



The Victoria Rhododendron Society Newsletter

4821 Townsend Drive, Victoria, BC V8Z 5P2

February 2020
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Fortieth Year of Publication
<http://victoriarhodo.ca>

General Meeting

MONDAY, February 3, 2020 starts at 7:30

Couvelier Pavilion at the HCP Gardens

505 Quayle Road, VICTORIA, B. C.

**Margaret Cadwaladr – Dart’s Hill
presenting**

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REFRESHMENTS

by

Lloyd & Linda Gilmore	Dean Goard
Betty & Bill Gordon	Spencer Grant
Dorothy Griffin	David Gustavson

PLEASE EMAIL Betty Gordon at
bbgordon@shaw.ca

or phone 250.479.0210 if you are coming with your wrapped goodies or snacks. Coffee and tea are supplied. Assistance in setting out the food, milk, sugar and napkins, and helping Betty with the cleanup is really appreciated.



BRING YOUR OWN MUG

Upcoming Events

2020	Event	Place
Feb 3 7:30	General Meeting Margaret Cadwaladr – Dart's Hill	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Feb 17 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Mar 9 7:30	General Meeting & AGM Doug Justice	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Mar 23 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
SPRING	SPRING GARDEN TOURS If any VicRS Member would like to show their gardens, please contact Brenda Macdonald	TBA
Apr 6 7:30	General Meeting Rosemary Prufer	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Apr 19 10-2	PLANT SALE at the Webbs'	5008 Old W. Saanich Rd
Apr 20 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Apr 29- May 3	<u>ARS Annual Convention - 75th Anniversary</u>	Portland, Vancouver, WA
May 4 7:30	General Meeting Truss Show	TBD
May 9 10-2	PLANT SALE at the Marquardts'	4640 Cordova Bay Rd
May 18 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
June 28 Noon	Sunday VRS Summer BBQ Picnic at	TBA

President's Remarks, February 2020

Spring Garden Visits

Now seems a good time to remind everyone of the purpose and protocol for visiting members' gardens in the spring ... when it isn't snowing or blowing, and hopefully not raining either. The reason for setting these up, and for asking for members to volunteer their gardens, is to allow us all to view other plants, other layouts, and other ways of doing things. Everybody gardens differently, and within those differences is a wealth of experience and knowledge that we all can benefit from

It is NOT a request to have you beaver away to create a showcase garden – one with no weeds, no scruffy edges, no almost-completed projects, or assorted tools not put away. Everybody's garden is a work in progress – that is what we would like to have you share.

And keep in mind these are garden tours, not necessarily rhododendron tours. Even if you have only one or two rhododendrons and your most prized possession is a rock garden or collection of hybrid lilies, we will all enjoy looking at it and learning from it.

Timing is not critical. Remember it is entirely at your convenience – early evenings, weekends, whenever fits your schedule. Late March, April and May are probably the optimum months.

We will have "Mussel Beach", our little chunk of paradise, open this year for anyone who did not manage to get out last year, or for anyone who would like to come out and see what has grown, what has died, and just generally how things have evolved. Johanna Massa has also volunteered her garden.

I urge others who would like to share their passion to let me know when you could set something up.

February Meeting

If the snow stays away and the power stays on, we will be treated to a presentation by Margaret Cadwaladr at our February meeting.

Based in Royston, Margaret is a writer, educator, and public speaker. She is also the owner of Madrona Books & Publishing, an independent small press specializing in memoirs, autobiography and life story. She has written two books on gardens: the first was *In Veronica's Garden: The Social History of the Milner Gardens & Woodland*, and she has recently published *The Secret Garden: The Story of Darts Hill Garden Park*. Darts Hill, a garden in Surrey, BC, was the creation and lifelong passion of Francisca Darts. Aided by her husband Edwin and over the course of 70 years, she took a 7-acre fruit and nut orchard and filled it with an extraordinary collection of rare trees and shrubs, many grown from seed. Coda.

It seems 2020 arrived with more drama than was absolutely necessary. I am sure we all experienced some losses – branches were broken by snow load, plants felled by wind-blown trees, marginally hardy specimens damaged by the unusual cold. All of it will become all too apparent when the spring growth cycle commences. Just DON'T be like me – racing out there on the first reasonable day with my secateurs all sharpened up and ready to prune.

