

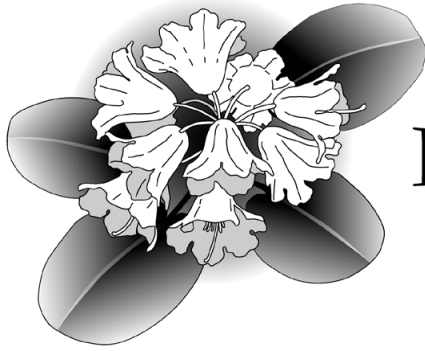
AtlanticRhodo

www.AtlanticRhodo.org

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Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society

Our Mission

ARHS supports and promotes the development and exchange of expertise and material relating to the practice of creating and maintaining year-round garden landscapes featuring rhododendrons and other plants.

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Photos in articles are by the authors, unless otherwise identified.

Membership

Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society.

Fees are \$20.00 from September 1, 2015 to August 31, 2016, due September 2015. For benefits see ARHS website www.atlanticrhodo.org

American Rhododendron Society: ARHS is a chapter in District 12 of the American Rhododendron Society. Combined ARHS and ARS membership cost is \$50.00 Canadian. For benefits see www.rhododendron.org

Cheques, made payable to Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society should be sent to **Gloria Hardy 47 Melwood Ave. Halifax, NS B3N 1E4**

Please include name, address with postal code, e-mail address and telephone number, for organizational purposes only.

AtlanticRhodo is the Newsletter of the Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society. We welcome your comments, suggestions, articles, photos, and other material for publication. Send all material to the editor.

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Cover Photo: 'Bellefontaine.' [Photo provided by Anitra Laycock]



Calendar of Events

ARHS meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, from September to May, at 7:30 p.m. usually in the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History Auditorium, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, unless otherwise noted. Paid parking is available in the Museum lot. We welcome anyone sharing our interest in plants and gardens.

2015

Dec. 1

Monthly meeting. **Members' photo night + AGM + wine = Christmas Party**
Bring some plant/ garden images on a memory stick and some finger food for sharing.
Bring photos of Dartmouth gardens from this year's garden tour, if you can.
The club provides wine and the 2015 AGM.

Dec. 15.

Deadline for sending seed for the ARHS Seed Exchange to Sharon Bryson, #407 Old Maryvale Rd., Antigonish, NS B2G 2L1. See article elsewhere in this issue.

2016

Jan. 5

Monthly meeting. **Garden design. Joe Bidermann.**
Certified Landscape Designer, Joe Bidermann's design and build landscaping company has won many awards in Nova Scotia. Please visit his website to see some of his work: <http://www.joebidermannlandscaping.com>

We will vote at this meeting on the recommended by-law revisions, prepared by Rachel Martin and Jim Drysdale.

Feb. 2

Monthly meeting. **Food improvement: a tour of the modern breeder's toolkit. Sean Myles**
Dr Myles is the Canada Research Chair in Agricultural Genetic Diversity at Dalhousie University. A New Brunswick native, he received his training at Oxford, the Max Planck Institute, Cornell, and Stanford before settling in Wolfville. He is deciphering the genetic codes of agricultural species in order to accelerate the breeding of improved food. His research focuses on apples: he established and manages the Apple Biodiversity Collection - an orchard with over 1000 different apple varieties - at the federal research station in Kentville. He aims to educate the public about genetics and food with videos and blogs via his website <http://www.cultivatingdiversity.org/>

Feb. 15

Deadline for newsletter material.

March 1

Monthly meeting. **Soil preparation and planting:** A panel of dirt-under-the-fingernails gardeners Like our panel on pruning in October, this group of real gardeners will give brief presentations about soil prep and proper planting of rhododendrons and other plants. The talks will include demonstration, tips, and experiences. They look forward to questions and participation from the audience.

April 5

Monthly meeting. **Clematis. Marion Jarvie** <http://www.marionjarvie.ca>

April 8

Deadline for newsletter material

May 3

Members to Members Plant Sale

Sunday June 12

The Annual Garden Tour: **Willow Garden & Antigonish County, here we come.** See the directors' report.

Thank you for avoiding the use of perfumes and scented products when you come to ARHS events.

Directors' Report

Sheila Stevenson, on behalf of the Directors

Thanks for the energy and commitment of everyone who took on a job in 2014/15 - to bring us speakers, refreshments, plants, our annual garden tour & pot luck, the survey, newsletter, website, and books, as well as those of keeping our various records straight: membership, finances, and minutes of directors' meetings - it's been a full year, learning as we dealt with changes and challenges.

The Dec. 1 AGM agenda is brief. Our treasurer, Rachel Martin, will present the 2014-15 financial report. And we will elect directors for 2015-16. Rachel will speak as well to the by-law changes that she and Jim Drysdale have prepared to make us consistent with what the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies currently recommends for non-profit societies in NS and to reflect our current reality. To comply with the 60-day notice required by our current bylaws, the bylaws will be voted on at the January 5th meeting.

Incoming director, Sophie Bieger, is on the job to research options and costs in planning for our June 12, 2016 visit with Bill Wilgenhof and Sharon Bryson at the Willow Garden in Maryvale, Antigonish County. For that tour, we look forward to meeting up to 25 people from the Quebec Rhododendron Society who will be on day 3 of their 3-day bus tour to see rhododendrons in our NS landscapes. One idea is to follow our Willow Garden visit with a late-ish catered lunch somewhere and a visit to two more area-gardens and a nursery, with a possible stop at the Dal AC gardens in Truro on the return trip.

What do you think?

- Are you willing to give up the pot luck idea and pay for a catered lunch?
- Are you interested in taking a bus (departing around 8:45 am from the Halifax area) instead of individual cars?

Elsewhere in this issue is a heads-up from Anitra Laycock about part one of the pre-ordered sale: the chance to buy a limited number of rooted cuttings taken from some desirable, locally-successful rhodies.

To be sure to receive email announcements from ARHS, please put this address in your contacts:
jphwhite@ns.sympatico.ca

And on we roll. ☺



A very warm welcome to our new and returning ARHS members who have joined since the May Newsletter.

