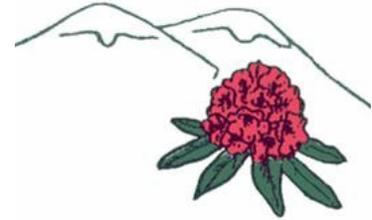


# THE RHODOVINE



## THE MOUNT ARROWSMITH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

MARS  
P. O. Box 342  
Qualicum Beach, BC  
V9K 1S8  
[mars.rhodos.ca](http://mars.rhodos.ca)

Volume 20, Issue 2

February 2008

### 2007/2008 Executive

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>President</b>   | 752-6131   |
| John England   |  |
| <a href="mailto:jaengland@shaw.ca">jaengland@shaw.ca</a>           |  |
| <b>Past President</b>  | 954-3210   |
| Ron McMaster   |  |
| <a href="mailto:rjmcmaster@shaw.ca">rjmcmaster@shaw.ca</a>         |  |
| <b>Vice-President</b>  |  |
| Art Lightburn  | 468-7516   |
| <a href="mailto:slightbu@shaw.ca">slightbu@shaw.ca</a>             |  |
| <b>Secretary</b>   |  |
| Marilyn Dawson   | 752-3694   |
| <a href="mailto:dawsom@shaw.ca">dawsom@shaw.ca</a>                 |  |
| <b>Treasurer</b>   |  |
| Tony Ansdell   | 752-4475   |
| <a href="mailto:ansdella@shaw.ca">ansdella@shaw.ca</a>             |  |
| <b>Directors</b>   |  |
| Maria Bieberstein  | 468-7252   |
| <a href="mailto:abieberstein@telus.net">abieberstein@telus.net</a> |  |
| Ann De Brincat   | 724-5594   |
| <a href="mailto:darrylhatch@shaw.ca">darrylhatch@shaw.ca</a>       |  |
| Bert Harding   | 752-3923   |
| <a href="mailto:ruber@shaw.ca">ruber@shaw.ca</a>                   |  |
| Ann Robertson  | 752-5997   |
| <a href="mailto:annierobertson@shaw.ca">annierobertson@shaw.ca</a> |  |
| <b>Program Chair</b>   | Art Lightburn  |
| <b>Meeting Coord</b>   |  |
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| <b>Ways &amp; Means</b>  | Susan Lightburn  |
| <b>Library</b>   | Judy McMaster  |
| <b>Refreshments</b>  | Barbara Kulla  |
| <b>Dollar Table</b>  | Cassy Lacouvee   |
| <b>Truss Show</b>  | Bert Harding   |
| <b>Garden Tour</b>   | Art Lightburn  |
| <b>Milner Gardens</b>  | John England   |
| <b>Bus Tours</b>   |  |
| <b>Christmas Party</b>   | Maria Bieberstein  |
| <b>PR</b>  | Ron McMaster   |
| <b>Sunshine</b>  | Maria Bieberstein  |
| <b>Bursary</b>   | Judy McMaster  |
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| <b>Historian</b>   | Cassy Lacouvee   |
| 752-3923   | <a href="mailto:ruber@shaw.ca">ruber@shaw.ca</a>                   |
| <b>Newsletter</b>  | Ann Robertson  |
| 752-5997   | <a href="mailto:annierobertson@shaw.ca">annierobertson@shaw.ca</a> |



### **Jean Greg our past Historian**

A special thank you to Jean who behind the scenes has kept MARS history up to date.

### Peace Arch Rhododendron Society (White Rock & Surrey)

#### PARS Visit Qualicum April 22<sup>nd</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup>

MARS members will be asked to provide billets for PARS club members. We will also need 3-4 gardens ending the first day with a barbecue. Next day we will visit Milner gardens and provide lunch before they return to the mainland.

#### MARS Visit the Mainland May 21<sup>st</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup>

PARS members will provide billets for MARS members. We will visit 4 gardens have a pot luck dinner on the first day. The second day we will visit the Glades which is a 5 acre Rhodo garden. It is still occupied by the owners but run by the city of Surrey. Lunch and home to the island.

