The Rhodoholic

Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society Volume 27:1 February 2016

President's Message

Happy New Year everyone. Already a month has passed in 2016 and the days are lengthening, the snow drops are blooming! Besides the general meetings with a good line-up of speakers, we can look forward to the CV Garden Fair, garden tours, and the club picnic.

Al Campbell has arranged a great panel of experts for our February meeting so please bring questions and examples of any plant problems you may have. We will also have a short business meeting to vote on the proposal to build 2 propagation units with the intent of having half the costs paid from the 2015 Convention legacy fund.

Fabia Group, a featured rhodo hybrid beginning with the letter F.

CVRS Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, February 3
7:30pm St. John's Church
Member Education Event
Expert Panel—come prepared with your questions! Page 2

In This Issue:

Planning for the Cowichan Valley Garden Fair is underway. The website has been updated and we are pursuing sponsors and vendors. The Fair succeeds because of the CVRS volunteers so we will be seeking your assistance in the near future. For one thing we need someone to take on the Twitter and Facebook accounts for the Fair. Help is available to facilitate the transition so let me know if you are interested.

Please remember we bring in the most revenue at the Fair from selling plants donated by members. The plants can be shrubs, trees, perennials, bulbs and of course rhodos and azaleas. Most perennials can be successfully divided anytime now and look presentable for April 30th.

Finally, remember that the library is open during our general meetings and we have some new donations, so check it out. I look forward to seeing you on Feb. 3rd.

Carrie Nelson, President

Experts Ready for Tough Questions at Next Wednesday's Meeting

February 3 at 7:30 pm

Al Campbell, our own rhodo specialist has put together a great expert panel on rhodos and members are asked to definitely come to our February meeting prepared with any and all queries to do with rhodos.

This year's panel includes:

- Ken Webb, ARS Western Vice President: for overall rhodo questions, propagation, and questions of an ARS nature.
- Sean Rafferty, RSF Vice President: overall rhodo questions, and questions of an RSF nature
- Roy Blackmore, Victoria Chapter: overall rhodo questions, propagation, planting and growing rhodos in containers
- Rose Rogan, Cowichan Chapter member, Perennial Ridge Nursery, overall rhodo questions, propagation, companion plants

Don't miss this great opportunity to take advantage of the skills and experience of these rhodoholics!

Maggie Walker, recently retired from “Fern Gardens” will be at the February general meeting to provide an informal information session on propagating and growing ferns and is a welcome addition to our member information session that evening. Maggie has been a grower/seller at our Garden Fair for many years.

Fire Rim

Book Review by Ian Efford

Plants from the Edge of the World: New Explorations in the Far East

Mark Flanagan and Tony Kirkham 2005: Timber Press

Anne and Roger Slaby were among our club's first members. Throughout the years, they regularly donated plants from their nursery for our raffles. Recently, this generosity has included the donation of quite a few interesting books to our library. As some of these have passed through my hands, I have taken the opportunity to read one or two.

This book by Mark Flanagan and Tony Kirkham is not an obvious rhododendron book but it does mention 14 different species found along the eastern seaboard of Asia and describes their natural habitat, some of which are grown by our members and others are relatively rare and may not be in cultivation.

The great storm of 1987 that swept through the south of England caused extensive damage to literally thousands of the trees in places like The Royal Botanic Garden, Kew. Some of these trees have great historical significance as they were grown from the first seeds brought back by early plant explorers. After the storm, it was decided to completely revitalize some of the arboreta with plants from newly collected seeds with excellent provenance. To collect the seed, experts were designated to visit native forests in various parts of the world.

Flanagan and Kirkham were chosen to explore the forest along the eastern edge of Asia – Ussuriland [north of Vladivostok], Sakhalin Island, South Korea, Hokkaido, and Taiwan. These areas were chosen as the northern hemisphere was covered originally in deciduous forest containing many different species of different genera. The combination of the recent ice ages and related climatic changes and, most recently, the impact of urbanization by humans has resulted in a dramatic loss of diversity in these forest throughout North America and Europe and Western Asia. This loss has not occurred in the forests along the eastern edge of Asia. Furthermore, many of these forests have not been explored completely and they contain many species of beautiful trees and shrubs that would be very suitable for gardens but have never been introduced.

The only problem with these exploratory visits is that collecting seeds means seeking them at the very end of the season before winter arrives. As a result, much of their time was spent in cold and very heavy rain and a significant part of the book is devoted to the difficulties created by the weather. This is particularly true in eastern Russia where living conditions are very poor as is the weather throughout much of the year.

The five collecting areas visited by Flanagan and Kirkham cover a wide climatic range from the near Arctic conditions in the area of Ussuriland and Sakhalin Island to semi-Tropic Taiwan.

The book is in the CVRS library so that you have the opportunity to read about the arboreal flora in detail if you wish.

The Rhododendrons

The rhododendrons in their collections reflect the climate range. In the far north, *R. lapponicum, aureum, and catschaticum* are all very low-growing plants that tend to creep over the rock surface and can often be found at the top of mountains. In fact, *R. aureum and camtschaticum* were found matted together in the alpine zone near the summit of Mount Chekov on Sakhalin Island. Most of the other plants in this area were low growing birches and alders and other dwarf woody plants dominated by members of the Ericaceae such as *Vaccinium vitis-idaea. R. lapponicum* is a circumpolar species which is also found in isolated pockets on the tops of more southern mountains. It is also very low-growing and adapted to very cold conditions. This species was collected near to top of Oblachnaya on the mainland [Ussuriland]. I find it surprising that *R. aureum* is found under these conditions as most species in the Ponticum section are the larger-leafed plants we grow in our gardens. Rarely, are plants in the Ponticum group dwarf cold climate alpine or Arctic species.

I grew *R. camtschaticum* this last year but lost it to drought at the height of the summer. I particularly regret not keeping it well-watered and out of the sun as it is a delight. It has very bristly leaves and the whole plant appears covered in a white film of quite long bristles. The flowers are relatively large for such a small plant. I must try again but only after installing a drip irrigation system.