M. Lynn Brooks	Stillwater Lake
Ron Bulmer	Halifax
Ruth Christian	Chester Basin
Cathy Lockerbie-Forrester	Annapolis Royal
Bernice Moores	Halifax
Andre Morency	Trois-Pistoles, Quebec
Jane Reardon	Halifax
Nathan Smith	Waterville
Jane Reardon	Halifax

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Members' Pre-ordered Plant Sale 2016: A First Look

Anitra Laycock

The 2016 Sale Program promises something special for rhododendron growers in our region. Over the past several decades our Society and its individual members have been able to bring in a wide range of plants to try out in maritime gardens. Many of these plants are now upwards of 20 years old and have proved themselves to be stunning additions to the garden landscape. These treasures deserve to be more widely known and grown here but, for the most part, are not available to us in commerce. So last fall we began what we hope will be an ongoing project to propagate these plants by taking cuttings from them.

The cuttings are shipped, as expeditiously as possible, to Van Veen Nursery in Portland, Oregon, where Kathy Van Veen and her expert team root them and grow them to a size where they can be shipped back to us for distribution.

The plants we sent for rooting in fall 2014 will be coming back to us in the spring of 2016, after 18 months on the West Coast. So we can expect to see some good-sized young plants. In addition, we will bring in some very promising introductions, as one-year cutting-grown plants, from the very best of the Eastern North American hybridizers, including our own local hybridizers.

Pictured on the back cover are just a few of the rhododendrons we anticipate receiving. We expect to get a list out to you early in the new year with descriptions of the plants. Some of these plants will be available in very limited numbers. Be prepared to get your orders back to us by the end of January 2016.

- R. 'Babylon'
- R. 'Bellefontaine' Halifax
- R. catawbiense v. compactum x 'Treasure'
- R. 'Elizabeth Hobbie'
- R. 'Golden Star'
- R. 'Minas Grand Pre'
- R. Minas Grand Pre' St John's
- R. 'Nova Sunrise'
- R. 'Nova Sunrise'
- R. 'Scarlet Wonder'
- R. 'Sun Dust'
- R. 'Sun Dust' Halifax

Editor's note:

Thanks to George Woodard, our 2015 Steele Lecturer, for taking this year's cuttings with their phytosanitary certificate across the border for shipping, and to John Weagle for getting the certificate and taking cuttings, including 100 in a one-day trip to Morris Island. ☺

About some of the authors

Aaron Ashcroft Staples received the Passionate Plants Person award at Kingstec in 2015, and continues to be a student there.

Dennis Crouse lives in St Margaret's Bay and recently joined ARHS. He says "I really started gardening about 7 years ago, but became a plant enthusiast 5 years ago. I guess you could call me a collector of plants. I have over 60 Rhododendrons. I'm interested in foliage plants and love all-year interest. I switched my career in retail to something I love to do, which is being outside and exploring my horticultural interests. I graduated the Horticulture and Landscape program at Kingstec in 2015."

Steve Whysall has been writing a weekly gardening column *In the Garden* for the Vancouver Sun for more than 20 years. The full-colour page appears every Friday in the Arts and Life section. The Sun's data bank calculates that he has written more than 2,900 by-lined stories for the paper over the last two decades. He has authored five published books on gardening; four became No. 1 bestsellers in BC. He has also written for various magazines, including *Canadian Gardening* and *Gardens Illustrated* in the UK. ☺

Hollies: more choices for year-round beauty than you thought

Bob Howard
Granville Beach NS

David Osborn delighted us with many live plants in pots and introduced us to lots of possibilities when he presented an illustrated talk at our September 2015 meeting entitled, "Hollies for Nova Scotia: The Neglected Genus".

David has been doing some very adventuresome work, growing and hybridizing hollies at Sable River, Shelburne County in South West Nova Scotia for ten years. He showed us ninety-four images of species, interspecific hybrids, varieties, and cultivars of the genus. To think that we are usually limited to just two hollies, 'Blue Princess' and 'Blue Prince', underscores the truth of his title.

The holly plants he showed us wowed me. We suffer from six months of leafless shrubs and trees in my part of Nova Scotia. This group of broadleaf evergreens, alongside our rhododendrons, is a boon for garden design - both for winter interest and for a sturdy, lively green foil for deciduous shrubs and perennials. I'm hoping to visit his garden next year and get some cuttings for test propagation. This is a genus that needs some risk-taking gardeners to test them in more locations.

The botanical name for the holly genus is *Ilex*. *Ilex* typically have male (staminate) and female (pistillate) flowers on separate plants. In botanical terms, they are called dioecious (dye-ooh-shus). So you need both a male plant and a female plant to have the colourful berries. Commercial growers sometimes put the two plants in one pot so that both flower types are present.

David's breeding goals include

- more hardiness
- better leaf colour
- handsome plant form
- wider temperature and wind tolerance.

Hollies are mostly endemic to latitudes south of Nova Scotia. They crave summer heat to ripen their wood enough to be resistant to cold. Given the winds and cool temperatures off the coast of SW Nova Scotia, which species and varieties have proven themselves in the testing ground of David's garden?

On David's list you will find thirty-one botanical species that are hardy in his zone 6 garden, a few of them borderline. As mentioned above, summer heat is important for ripening wood, so it may be that gardeners in the Valley and other areas with more heat and longer summers may actually have better growing conditions for some hollies. Repeat: This is a genus that needs some risk-taking gardeners to test them in more locations.

In addition to those thirty-one species, there are another sixty-three hybrids, varieties, and cultivars, with improved form, hardiness, and leaf beauty. With such a wide range of forms, hollies can be used for many design purposes to provide both formal and informal elements including hedges. There are holly trees and holly shrubs of all sizes. There's even a dwarf form of Japanese holly for the rock garden, *Ilex crenata* 'Piccolo'.

The most commonly-available hollies are in the *Ilex x meserveae* group, with the popular cultivars, 'Blue Princess' and 'Blue Prince'. This hybrid, a cross of *I. rugosa* x *I. aquifolium*, was made by Katherine Meserve on the window sill at her estate Holly-by-Golly on Long Island in the 1950s. These are called the blue holly because of the bluish tint of the shiny, dark green leaves. They are among the most hardy in the genus.



