



"Niagara Rhodo"

Newsletter of the Niagara Chapter,
Rhododendron Society of Canada,

District 12, American Rhododendron Society



Our Purpose: We are a non-profit organization whose aim is to promote, encourage and support interest in the genus *rhododendron*. Our goal is to encourage gardeners to grow and appreciate these plants, by providing educational meetings with knowledgeable speakers, access to topical publications and hosting joint meetings with other chapters'

Merry Christmas – One and All

December 24, 2016

<u>Content</u>	<u>Word of Caution</u>
1. President's Greetings 2016-2017 Program.	By becoming a successful grower, the reader will be exposed to a contagion for which there is no cure. Once infected with an appreciation of rhododendrons and azaleas most gardeners spend a lifetime collecting these most beautiful of all plants.
2. Farewell & Welcome	
3. Todd Boland's Talk	
4. 2017 Program	
5. Volunteers in Action – Plant Sale	
6. Visit to South Coast Gardens	

H. Edward Reiley



President's Christmas Message

This is the season to reflect on the year that is coming to a close. Our Niagara Chapter has had another successful year forging new relationships & partnerships, acquiring intriguing "to die for" plants, and sharing our passion with other gardening and rhodo enthusiasts.

Our organization's strong roots and sustainability is a tribute to our loyal members who attend our public meetings, volunteers who help on projects and serve on committees, supporters who buy plants at our Annual Plant Sale, and our very committed Board of Directors, comprised of knowledgeable and accomplished individuals. Our network continues to expand, creating new opportunities to share plant material and knowledge to enrich our community.

We have a lot to be thankful for, and can look forward to a new year filled with opportunity and promise. We wish you Joy and Laughter, shared with your Family and Friends, at this time of year.

Best wishes for 2017! *Sandra Meis*

Change at "Vineland Innovation & Research Inc."

The Vineland Research station has been the home of the Niagara Region Chapter of the Rhododendron Society of Canada since 1976 when the founding meeting of the Chapter was held in Rittenhouse Hall. Whether it was called the Horticultural Research Institute of Ontario or by its current, modern designation as a private enterprise, our meetings and Plant Sales have been held on these grounds. The facilities manager during most of these years, with his staff, has assisted the Rhododendron Society Chapter, and other not-for profit community horticultural groups, by making space available for their various activities. During this time Ray

Kaczmarek, the Buildings and Grounds Manager has been our principle contact in access to these facilities. Recently, Ray has moved on to be in charge of facilities on the Simcoe Campus of Guelph University.



On November 12, 2016, the Chapter thanked Ray for his efforts in helping the Niagara Region Chapter with its various endeavours. The image at the left shows Ray receiving two framed original watercolour prints by Don Hyatt. At the same meeting, the new Farm

& Grounds Manager, Michael Josiak, was introduced to the 52 members present at the meeting.

Todd Boland's Talk, November 12, 2016

Todd Boland, Research Scientist at the Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical Gardens, discussed growing Rhododendrons on Canada's most easterly province. He discussed the soil, weather conditions and various other challenges in growing rhododendrons "On the Edge".

'Rhododendrons on the Edge' Presentation by Todd Boland, Research Horticulturist, MUN Botanic Gardens

Summary by Dixie and Martin Taylor

On Saturday, November 12, 2016, the Niagara Rhododendron Chapter had the pleasure of hearing an extremely engaging, informative talk by Todd Boland from Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanic Garden, on "Growing Rhododendrons on the Edge". His comprehensive, entertaining presentation began with MUN Botanic Garden in all its seasonal glory filled with ericaceous plants, rhododendrons, azaleas, and other hardy perennials and native plants. The beautiful lush gardens and rockeries, enhanced by dramatic sandstone/ siltstone boulders, and graceful streams, ponds and cascading waterfalls invite visitors to wander through the many themed gardens before meandering into a large natural wilderness area. This forested area surrounds an idyllic 14 acre, man-made marshy lake where wildlife, including a pair of nesting ospreys is abundant. In this part of the world, Todd informed us, being part of a wilderness area also means frequent invasions from unwelcome garden-chomping moose!