Species found by the authors in the five regions of eastern Asia

	Ussuriland	**Sakhalin Island**	**South Korea**	**Hokkaido**	**Taiwan**
Lapponica	*lapponicum*				
Ponticum	*aureum*	*aureum*			*pseudochrysanthum*
					hyperythrum
Therorhodion		*camtschaticum*			
Rhodorastra	*mucronulatum*		*mucronulatum*		
			dauricum		
Pentathera			*schlippenbachii*	*albrechtii*	
Tsutsusi					*oldhamii*
					chilanshanense *
					nakaharaii
Maddenia					*formosanum*
Vireya					*kawakamii*
June High	17	11	30	25	30
January Low	-18	-13	-2	-4	18

This species was collected as *R. lasiostylum* but was subsequently identified as a new species.

The other species collected in this northern region was *R. mucronulatum*, a popular species grown quite extensively in gardens on Vancouver Island. It was collected in three regions in forested areas rather than on the exposed mountain tops.

The South Korean species are all common in our gardens and also tend to be woodland species. The fact that *R.mucronulatum* is found in Korea is not too surprising as an examination of any atlas shows that Ussuriland is bordered on the south by North Korea and the forest extend right down the peninsula. *R. dauricum* and *schlippenbachii* are both well-known species in our gardens. I find that one is easy to grow and the other, *R. schlippenbachii* more difficult although there are some large and very beautiful examples of this species in gardens of our members.

My experience in Hokkaido is that it is almost identical climatically to the coast of British Columbia. Tall conifer forests, salmon runs in the rivers and a fairly mild climate. One feels quite at home. The capital is Sapporo is on the sea just like Vancouver and Victoria but has a lower average January temperature of -4C. Tony Kirkham, the only one of the authors to visit the island, found only one species, *R. albrechtii* at the edge of the forest. This is a beautiful delicate species that is closely related to *R. schlippenbachii* and *quinquefolium* although the flowers are smaller. I first saw it at the flower show at the international rhododendron meeting in Edinburgh where I thought it the best one of the whole lot,

R. dauricum in reviewer's garden

including all the massive trusses! I have tried to grow it from cuttings and have a small plant but, to be on the safe side, I have also purchased a large one which should flower for me this next year.

Taiwan is an entirely different climate as this is the only area explored where the winter temperatures do not fall below freezing at least in the lower elevations. It also has a quite different flora, especially of rhododendrons. The authors found two Ponticum, both being endemic to the island: *R. pseudochrysanthum* and *hyperythrum*. The two species are grown quite frequently in gardens locally. The former grows to a reasonable garden height in our gardens [0.3-3M] but near the summit of Yushan it was found growing in extensive mats no more than 10cm high. Apparently, these plants retain their dwarf habit when grown at lower elevations but I have not seen any of these dwarf ones. In Windsor Great Park, 30 year old plants are still only 15cm tall.

R. hyperythrum in reviewer's garden

Three species in the Tsutsusi are all endemic and include the beautiful *R. oldhamii,* which grows well on Vancouver Island but, again, must not be left with too little water in summer. One species discovered was found to be a new species. The other, *R. nakaharii* is interesting as it flowers profusely late in the season in June and July. It was found growing in grassland, which is quite unusual for rhododendrons.

Finally, Flanagan and Kirkham collected two semi-tropical species. *R. kamakamii* is the most northerly recorded Vireya and *R. formosanum* is in the Mad-

denia group, a group of rhododendrons usually found in rain forests in more tropical locations.

Conclusion

If you have any interest in trees either in the wild or in the garden, this book is worth reading. As mentioned above, one of the objectives of the collecting trips was to re-populate the main garden at The Royal Botanic Garden, Kew and its satellite arboretum at Wakehurst Place in Sussex after the devastating destruction caused by the 1987 hurricane. Another objective was to discover trees and bushes that would be fine additions to gardens. The seeds were taken back to Kew, Wakehurst and Windsor Great Park and elsewhere to be raised so that their hardiness and suitability could be judged before being transplanted to their final homes. The book does not have a lot of "flower" pictures but rather photographs of the expedition itself or of trees, their bark, etc. One photograph that struck me as a "must have" plant was the lilac, *Syringa pubescens ssp. patula*, this plant is readily available from nurseries but usually in a wide range of blues and purples. The one in their photograph is pure white and, in my mind, quite striking. There are other new finds that will eventually work their way into the horticulture industry and become available to gardeners. Perhaps, some of our B.C. nurseries could read the book and speed up the process in introductions!

Ian E. Efford

R. oldhamii in reviewer's garden

This month in the *Rhodoholic* we are featuring **Rhododendrons that start with the letter F.** Enjoy!

Frosted Lemon

How and When To Prune Rhododendrons

Robert L. Furniss, Portland, OR

"How do I prune my rhododendrons?" The usual answer to this frequently asked question is, "Very little. Remove the dead and sickly branches and let the plants grow naturally."

Reprinted from the ARS Journal 34:3 1980 with photos added to illustrate text.

Sometimes this is good advice. It applies best to small, bushy-type rhododendrons and to rhododendrons in woodland and mass plantings, but it is not the whole story. At times it is adequate, even misleading.