Image #1

Ilex verticillata, or winterberry, with its colourful winter berries is one of our three native hollies. The other two are *I. glabra* (inkberry) and *I. mucronata* (formerly *Nemopanthus mucronata*)



Image #7

I. fargesii x *I. latifolia*. This cross of David’s produces a plant with deep green, very elegant, lance-like leaves, the spines either non-existent or reduced to small nubs at the leaf edge.



Image #2

The American holly, *Ilex opaca*, can grow slowly into a medium-sized tree, 10 to 20 metres tall. Native from Massachusetts south and west to Texas, we offered four time-tested, grown-in-Nova Scotia variations of the American holly in the 2015 members’ pre-ordered sale.

I. fargesii from SW China and upper Burma is a zone 5b plant. In Britain, it fruits heavily in lightly-shaded acid woodland. *I. latifolia*, from southern Japan and adjacent coastal China, is hardy to zone 7. C. S. Sargent says “*I. latifolia* is probably the handsomest broad-leaved evergreen tree that grows in the forests of Japan...” The male also produces a large cluster of pale yellow-green flowers. Is there hardiness in the cross? This is another one I would like to grow.

Images #3 – 9 show close-up views of the leaves of seven different hollies that David likes a lot.



Image #3

Ilex aquifolium ‘Aurea Medio-Picta’. This beautiful variegated form of the English, or common, holly is a variety that David discovered. It still survives in his garden. A zone 7 plant, the English holly grows so aggressively in NW

US and western Canada that it is considered a noxious weed there. Since it is borderline hardy here, it is unlikely to be invasive. The more likely limitation is that it will succeed only in the warmer parts of Nova Scotia.



Image #8

A hybrid David made with (*I. cornuta* x *I. pernyi*) x *I. bioritsensis*. This hybrid produces another beautiful, distinctive leaf form. *I. cornuta*, whose common name is the Chinese holly, entered British horticulture in 1846 when it was

introduced by Robert Fortune. This plant is more successful in North America than in Britain. It likes summer heat. It may be hardy to a sheltered 6b. *I. pernyi*, the Perny holly, is named after a French missionary who found it in the mid-1800s. It is native to central and western China. Hardy to zone 5b, this species has been much employed in breeding. Numerous cultivars have come out of the *cornuta* x *pernyi* cross, such as ‘Good Taste’.



Image #4

I. yunnanensis, from western China and eastern Tibet, hardy to zone 5. This species shrub can reach 4 metres high, though it would probably be smaller here. The Yunnan holly was brought by Ernest Wilson from Asia to the

Veitch nursery in Britain in 1901, and to Arnold Arboretum in 1911. T.A. Dudley in his book, *Hollies in the Landscape*, says it is “one of the most attractive red-fruited, tall or short, multiple-stemmed shrubs or small trees.”

I. bioritsensis is probably hardy to zone 5. It is the unusual element in this ménage-à-trois. Its synonym is *I. pernyi* var. *veitchii*, and under that name earned an Award of Merit from the RHS in 1930. Christopher Bailes in his book, *Hollies for Gardeners*, describes the leaves as “combining angles with curves with interesting effect.” Image #8 shows the hybrid with a more rectangular leaf form like that of bioritsensis.



Image #5

David’s hybrid of *I. ‘China Girl’* x *I. ‘China Boy’*.

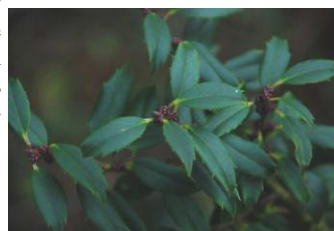


Image #9

I. ciliospinosa. Our last recommended plant does not have the long breeding history of *I. cornuta* and *I. pernyi*, but several good hybrids have involved in this species. Dudley, cited above, praises it as a “choice Chinese species with

well-displayed often quite large red fruit; rapid grower and thrives in northern climates.” The Missouri Botanic Garden lists it as hardy to zone 5, liking moist, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade.

In our library we have the book, *Hollies for Gardeners*, by Christopher Bailes. It’s a good one.

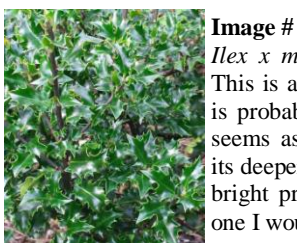


Image #6

Ilex x meserveae ‘Blue Princess’ x *I. opaca*. This is another of David’s own cultivars , and is probably a unique cross to date. Hardiness seems assured. The dramatic leaf-form, with its deeper incisions and glossy cast, would be a bright presence in the winter garden. This is one I would like to try to grow.

Bob thanks David Osborn for providing the plant list, the seven images of hollies from his talk, and for providing some information for this article. The editor thanks both of them. ☺

**David Osborn's Slide List for "Hollies for Nova Scotia: The Neglected Genus"
Sept 2015 presentation to the ARHS**

"A significant part of the information provided by this list", says Bob Howard, "is the impressive range of things that David Osborn is doing with hollies. 31 species + 63 hybrids, varieties, and cultivars = 94 different names, in a broad range of botanical categories, putting to shame the commercial choice of basically only two cultivars, 'Blue Princess' and 'Blue Prince'."

