

The Victoria Rhododendron Society

Newsletter



Box 5562 Postal Station B, Victoria BC Canada V8R 6S4

March 2012

Thirty-Second Year of Publication

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MEETING 7:30

MONDAY, March 12, 2012

GARTH HOMER CENTRE, 811 DARWIN STREET, VICTORIA, B. C.

Speakers: Ken and Madeleine Webb, “German Rhododendron Convention Highlights”

Ken and Madeleine Webb are long-term members of the VRS. They have traveled to many ARS Conventions, including the one to Germany in Bremen in May of 2010.

They are founding members of the VRS propagation group and grow on many hundreds of rhododendron cuttings and seedlings each year.

REFRESHMENTS

Please let Betty Gordon know at 250-479-0210 if you are coming to the meeting and bringing goodies.

Alan and Sandy Campbell, Ruth Cook, Jan Dammel, Carol and Bill Dancer and Robin and Betsy Dening

Please wrap your cookies or snacks. Coffee and tea are supplied. Assistance in setting out the food, and helping Betty in the kitchen cleanup is really appreciated.

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February’s Talk

Shane Ford’s talk on *R. macrophyllum* populations in B.C. and Washington began with the four words, “pirates, thieves, fluterbys and bees”. Various insects affect the blooms, their quality, and pollination. Ants steal the nectar in the blooms. Syrphid flies eat pollen. Crab spiders eat the pollinating insects. Bumble bees busily pollinate all the flowers in a rhododendron, leading to a lot of self-pollinating. Swallowtail butterflies are more likely to flit from rhodo to rhodo, leading to more varied distribution of pollen.

Shane found that the different populations

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or clades of *R. macrophyllum* had different rates of flowering to fruiting. A clade is defined as a group of organisms evolved from a common ancestor.

As well, differing weather patterns affect fruit set and bloom. For example, for all populations of *R. macrophyllum*, 1995 was a great year for flowering, but 1996 was poor.

In the wild, *R. macrophyllum* can be found growing on dry, well drained lodge-pole pine covered slopes, or in mature hemlock forests, or on lakeside margins. They favor disturbed sites.

With climate change, macrophyllums may even expand their range in British Columbia.

R. macrophyllum in the Garden

By Theresa and Bill McMillan

Considering the various locations in the wild that *R. macrophyllum* can grow in, it is not an easy rhododendron to grow in our gardens.

The usual comment from an unhappy gardener is, "I killed it". In Britain, Kenneth Cox (*Rhododendrons and Azaleas, A Colour Guide*, 2005) describes it as a "rather straggly, upright shrub" - not very flattering to our only native *hymenanthes rhododendron*!

Once established, it dislikes being watered in the summertime, and it hates being fertilized. It is like a tender woodland plant that likes to be planted in duff, leaves, rotten wood, old moss. It also needs sharp drainage; however, in my (Bill) experience it needs summer watering until it is well established.

However, there are a few gardeners in Victoria who are growing plants from either one of the two clades that came from the wilds in Manning Park or the Vancouver Island locations. Some of these plants do well and even bloom. Members of the Propagation Group collected seed from the Shawnigan Lake area and managed to grow *R. macrophyllum* into plants.



R. macrophyllum in a woodland/garden setting with bunchberries and Sword ferns at Glendale Gardens, February 2012



A flower bud on *R. macrophyllum* in the Rhodo and Hosta Garden at H.C.P.

A few of these seedlings have been planted in the native and dry shade gardens at the Glendale Gardens of the H.C.P. They are in forest duff, in the soil (amended to provide sharp drainage) and on a stump. They are doing well and some have bloomed. We also planted one a few years ago on an

old rotting stump in the Rhododendron and Hosta garden at H.C.P. This year it even has a flower bud on it.

Macrophyllum may be difficult, but it is **ours**, its flowers are beautiful and it is worth the effort of trying to grow it! Straggly indeed!



IR. *Macrophyllum* in bloom at Shawnigan Lake



R. macrophyllum seedling in a rotting nurse log at Shawnigan Lake

NOTES FROM THE VRS BOARD

The Annual General Meeting (or AGM)

On the March 12 meeting, after Ken and Madeleine Webb's presentation, the AGM will be held. Our current executive will be returning, but we are hoping for new faces to come on board. We are looking for a second vice president and any one else that would like to join us to handle the running of our society. You can email Calvin at waterlily@shaw.ca or phone him at 250-385-1970

Tea & Coffee - Betty Gordon needs someone to begin training to prepare the coffee and tea and goodies for our monthly meetings as she has been capably handling these duties for some time now. Bill Gordon would also like to train someone to handle the raffle tickets. If you are interested in these important tasks, please talk with Betty and Bill.

Garden Tours – We are looking for members who would be willing to open their gardens for other members to tour. Your garden can be small and does not have to be perfect (ours is definitely not!)! We think most of us are so interested in your rhodos that we would not notice how straight your flowerbeds are or the condition of your driveway! You pick the day and time; we will advertise in our newsletter and on the website. We all learn from seeing other members' rhodo collections. Please email Calvin or Lois to be included on the tour. (phone numbers and email addresses are in the VRS Board list on page 2).

Photograph Your Garden – Just a reminder to start taking photos from your garden so you can be part of the monthly Garden PowerPoint of members' gardens. Photos can be sent to Calvin or Lois.

There is also an ARS photo contest underway

for pictures taken from January 1, 2011 to July 31, 2012. Contest rules are provided in the ARS Journal, volume 65, number 4, Winter 2011 and in the latest edition. Entries are submitted to Glen Jamieson at ars.editor@gmail.com. The deadline is July 31, 2012.