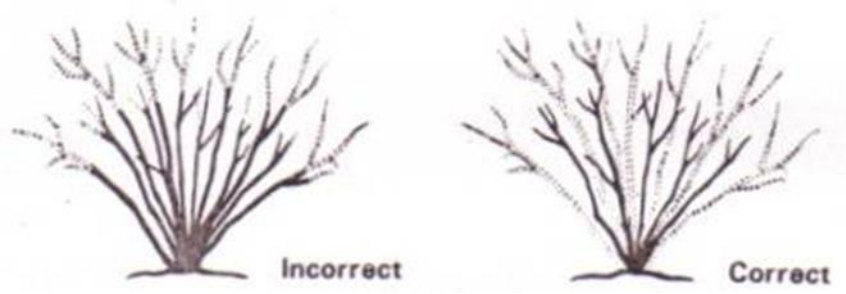
Definition. Pruning is the removal of parts of a plant to control growth. More art than science, it is an adaptation of natural processes to achieve horticultural objectives. Broadly, pruning includes the removal of any unwanted parts of a plant, including flowers, buds, soft wood, hard wood, basal sprouts, and sometimes roots. Pruning is not a routine treatment applied cookbook style. Nor is it a substitute for requirements for vigorous growth, such as fertilizing, watering, controlling pests, and planting properly.

Objectives. Pruning is for some cultural purpose. Before plant surgery, the grower should decide what the pruning is intended to accomplish. Is the grower trying to revitalize treasured old plants, to produce plants for sale, to stimulate maximum number of highest quality flowers, to enhance the year-around appearance of the plants, or to achieve some special landscape effect? Has something gone awry that needs correcting? The kind and amount of pruning depends upon the nature of the planting and the purpose of the grower.

Pruning can accomplish a lot. It can start early in the life of a plant, as in the heading back of nursery stock to achieve compactness. As the years roll by after planting, many fine rhododendrons decline, become leggy, or

develop into brush heaps for lack of attention. Such plants often can be revitalized and improved by judicious pruning and training. Of course there are limits. Medium-sized 'Elizabeth' cannot be forced to grow tall by pruning, and giant-sized 'Loderi King George' cannot be dwarfed. Most rhododendrons respond well to pruning. Some that do not sprout readily from old wood cannot be much improved. Others that sprout abundantly should not be opened excessively to light. If in doubt, proceed cautiously, or seek expert advice.

When to prune. Pruning of hardened wood can be done at any time except during periods of freezing weather. Early spring generally is best because the new growth then has a full season in which to develop and mature. Pruning immediately after the blooming period is standard practice. However, some rhododendrons that bloom very heavily should be pruned prior to bloom to reduce the number of flowers and thus maintain vigor of the plant. Thinning the flowers also can improve the quality and placement of the ones that remain.

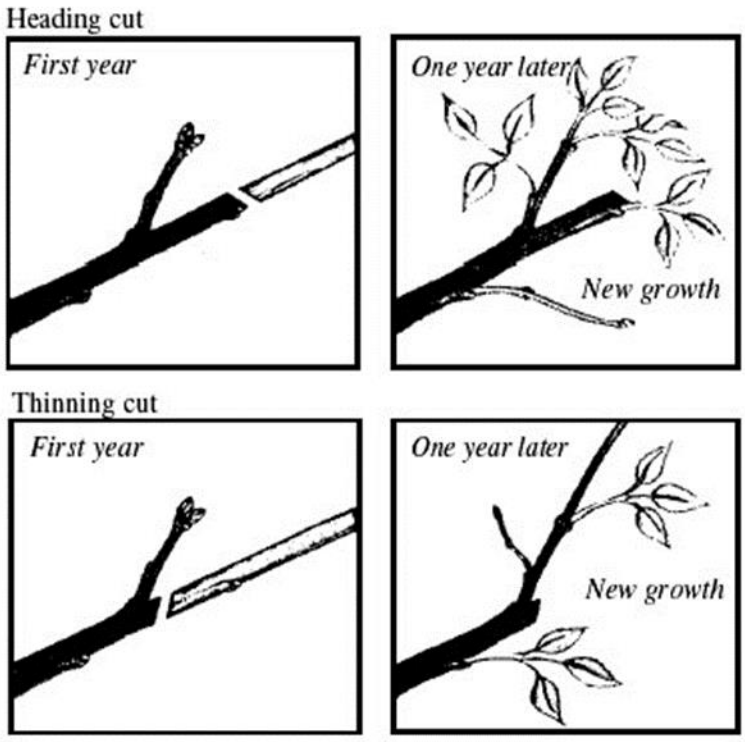


Summer pruning often results in lush sprouts that are subject to aphid injury and may not harden sufficiently to withstand low winter temperatures. Deadheading, which is the removal of spent flowers, should be done soon after the flowers fade, taking care not to injure the new growth. This important job helps control insects and greatly improves the abundance and quality of the next year's bloom. Soft wood pruning, or pinching back, is done during the growing season. Removal of terminal leaf buds and shoots to promote branching should be done early in the season or from late summer on through fall and winter.

How to start. A good way to start to prune a rhododendron is to crawl under it, look up, and decide what structural changes are needed. If the plant has been long-neglected, it likely will be necessary first to cut out a tangle of dead branches. Then remove cross branches and weak wood. Remove excess branches to give remaining ones room to grow. Except when layering a plant, remove drooping branches that scrape the ground and provide handy stepladders for weevils to climb and feed upon the leaves. Remove spindly shoots that sometimes develop along the bole. Remove sprouts from under-stock on grafted plants. These sprouts spring up from the base of a plant and produce flowers of a different color, often lavender. Fortunately modern hybrids are mostly grown on their own roots, and so remain true to color. In removing hardened wood, make clean cuts, prune flush with the bole or main branches; do not leave stubs. Thinning the small outer branches is the final step in the pruning process.

Pruning for compactness. The compact, profusely budded rhododendrons of the nursery trade usually are the objective of commercial growers and landscapers. These plants are produced by good cultural methods, including de-budding and summer pruning of current growth to induce multiple branching and abundant flowers. In the home garden, the day ultimately comes when the branches become too numerous and need to be thinned to restore high quality foliage and bloom. When this occurs, insect damaged, sun-scorched, winter-injured, and scraggly foliage and branches should be among the first to be removed. Before planting a rhododendron, keep in mind that it is best to select one that will not outgrow the allotted space. A tall-growing variety just isn't suitable in front of a picture window. No amount of pruning will make it fit there comfortably and attractively.