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Ilex mucronata | 50. Ilex ciliospinosa |
| 2. Ilex verticillata | 51. Ilex crenata |
| 3. Ilex verticillata 'Red Sprite' | 52. Ilex crenata 'Steeds' |
| 4. Ilex verticillata 'Berry Heavy Gold' | 53. Ilex crenata 'Green Luster' |
| 5. Ilex verticillata 'Winter Gold' | 54. Ilex crenata 'Piccolo' |
| 6. Ilex verticillata 'Sunspot' | 55. Ilex crenata 'Beehive' |
| 7. Ilex glabra | 56. Ilex crenata 'Sky Pencil' |
| 8. Ilex glabra f. Leucocarpa | 57. Ilex crenata 'Helleri' |
| 9. Ilex glabra 'Shamrock' | 58. Ilex crenata 'Snowflake' |
| 10. Ilex glabra 'Gold Mine' | 59. Ilex crenata 'Golden Gem' |
| 11. Ilex aquifolium | 60. Ilex maximowicziana var. kanehirae (I. Mutchagara) |
| 12. Ilex aquifolium 'J.C. Van Tol' | 61. Ilex fargesii |
| 13. Ilex aquifolium 'Golden Van Tol' | 62. Ilex colchica |
| 14. Ilex aquifolium 'Argentea Marginata' | 63. Ilex cornuta |
| 15. Ilex aquifolium 'Aurea Marginatum' | 64. Ilex cornuta 'Burfordii' |
| 16. Ilex aquifolium 'Gold Coast' | 65. Ilex cornuta 'Rotunda' |
| 17. Ilex aquifolium 'Alaska Cream' | 66. Ilex serrata |
| 18. Ilex aquifolium 'Bacciflava' | 67. Ilex serrata 'Sun Drops' |
| 19. Ilex aquifolium 'Aurea Medio-Picta' | 68. Ilex serrata x Ilex verticillata |
| 20. Ilex aquifolium 'Canadian Gold' | 69. Ilex pedunculosa |
| 21. Ilex aquifolium 'Crispa Aurea-Picta' | 70. Ilex pedunculosa 'Variegata' |
| 22. Ilex aquifolium 'Ferox Argentea Marginata' | 71. Ilex pedunculosa 'Mountain Mist' |
| 23. Ilex X altaclerensis | 72. Ilex decidua |
| 24. Ilex rugosa | 73. Ilex decidua 'Byer's Golden' |
| 25. Ilex x meserveae 'Blue Princess' | 74. Ilex amelanchier |
| 26. Ilex x meserveae 'Blue Prince' | 75. Ilex montana |
| 27. Ilex x meserveae 'Casanova' | 76. Ilex longipes |
| 28. Ilex x meserveae 'Goldader' | 77. Ilex laevigata |
| 29. Ilex X meserveae 'Golden Prince' | 78. Ilex collina |
| 30. Ilex x meserveae 'Honey Jo' | 79. Ilex yunnanensis |
| 31. Ilex x meserveae 'Golden Princess' | 80. Ilex integra |
| 32. Ilex x meserveae 'Honey Maid' | 81. Ilex integra 'Gold Leaf' |
| 33. Ilex x meserveae 'Jadestar' | 82. Ilex spinigera |
| 34. Ilex X meserveae 'Spring Surprise' | 83. Ilex x attenuata |
| 35. Ilex X meserveae 'Leander' | 84. Ilex x attenuata 'Sunny Foster' |
| 36. Ilex X meserveae 'Castle Gold' | 85. Ilex corallina |
| 37. Ilex X meserveae 'Gretchen' | 86. Ilex centrochinensis |
| 38. Ilex x meserveae 'Golden Girl' | 87. Ilex georgei |
| 39. Ilex 'China Boy' | 88. Ilex wilsonii |
| 40. Ilex x meserveae 'Blue Angel' | 89. Ilex sugerokii |
| 41. Ilex pernyi | 90. Ilex sugerokii var. brevipedunculata |
| 42. Ilex x aquipernyi 'Dragon Lady' | 91. Ilex latifolia |
| 43. Ilex opaca | 92. Ilex X koehneana 'Chestnut Leaf' |
| 44. Ilex opaca 'Canary' | 93. Ilex 'Nellie R. Stevens' |
| 45. Ilex opaca 'Christmas Snow' | 94. Ilex 'Whoa Nellie' |
| 46. Ilex opaca 'Steward's Silver Crown' | |
| 47. Ilex opaca 'Lin's Gold' | |
| 48. Ilex opaca 'Golden Knight' | |
| 49. Ilex bioritensis | |

My Trip to Northern Italy: A Culturally Infused Landscape

Dennis Crouse
Boutilier's Point, Nova Scotia

Photos by the author



A place for inspiration in Canova

This was my first experience in Europe, to be precise in Ghesc, nestled in the foothills of the Italian Alps near Domodossola. I had no idea what to expect, but I knew it would be a cultural adventure in an unfamiliar landscape. This was an international learning opportunity, the Canova Field School program, offered by the Canova Association in association with NSCC International (Nova Scotia Community College). Canova plays a pivotal role in restoring and repurposing small abandoned medieval villages in Northern Italy.

From June 29th to July 13th, 2015, the program engaged us in philosophical and technical discussions and presentations, in the physical but satisfying work of rebuilding a beautiful stone medieval structure using old techniques, and in the pleasure of eating together and exploring the area. ('Us' being students from NSCC and from Willowbank, an Ontario school

that focuses on the ecological and sustainable approach to heritage)

During the first couple of days we encountered Canova, which used to be an abandoned village. This village was the first that the Canova Association restored and it has become a viable and thriving community again. Also, it is here where we learned some history of the people, buildings, community, and essentially the cultural landscape. The oldest existing building in this village was built in the early 1000s, whereas others were built between 1400 and the early 1900s.



Our first task in Canova was to sit down and sketch "an element that catches your eye". Well, when you walk around in this village everything is so rustic and beautiful that it made this task very difficult. I decided to get myself out of the hot, blazing sun of Canova and sit down in the shade to sketch this inspirational sitting area pictured on the right.

The restoration project

Our restoration project included the installation of a rooftop patio. The other NSCC students were engineering students who had no experience in Horticulture/Landscaping and I have no experience with Engineering. So, I certainly learned a few building terminologies.

Material in this patio project included gravel, sand, and limestone tiles that on average measured 90cm x 60cm and thickness around 15cm. Mortar was mixed and used to fill in the grooves between each tile. A drier mortar was used to fill in the voids under the limestone tiles and on top of the gravel bedding layer.

This project was hard physically as we had to *carry* all this material up the hill and up many steps. Our group formed a chain to make this strenuous process easier. Sand and gravel was brought to the bottom of the hill in the back of an old Land Rover where it was then brought up to the worksite in buckets. The limestone tiles were also brought up mostly on the backs of individuals who could handle it.





... Did I mention the temperatures were 35^o - 40^oC (not including humidity) the entire 15 days? We were on site for 6 or 7 of those days, so there was not much time to complete the project.

There was a fair amount of prep work involved with installing the flue for the pizza oven. Of course this wasn't easy! This flue came up between the rooftop patio and the hill behind. A few of us took away some of the bank and wedged heavy rocks to get to the wall of the building below. The pizza oven would be installed inside the stone building, under the rooftop patio, by a different group a few weeks later.