New Ideas – New ideas are always welcomed from our membership. Perhaps you can find a spot where you can become more involved in the VRS. Lois will have many opportunities for your involvement with sign-up sheets for our various plant shows and sales at our March and April meetings.



More *R. macrophyllum* seedlings, Shawnigan Lake

Garden Tips

Now is a good time to prune your rhododendrons if you plan relatively drastic pruning. It will give the plant the whole growing season to recover. Light pruning can wait until after flowering.

Fertilizing now is also a good idea. It will offset the leaching caused by winter rains.

Upcoming Events

2012	Event	Place	Fee
Sun March 4	Hellebore Sunday 12 – 3 p.m.	Horticultural Centre of the Pacific (Glendale Gardens)	Free
Fri – Sat, April 13 & 14	Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Show & Sale; 13 th 1- 8 p.m.; 14 th 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.; http://virags.ca/	Cadboro Bay United Church 2625 Arbutus Road	Donation
Sat, April 21	VRS Rhodo Show and Sale	Westshore Town Centre 2945 Jacklin Road	Free
Sat, April 28	Plant Sale and Garden Open 10 – 12 p.m. wide assortment of shrubs, rhododendrons, perennials and ferns	Evelyn Weesjes 10629 Derrick Road, (north on West Saanich , left on Downey, left on Derrick)	Free
Fri – Mon, May 4 –7	ARS-ASA International Convention Info Contact and registration information	Asheville, North Carolina	~\$515 US
Sun, May 6	Humungous Plant Sale 10 – 1 p.m.	University of Victoria See ‘plant sale’ signs	TBA
Fri – Sat, May 11 - 12	Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society Vancouver Garden Tour (See page 6 of this Newsletter for details).	Two-day tour of special gardens of the Vancouver area	\$320
Sat, May 12	VRS Rhodo Sale	Abkhazi Garden 1964 Fairfield Road	TBA
Sun, May 13 (new date)	Plant Sale and Garden Open 10 – 2 p.m. large selection of woodland perennials, Pacific Coast Iris hybrids, hydrangeas, ferns, geraniums & fuchsias.	Carmen Varcoe 5450 Old West Saanich Road Some parking available next door at Gazebo B & B	Free
Sat, May 20	Plant-a-Holics Sale and Garden Open 9 – 12 p.m. Tearoom open: 10 a.m.	Abkhazi Garden 1964 Fairfield Road Parking at Margaret Jenkins School	Free
Wed – Sun, May 23 – Jun. 2	Nine Night Hosted Deluxe English Garden Tour http://www.travelandcruisedeals.com/homepage or call Liz: Cruiseplus Management Ltd, 250-390-0220 or 1-800 854-9664	London and Cornwall, UK	\$3299.00 CAD per person
Sat, May 26	VRS Rhodo Show and Sale	Tillicum Centre 3170 Tillicum Road,	Free
Sun, June 24	VRS Picnic 12 p.m.	Webb’s Rhododendron Garden 5008 Old West Saanich Road	Free
Mon, Nov. 12	People’s Choice Rhododendron Photography Evening VRS Regular Monthly Meeting	Garth Homer Centre 813 Darwin Avenue	



Vancouver Garden Tour

May 2012

The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society has organised another exciting two-day tour of special gardens of the Vancouver area on May 11 and 12-peak blooming times for rhodos and many other plants in several impressive private and public gardens. Local Garden Club members and others will also be joining us. Features planned:

- Deluxe highway coach transportation from downtown Duncan to Vancouver on Friday morning with a return to Duncan on Saturday evening.
- A relaxed cruise over breakfast aboard the *Queen of Oak Bay* from Nanaimo to Horseshoe Bay terminal.
- Visits to some spectacular private gardens in West and North Vancouver including lunch at the beautiful 3 acre Park and Tilford Gardens with 8 separate themed gardens. We'll also visit the impressive UBC botanical gardens and the Van Dusen Garden.
- Overnight at the comfortable Delta Airport Hotel and a fun Friday evening in Richmond for a Chinese Hot Pot dinner experience.
- A visit to several specialty nurseries -plant buying opportunities to fill up the bus!
- Return to Duncan via Swartz Bay on BC Ferries *Spirit of Vancouver Island* featuring sumptuous Pacific Buffet dining and their decadent dessert bar.

The total cost including all meals except Friday breakfast on the ferry (2 lunches, 1 breakfast, 2 suppers), coffee breaks, garden entry fees, hotel, bus transportation, ferry fares, gratuities and taxes is \$320 per person (double occupancy). Single supplement is \$75 extra. Advance booking is now required to guarantee your seat on this great tour. This is your opportunity for a nice, well organised trip with fellow gardeners and rhodoholics and see some impressive gardens while enjoying a visit to the lower mainland and we do the driving! CVRS trips have a solid reputation for quality service, food and content.

Departure will be from the Duncan Train station at 7 am on May 11 with a return by bus to the Duncan train station by 8 pm on May 12. Participants should be in good physical condition but the sites are mostly well accessible.

To join the tour you must send a cheque for \$150 per person made out to Bill Dumont, 1753 Peerless Road, Cobble Hill, BC V0R 1L6 by March 20, 2012. Please provide an **email address, street address, postal code and phone number** and advise of any food allergies/requests. Balance will be payable by May 1, 2012. For further information please contact Bill TO CONFIRM at 250 743 9882 or wedumont@hotmail.com. This tour will sell out quickly so don't delay in submitting your deposit. First come first served!!