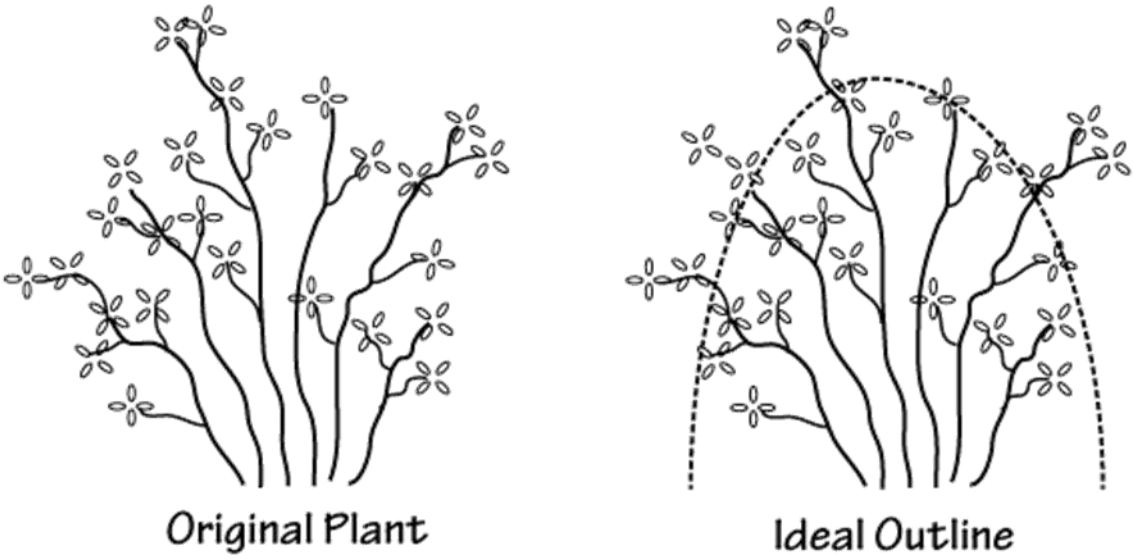
Pruning to a single trunk. In some kinds of landscaping, plants are pruned high and trained to a single trunk or a few main stems. This treatment reveals the structure of the plant and texture of the bark, thus improving the year-around interest and beauty of a planting. An arched canopy over a woodland-type pathway can be achieved by high pruning of adjoining plants. The openness of a high-pruned plant facilitates the placement of ladders for deadheading and grooming the top, and provides ready access for watering, fertilizing, and mulching. If a single-trunk plant is the objective from the beginning, heading back can be delayed to encourage height growth. Also, while a plant is young and flexible, its trunk can be shaped for character by bending. If a plant has branched very low or has multiple stems, it will be necessary to cut away some lower branches and all except one or a few of the stems to achieve the desired tree-like effect. The 'Loderi' and 'Naomi' hybrids and many other large varieties respond well to the single trunk treatment. Bushy varieties do not; for example, 'CIS,' 'Bric-a- brac,' *R. racemosum, R. williamsianum*, and others.



Heading and thinning cuts

Heading and thinning cuts have different effects on subsequent growth.

Pruning for special effects. Sometimes it is desirable to prune a group of rhododendrons so that the foliage on one side is allowed to cascade nearly to the ground and that on the other side is pruned high to reveal the beauty of the trunk and large branches. Rhododendrons pruned in this way exhibit an unbroken bank of foliage or bloom when viewed from one side and a wooded-dell effect from the other. The exposed trunks should face the north or east, or be protected from the sun by buildings or other plants.



In general the profile of rhododendron plants is regular. Individually they are difficult subjects to train for asymmetrical or tiered effects. These landscape effects can best be achieved by grouping rhododendrons of different sizes and textures, or by inter planting them with suitable companion plants. However, some azaleas, such as *R. calendulaceum*, are exceptions to the rule in that they respond beautifully to pruning for irregular effects.

Pruning to rejuvenate. Rhododendrons that have outgrown their site or have become tall, ungainly, and sparse of bloom can be rejuvenated by judicious pruning, preferably in early spring. Don't attempt to do it all at once. The plant likely will survive one-shot surgery, even make a strong recovery, but it is no way to treat an old friend. It is better to spread the rehabilitation over 2 or 3 years. Each year cut back some of the heavy branches to latent buds. Let the light in to encourage new shoots to form. Plants that have deteriorated in the top should be cut back and rejuvenated with new growth originating low on the bole. Prune with the dual objective of retaining the mature structure of the rhododendron and of improving its vigor and capacity to bloom.

Pruning to salvage. When catastrophe strikes and a large plant is broken or otherwise severely injured, don't despair. It may be salvaged. In the wild our native rhododendron, *R. macrophyllum*, often is killed back to the ground by fire, only to sprout again from the root crown and in a few years regain full vigor. Cultivated rhododendrons that have to be cut back to a stump likewise frequently recover.

Pruning to facilitate moving. Sometimes large, long-established rhododendrons have to be moved. This is a sizeable but relatively simple job. For best results, it should be done in the fall or in early spring before new growth begins. The roots are cut back (pruned) with a sharp shovel, leaving a wide but shallow pad of roots and soil. Hauled or skidded to its new location, the plant should be set high in loose, well mulched soil. To ease the shock of moving, some foliage should be pruned to compensate for the loss of roots. In part this is accomplished by cutting off lower branches that hamper the moving and in part by pruning unneeded upper branches. It is a good opportunity to shape a neglected plant.

Pruning azaleas. Most of this article concerns broadleaved, evergreen rhododendrons. Azaleas require relatively less pruning, but some deciduous ones thrive better if the old shoots are periodically cut back to the ground to give new shoots growing room. Some azaleas that sprout vigorously or send up suckers from the spreading roots need to be thinned occasionally at the ground to prevent excessive bushiness. Azaleas can be made more compact by heading back the new growth a few inches in early summer. Some evergreen azaleas will stand shearing, a practice that is common in Japanese landscaping and which produces very dense mounds of foliage.