Although enduring long, cold winters where 10 foot- high drifts and snow on the May 24th weekend are not uncommon, and 'snow loading' on small trees and shrubs is a winter hazard, overall MUN Botanic Garden enjoys (?) a rather foggy, windy, moist maritime climate zone of 5b. This allows not only the 'iron clad' varieties of rhododendrons to flourish (hardy to zone 4b), but also a large unique collection of hardy to more tender rhododendrons and azaleas, as well as several endemic species of ericaceous and alpine plants found only in Newfoundland.

Todd mentioned that Newfoundland's non-limestone barrens were formed as result of the last ice age 10,000 years ago. These mostly tree-less areas with thin rocky soils represent 20% of Newfoundland's landmass and are dominated by the Heath Family or the Ericaceae (pers. com. T. Boland). As such Newfoundland and Labrador

have four native rhododendron species. In the St. John's area, *R. canadense* (Rhodora) and *R. groenlandicum* (Labrador Tea) are common and occur province-wide, whereas *R. lapponicum* (Lapland Rosebay) is limited to serpentine and limestone barrens of western Newfoundland, the Great Northern Peninsula and Labrador, while *R. tomentosum* ssp. *subarcticum* (Northern Labrador Tea) is found only in northern Labrador. These small hardy shrubs are related to blueberries, partridgeberries, sheep laurel, heath and heathers, and all bloom beautifully each spring in MUN Botanic Gardens.

MUN Botanic Garden was established near St. Johns in 1971 on 110 acres that opened to the public in 1977. Seven cultivated acres make up the Botanic Garden with thirteen themed gardens, namely:

- The Rhododendron Garden is the biggest with over 200 taxa, which features spectacular rhododendrons and ericaceous companion plants in the peat garden, an exclusively rhododendron border and dell, and a new garden area for Todd's hybrid rhododendrons;
- Cottage Garden including a greenhouse that grows grapes, figs and various succulents;
- Heritage Garden for tough perennials and native plants found in Newfoundland before WWII;
- Wildlife-friendly Garden for birds, bees, butterflies and other pollinators, with three beehives planned for 2017;
- Rock Garden, best in June, features alpines, heaths, heathers and other dwarf plants such as *R. 'Scarlet Wonder'* (bright red). Also within the rock garden, the Alpine House showcases a revolving selection of less-hardy, potted rock plants and dwarf lepidotes like 'Towhead' (pale yellow), and *R. campylogynum* (purplish pink);



R. "Scarlet Wonder", Rock Garden



R. "Towhead", Alpine House



R. campylogynum (too hot in Niagara?!), Alpine House



A newer feature of the rock garden is the unique 'Crevice' Garden, packed with plants between upright rock slabs to replicate rock cracks and crevices in the barrens. This showcases rare alpine and dwarf plants found not only on the western Great Northern Peninsula of NFLD, but also from around the world rare alpine and dwarf plants found not only on the LST barrens of the western Great Northern Peninsula of NFLD, but also from around the world.

- Other themed gardens include the Asian Garden, the

Medicinal Garden, the Shade Garden, the Vegetable Garden (raised beds), the Perennial Border, and the woodland beds and limestone scree slopes.

Most of MUN's rhododendrons came from Nova Scotia around 1986, including Kentville hybrids developed by Dr. Don Craig, and Boulderwood hybrids developed by Captain Dick Steele. Newfoundland's mostly thin rocky soils are naturally acidic with a pH of 4 to 5, and bogs are common. As result rhododendrons will grow almost anywhere in the Botanic Garden provided extra organic matter is added to the soil. Besides gravel mulch used in the rock garden, leaf compost is used over the established rhododendron beds, and shredded spruce bark is used in the newest garden for Todd's rhododendron hybrids (pers. com. T. Boland). To guarantee maximum flowering, the rhododendrons must be sited in almost full sun in locations protected from wind by other trees and shrubs, and normally do not require watering. In a good spring, PJM rhododendrons bloom in the last week of April to mid- May, whereas the 'iron clads' bloom much later in late June and July. Peak bloom is in mid-June when the annual rhododendron festival is held.

