

The Rhododendrons of  
Milner Gardens and Woodland







## CONTENTS

---

Introduction	3
The Collection	4
Discover Rhododendrons	7
Rhododendron Species	8
Map of Heritage Garden	10
Rhododendron Hybrids	12
Azaleas	14
Highlights	16
Acknowledgements	17

LEFT: *R.* 'May Day' blooms  
along the Rhododendron Walk  
COVER: *R.* 'Robin Hood'



*Mission:*  
*To preserve and enhance*  
*Milner Gardens and Woodland*  
*to educate and inspire*



## INTRODUCTION

The 70 year old Milner property was acquired by Malaspina University-College in May of 1996. It was named Milner Gardens and Woodland in recognition of Ray and Veronica Milner's contribution to the development and preservation of the 10 acre garden and 60 acre forest.

The woodland garden features exotic tree species growing amongst native old growth, sheltering the rhododendron collection and understory of shrubs, perennials and bulbs. The wild garden blends into formal areas surrounding the historic

Milner House with manicured lawns, perennial borders and ponds, with a stunning ocean view backdrop. A small orchard, berry garden, rose garden and cutting garden are also part of the historical plantings.

Today, Milner Gardens and Woodland is open to the visiting public seven months of the year. Services include The Pool House gift shop, nursery plant sales and guided group tours. The Milner House is open for afternoon tea in the Camellia Tea Room.

Malaspina's goal is to maintain the garden and woodland in perpetuity for education and the community's benefit in the Milners' memory.



**ABOVE:** a view across the grand lawn from the ponds **LEFT:** *R. 'May Day'* blooms near the base of a 50 year old *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* **ABOVE LEFT:** *R. augustinii* frames the spectacular ocean and mountain views **ABOVE RIGHT:** The Milner House, built in 1930

## THE COLLECTION

Veronica Milner was a painter. It was with this artist's eye that she envisioned a wild, woodland garden amongst the forest. Her vision echoed the philosophies of Irish garden writer William Robinson whose style embraces natural plantings and rejects Victorian formality. To combat the monotony of the native evergreen trees, she planted rhododendrons - by the hundreds! A reminder of her grandmother's estate in England.

In the 1950's, Ray became friends with nursery owners Ted and Mary Greig and began collecting the earliest rhododendrons planted in the garden. The Greigs specialized in species and hybrid rhododendrons, importing seed and nursery stock from England to their nursery in Royston, BC. They were award winning rhododendron hybridizers and the Milners' garden became home to many of their new introductions. Their guidance, expertise and friendship were instrumental in the creation of this garden.



*R. augustinii* 'Royston Blue' is one of a series of Greig Royston hybrids

Today, the historical rhododendron collection numbers over 400 specimens, spread over 10 acres of

garden. A combination of unique species and rare Greig hybrids make this collection worthy of preservation. Small shrubs that were planted over 40 years ago have grown to tree-sized proportions, creating a forest of colour.

The collection is being propagated to replace aging specimens in the garden, as well as for distribution to the general public. These efforts ensure that this extraordinary collection can be enjoyed for years to come.



ABOVE: *R.* 'The Honourable Jean Marie de Montague' compliments the red blotch of *R.* 'C.J.S.'  
BELOW LEFT: *R.* 'Nancy Evans'  
BELOW RIGHT: *R.* 'Blue Peter'



The name rhododendron comes from the Greek rhodon meaning 'rose' and dendron which means 'tree'.

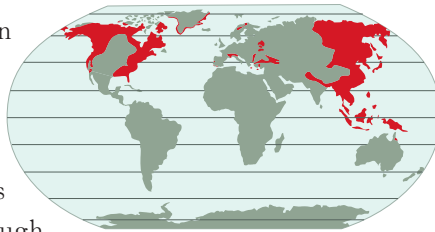


## DISCOVER RHODODENDRONS

The genus *Rhododendron* is one of the largest and most diverse of the plant kingdom. Mainly broad-leaved evergreen shrubs, rhododendrons can vary in size from ground-covers to trees that tower to 30 m (100ft). They grow naturally from sea level to mountaintops in North America, Europe and Asia, including some tropical varieties from Malaysia and Indonesia. Showy blooms appear in early spring through summer in every imaginable colour.

Rhododendrons are members of the heath family (Ericaceae) and are a relative of our native *arbutus* and *salal*. Most thrive in the rich woodland acidic soil, high rainfall and cool winters that are typical of their native habitat in north temperate regions. The greatest concentration of rhododendron species in the world (over 90%) occurs in the Sino-Himalayan region of southeastern Asia.