More details will follow.  
Please contact MARY if you have any questions and to offer your help in this FUN club event.  
250-754-1918 [maryjparker99@shaw.ca](mailto:maryjparker99@shaw.ca)

### MARS Meetings

Second Wednesday of the Month  
7:30 pm  
Qualicum Beach Civic Centre

## Next Meeting Tuesday February 19th

It's time for the annual panel of experts, always a popular event at MARS meetings. This time, the topic is predominately container gardening, although some of the discussion will likely centre around good gardening practices. Here is the panel:

**Terry Richmond**

**Gerry Babiy**

**Kathy Claxton**

**More information on page 6**

### March Meeting

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March**

**Bill Stipe**

**Rhodos 101**

Bill is president of the Whidbey Island chapter of the American Rhododendron Society and the owner of Glynneden Gardens, a nursery specializing in rhododendrons.

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## President's Message

Listening to my radio earlier this week I learned that statistically the fourth week in January (as I write this) is considered to be the 'depth of winter' and the 'height of depression week', for many Canadians. Looking out my window at the brilliant sunshine (no SADS this week) I thought well maybe, but not here in Oceanside!

Discover the small miracles of nature already to be found in your garden. Wander through and you will see assorted bulbs showing their tips as they emerge from their winter hibernation - even though you might have planted them only a few weeks ago, as I did! And furthermore, you can still see them past five o'clock in the afternoon - it's still daylight!

One of my hamamelis (witch hazel) is now in full bloom, others close to being so. Viburnum 'Pink Dawn' gives testimony to the fact that the gardens are beginning to wake up; whilst walking around yours see if any of your 'friends' are in need of some TLC, particularly those of the genus Rhododendron!

I guarantee that you won't be depressed... get your questions ready for our February meeting of the 'Expert Panel'. Reminder, the meeting is six days later than usual, on Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup>. See you there.

John England



**MARS-Malaspina 2007 bursary award winner,  
Katelyn van Duin,**

## Member's Corner

### Tufa Rock

Anyone interested? It maybe 'lightweight', but it's still pretty heavy. For comparison, I purchased a truckload of rock delivered to QB from Nanoose, back in 2005. It cost \$450 delivered. Comments. John

### Lost and Not Found

Terry Richmond has a large lid that does not fit his slow cooker. Do any of you have a smaller lid that does not fit your casserole or pot? Please bring it to the next meeting.

### North Island Elder College

Terry Richmond is giving a Beginners Talk on How to Take care of Rhodos.

### Membership

Welcome to the following people who joined us on January 9, 2008:

Bernie & June Mazur      248-7009  
 berrniemazur@shaw.ca (Note: 2m's)  
 Linda & Paul McPhie      738-0686  
 plmcphe@shaw.ca

### Seeds

I have received some packets of rhodo seeds collected by Peter Wharton. These are available for the asking.

For information phone Art 468-7516.

## Editor's Corner

The beautiful photographs and articles that you send to me make this newsletter possible. This month the photos are all from Susan Lightburn, except the one from Ken Gibson's garden. Thank you one and all. Keep up the good work.

Send **your** contributions to Ann Robertson  
 752-5997      [annierobertson@shaw.ca](mailto:annierobertson@shaw.ca)

### Glen Patterson with Joan Rich



### Thank you Glen

When Glen Patterson decided it was time to change his lifestyle and move from his large waterfront garden in West Vancouver to a condo in Vancouver, he thought about it long and hard. He wanted a rooftop garden, not just a few plants stuck in pots and scattered around a balcony, but a real honest-to-goodness garden with trees and fish ponds and rocky edging holding back underground plantings. So, this man who had spent his lifetime in the forestry industry, set about his goal, taking two years to realize his dream. He found a soon-to-be built condo in Coal Harbour with an adjoining two-story townhouse. His condo would be on the third floor with a sliding door opening out onto the townhouse rooftop and his garden.