A climb in the Italian Alps.

Our group made the ascension through the Lago dei Sabbioni (G41). I knew it would be a hike, and 1400 meters is certainly quite the journey. A chance for me to take many photographs. And a chance to see how plants adapt to different altitudes in situ. The picture at the right was taken at about 1200 meters.

I was the only plant person on this trip. There wasn't much time to plant-explore, but I managed to see alpine rhododendrons, sempervivums and primulas. Based on the photos I took, and to the best of my plant identification skills, here are some of the plants I saw: *Daphne striata*, *Rhododendron ferrugineum*, *Campanula carnica*, *Bartsia alpina*, *Anthyllis vulneraria* subsp. *alpestris*, *Gentiana bavarica*, *Gentiana acaulis*.



With all the beauty around me and being the only plant person I was behind everyone else most of this journey, but I always had my group in sight. The one problem was that I did not have enough water for the hike up, so I was thankful we found the freshest, cleanest, and coldest water at the Swiss border. It was certainly the best water I've ever had! I highly recommend this hike and I would do it again in a heartbeat.

Making the most of what you've got

The other days were filled with day trips to Milano in Italy and Locarno in Switzerland, to a marble quarry and to a granite and marble processing facility near Domodossola, Italy. We also visited and documented some unique features of a few other abandoned medieval villages that trees and vines are destroying. We certainly did a lot of walking and hiking through these small villages, each with their own unique attributes. However, the main similarity was that the people built their homes on huge boulders and used the fertile land for grapes, cereal, vegetables, and hemp (used for rope making or its fibres used in mortar mix), fruit trees, and sheep.



What did I get out of all this? I was certainly in my element taking in the views of old dry-stone buildings, retaining walls, wash basins, and of course the flora. I felt welcomed. I feel like I need to go back. The hospitality was abundant - local wine, food, and music in the Piazza of Domodossola. I came home with the inspiration of simple but impactful design elements that could be incorporated easily in our landscapes.

My blog and other participants' blogs on this trip can be viewed at <http://international.nsc.ca/country/Italy/>

Find out more about the Canova Association by visiting www.canovacanova.com ☞

Maritimers' Mulch

Bruce Clyburn

Like most ARHS members I live a short distance from the sea and at an early age I tended a small vegetable plot. The spring soil preparation ritual included hauling a truck load of eel grass from the nearby Lingan Bay shoreline. This was put aside to use for the potatoes. As potatoes grow they require “hilling up” or pulling loose soil up to the plant’s stock so the newly developing potatoes are protected from the sun. If you replace the hilling soil with eel grass the harvested spuds will come out of the ground snow white, without a peel (skin).

Eel grass is a member of the marine seagrasses - *zostera marina* (Eel Grass; Eelgrass; Seagrass). The living grass tends to populate most of the shallow saltwater bays and estuaries in Nova Scotia as offshore submerged beds.



Eel Grass Deposit - Shoreline, Lingan Bay

The shoreline deposits of eel grass in the photo are dead grasses that have broken free of their mooring and lain in the sun to die, dry, and turn brown. Eel grass breaks down very slowly, which suits it well for use as a garden mulch. It’s easy to harvest eel grass using a garden fork to pick it up and poly bags or a plastic garbage can to carry it. The placement around plants goes quickly; it handles well. It holds moisture and tends to stay in place but if it were a windy, exposed location one might have to top dress it with a few pine nuggets for weight. Salt content has never been an issue. It’s minimal, and with the first heavy rain is leached out.

With the rising cost of traditional mulches and the dwindling supply of pine bark and conventional materials gardeners should consider the alternatives from Mother Nature’s smorgasbord of sustainable offerings. Eel grass has been a choice one here and the aesthetics of an eel grass mulched rhododendron remind me I’m a Maritimer.



Rhododendron Liners in a Nursery Bed



A Large Specimen Rhododendron Mulched

My love affair with plants and horticulture.

Aaron Ashcroft Staples

Not so long ago there wasn't a day that went by where I didn't wonder, "What should I do with my life"? There were always so many career choices ahead of me and I have pursued them all in broad terms at some point or another: art, science, service, sales, and so on. My friends have called me a generalist because of my broad interests and it has been crippling in terms of finding a career path that could hold my interest for longer than a year.

Just over two years ago I made the choice to aggressively pursue an education in the sciences as I was in the midst of a steamy love affair with evolutionary theory, however I did not have the required chemistry background. Eager to get my hands dirty as soon as possible, I was turned on to the horticultural program at Nova Scotia Community College of which biology was a component. "Perfect", I thought. "I would expose myself to biology and the world of plants while I upgraded in preparation for a degree."

I never imagined this choice would introduce me to a vast, beautiful world that would sate my thirst for every possible curiosity I could hope to explore. As I began to study plants with my fellow students, my world became so much more exciting. Every individual plant species offered a glimpse into an exciting evolutionary history, every cultivar a possible story about another human's sense of beauty and sway over genetic expression. The philosophy of plants keeps me up at night wondering what it means to be an individual plant, or if the notion of individuality has any meaning in the plant world. What lies in the genetic code of plants that we cannot see? How much of them is in our genetic code, and how much of us is in theirs?

As if the stimulation of the mind through the study of plants weren't enough, to learn to manipulate them in the landscape and to propagate and cultivate for form, colour, texture, and vigor so as to expand the variety one is able to leverage in creating a landscape is by far the most rewarding form of artistic expression I have had the privilege of practicing. Sights, sounds, tastes, smells and the tactile are all elements one can leverage in the landscape to attempt to communicate something deeper than what words allow.

The world of horticulture and of plants has taken a deep hold of me and every day I am invigorated by some new discovery, some new story, and I can imagine nothing more rewarding than slipping deeper into its enchantment.

I would like to thank the ARHS for the 2015 Kingstec Passionate Plant Person award. I am very excited to be a member of your organization and look forward to sharing experiences with you as I continue on this great plant adventure. ☘

'Minas Grand Pre' Photos provided by Anitra Laycock



***R. ochraceum* Crosses, 2015**

Bruce Clyburn

There seems to be a revival in the pursuit of red-flowered rhododendron hybrids in the northeast. More breeders are sharing a quest for hardy hybrids that bloom with the clear glowing scarlet/crimson shades represented by the best of the tender Asian species.