Fabia x bureavii

Pruning for bonsai. The ultimate in controlling growth by pruning is the culture of bonsai. Some small-leaved rhododendrons and evergreen azaleas are good material for bonsai. This specialized aspect of pruning and growing rhododendrons is discussed in "Rhododendron Information," a book published by the American Rhododendron Society, and in standard texts on bonsai.

Treatment of pruned surfaces. It is often recommended that the cut surfaces resulting from pruning limbs an inch or more in diameter be treated with pruning compound. Probably more aesthetic than prophylactic in effect, this treatment appears to be optional with the grower.

Basic tools and references. Basic tools and procedures are discussed in standard references such as "The Pruning Manual" by L. H. Bailey and Sunset Magazine's "Pruning Handbook." Detailed procedures for pruning rhododendrons are discussed and illustrated in "Rhododendrons of the World" by David Leach.

A final word. In summary, it is a myth that rhododendrons should not be pruned. The essential thing in pruning is to decide upon the purpose. Then don't be afraid to apply the saw and pruners to achieve the desired result. The rhododendrons will appreciate the attention and respond to it.

Fairweather

Fairy Mary

Great Dixter's Fergus Garrett Workshop

Maximizing your Border Impact with Bulbs

Join us on Friday March 11, 2016 1:30pm to 5:30pm

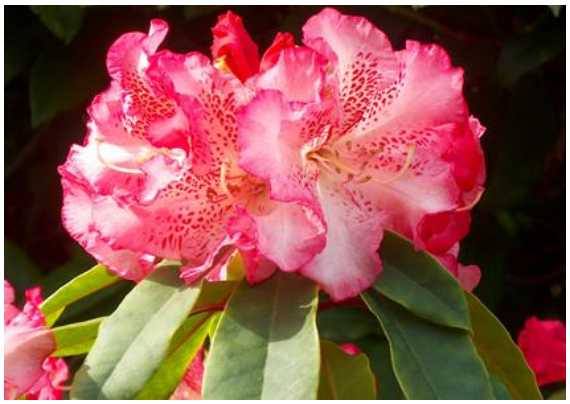
The Victoria Hardy Plant Group is thrilled to be hosting Great Dixter's Fergus Garrett and offering one of Great Dixter's popular workshops. Great Dixter is one of the UK's most popular gardens. Christopher Lloyd created this garden and in his later years he shared his knowledge and love of this garden with Fergus. Today the garden grows and develops under the care of Fergus. It will be a rare treat to attend this workshop outside of the UK.

This workshop will concentrate on the role of bulbs within the mixed border. How to look and record spaces, how to decide on numbers, how to interplant and underplant bulbs to extend the seasons, understanding planting styles, and distances, and integrating bulbs without killing the host perennials will all be covered. The talk will include Galanthus, Tulips, Daffodils, Alliums, Lilies, as well as other bulbs.

Fergus says "I will talk about the use of bulbs within the borders at Great Dixter. This will show how bulbs are chosen, how they are integrated into permanent plantings as well as bedding pockets, all of which serve to extend the season."

The workshop will include indoor and outdoor (rain or shine) time so come prepared for all sorts of weather. The fee is $150. You don't have to go all the way to the UK to participate and the workshop fee is less than if you took it at Great Dixter. Contact the HCP www.hcp.ca to register.

Forest Lane



Forever Yours

2015 ARS Convention Legacy Fund

The Victoria Rhododendron Society hosted the American Rhododendron Society's Annual Spring Convention in 2015 in Sidney, BC. The rhododendron societies on Vancouver Island contributed to the success of this convention. The convention was not only greatly enjoyed by those in attendance, but was also a financial success. The Victoria Rhododendron Society has created a 2015 ARS Convention Legacy Fund consisting of approximately $19,000 from the profits realized from the convention.

A committee has been struck from Vancouver Island ARS chapters to help define the parameters for dispersal of the Legacy Fund.

Rationale:

These funds will be made available to ARS District #1 Chapters, specifically, North Island Rhododendron Society, Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society, Nanaimo Rhododendron Society, Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society and Victoria Rhododendron Society to encourage interest in and dissemination of information and knowledge about the genus Rhododendron on Vancouver Island.

Criteria:

1. ARS District #1 chapters only, may present an application for funds. Individuals from chapters will not be funded.
2. This fund will only MATCH funds requested by a chapter. Each application will have to show resources already collected to be matched.
3. Funds to be used for the enhancement of the Genus Rhododendron on Vancouver Island.
4. Applications to this fund will be heard by the Director, Alternate Director and the Presidents of ARS District #1 chapters. A majority of votes will be needed to approve applications to this fund.

Note:

This Legacy Fund is held in the VicRS special account at Coast Capital Savings.

A CVRS application to this fund for several rhodo propagators is planned and outlined on pages 16 to 20 of this newsletter.

Fancy That

Farnese

2015-16 Coming Events

February 3, 2016
CVRS Monthly Meeting—7:30 pm
St. John's Church
Member education event panel – *Ken Webb, Rose Rogan, Sean Rafferty, Roy Blackmore*
http://cowichanrhodos.ca/

February 6, 2016
Qualicum Seedy Saturday – 10 am to 4 pm
admission by donation
Speakers, Seed Swap, Vendors, Farmers' Market, Master Gardeners, Door Prizes and Raffle
http://www.harbourliving.ca/event/qualicum-beach-seedy-saturday105/

February 20, 2016
Victoria Seedy Saturday
Victoria Conference Centre
10 am to 4 pm
$7 entry fee
http://jamesbaymarket.com/seedysaturday/

February 27, 2016
Sooke Seedy Saturday
10 am to 3 pm – Sooke Community Hall
2037 Shields Road
$5 entry fee
http://www.harbourliving.ca/event/sooke-seedy-saturday83/