Much to the Head Gardener's relief, I have finally learned that waiting is the better part of the garden clean up. Many plants/parts of plants that look dead are just traumatized and feeling a little sorry for themselves. You will be surprised and gratified by new shoots springing up from rootstock or new growth poking out from seemingly dead branches.

Just keep the faith.

Happy gardening to all.

Brenda Macdonald



Editor's Notes

By Theresa MacMillan



Bernie Dinter's talk, "Small Evergreens"

At least it wasn't icy or snowy as we drove to the VRS meeting. It was still a dank, dark evening typical of January.

We walked into a bright warm room with several rhodos on a table at one end, and many chatting VRS members.



Cryptomeria japonica "Spiralis"

Bernie Dinter of the Dinter nursery near Duncan was there to give us a talk, "a journey into the miniature", with several beautiful pictures of dwarf conifers. To help us follow the hundreds of plants, Bernie had provided a three plus paged handout with their names. There were "Abies- True fir, "cryptomeria japonica "Black Dragon, Juniper Sabina "Calgary Carpet", "ginkgo biloba "Mariken" and "Tsuga- Hemlock".

Bernie's knowledge of his plants includes information on the management of pest conditions such as root rot (phytophthora). This condition has

been responsible for the browning and dying of thousands of Victoria's junipers, hedges, even rhododendrons.



Abies balsamea "Nana"

Bernie's many pictures show that pruning is necessary to keep the small evergreens looking their best. When I checked pictures of unpruned evergreens I saw many that were tall and unkempt. But pruning can be used to create oval or round



Ginkgo biloba "Mariken"

(Continued on page 7)

The Story of 'Champagne Lace'

By Jim Barlup

One of my favorite things to do on a cold and rainy winter day is to sit by the fire and ponder over the possibilities of hybridizing rhododendrons. What might I get if I use the pollen from this plant on that one? Ummmm... I wonder what the offspring would be like if I crossed this plant with that one? Or what about that one as the seed parent and this one as the pollen parent? The possibilities are endless!

In the winter of 1995, while my mind was exploring “what if’s”, I decided to cross ‘Glenna’ (one of my registered hybrids) with ‘Janet Blair’ (a well-respected and internationally known Eastern hybrid). ‘Glenna,’ (‘Hotei’ x ‘One Thousand Butterflies’) had proven to produce full trusses with lacy edges. I selected ‘Janet Blair’ for the pollen parent for its many positive attributes but primarily for its hardiness.

The cross was made that spring (1996). I placed pollen from ‘Janet Blair’ onto the stamens of ‘Glenna.’ In the fall, I harvested and processed the seed. Then in December, I planted the seeds. The resulting seedlings grew and flourished over the summer months. Finally in 2001, the first bloom appeared. In time, I selected the best seedling from the cross and transplanted it from a pot to the soil. The rest were discarded. Over the years, roots from a nearby cedar tree encroached upon this rhododendron. That, in combination with too much shade, weakened the plant. It needed a better environment, so I took three cuttings from the plant and donated the original plant to Meerkerk Gardens for their foundation’s annual fundraiser.



Champagne Lace
Jim Barlup

The three remaining seedlings flourished in pots. As the years went by, they became stronger and were growing well. The branching habit was excellent. In 2009, the cuttings bloomed. The trusses were full with pale yellow, lacy edged flowers, just as I had hoped! It was looking quite good now, but I still wanted to wait a few more years to let it prove itself before registering the name. My selection of parents proved to be good but it took 17 years from the time it was conceived in my mind until the Royal Horticultural Society of Great Britain registered the name ‘Champagne Lace’ in December 2012. Perhaps this is what they mean when they talk about a “slow bloomer.”

I was honored that ‘Champagne Lace’ was chosen as the official rhododendron for the American Rhododendron Society’s 70th Convention in 2015 in Sidney B.C. I hope that whoever has that original plant labeled (‘Glenna’ x ‘Janet Blair’) from Meerkerk Gardens years ago, realizes that they have a very special rhododendron.

JOE'S JOTTINGS,

Miscellaneous thoughts from a life with plants

By Joe Harvey

#4 Eye Health and Calendula 'Orange Pig'

A couple of years ago my wife had her annual eye exam and was told that her retina showed traces of macular degeneration. The macula is the yellowish central region of the retina and is important for reading and looking at faces. In other words, deterioration is a real bummer. (A later exam showed no further deterioration).