LEFT: treelike rhododendrons grow on a slope in the Annapurna range of the Himalayas BELOW: geographic distribution of the genus



The earliest rhododendron introduced into European cultivation, *R. hirsutum*, was discovered in the mid 17th century. However, the majority of rhododendrons were discovered and named during an intense period of adventurous plant hunting expeditions to southeast Asia in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Modern plant hunters have continued to revise and add to the over 850 recognized species, while hybridizers have been busy creating tens of thousands of hybrids.

### RHODODENDRON SPECIES

A species is a group of similar rhododendrons that grow naturally in the wild, in the same geographical location. Colourful, often fragrant flowers are pollinated by insects and birds. The resulting seed produces offspring that is identical to the parent. The leaves of different species can vary



a comparison of leaf sizes, shapes and shades of indumentum

greatly in size and shape and often have fuzzy or scaly coatings called indumentum.



ABOVE: *R. wallichii*  
ABOVE LEFT: *R. racemosum*  
ABOVE RIGHT: *R. aberconwayi*  
RIGHT: *R. barbatum*

While rhododendron species are especially diverse, they can be divided into two general categories: lepidotes and elepidotes. The lepidotes have minute scales on the leaves and buds and are usually small leaved varieties from higher elevations. The larger leaved varieties, including Azaleas, are elepidotes and do not have scales.

*R. fulvum*

Species rhododendrons add an element of authenticity to a woodland garden and signify a direct connection to how these plants grow naturally in the wild. There are 45 species represented in the Milner historic collection.

ABOVE: *R. calophytum*LEFT: *R. wardii*ABOVE LEFT: *R. augustinii*ABOVE RIGHT: *R. cinnabarinum*

# MILNER GARDENS AND WOODLAND



Rhododendron Grove

Nursery

Gift Shop

Fr



Tea Room

Orchard

Gardener's Cottage

Wood Garden

## RHODODENDRON HYBRIDS

When two different rhododendrons are successfully crossed a hybrid is produced. While this occurs naturally, many hybrids are created when humans cross-pollinate by hand. Crosses can be made of species or other hybrids, hopefully resulting in a plant that displays the best features of its parents. There are about 25,000 hybrids registered today, and counting!



*R. 'Lady Rosebery', a waxy petalled elepidote*

Horticulturists create hybrids to select desirable characteristics from parent plants. These traits may include flower colour, overall plant size or bloom time. Cold hardiness is also a preferred feature. Hybrid rhododendrons do not grow true from seed. They must be propagated vegeta-



ABOVE: unnamed spinuliferum hybrid  
 ABOVE CENTRE: *R. 'Leda'*  
 ABOVE RIGHT: *R. 'Purple Splendour'*  
 FAR RIGHT: *R. 'Old Copper'*  
 RIGHT: *R. 'Ruth Lyons'*



tively using various techniques of cuttings, layering, grafting or tissue culture.

The historical collection at Milner Gardens represents 70 named hybrids. Some of the most outstanding specimens remain a mystery; their identity lost over the years. Many of the hybrids created by Ted and Mary Greig were unnamed, and therefore are simply labelled 'Greig Hybrid'.



LEFT: over the decades many rhododendron ID tags have been engulfed by the plant  
BELOW: trusses of *R. 'Androcles'*, one of the largest specimens in the collection, a giant at 20 ft. high and 15 ft. across



LEFT: *R. 'Gill's Crimson'* ABOVE TOP: *R. 'Bow Bells'* displays coppery new growth typical of williamsianum hybrids  
ABOVE MIDDLE: *R. 'Mrs. G.W. Leak'*  
ABOVE RIGHT: *R. 'Loderi King George'*, a fragrant giant

## AZALEAS

Azalea or Rhododendron?

The answer is both! Azaleas are classified within the genus rhododendron and are separated into two groups: evergreen and deciduous. Their most distinguishing feature is a five petal flower with an equal number of stamens - the pollen producing part of the flower. Most other rhododendrons have ten or more stamens.

Azalea species grow naturally in the wilds of North America, Asia and eastern Europe. Thousands of man-made hybrids are also produced in a multitude of colours.

Evergreen azaleas keep their small leaves through the winter. They are compact and low growing shrubs that can be grown in sun or part-shade. In spring they put on a spectacular show of dazzling blooms that shroud the plant in colour.



**ABOVE:** evergreen Japanese azalea  
**RIGHT:** an early 20th century bronze crane stands next to an evergreen azalea in full bloom  
**FAR RIGHT:** a double petalled evergreen variety exhibits multiple hues of pink on the same plant





Deciduous azaleas lose their leaves in the winter, but not before a dramatic display of fall colour. These shrubs are generally more resistant to cold temperatures than the evergreen varieties. Deciduous azalea flowers are unique in their colour range, displaying shades of orange and coral not seen in other rhododendrons. Many are highly fragrant.