Todd presented hundreds of gorgeous lepidote and elepidote rhododendrons and deciduous azaleas, all grouped according to spring and fall colours in their respective garden settings. He has hybridized over 30 rhododendrons and azaleas over the past twelve years including his most recent azalea hybrids in various shades of intense pinks to yellows that have yet to be registered and named. A selection of Todd's rhododendron hybrids include: *R. roxieanum oreonastes* X 'Besse Howells', *R. oreodoxa* X 'Carmen', 'Brown Eyes' x 'Minas Grand Pre', 'Minas Grand Pre' X 'Roslyn', Henry's Dark Red' X 'Yaku Angel', 'Sumatra' (tiny) X 'Bellefontaine' (huge), 'Sumatra' x 'Yaku Angel', *R. williamsianum* x 'Barbara Hall', 'Sumatra' x 'Minas Grand Pre', and 'Fantastica' X 'Rangoon' X 'Roselyn'.

When it comes to the lepidote rhododendrons, the 'PJM' series are the largest and most successful in the St. John's area. Selections of some excellent dwarf rock garden lepidotes grown in the Botanical Garden include: *R. impeditum*, one of the smallest with tiny blue- green leaves and purple-blue flowers; *R. campylogynum* with small purple individual flowers like drooping thimbles, also adapted to potted arrangements combined with succulents; 'Ramapo' and 'Purple Gem' are a little bigger with purple-pink flowers. Other dwarf hybrids at the Botanical Garden include tiny ground huggers named after birds like the Cox hybrids 'Wren' (yellow), and 'Curlew' (bright yellow). Otherwise among other dwarf hybrids: 'Patty Bee' (yellow), 'Towhead' (pale yellow), 'Tottenham' (bright pink), 'Jenny' (lavender-pink), 'Dora Amateis' (white), 'Isola Bella' (Breuckner, cream, flushed pink), 'Madison Snow' (white), 'Ginny Gee' (pink and white)', and 'Milky Way' (white).

The 'Iron Clad' rhododendrons were developed from *R. catawbiense*, native to the mountains of the Appalachians in the eastern USA, and true to their name have proven to be the best elepidotes for the St. John's area. Besides the ever popular 'English Roseum', 'Roseum Elegans', 'Grandiflorum', 'Boursalt', 'Album', and 'Catalga', selections of other hardy elepidote hybrids at the Botanical Garden include: 'Nova Zembla' (red), 'Scarlet Wonder' (red), 'Firestorm' (dark red), 'Henry's Red' (bright red), 'Susan' (lilac-blue), 'Hong Kong' (lemon yellow), 'Grand Pre' (pink), 'Janet Blair' (light lavender-pink), 'Roslyn' (purple-violet), 'Golden Gala' (pale yellow), 'Vernus' (lavender-pink), 'Wyandanch Pink' (dark pink), 'Nancy Steele' (soft yellow), and 'George Swain' (pale yellow) among others.

Besides the equally hardy, compact Finnish hybrids, another important group of hardy, large-leaved rhododendrons are the lovely 'Yak' hybrids developed from the species *R. yakushmanum*. They are desirable not only for their large apple blossom-like pink blooms fading to white, but also for their attractive new foliage which has a unique whitish to cream tomentum and cinnamon to tan suede-like lower indumentum.

Outstanding 'Yak' hybrids in the Botanical garden include: 'Crete', 'Teddy Bear', 'Double Dip', 'Golfer', 'Mist Maiden', 'Fantastica', 'Yaku Angel' and 'Yaku Prince'.



R. pachysanthum

When it comes to exceptional foliage and elegance, however, the 'Rolls Royce' of rhododendrons is the rare, elepidote *R. pachysanthum* from high up in the mountains of Taiwan. This low mounding shrub has a tawny indumentum that turns silver as the leaves mature and often retains its indumentum into winter. This valuable shrub apparently hardy to US zone 6a, is grown quite successfully in the Botanic Gardens' zone 5b. 'Golfer', a hybrid of *pseudochrysanthum* and *yakushmanum*, looks like a larger version of *R. pachysanthum* - quite striking! (*pers. com. T. Boland*)

It's worthwhile noting that Todd couldn't resist teasing us over a few desirable dwarf rhododendron varieties such as *R. campylogynum* (maroon), *R. keleticum* (dark purple), *R. sargentianum* 'Maricee' (frosted pink), and 'Carmen' (red) because they would probably succumb to the summer heat in Toronto or Niagara - 'Sorry, you're too hot...too hot!' Odds are that *R. pachysanthum* and 'Golfer' would not do that well either (*pers. com. T. Boland*).