March 2, 2016
CVRS Monthly Meeting
7:30 pm
Doug Justice UBC
Biodiversity in the Garden

March 12, 2016
Cobble Hill Seedy Saturday
10 am to 3 pm
Cobble Hill Hall

April 6, 2016
CVRS Monthly Meeting –Ian Efford
The Public Rhododendron Gardens of Vancouver Island

April 30, 2016
Cowichan Valley Garden Fair Cowichan Exhibition
10 am – 2 pm
www.CowichanValleyGardenFair.com
Please donate plants for the CVRS plant table

May 1, 2016
Nanaimo Rhodo Club Plant Sale
Beban Park Nanaimo

May 4, 2016
CVRS Monthly Meeting St. John's Church, Duncan - 163 First St. 7:30 pm
Gordon Murray - Trilliums in the Garden
www.cowichanrhodos.ca

May 14-15, 2016
Nanaimo Rhodo Society Public Garden Tour
http://nanaimorhodos.ca

May 28, 2016
CVGC Annual Flower Show and Tea St. Peter's Church Hall 10 am
www.cowichanvalleygardenclub.com

June 11, 2016
Community Flower and Garden Show
Cobble Hill Hall – 9 am to 2 pm
www.MillBayGardenClub.com

June 18, 2016
CVRS Summer Picnic and Awards/Wrap Up
11:30 am to 2:30 pm

September 30- Oct. 2, 2016
ARS Western Regional Conference
Newport, Oregon

A Propagator Design for CVRS

Ian E. Efford and Joe Hudak

Introduction

CVRS is considering giving a propagator to Providence Farm and having another one for the branch itself. In addition, there are some members who might like to have a personal propagator. To this end, we spent the day in Victoria and Sooke discussing details of the design with Ken Webb and Moe Massa and examining their set-ups. Both of them expect to root close to 1,000 cuttings this year. Emphasis is being placed on rooting outstanding plants that are not carried by the nurseries e.g. Sir Charles Lemon. This is particularly important at a time when a number of well-known nurseries are likely to close.

The following account is a summary of these discussions with recommendations as to how the branch should proceed.

Materials

The propagators that we examine were all around 40 inches across and just over 8ft long although they could be made any other size. The sides were

15 inches deep and 1.5 inches thick. Moe uses pressure treated lumber whereas Ken uses rough cedar or pressure treated in his two propagators. Either will result in a propagator that will last at least 10 years and probably 20. The bottom was constructed with an outside rim of 1x1 inch with cross pieces of 2x2 inch pieces

Their propagators were insulated on the inside and bottom with 1.5 inch thick ISO insulation [Polyiso is highly efficient thermal insulation board with apolyisocyanurate foam core bonded to fiber-reinforced facers.] It was strongly emphasized that one must not use Styrofoam.

There is an alternative view on the construction of the bottom of the propagator which argues that root growth in encouraged by a supply of air. To achieve this, the bottom is constructed of a strong wire netting base covered with a heavy plastic mesh [waste belting from the pulp mill]. This allows air to flow up through the growing medium and supply oxygen to the roots. Ken Gibson wrote an article that supports to view that air access to the root area helps with

rooting [JARS 1990 44(3) 151-153]. Ken Webb's experience is that he can root close to 100% rooting with a solid base and so the air flow in unnecessary.

The cover in both cases has heavy plastic film and is hinged at the back. It is closed to prevent moisture loss. In one case the frame is heavy metal and in the other case is constructed of 2x2 inch wood. In one case, because of its weight, the metal frame has substantial hinges at each end and in the other one only three door hinges along the back. As the propagator is heavy, it is important to determine whether the hinges must be put in place before the propagator is installed. If it is placed against the wall, access to the hinges will be difficult if installation is not done before it is moved. Alternatively, if the cover has a 2x4 inch base to which it is hinged, it could be screwed to the sides and easily removed when the propagator is dismantled.

The propagators are both installed with 8x1.5 inch legs attached directly to the side of the boxes. If there is any intent to move this equipment or to construct it before installation, it would be far better to have the box placed on a sturdy frame rather than have attached legs. In any case, the final height should allow easy access without bending.

Fine Feathers Group

First Touch

Lighting

Covered florescent lights are installed in Ken's equipment which prevents water damage inside the cover. Alternatively, Moe has florescent lights above the propagator which do not have to be covered as the humidity is low. Outside installation is far less expensive. In Ken Webb's view, the actual rooting of cuttings does not require high light levels but once the rooted cuttings are re-potted, then an artificial light source helps with growth. If lighting is installed, florescent grow lights are by far the least expensive although many commercial nurseries are now turning to blue-red LED strip lights which is very efficient and the lifetime cost are far less than the alternatives. For amateurs, however, the initial cost are far more expensive.

Watering

Ken has installed a row of sprays along each side of the propagator that alternate with those on the other side. They are only on for 7 seconds four times/day. Moe does not have an automatic watering system as the box is sealed and evaporation is at a minimum. He examines the plants once or twice a week and, if necessary, sprays them to maintain the moisture level in the growing medium. Note: **The growing media is to be kept damp, not wet.**

Heating

It is generally agreed that rooting success if far higher with 20-21C bottom heat. Both the propagators that we examined used cables that have lasted many years. One would need a 90ft cable for an 8x3.5 ft. box. Alternatively, heating pads are reliable although more expensive. Unlike the cables, the pads cannot be wet but if they are in a sandwich of sand and switched on, they would remain dry. In either case, the heating system should be placed in the middle of a 3 inch layer of coarse sand. The heating systems are plugged into and controlled by a thermostat.

The Growing Medium

It is recommended that the cuttings are rooted in a mixture of 60% of perlite or other inert drainage material [such as coarse sand] and coarse peat, coir or sieved bark mulch. As there is an international movement to reduce peat use, in order to protect peat bogs, coir or bark mulch might be recommended. The medium is placed on top of the sand, which might be protected by a stiff wire mesh [1-2 inch squares] until it reaches close to the top of the box.