The optometrist kindly sold her a couple of bottles of pills, which, especially to someone on a burger-fries-soda diet, might (no proof) help. One of the bottles contained fish-oil capsules; I looked at it and said, you should eat sardines. The other bottle was labelled AREDS2; I stared at it and said – You paid WHAT! (Glossary of terms below).

AREDS2

As a small-print guy, a plant breeder and a chemist, I got out my magnifying glass to see whether gold was one of the ingredients, and it was (but read further).

First on the list of ingredients were minerals and vitamins, much the same as the multivitamin-mineral tablets we take each morning. I once mentioned this to my physician and he explained that with a balanced diet they were of no benefit and that we were, not to put too fine a point on it, pissing money down the toilet.

The special AREDS2 ingredients turn out to be plant pigments, principally lutein and zeaxanthin (loo-TAY-in, zee-uh-ZAN-thin). The label helpfully mentioned that they were sourced from T. erecta. Any gardener who has spent a winter day scanning a seed catalogue will recognize Tagetes erecta as an African marigold (the 'gold'). These annuals have yellow and orange flowers.

Amusing Asides

1. African marigolds and the smaller French marigolds originated in Mexico.
2. Extracts of *Tagetes* are legal as a food colourant in the European Union but not in the USA. However, use is permitted in the US in chicken feed. Why? The egg yolks take on a rich orange colour and yes, deep orange yolks really are better for you.
3. What about carrots and eyesight? Carrots contain another pigment unimaginatively named 'carotene' (beta carotene). This makes Vitamin A, which combines to form the pigment in your retina needed for vision. So important, but lack of carotenoids (group name for these substances) is rare in the western world. High doses of Vit. A can be toxic and excess beta carotene has been dubiously linked to increased cancer in smokers. On the other hand, impoverished rice-growing regions have many children who develop blindness as a result of lack of carotenoids. 'Golden rice' has been bred to help this lack, but governments are reluctant to permit its cultivation since some groups have protested at feeding innocent children 'Frankenfood'.



(Continued from page 4)

Bernie Dinter's talk, "Small Evergreens" cont'd.

shapes or to limit the plant's size. In the gardens themselves, the use of textures and colours blue-green, against backgrounds of rounded rocks or plants such as cactus will make the dwarf conifer garden interesting.

Bernie describes the many virtues of dwarf conifers:

- Drought tolerance (handy in hot, dry summers)
- Slow growing (not requiring much pruning or watering)
- Deer resistant or deer proof

These qualities will no doubt encourage our gardeners to buy a few of these conifers to add new colours and shapes to their gardens next spring.



Podocarpus lawrencei "Blue Gem"



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American Rhododendron Society
 75th Anniversary
20/20
VISION
 ARS75.org
Looking forward, reflecting back
Portland-Vancouver, April 29-May 3, 2020



You're invited to the celebration!



World-renowned Keynote Speakers
 Kenneth Cox • Jens Nielsen • Steve Hootman • Juliana Medeiros
 Lionel de Rothschild • Steve Krebs • Valerie Soza • & more!

**Tours to the Northwest's
 Outstanding Gardens & Nurseries**

**April 29-May 3, 2020, Hosted by ARS District 4
 Heathman Lodge, Vancouver, WA.**

20/20 Vision international speakers to include:

- Kenneth Cox from Glendoick in Scotland
- Lionel de Rothschild from Exbury in England
- Jens Nielsen, plant explorer from Denmark
- Steve Krebs and Juliana Medeiros from the Holden Arboretum
- Steve Hootman from the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden
- Valerie Soza from the University of Washington
- and more.

Garden tours to include:

- Crystal Springs Botanical Garden
- Cecil & Molly Smith Garden
- Portland Japanese Garden
- Lan Su Chinese Garden
- Iseli Nursery
- Woodburn Nursery
- The Stewart Garden (formerly Dover Nursery)
- Sebright Gardens

Plant sale, photo contest, poster session, special clinics, plus:

Around the Sound pre-tour
Willamette Valley and Oregon Coast Excursion post-tour

ars75.org

Registration opens December 2, 2019