Deciduous azaleas do best in the St. John's area, and many are hardy throughout the Island, in particular *R. canadense* 'Rhodora' (purple and rare white). Besides providing brilliant orange and yellow shades not available in hardy evergreen rhododendrons, they are also unique for their wonderful fall colours. Deciduous azalea hybrids developed in Belgium (Ghent hybrids) or Britain (Knap Hill and Exbury hybrids) grown in the Botanic Garden include: 'Narcissiflorum' (double bright yellow), 'Oxydol' (white, yellow blotch), 'Klondyke' (yellow-orange), 'Apple blossom' (white and yellow), 'Sweet Caroline' (pink), and 'Cannon's Double' (double, cream and pink). We look forward to seeing Todd's unique double yellow and pink azalea hybrids one day.

Before concluding his talk, Todd encouraged us to visit Newfoundland: "Come for the icebergs, caribou and whales!" But please also consider the 11th century Viking village at L'Anse aux Meadows (northwestern tip); Gros Morne National Park (west coast); Mistaken Point's Precambrian invertebrate fossils (Avalon Peninsula, east coast); Fogo and Change Islands (east coast), and not least, be thrilled by beautiful MUN Botanic Gardens.

Plant Sale: April 29, 2016

It may not be a self-evident truth, but one of the realities for any community horticultural organization is that volunteers sustain the organization. The annual plant sale held at the Vineland Innovation and Research Centre is the major fund raising event. This year, in addition to our usual volunteers we were assisted by students and a staff member from the Great Lakes Christian College in Beamsville. Shown here are various volunteers preparing the scene of the sale and organizing delivery of pre-orders for members.



Our recognition of volunteers would be incomplete without naming those individuals for whom photographs were not available. The following assisted either in setting up the sale on Friday or participating in the sales on Saturday: Angela Calixto, John Calixto, Wendy Fletcher, Dorothy Graham, Sheila Hirsch-Kalm, , Sondra Meis, Jane Montgomery. Peter Phelps, Barbara Phelps, Irma Purchase, Bonnie Priest, Dixie Szass, Martin Taylor, Wanda Yarmoshuk, Tom Ziegler.

Kevin Kavanagh and Christina Woodward organized the Plant for Members distribution. They selected plants, organized the sale and worked efficiently in the August heat at the Open House.

In September, plants associated with the Brueckner Test Program were distributed to Madison Ohio, Mississauga, Kingston and Montreal. Kevin Kavanagh and John Kooger made possible the safe and efficient delivery of these plants to test participants. To all volunteers a hearty **Thank you.**

Open House at South Coast Gardens, St. Williams, August 21, 2016

Plants for Members and test plants for the Brueckner Test Project were assembled and cared for by Kevin Kavanagh in his greenhouses at South Coast Garden in St. Williams Ontario. An Open House on the weekend of August 21 provided an opportunity for members to visit Kevin`s unique collection of border-line hardy genera and other species unique to the Carolinian Forest.. This even provided members with an opportunity to add unique rhododendron cultivars from Finland and to test evergreen azaleas plants obtained from a generous colleague in Long Island New York. A sample of membership participating in the Open House is shown below.



Niagara Region Chapter

Rhododendron Society of Canada

District 12, American Rhododendron Society

2017 Program

All Gardeners are Welcome to Meetings & Plant Sales

Meetings are held on Sundays at 2 P.M.
Rittenhouse Hall,

Plant Sale at 9 A.M. April 29, 2017
Implement Shed

Vineland Research & Innovation Centre
Victoria Avenue, Vineland Station, ON



February 5, 2017. Tom Laviolette. Director, Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens, Niagara Parks Landscape Design, School of Horticulture, Butterfly Conservatory (retired) .
A rhododendron garden begins and much more.



March 5, 2017. Dr. Steven Krebs. Director Leach Research Station, Eastern VP ARS. Evaluates his new cultivars; discusses planting techniques & soil media that may help control phytophthora issues.



April 9, 2017. Kevin Kavanagh & Nick Yarmoshuk. What's in the Plant Sale? Describe for each cultivar: its strengths, weaknesses & appropriate growing conditions.

April 29, 2017. Annual General Plant Sale. Starts at 9 A.M. Closes when plants sold out.

Niagara Region
Rhododendron Society of Canada



<http://www.rhodoniagara.org>