Alternatively, the plants can be rooted in small pots, 1 plant/pot, or large pots with up to 10/pot. This might be a better method when there is more than one user. In this case, the pots are either placed on the sand or in trays on the sand.

Recommended Design

After reviewing these two propagators and studying the literature and knowing that CVRS would like a propagator that can, on occasions, be moved between members property, we recommend the following:

1) 8ft by 4ft box 15 inches deep made of rough 1.5 inch cedar. The sides would be made up of a stack of two 2x6s and a 2x3 piece;

2) Cover constructed of wood with a plastic sheet cover;

3) The cover would have simple door hinges attached to the 2x4 inch top of the wall;

4) Box would be insulated with 2 inch ISO insulation;

5) The propagator would have a solid base made of unattached,1x4 inch cedar supported by three 2x4 that extend the length of the propagator;

6) The propagator would have a short [21 inches] high "table" designed to take the weight [stacked breeze blocks for example];

7) There would not be a watering or lighting system although they could be added later;

8) A heating cable, controlled with a thermostat, would be used;

9) The medium would be 60% perlite and 40% coir;

10) Cutting would be planted into individual or group pots on top of the 3 inch sand base;

11) The sand base would be covered with a wire mesh.

12) Gutter metal, shaped to cap the upper edges of the walls, would be installed.

Note: It is recommended that each year the propagator should be cleaned with a dilute solution of bleach.

Moving the propagator

As recommended, the propagator is easily moved. The cover is attached with a couple of screws, the top half of the box is only kept in place by its weight, and the pots or trays can be placed to one side. One is left with the sand which will have to be scooped out taking care to protect the heating cables. All pieces would be pass through a door on their side without trouble. The new site would have to have access to electricity for the heating control panel and, if used, the lights. It would also need to be located near to water and in the shade – north facing wall would be ideal – to protect against excess heat. The propagator could be located outside although some clear protection would be required against rain when being attended.

Holding Tables

Depending on where the propagator is placed, as soon as rooted cuttings are transferred to pots, there will be a need for a holding table with an area at least 16x 8x4ft. This can be two or three open tables with shallow metal trays [1 inch deep]. The pots with the new plants would be kept there and watered until they can be moved outside. The tables can have a simple construction if they have metal trays with sufficient strength to take the weight of a large number of pots. It would be here that the installation of lights would be most beneficial.

Conclusion

The recommended design will provide the branch with:

- long-lasting propagators which should result in a high percentage of rooted cuttings;
- propagators at the lowest price of the alternatives mentioned;
- a propagator that can be moved between batches of cuttings.

Initial cost estimate suggest that a fully equipped propagator can be installed for $1,000 assuming that a level flooring is available.

Ian Efford and Joe Hudak

Fidelius

Fire and Ice

Foliis Purpureis

Saturday April 30, 2016
10 am to 2 pm

Cowichan Exhibition – Mellor Hall

- Excellent plant selection
- Volunteer to help with the fair
- Grow plants for the club table
- Purchase plants for your garden
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NEW ZEALAND GARDEN & COUNTRY TOUR

Fall 2016

Duncan Hill Travel is pleased to announce that Bill Dumont has teamed up with us to offer an exceptional tour of New Zealand in the fall of 2016. Bill is a professional forester and an accredited tour guide having organised local and international tours to interesting locations such as South Africa, Haida Gwaii, many other parts of British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, California and most recently completed an 11 day tour of Cornwall gardens in England with 47 participants. He has done many successful garden tours for the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society over the past decade and achieved a high standard of customer service and well-organised tours.

The New Zealand tour is 22 days from October 23 to November 13, 2016 and includes most major parts of this beautiful southern hemisphere country during their spring and prime time flowering for their amazing gardens in this two island nation of 4.5 million people.

Our 3 week visit starts and ends in Auckland, New Zealand's largest city with a population of 1.5 million. We will be touring both the North and South islands and all the major cities including Wellington-the capital city, Christchurch, Dunedin and Queenstown along with more than 30 major public and many private gardens including the spectacular 360 hectare Pukeiti garden at New Plymouth with 2000 rhodos and thousands of companion plants. The varied climate ranges from sub-tropical to temperate zones with ocean influences to create an amazing collection of native ecosystems, gardens and introduced plants to see, inspire and enjoy.

We will be part of the 4 day 2016 New Zealand Rhododendron Association 70th Annual Conference in Hanmer Springs featuring guest lectures, special events and, of course, some fabulous private garden visits and the famous hot springs.

We will experience Maori and Kiwi culture, visit the Hobbits, a sheep farm, sip some great local wines, enjoy a cruise and lunch on spectacular, world-renowned Milford Sound and much more with regular travel in a deluxe highway coach and all the necessary comforts including Wi-Fi. We are travelling with Ritchie's, New Zealand's largest coach company supported by our travel advisors ATS Pacific.

On arrival is our Welcome Party get together in Auckland and a farewell dinner on the last night of the tour. As most international flights arrive and depart from Auckland that is where travel should be arranged (your responsibility). Because the tour requires a minimum number of participants to proceed do NOT book your air travel until you are advised the trip is proceeding.

As a full service travel agency the team at Duncan Hill Travel can arrange your flights and by utilizing group bookings significant savings will be realized. Duncan Hill Travel can also assist in arranging all your travel insurance needs including trip cancellation and medical insurance as well as many other quality travel services.

The estimated cost per person (double accommodation) will be approximately CDN$7300 (single room supplement of CDN$1950 per person) depending on currency exchange next August. This includes: 3 and 4 star hotels, all breakfasts and suppers, garden and site entry fees, guides, gratuities, 15% GST taxes, full registration at the NZ Rhodo Association meeting, ferry from north to south island, deluxe coach transportation, Hobbiton and Shire visit, Maori culture and cuisine event, sheep farm and geothermal springs visit, Milford Sound cruise and lunch, flight from Queenstown to Auckland, tour mementos, wine tasting and an experienced tour guide. A full draft itinerary is available from wedumont@shaw.ca.

