



The Victoria Rhododendron Society Newsletter

4821 Townsend Drive, Victoria, BC V8Z 5P2

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

General Meeting

MONDAY, January 6, 2020 starts at 7:30
Couvelier Pavilion at the HCP Gardens
505 Quayle Road, VICTORIA, B. C.
Bernie Dinter - Small Evergreens

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REFRESHMENTS

by

Elaine & Don Eastman	Lana Ellis
Nathalie Emond	Lynne Ferrie
Carrie George	Lisa Giles

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
	Happy New Year It is Membership renewal time.	
Jan 6 7:30	General Meeting - Bernie Dinter - Small Evergreens	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Jan 20 Noon	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
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 garden, 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, January 2020

Christmas Potluck

It was, as usual, just grand. Our Christmas Potluck was a wonderful success, thanks to all those who helped make it happen – all the “ladies who swag”, the table setter-uppers, everybody, because we all brought food, good cheer and donations to the raffle table and Food Bank. Our Treasurer reports that the raffle table raised a total of \$486.00 to go to the Mustard Seed. He also noted that 68 pounds of food were donated but Generally Accepted Accounting Principles do not encompass metric conversion to numbers of meals. Thank you to everyone for such an enjoyable and worthwhile evening.

January Meeting

We get a break this year – the January meeting isn't until January 6, giving us all plenty of time to recover from holiday excesses. Bernie Dinter will be speaking on “Dwarf Conifers – A Journey into the Miniature”, a topic of ever-increasing importance as we try to incorporate some evergreen structure into today's increasingly smaller (and for many of us, more crowded) gardens.

Coda

I cannot believe it is almost 2020 already. It seems just a short while ago there was all that fuss about Y2K. Not exactly sure why the passage of time accelerates just as one begins to have the time to enjoy it. Something about the universe expanding more rapidly at its outer (oldest) border perhaps?

And yet the long, scrawled list of things in the garden that need to be removed, relocated, divided and generally dealt with remains stubbornly static.

Top of the New Year to you all, and happy gardening.

Happy gardening -

Brenda Macdonald



Editor's Notes

by Theresa McMillan
Photos by Nadine Minckler

Our Christmas Potluck Dinner, Dec. 2, 2019



Our traditional Potluck dinner was beautiful, delicious, and downright festive. We had round tables with freshly ironed white tablecloths, around to and centerpieces of flowers and greenery to brighten the hall.

In the center of the room was a line of tables covered in Christmas green. On them were many items for sale in the raffle. Many of the objects were

homemade, jams, jellies, or knitted hats. There were also bought gifts for this special occasion.

For me, the outstanding sprays of garden greenery were a happy reminder of Jacq Bradbury and her volunteer group's work with garden prunings. A few years ago, Jacq was not able to help, so our raffle tables were rather bare.

But this year, her group made table centerpieces, with several featured at our dining tables. They also made long or shorter sprays tied with showy bows suitable for hanging on front doors or walls at Christmas.



People went around the raffle tables, trying to decide which items to put their tickets on. It was so hard to choose! Several people had long rows of tickets, which at \$1 a ticket could be considered an extravagance, but no one felt bad about it, for the proceeds were going to a very worthy cause, the Mustard Seed Food Bank. Several members had also brought non-perishable food items for the Mustard Seed.

The next part of our tradition was doing the Christmas puzzle. The winning group was first in the line-up for the Christmas dinner. We were all hungry; the food looked and was delicious and the puzzle seemed to be fiendishly hard (thanks,



Sharon Joseph!), but someone always wins at last. Some people in the food line-up help the more challenged groups, and at last we all get to enjoy the appies, salads, veggies, ham and turkey, and desserts.

The raffle is played last. Our president, Brenda Macdonald, drew the tickets, and her husband, Sean Rafferty delivered the prizes. He was in a playful mood, and his comments drew laughter from the crowd.

Lastly we all, including our volunteers, cleared the hall, took away our leftovers, and went out into the cold (but not snowy!) and dark December night.

Thank you to the volunteers and everyone that helped to make our evening the success and pleasurable event we have come to enjoy each year.

Thank you.





ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christmas Raffle and the Mustard Seed Food Bank

The Christmas Raffle was its usual success. The members bring in so much for the swag tables that there is something to tempt everyone. Ticket sales were \$486.00 and that entire amount goes to the Mustard Seed Food Bank. As well as the monies raised by the VicRS members, the club also donated food which when weighed on the scales yielded 68 pounds. Metric conversion is not part of my repertoire.

The Mustard Seed appreciated the generosity of the members again this year.

See you all in the New Year.

Bill Gordon, Treasurer,
Victoria Rhododendron Society

AN UPDATE AT THE BARLUP RHODODENDRON GARDEN

By Lois Blackmore

WINDSONG – the rhododendron that started this amazing project

Through the many efforts of many people, from the spring of 2018 to December 2019, there is now a total of 97 Barlup hybrids planted in the Esquimalt Gorge Park. As the year closes, it is a time to reflect on what people can do when there is a common purpose. They say it takes a “village to raise a child”. Our village consists of the many, many people who have worked together to create beauty for the public to enjoy and learn from.



JOE'S JOTTINGS, MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS FROM A LIFE WITH PLANTS

By Joe Harvey

"A Host of Golden Daffodils" - Not No More!

The Problem

Wordsworth had it backwards: golden daffodils, or any kind of Narcissus, golden or otherwise, are the host to many insects, my current obsession being the Greater Narcissus Bulb Fly, *Merodon equestris*, (GNBF). Other bulbs of the Amaryllidaceae are also affected.

The fly has an ugly larval stage consisting of a fat grub, almost 2cm long which eats the heart out of the bulb while immersed in its own waste. Infested bulbs do not flower.

In late spring, the grub pupates and soon emerges as what looks like a dark, hairy bumblebee. This is pure deception; these are harmless hoverflies, Syrphidae, getting protection by mimicry. The females have a characteristic search pattern, flying low between clumps of plants seeking, presumably, the smell of withering Narcissus leaves and laying one egg in each tuft.

While I lived in Halifax daffodils were popular and to many people, the symbol of spring (I'm more of a snowdrop guy), but GNBF were present and I noticed them in their short flight season. Daffodils are native to Europe and were brought to North America by early settlers, with the fly an accidental stowaway hidden inside some of the bulbs. I got the impression that there was some sort of equilibrium between the bulbs and their parasite.

After moving to Sooke in 1990, I found a vigorous garden scene, plenty of daffodils and, new to me, whole fields grown as a commercial crop. I proceeded to buy bulbs in bulk to add to the ones already on our acreage. But even in the wilderness of Sooke I soon noticed GNBF flying among the plants and one year I spot treated with Chlordane dust, still legal at the time, to no effect as far as I could tell. I gradually lost clumps, with some cultivars seemingly more attractive to the parasite and vanishing first.

By 2008, joint problems dictated a smaller property and a move into town. We found a 1930 house with an old garden saturated in places with bulbs. There were tommy crocuses, Muscari and snowdrops thick on the ground plus clumps of Narcissi ranging from the traditional yellow "King Alfred" (no one knows what the original 'King Alfred' was), to the white-with-orange-cup Pheasant's Eye or poet's narcissus (classic Latin poets, not Wordsworth) and their hybrids x *Incomparabilis*. Completing the show were some hyacinths and tulips. Of these, tulips, Muscari, hyacinths and crocus are not Amaryllids, hence not touched by the fly, but in 2010, the first deer in over 100 years arrived on our street and the indulgent Oak Bay council has allowed a dense population to form. The fly took out most of the Amaryllids, the deer the rest. Snowdrops, with their smaller bulbs, seem less susceptible to the fly.