One of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden's (RSBG) pollens I worked with this spring was from the recently-introduced *R. ochraceum*. It is a close cousin to *R. strigillosum* but has some distinct advantages, mainly a later flowering-period that avoids the late spring frost that catch *strig* hybrids. *Ochraceum* is conservatively rated to be flower-bud hardy to -18°C (0°F), but further testing is needed.

Ochraceum is relatively new to cultivation, introduced as recently as 1995.



Ochraceum is a member of the Maculifera subsection. Its bright-red bell-shaped flowers stand out in mid-spring and it is closely related to a more familiar species, cousin *R. strigillosum*. It differs in being of smaller stature with a thick, pale-brown indumentum on the lower surface of the smaller leaves. The petioles and young stems are bristly and the plant is said to look like a cross between *R. strigillosum* and *R. griersonianum*. *Ochraceum*'s truss is tight with as many as 20+ individual florets.

This species is considered by Chinese botanists to be one of the rarest rhododendrons in China, with only a few remnant populations in scattered isolated pockets of forest and on steep limestone cliffs. No named commercial hybrids are offered by nurseries yet and only 12 crosses were entered in the ARS Seed Exchange 2010-15.

The *ochraceum* pollen in my spring 2015 RSBG order was very potent and the seed capsules were large. Two gel capsules were removed from the recycled 35 mm film canister; the masking tape labels affixed to them had a ball point inscription, "*ochraceum* 04/266", and the date the pollen was collected. Holding the capsule's tape 'handle', each capsule bottom was given a hard flick with the nail of the right middle finger. The sharp impact forced the individual anthers to release their contents, forming a coherent 'golden cotton ball'.

I selected seed parents that had more than a modicum of reserve hardiness, so the progeny from the crosses can be expected to perform well in zone 6b and possibly in 6a. The crosses listed here should inherit the fine clear red of the species and give compact hybrids. Quantities of seed from these crosses will be made available to the seed exchanges for testing.

The Seed Parents:

'Red Brave' (Mars x America) Dark red flowers with white stamens. Introduced by plantsman, Orlando S. Pride of Butler, Pennsylvania, and hardy to -26°C.

'Avondale' (Pygmalion x (*haematodes* x Wellfleet)) Strong red flowers, spotted black. One of Dexter's better reds and hardy to -24°C.

'Hachmann's Marlis' (Mars x *degronianum* ssp. *yakushimanum*, K.W.) Deep purplish pink lobe margins and exterior, inside white with medium grayed-red dorsal markings. Hardy to -26°C.

'Francesca' (Britannia x Dexter 202) Black-red flower buds open bright carmine. Hardy to -26°C. A Tony Consolini hybrid. Tony was Charles Dexter's gardener for many years and a noted hybridizer in his own right.

Unnamed (Russell Harmon x *rex* ssp. *rex* 75/118) A cross of my own from 2011. Heavy substance red-pink flowers. Hardy to at least -23°C.

'Henry's Red' would have been a choice candidate but I found out only recently the plants I have been growing for ten years are not the true cultivar.

Next year, perhaps, a continuation by using *ochraceum* on several late flowering rhododendrons: 'Firestorm', Maximum 'Roseum', 'Midsummer', and the recalcitrant 'Red Max'.



'Red Brave'



'Russell Harmon' x rex

Some of the Rhododendron species donated by Alleyne Cook to the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden

Photos by J. C. Birck



R. adenogynum



R. oreodoxa



R. rex



R. strigillosum

Cook's great gift: Rhodo expert gives away his treasured specimens

Editor's Note: A number of us wonder what's to become of our various plant collections when we have to move or are less able to care for them. Thanks to Steve Whysall, *Vancouver Sun* columnist, for permission to share these stories about Alleyne Cook and his North Vancouver garden.

Alleyne visited NS as Steele Lecturer, with his wife, Barbara, in 1991, 1992, and 1999. He provided the azaleas to Captain Steele for the walk at Pine Grove Park in Milton, Queens County in the late 1980s.

A founding member of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society and a lifetime member of the Alpine Garden Society of B.C., Alleyne was awarded a gold medal from the America Rhododendron Society in 1999. Some of Alleyne's stories have appeared in previous issues of this newsletter, thanks to John Weagle. Read more about 'Cookie' at <http://blogs.vancouversun.com/2013/10/31/alleyne-cook-up-close-and-personal/>

Nov. 1, 2013 Gift of a Garden Steve Whysall



Alleyne Cook in the Ted and Mary Greig Garden.

Well-known North Vancouver gardener Alleyne Cook was sitting in the bath when he got the idea to give away all his rarest and best rhododendrons to the new Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden in Sechelt. "I get all my brightest idea while sitting in the bath," he says, "and this was one of the best."

One of B.C.'s most beloved garden personalities, with a long history of successes and recognized as a world-class authority on rhododendrons, Cook decided in the summer that the time had come, now he is 88, to find a new home for the many rare and unusual plant treasures in his North Shore garden.

"When I go, I feel they are going to bring a bulldozer to this place and I want my rhodos to go to a place where they will be appreciated."

His gift of more than 40 exceptional rhodos, valued at around \$15,000, will be used to create a "spring walk" at the Sechelt garden, B.C.'s newest botanical garden slowly being developed on 16-hectares off Mason Road. Cook's magnificent gift will significantly boost the garden's botanical content.

The rhodos were lifted from Cook's garden on Larson Road on Wednesday by 15 students from the University of B.C. horticultural training program, under the guidance of head tutor Egan Davis, who was supported by Douglas Justice, the UBC garden's curator of collections and associate director.

The Cooks watched with enthusiasm as their garden, built over a lifetime, was dismantled and dozens of rhodos, many of them large architectural specimens, were dug up and moved by hand-trolley to waiting trucks.

"It is a bitter-sweet moment, but we are happy to see that it is being done by professionals and the plants will be going to a good home," said Alleyne's wife, Barbara.