It took considerable negotiating and of course he was told it couldn't be done, but he persisted, relying on engineer friends and other experts. He hired an architect, sought the expertise of his Japanese gardener and worked with a lab in Langley to get the right soil mix for his plants. As he told MARS members at the January meeting, "remember the words permeability and porosity," that's the essential for all successful container gardening. A lot of experts had given him advice using ordinary soil mixes that biodegrade too quickly. He wanted to move mature trees, including a 100 year-old Japanese maple and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to change the mix every so often. With the help of the Langley lab he settled on 40% white pumice, sand graded but not fine and 30% coconut fiber for organic content because of its long life

So the move finally took place one spring evening with a procession of trucks and trailers carrying his favorite trees and shrubs already root and cloud-pruned, over the Lions Gate Bridge to the condo, where they were lifted by crane to the roof deck. Glen's slides told the story eloquently and viewers gasped at the sight of full-grown trees rising into the air. Included in the move were several mature rhododendrons including a

macabeanum which continued to bloom after the move, several conifers, some of them dwarf and lots of ground covers and perennials.

To keep the weight to a minimum Glen brought in a truckload of tufa rock from the Banff area to edge the beds and contour the koi ponds. His garden now grows in bonsai-like conditions with fertilizing kept to a bare minimum. Now when he looks out onto his garden, he sees his beloved trees and beyond views of the Harbour and Stanley Park where some of his other West Vancouver trees are planted.

As a gift to the mid-island rhodo clubs, Glen donated a small Wollemi Australian Pine, the tree discovered 13 years ago growing in Australia and once believed to be extinct. It dates back 200-million years and MARS and Nanaimo ARS members were asked to place silent bids on it as Glen was speaking in Nanaimo the following night. Both clubs would share in the proceeds. The winning bid was \$269.00 by Dick Beamish of Nanaimo.



### Ken Gibson's Garden February 2005

Ken has a wonderful property in Tofino filled with hundreds of rhododendrons.

**R.prostium** 6', 20'F, VE, 3/3-4/3

Spectacular large leafed, tree like shrub, with foliage that reaches 18"x 9". Young growth covered with greyish yellow indumentum. Mature leaves are lanceolate to oblanceolate, dark wrinkled and impressed with veins on top and indumentum palish green underneath.

Trusses are beautiful holding 20-30 flowers.

Flowers are up to 2' long tubular bell shaped creamy white blushed rose.

(Information taken from the Greer's Guidebook by Harold E. Greer)

## Deadheading By Bill Stipe

Many of the early rhododendrons have finished blooming and should now be "dead-headed". After the flowers have wilted and fall to the ground, the seed capsules start to swell and form a crop of seeds. This act of forming seeds is very energy consuming, and will slow down the other growth processes that should be taking place. In fact, if the seeds are allowed to mature, the plant will most likely not produce a flower bud on that terminal. That means that next year there will be fewer flowers because we did not deadhead when we should have.

The hybrids are particularly susceptible to poor performance when not 'dead-headed' in a timely manner. Most hybrids have been bred (selected) for their ability to produce large quantities of large blooms. If the flower trusses are allowed to set seeds, the energy required to produce those seeds will have a detrimental effect on the plants' ability to survive! The species plants have evolved under conditions where they do not bloom as heavily as the hybrids, therefore they only set enough seeds for the species to survive and prosper.

When to 'dead-head'? It is important to remove the seed head before the seeds start to develop. As soon as the florets start to fall, the truss rhachis is easy to break off. The longer you wait, the tougher it is to snap off. It is also easier to remove if the plant is turgid (being full of water) as in the early morning or during a rain.

The elepidotes, (non-scaly large leaves) are much easier to deadhead than the lepidotes, (scaly small leaves) because the rhachis is longer and easier to grasp between the thumb and forefinger. Although there are some varieties of the elepidotes that have very short rhachises. They are difficult to deadhead without damaging the new buds just below. On these plants, I find it easier to use a needle nose shear (like a grape shear) to cut them off. A grape shear has a long slender blade that will fit between the seed head and the growth buds.