To confirm your seat please provide a $1700 deposit payment (refundable if tour doesn't proceed) to Duncan Hill Travel Ltd.105 – 2700 Beverley St., Duncan, BC V9L 5C7 250-748-0391 by February 29, 2016. Payments can be cash, cheque, or debit card.

This will be a popular tour and your booking confirmation is on a first- come first- served basis based on date of receipt of the trip deposit. Due to the current instability of both NZ and Canadian currencies the final tour pricing will be confirmed by August 1 with the balance of the tour cost payable by August 15, 2016. All participants must have valid Travel Medical Insurance to join this tour.

With your payment please provide your full name, address, phone, email address (mandatory), and indicate single or double accommodation. If you are a single looking for a room partner let us know as well. We also need to know if you are a senior and you must confirm you are fully mobile for walking and visiting the various New Zealand gardens and sites. Please let Bill know by email when you have sent in your deposit to Duncan Hill Travel. Questions to: Bill Dumont 250-743-9882 wedumont@shaw.ca.

Hill Travel Ltd.
DUNCAN

DUMONT & ASSOCIATES
FORESTRY CONSULTANTS

CVRS Rhodos Available Spring 2016

In anticipation of the continued shortage of growers and rhodos in 2016 the CVRS organised the advance purchase of 350 1 gallon rhodos from Erica Enterprises nurseries in Pitt Meadows last fall. These will be shipped to arrive for the Cowichan Valley Garden Fair on April 30. Ian Efford did the work on arranging these plants which were purchased, like most CVRS spending over the past five years, with proceeds from past garden tours. The plants will be sold to the public at the Garden Fair.

These plants will be available to CVRS members at a discounted price. Contact the CVRS executive for further information and to place your plant order. The following is the list of hybrids and species ordered. The quantity of plants ordered is shown as the number in front of the hybrid name.

10 RHODO BLUE OX
10 RHODO BRUCE BRIGG'S
10 RHODO BUSUKI
5 RHODO CAMPYLOGYNUM
5 RHODO CAMPYLOGYNUM DWARF
5 RHODO CARMEN
5 RHODO CARMEN X KEN JANECK
10 RHODO CHECKMATE
10 RHODO CHERRIES & MERLOT
5 RHODO CILPINENSE
5 RHODO CONROY
5 RHODO CREAM CREST
5 RHODO ELIZABETH HOBBIE
5 RHODO ELIZABETH OSTBO RED
5 RHODO GARTENDIREKTOR GLOCKER
5 RHODO GOLDEN GATE
5 RHODO GOLDSTRIKE
5 RHODO HACHMANN'S POLARIS
5 RHODO HALLELUJAH
10 RHODO HONEYBUTTER
5 RHODO HOTEI
5 RHODO IMPEDITUM
10 RHODO KARIN SELEGER
5 RHODO KELETICUM
5 RHODO KEN JANECK
10 RHODO KODIAK
5 RHODO LORI EICHELSER
5 RHODO MILKY WAY
5 RHODO MILTON
5 RHODO MOERHEIM
5 RHODO NANCY EVANS
5 RHODO PACHYSANTHUM
5 RHODO PEMAKOENSE
5 RHODO PINK PORCELAIN
10 RHODO POLARNACHT
5 RHODO PURPLE GEM
5 RHODO PURPLE PASSION
5 RHODO RABATZ
5 RHODO RAMAPO
5 RHODO ROYSTON RED
5 RHODO SAFFRANO
5 RHODO SHAMROCK
5 RHODO SNOWLADY
10 RHODO SUGAR PUFF
10 RHODO TEACHERS PET
5 RHODO TITAN BEAUTY
10 RHODO WILD GINGER

Cream Crest

Kodiak

Polarnacht

Wild Ginger

Florence Parks

Florida Ogada

New Editor Wanted

Well folks-this is my last issue as Editor after completing a total of 19 editions of the Rhodoholic and the CVRS newsletters since 2013-notably volumes 24, 25 and 26 of this publication that chronicled the progress of the CVRS and its financial success. This financial success was primarily from the many bus tours I did for the club since 2007 raising almost $39,000 that will no longer be part of the sustainability plan for the CVRS. Those tours provided the financing for the production of this newsletter as well as most CVRS activities over the past 7 years including the $5000 cash donation to the Milner Species garden project in 2015 and a portion of the annual ARS dues costs for members as well as many other expenditures made by your executive. Of course, I had lots of cooperation from those who participated in and helped with the tours.

I followed Ian Efford's excellent work as CVRS newsletter editor prior to taking on this task. The newsletter is the key communication between members and one of the benefits of membership in the CVRS. While it took a fair bit of effort every month I did very much enjoy contributing by researching, writing and preparing our newsletter for a supportive executive and membership.

During my term as editor we renamed our bulletin as the Rhodoholic. I want to especially acknowledge Ian's help with his many frequent and interesting contributions along with those from Sandra Stevenson, Al Campbell, Ken Webb, Verna Buhler and Joe Hudak. Also thanks to Sharon Tillie and Verna Buhler for their many excellent photos for the Rhodoholic over the years. A special recognition to our long-time designer and layout specialist Mary-Lynn Boxem who was a great help in making this newsletter attractive, well-illustrated, well-designed and produced on time each month-usually under some pressure to get it out in advance of the monthly meetings. Thank you so much for your great work and cooperation Mary-Lynn! Let the President know if you can look after this important CVRS task in the future. Thanks again to all my readers who expressed their appreciation for all the work that the newsletter entails. I hope you enjoyed the Rhodoholic.

Bill Dumont

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Saturday April 30, 2016

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