Narcissus_bulb_fly_
(Merodon_equestris)_grooming
By Sharp Photography



Snowdrops
by Marsupium Photography

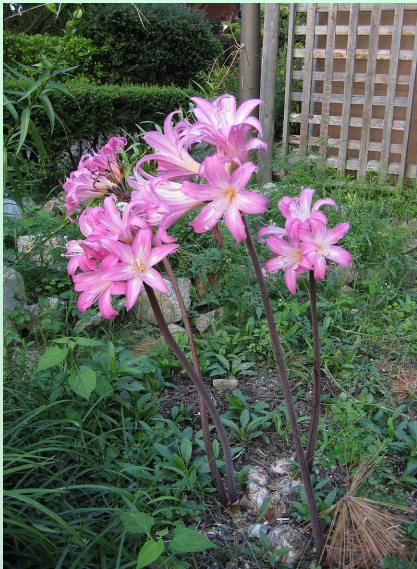


Muscari Neglectum
By Daniel78

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

Neighbours Gail and Garry proudly showed me their huge clump of naked ladies. It had grown from a few bulbs they dug up on the coast of California 19 years ago. There must have been at least 20 to 30



Amaryllis_belladonna
Reference:- jubholland.nl

flower heads – spectacular! I use the term ‘naked ladies’ for this South African native – it just refers to the flowers appearing without the leaves – because its scientific name is *Amaryllis belladonna*, but this competes with the popular house decorative bulb also called *amaryllis* which in this case comes from Mexico. The problem of which one is to be called *Amaryllis* was not settled until 1987 when the international body responsible “conserved” the name *Amaryllis* for the Cape plant and the Mexican one became *Hippeastrum*, but no one uses that name.

By the way, *Hippeastrum* translates ‘horse-star’. Apparently, the person coining the name was keen on horses and noticed that the dried, pressed specimen before him had two bracts, stuck up like a horse’s ears, which protect the flower bud before it opens. Personally, I think he was drunk but that is strictly unofficial. Certainly GDNB is so keen on *Hippeastrum* that they even found their way into my greenhouse and I lost it and the hybrid I had made with related *Sprekelia*. The naked ladies have also ceased to produce

flowers although when we cut open a soft one in November it was rotten but there was no grub visible.

The Bad News

My garden looks very different from just 8 years ago. Most of the *Amaryllid*s no longer flower, only the snowdrops. From an ecological point of view, this is rapid change. I no longer have equilibrium, but a wipeout. Has anyone else noticed something similar? I want an explanation.

The Hypotheses

A hypothesis is the spark of an idea, something that might or might not turn out to be correct. The public and the press uses the word ‘theory’, but a theory is what you end up with when a hypothesis is tested by an experiment.

Hypothesis #1. I am crazy or just the victim of a random increase in the number of GDNB’s - Murphy’s Law if you like.

Hypothesis #2. There is something new.

I decided to look up the bulb fly genus *Merodon*. Turns out there are over 50 species described from Europe; most have been caught as adults on flowers in alpine meadows, although what bulbs their larvae might have fed on was unknown. In a very few cases bulbs have been dug up to see what hatches.

Recently the Dutch caught *M. batumicus* from a consignment of bulbs from Georgia. So new species do occasionally get introduced. Incidentally, the name *batumicus* (from Batumi) brings back happy memories of a week on a conference field trip in 1975 centred on the seaside resort Batumi. This was the height of the Cold War and the Georgians were extremely hospitable. We got to drink the very best of the black wines of Georgia, no doubt in my mind the best wine in the world.

Citizen Science

Note I have not said we have a species of *Merodon* new to Victoria. But we might. We need a group of people to collect specimens of bulb flies to identify them. Maybe a group of Master Gardeners could organise this. It could be a school project. I shall run this idea past the RBCM’s entomologist, but the world does not have sufficient specialists so some citizens’ participation will be needed.

Pioneer Scholarship Award

By Bill Gordon

Annually the Victoria Rhododendron Society awards the Pioneer Scholarship from the interest on our account at the University of Victoria. This fund is self-perpetuated and administered entirely by the university.

We have received a letter of appreciation from Ms. Rachel Kalkman, Fourth -year student, Biology. Ms. Kalkman's hometown is Fort St. John, B.C.

An excerpt from Ms. Kalkman's letter,

"I am so grateful to receive this award as it has helped alleviate some of the financial stress that many students face in university, especially in Victoria where the cost of living is above average.

Currently, I am in my fourth year of my Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Biology. I enjoy courses pertaining to genetics and animal physiology. "... and allows me to focus on my schooling and my training without having to get a job or worry about finances."



VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD

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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
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ars75.org

Registration opens December 2, 2019