Many people (including myself) do not always 'dead-head' the lepidote varieties. The lepidote's rhachis is much smaller, contains fewer flowers, and is generally located closer together on the stem, which makes it difficult to remove efficiently. I have found it easier to prune off the end of the flowering stem than to try to remove just the seed head like the elepidotes. If you closely inspect the leaves located just below the flowers, you will notice a dormant bud in the axil of each leaf.

There are some negative side effects (to the 'dead-header', not the 'dead-head') from deadheading. The rhachis on most elepidotes exudes a sticky substance that will stick to your fingers like glue. This same substance attracts bumblebees who can become entrapped by it. Many times I have reached in to snap off the 'dead-head', and pinched a bumblebee in the process. If the bee's stinger is not stuck in the glue, you can get a nasty sting on your thumb or finger.

Besides the potential for getting stung, the sticky substance (Eddie Newcomb calls it "Rhachis Gum") is difficult to get off your fingers. Gloves don't work very well for me. Rubber gloves will work, but they don't last long. I find the best solution is to use waterless hand cleaner (like the mechanics use) after a day of 'dead-heading'. [Editor's note: I wonder if the tip given in Bits and Pieces, *R & A News*, number 2, works. Has anyone tried it? BWS]

Another problem is 'dead-heading' the tall varieties. A "cherry-picker" like the power companies have would work great to get to the top of the tall rhododendrons, but let's face it, even a used cherry-picker ladder is more than most of us can afford. An orchard ladder is the best implement, but carries with it some risk. Some one in the age group 16 to 24 can manipulate a 14' ladder pretty good, but the rest of us should probably grow rhododendrons that don't get so high.

That brings up the subject of pruning. Rhododendrons can and should be selectively pruned from time to time. It is difficult to keep 'King George' under 5', but most of the rhododendrons can be kept at a 'dead-headable' height if pruned every year. While in Scotland, we saw many rhododendrons in the 30 to 50 foot range, and they looked bad! But at one garden we saw a mature specimen of rhododendron 'Cynthia' that had a trunk about 6" in diameter, but was only 5' tall. It looked healthy and was full of flower buds. So, get out there and deadhead, and if you can't reach it, prune it.

*(Bill Stipe is Editor of the Whidbey Island Chapter Newsletter. Permission to use materials from Whidbey Island Chapter Newsletters granted.)*

## General Meeting Minute

Wednesday 9th January 2008

**MEETING:** Called to order at 7:30 p.m.

As this was the first meeting of the year after the Christmas party, there were no December minutes.

**GUESTS:** Former members Hank and Terry Poirier were warmly welcomed as guests.

**BUSINESS ARISING:** None

**CORRESPONDENCE:** Newsletter from Victoria Rhododendron Society and two issues of the B.C. Garden Council newsletter.

**REFRESHMENTS:** Barbara Kulla's goodies came from Joyce Ansdell, Jan Kellett and Judy Wood

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Tony Ansdell provided the financial report for the month of December which indicated a total income of \$292.00, expenses of \$174.04 for an overall monthly total of \$117.96. As of Dec. our club is solvent.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Bert Harding said that of Jan. 1 MARS had 78 members, a drop from last year, but later in the evening he added four new members, Bernie and June Mazur and Linda and Paul McPhie.

Wearing his **TRUSS SHOW** hat, he told the audience the first meeting had already been held and he promised to nag members to sign up for volunteer jobs. The date by the way is April 19.

**PROGRAM** Art Lightburn outlined some of the future programs. The always-popular panel is planned for February. Bill Stipe of Whidbey Island will speak in March and Wanda McAvoy is the April speaker.

**GARDEN TOUR:** Art Lightburn said Garden Tour chair Linda Derkach and her committee have already lined up several gardens and a meeting will be held later this month to work on details.

**SPECIES WORKSHOPS:** Art said the Species study program is well under way. Each chapter was allotted a certain number of seats and MARS is fully booked, although there may be some available spaces not filled by other clubs. Anyone interested should contact Art.

**SUNSHINE:** Maria Bieberstein said there were no get-well cards sent this month; everyone is healthy.

**NEW BUSINESS:** John England reported that Cassy Lacouvee has agreed to be club historian. He gave a special thank you to Jean Greig who has done the job for the past several years. He also had special thanks to Ann Robertson for the colorful issues of the Rhodovine.