"I think it is all wonderful," said Alleyne who for 23 years was the head gardener at the Ted and Mary Greig Garden, the botanical oasis in the heart of Stanley Park. "I had a great time watching my rhodos go up on to the trucks. I couldn't be happier."

For rhodo aficionados here's the list of some of the rare and unusual rhodos that Alleyne Cook donated to the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden:

R. praestans
R. fictolacteam
R. hodgsonii
R. falconeri ssp. *eximium*
R. rex
R. calophytum
R. barbatum
R. vellereum
R. principis

R. insigne
R. sutchuenense
R. praeevernum
R. oreodoxa
R. lutescens
R. yunnanense
R. concinnum
R. davidsonianum
R. oreotrephes

R. fortunei ssp. *discolor*
R. polylepis
R. 'Sir Charles Lemon'
R. hunnewellianum
R. decorum x *fortunei*
R. orbiculara ssp.
cardiobasis

R. williamsianum alba
R. strigillosum
R. adenogynum
R. piercei
R. augustinii
R. coeloneuron

Feb. 27, 2015 Beautiful Botanical Boost



Alleyne and Barbara Cook in their garden

More than 40 rare and unusual rhododendrons were dug up last week from the garden of Alleyne and Barbara Cook in North Vancouver. A team of students from the horticulture-training program at the University of B.C. did the digging and lifting of the rhodos for free. The plants, mostly top varieties of *cinnabarinum*, were taken to their new home at the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden in Sechelt. This is the second time the Cooks have donated coveted rhodos from their garden, considered one of the best on the North Shore with a rich content of botanical treasures.

Last year, the couple gave away 56 prized specimens, valued at more than \$14,000, all of which were tagged, lifted, and transported using the same procedure and personnel.

There has been a lot of work done on the Sechelt garden site, formerly a holding-area for a nursery, but only five of the 40 acres have been developed. In 2009, the garden started by first establishing a vegetable garden. Volunteers also concentrated on removing invasive plants. In 2011, an impressive \$600,000 pavilion with sleek metal shed-style roof and reception centre was built. This is the garden's administrative centre, but is also a major revenue generator as a rental facility for weddings and special events.

In 2012, work began on a Native Plant Garden, which is still being developed. Next, a Rainforest Grove was completed and work started on pond, wetland and rain-shadow areas. In 2013, a rainforest platform overlooking Wakefield Creek ravine was finished. And last year, the first gifts of rhododendrons arrived – 56 from Alleyne and Barbara Cook and 64 hybrids from Ron and Carla Knight – significantly boosting the garden's botanical credentials.

Our focus in all of this is to try to maintain the beautiful, natural environment as the garden develops," says Gerry Latham, president of the Sechelt garden. "For example, the area surrounding the Wakefield Ravine is a rainforest. By placing a platform overlooking the ravine, we have made it possible for visitors to view and enjoy the rainforest ecosystem."



Mayan Vered, one of the UBC horticulture students, carries out an unusual R. cinnabarinum from the Cook's garden in North Vancouver

With her "passionate" team of supporters, Gerry Latham is working non-stop to "grow the garden" and move this ambitious project to the next level. "We need a master plan for the garden, including a design for the front entrance," she says. "We also need to create an interpretive signage program and develop more educational programs for children. "It will also be vitally important to harness technology to manage data."



UBC horticulture students lift rhodos from the Cooks' garden

Much has already been achieved, even though the garden, which occupies 16 hectares (40 acres) is only six years old. Membership has grown from 710 in 2012 to 1,000 today. The number of

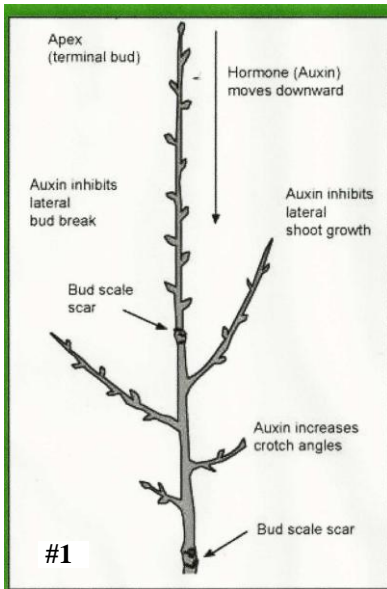
visitors has also increased from 2,500 three years ago to 6,999 last year. The majority of visitors are still from the Sunshine Coast, but 23 per cent come from other parts of BC, eight per cent from out of province, and six per cent from the U.S. and overseas.

There is also a strong community aspect to the project, she says. "Our goal is to create a botanical garden that inspires and engages the community in plant appreciation and acts as a catalyst for learning and research about horticulture, conservation and land stewardship."

<http://blogs.vancouver.sun.com/author/stevewhysall/>

Pruning at the Oct 6, 2015 ARHS meeting

Bob Howard



Our pruning workshop took the form of a panel of four sharp gardeners each presenting a topic, then opening the meeting to questions. The members' many questions provoked lively discussion and demonstrations.

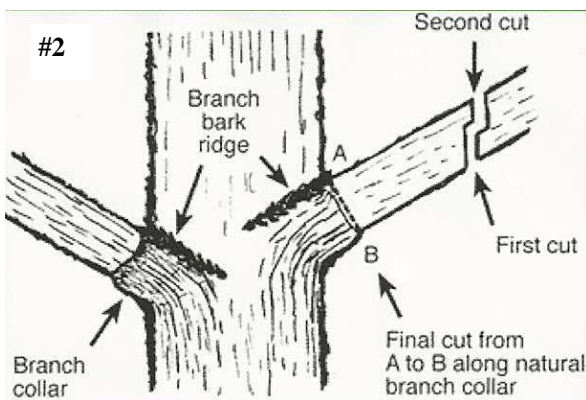
But first, we learned a couple of basic terms from the panel organizer:

1. "apical dominance" The leading tip (apex) of a branch is the main growing point and controls growth by producing an auxin that suppresses bud break and new growth further down the branch. See illus #1.
2. "branch collar" The area of concentrated growth cells where a branch grows out of a major stem or trunk. This active growth area can grow over a pruning cut and help that cut area to heal. See illus #2.