**LEFT:** Autumn leaf colour  
**BELOW:** a bank of multi-hued deciduous azaleas frames the Milner house



**ABOVE:** *R. vaseyi* or Pinkshell Azalea  
**ABOVE LEFT:** fragrant *R. occidentale* or Western Azalea  
**MIDDLE LEFT:** a double form of Exbury hybrid  
**BELOW LEFT:** highly fragrant *R. luteum*, latin for 'yellow'  
**FAR LEFT:** Mollis hybrid

## HIGHLIGHTS

---

<b>SPECIES</b>	<i>oreotrephes</i>	'C.I.S.'	'Marcia'
<i>aberconwayi</i>	<i>pachytrichum</i>	'Cotton Candy'	'May Day'
<i>albiflorum</i>	<i>praevernum</i>	'Courtenay King'	'Moonstone'
<i>arboreum</i>	<i>racemosum</i>	'Doctor Arnold W. Endtz'	'Mrs. Betty Robertson'
<i>augustinii</i> ssp. <i>augustinii</i>	<i>schlippenbachii</i>	'Doctor Stocker'	'Mrs. G. W. Leak'
<i>augustinii</i> Wilson form	<i>strigillosum</i>	'Elizabeth'	'Mrs. Walter Burns'
<i>augustinii</i> ssp. <i>chasmanthum</i>	<i>thayerianum</i>	'Elizabeth de Rothschild'	'Nancy Evans'
<i>augustinii</i> ssp. <i>hardyi</i>	<i>trillianum</i>	<i>oreotrephes</i>	'Old Copper'
<i>auriculatum</i>	<i>vaseyi</i>	'Exquisetum'	'Pilgrim'
<i>barbatum</i>	<i>wallichii</i>	'Fabia'	'Pink Pearl'
<i>beesianum</i>	<i>wardii</i> var. <i>wardii</i>	'Fabia Exbury'	'Purple Splendour'
<i>callimorphum</i>	<i>wardii</i> var. <i>puralbum</i>	'General Eisenhower'	'Robin Hood'
<i>calophytum</i>	<i>yunnanense</i>	'Gill's Crimson'	'Romany Chal'
<i>cinnabarinum</i> ssp. <i>xanthocodon</i>	<b>HYBRIDS</b>	'Glow'	'Royal Flush'
<i>coelicum</i>	'Akbar'	'Gold Mohur'	<i>augustinii</i>
<i>concinnum</i>	'Alice Street'	'Hino-crimson'	'Royston Blue'
<i>davidsonianum</i>	'Androcles'	'Hollandia'	<i>davidsonianum</i>
<i>davidsonianum</i> Exbury form	'Anna Rose Whitney'	'Humming Bird'	'Ruth Lyons'
<i>decorum</i>	'Azor'	'Ilam Violet'	'Sakata Red'
<i>fastigiatum</i>	'Beauty of Littleworth'	'Impi'	'Sapphire'
<i>fortunei</i> ssp. <i>discolor</i>	'Blue Diamond'	'Jock'	'Shilsonianii'
<i>fulvum</i>	'Blue Peter'	'King of Shrubs'	'The Honourable Jean Marie de Montague'
<i>hirtipes</i>	'Blue Tit'	'Lackamus Cream'	'Tom Williams'
<i>lutescens</i>	'Bonito'	'Lady Bessborough'	'Thor'
<i>luteum</i>	'Bo-peep'	'Lady Rosebery'	'Tofino'
<i>macrophyllum</i>	'Bow Bells'	'Laura Aberconway'	'Unique'
<i>occidentale</i>	'Britannia'	'Leda'	'Veronica Milner'
<i>oreodoxa</i> var. <i>fargesii</i>	'Buchanan Simpson'	'Lem's Monarch'	
	'Carita'	'Letty Edwards'	
	'Cheer'	'Loderi King George'	
		'Loderi Venus'	

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

---

### **REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Geoff Ball, Jim Cadwaladr, Louise Dwyer, Roy Taylor, Judith Walker

### **TEXT**

Kristi Ozero

### **DESIGN**

Concept by Kristi Ozero

Layout by Keith Leinweber

### **ILLUSTRATIONS**

Except where mentioned,  
all photographs by Kristi Ozero

Jim Cadwaladr  
(R. 'Royston Blue' photo page 4)

Dave Thompson, United Kingdom  
(mountain photo page 6)

Map illustration by Keith Leinweber

Map digital linework by Kristi Ozero

Illustrations on pages 1 and 7  
by Keith Leinweber

### **PRINTING**

Hemlock Printers, Victoria BC

### **FUNDING**

The design of this publication was made possible by a generous grant from the STANLEY SMITH HORTICULTURAL TRUST.

The printing of this publication was made possible by a generous grant from the THE AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY.



2179 West Island Highway  
Qualicum Beach, BC  
Canada V9K 1G1

Tel: (250) 752-6153  
Fax: (250) 752-3874  
[www.milnergardens.org](http://www.milnergardens.org)