John told the group that an exchange visit with the Peace Arch club had been proposed and negotiations were ongoing. Mary Parker has agreed to organize a mid-week tour with a one-night sleepover, billeting provided. In time, MARS will return the favor.

The club still needs a meeting coordinator and also a volunteer to help Barbara Kulla with the tea and cookies.

Judy McMaster introduced the recipient of the first MARS-Malaspina bursary, Katelyn van Duin, who thanked the club for helping her buy books for her Horticulture Technician course. Katelyn grew up on a dairy farm in Hilliers and enjoys working outdoors. She is looking forward to working in the horticulture field.

Ann Gutsche wanted members to know how she appreciated the beautiful basket created by Maria Bieberstein that she won at the Christmas party and which is still looking great.

There were several draw prizes during the evening. The door prize was R. Ingrid Mehlquist. Draw prizes were Northern Starburst, Hachman's Marlis and R. proteoides, as well as five pounds of Norm Todd's fertilizer.

Guest speaker for the evening was Glen Patterson from Vancouver who educated and mesmerized his listeners as he talked about creating his rooftop garden. More about that elsewhere in this newsletter.

**Meeting adjourned** at 9:25 pm

John England President

Marilyn Dawson Secretary



**Early morning light**  
**Qualicum Beach Heritage Forest**

## BC Seed Security Project

**Chris Wells**

We would like to introduce your garden club to the [www.bcseeds.org](http://www.bcseeds.org) website. This website was created as an information resource for British Columbian farmers and gardeners looking to purchase BC-grown seed. The main feature of the website is a continually growing database of BC-grown vegetable, flower, and herb seeds. From its initiation in March 2007, it has received over 1500 visitors.

Even though your organization may not be specific to growing vegetables, flowers, and herbs, there is a good chance that many of your members maintain a home food or ornamental garden and would appreciate this database. Your group's members may also be able to contribute to the database with root stocks, cuttings, or other potential plants that they would like to make available to the public.

The [www.bcseeds.org](http://www.bcseeds.org) website was started by a small group of farmers and organizers now called the BC Seed Security Project and are operated as part of the programming of Farm Folk City Folk, based in Vancouver. More information is available on the website.

Gardeners, farmers, and seed growers throughout BC can benefit greatly from this database. Buying BC-grown seeds helps your local seed growers maintain viable small scale businesses, while your own gardens can benefit from quality-grown, regionally adapted seeds. And with a wide range of seeds available, there are many interesting new varieties and reliable old favorites to choose from. We hope you can pass word onto your members about this great new database – an important resource for BC farmers and gardeners looking to keep their seed purchases in BC. You may also have some seed growers within your organization or membership who may wish to list their seeds, free of charge, on the database.

If you have a membership newsletter, I would also be happy to send you a short (100 words or so) article about the website and database if this would make it easier for you.

Please feel free to contact us, visit the website if you have any questions.

## This Months Panel

**Terry Richmond:**

A charter member of MARS, Terry has been involved with rhododendrons since the 1980s when his parents moved to a property with lots of them. At the Rhodo show in April, he is a familiar face busily selling plants that he has been growing for years. Terry, who holds the ARS bronze medal, is a fount of knowledge and is always willing to share it. He will be discussing fertilizer.

**Gerry Babiy:**

Many will know the face, but maybe not the name. Gerry and her husband are the owners of Arrowsmith Greenhouses on the Alberni Highway and they are known by club members for their collection of rhodos, perennials and their hanging baskets. Gerry grew up in Vancouver, but a job transfer landed her husband and her in Victoria in 1988. They bought an old garden centre and eventually opened Arrowsmith Greenhouses in 1994. It's a family business and now has five employees with many years of experience. Gerry will talk about the retail aspect of plants.

**Kathy Claxton**

A very knowledgeable Master Gardener who has been a member of our club and has worked at Arrowsmith Greenhouses **six** or more years.



**A stroll in Qualicum Beach Heritage Forest.**

*Happy  
Valentine's Day*