The four sharp gardeners were Ken Shannik, Cora Swinamer, Jim Turner, and Stephen Archibald. Ken focused on pruning rhododendrons. Cora talked about renewing an overgrown shrub. Jim explained how to rejuvenate an old apple tree. Stephen gave some guidelines for getting comfortable with pruning in your garden.

Some general rules emerged, including the following ideas.

- Prune to remove dead and diseased branches.
- Prune to space branches so that they all receive light and air. This means, for example, removing crossing branches. See illus #3.
- Prune to shape the plant like you want.



Ken demonstrated how straightforward pruning can be. He emphasized that we should not be afraid to make cuts. Holding a multi-stemmed branch with one awkward stem sticking out, Ken asked the audience to imagine it as a large shrub. Then he snipped off the awkward bit and it was back to balance. That's it. Cut out what you don't want. Plants respond well to being pruned and almost whatever you do, the plants live on. Make the plant look good.

Cora brought in some very large forsythia. She spoke about rejuvenation pruning of deciduous shrubs, best done immediately after flowering if you don't want to interrupt the normal flowering sequence for the following year. She encouraged people to do follow-up pruning to remove excess shoots that can grow after a shrub is cut back to allow a healthy, open shape for new growth. Removing

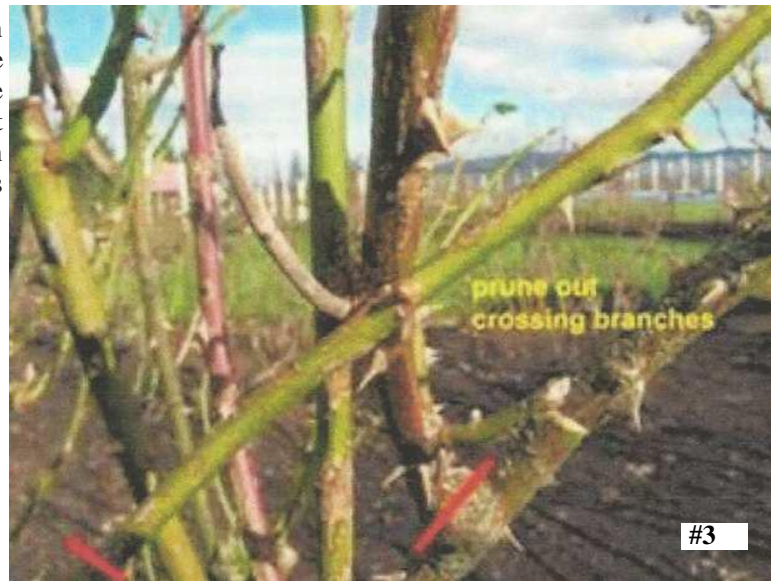
approximately one third of a mature shrub each year or two will keep the plant healthy and blooming at its best. It's important to have good by-pass pruners to allow a clean cut that will heal promptly.

Jim described how pruning apples near the end of the dormant season (e.g., March, April) allows the tree to best adapt to the intended and unintended modifications of the pruning.

- The goal of pruning is to get light and air to all parts of the tree.
- With old, abandoned trees never remove more than 25% of the tree in one year.
- Visualize the future growth of the tree in quadrants, in three-dimensional zones of space.
- Make cuts that cause branches to grow into empty spaces. (Leading cuts)
- Remove branches that are crowded. (Thinning cuts)

Stephen talked about his experience as a non professional pruner. When he first had to prune, the task was daunting. Like many novices he feared the plant could be hurt or, even worse, die. But experience quickly brought the joy and satisfaction of better looking and better performing plants. His advice:

- Really look at plants and practice mentally pruning them. The better you are at imagining what a cut will accomplish, the more confident you will be.
- When you make a real cut, step back and see if the effect is as you imagined. Do you need to make another cut?
- Take the time to notice when plants are growing over paths or in front of windows. It is surprising how often we allow our views and walkways to be limited. After a rain when branches are heavy and drooping is a good time to take note of what needs to be trimmed.



He made the point that as plants in our gardens grow, we may do less planting and moving, and pruning becomes all the more important to keep our landscape lively and in balance.

The audience had many questions and a good conversation followed the presentations. We learned from Ken to shear evergreen azaleas before mid-July, And Jim does pruning and tool-sharpening workshops at the Deanery in Musquodoboit Harbour in spring.

This panel format was well-liked by the members. We will have another panel at the March 1 meeting on “Soil Preparation and Planting”. Mark your calendars! ☘

Some more of the rhododendron species donated by the Cooks

Photos by J. C. Birck



R. fictolacteum



R. prevernum

Positions of Responsibility

Officers and Directors of the Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticulture Society for 2014 -15

President	Sheila Stevenson	902-479-3740
Vice-President	this position available!	
Secretary	Jean Henshall	902-477-2933
Treasurer	Rachel Martin	902-425-3779
Past President	Cora Swinamar	902-826-7705
Director, Communication	Sheila Stevenson	902 479-3740
Director, Education	Bob Howard	902-532-0834
Director, Plant Material/ Horticulture	Wendy Cornwall	902-477-6121
Director, Social	Ralph Pineau	902-454- 9056
Director at Large and Membership Coordinator	Gloria Hardy	902-477-4411
Director at Large	Roslyn Duffus	902-861-3831

Other Positions of Responsibility

Newsletter Editor	Sheila Stevenson	902 479-3740
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Website	Cora Swinamar	902-826-7705
Library	Bonie Conrad	902-832-0204
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Coordinator, Tissue Culture Plant Sale	Jon Porter	902-350-0010
Coordinators, Members' Pre-ordered Sale	Wendy Cornwall & Antitra Laycock	902-477-6121
Tech Support at Meetings	Rachel Martin	902-425-3779
Gardens Care Outreach	Chris Hopgood	902-479-0811
District 12 ARS Rep (American Rhodo Society)	Lynne Melnyk, Toronto	705-835-0372

Photo Album - Photos contributed by Anitra Laycock and John Weagle



'Babylon'



R. catawbiense v. *compactum* x Treasure.



'Elizabeth Hobbie' (Red flowered plant)



'Golden Star'



'Harold Amateis'



'Scarlet Wonder'



'Nova Sunrise'



'Sun Dust'