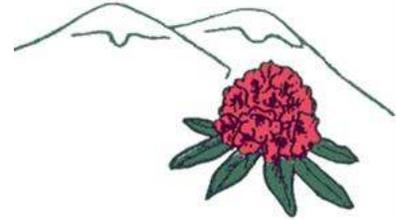


THE RHODOVINE



THE MOUNT ARROWSMITH
RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

MARS
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Garden Tour – Ken Jones

Greeter - Velda Rhodes

Historian - Cassy Lacouvee

Library – Donna deBoer

Meeting Coordinator- Tony Ansdell

Membership – Bert Harding

Milner Gardens - John England

Plant Sale – Marilyn Dawson

Program Chair - Ann DeBrincat

PR - Marilyn Dawson

Refreshments - Anne Gutsche

Sunshine - Judy McMaster

Door Prize - Sandra Hemsworth

Truss Show –

Ways & Means - Don Bridgen

This Month:

New Hybrids from Oregon, Washington and California is our October presentation by Mike Stewart – an entertaining and knowledgeable speaker. Mike has held many positions in the American Rhododendron Society including President. He is currently Vice-President of the Rhododendron Species Foundation. He and his wife Maria own Dover Nursery in Oregon which will be one of the vendors coming to the Nanaimo 2012 fall convention.

If you want to see more of Mike's presentations, the NIRS program on Tuesday, October 11 will be Species Deciduous Azaleas of North America. Contact Dave Godfrey at davegod@shaw.ca for more information. The Nanaimo RS program in October will be Dwarf Rhododendrons Species and their Hybrid Relatives. Contact Glenda Barr glenda_barr@telus.net for more information.



This magnificent bloomer is *Calluna vulgaris* 'Elsie Purnell' gracing the garden of Anne and George Gutsche.

MARS Meetings

Qualicum Beach
Civic Centre
2nd Wednesday of the
month 7:30 pm

Next Meeting
12th October 2011



Eucryphia x nymansensis 'Nymansay' – a stunning beauty just now finishing in the garden of Ken Gibson in Tofino.

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From Your President...

This month's meeting is a very special one, so please attend if at all possible – and for two very good reasons. First, we have a special speaker, Mike Stewart. Mike and his wife Maria own and operate the Dover Nursery. Mike's own description of the nursery follows...

"My wife Maria and I own the Dover Nursery where we grow over 1,000 varieties of rhododendrons including deciduous azaleas and species and hybrid rhododendrons. We have been producing rhododendrons for the past 34 years. We supply 70 retail garden centers around the United States [and some in Canada], both east coast and west coast. Our emphasis is on growing rhododendrons that we consider to be very high quality varieties. We do a fair amount of testing of new hybrids for several of the west and east coast hybridizers, and we only introduce those varieties that we consider to be worthy. We do all our own propagation. Our facility includes 30 acres of field grown plants and over 2 acres of greenhouses. We produce both field and container grown rhododendrons. Although we are a wholesale nursery, we always enjoy visitors and will gladly give tours through the nursery and display garden. Rhododendron Society members are welcome to purchase plants."

Mike has also been a Research Foundation Trustee, Membership Chairman, Vice-President, and from 2003 to 2005, President of the American Rhododendron Society. He is currently Vice-President of the Rhododendron Species Foundation. Mike will be speaking to us on the subject of new hybrids. This is clearly a talk not to be missed.

Secondly, as in past years, Briggs Nursery has extended a challenge to each chapter of the ARS to increase their membership by 10%. Those chapters that achieve this will get a donation of a flat of rhododendrons. For the

second year in a row, we have met this challenge and will get the flat.

As I write this, we have not received a confirmation of the delivery date but if it works like last year, the rhododendrons should arrive before the next MARS meeting in October.

We will distribute the plants as we did last year. At the end of the meeting we will have a draw for each member to choose a plant. Those eligible to have their names in the draw will be MARS full members who are present at the meeting and have paid their membership fee for 2012. There will be one plant per membership. When all the members present have chosen their plants, we will continue the draw for members who are not at the meeting until all the plants are gone.

Should the plants not arrive in time, we will have the draw at our November meeting.

Tony

Dates to Remember

October 11 – David Sellers at QB Civic Centre on **Joy of Sax**; 2:00 to 3:30 pm; Admission by donation.

October 23 – Ron Berezan speaking on **Permaculture Gardens and Landscaping** at Parksville Community Centre; 10:30 to 4 pm; \$10 until October 7; \$15 at the door.

October 31 - Paul Spriggs building a **Crevice Garden at Eswyn's Garden at Nanoose Place**; Admission by donation; 8:00 am to 3:00 pm

December 10 – MARS Christmas Party

Kalmias – Amiable Companions for Rhododendrons

About 25 years ago, I discovered the Mountain Laurel – *Kalmia latifolia*. I placed my treasure next to *Rhododendron* ‘Cunningham’s White’ and under a yellow plum, and for about 20 years they were fast friends.



I loved my kalmia – dark green, evergreen leaves, no pests or bugs, and massive sprays of tiny white flowers all through winter – a lovely addition to Christmas wreaths and bouquets. Then that horrible winter of 2007 struck, and by spring my kalmia - now about 20 feet tall poking its head out from the top of the plum tree - was a shadow of its former self – brown-leafed and ugly. Fortunately, I had taken off-shoots and cuttings, so that when I finally took the decision to remove it, my heart was not too broken. The loss of a plant is also an opportunity to do something different – but it did not include a kalmia.



Kalmia ‘Olympic Wedding’

Fast forward to June 2011, when several of us journeyed to Haida Gwaii, the home of Harry and Gwen Wright in Courtenay. In case you haven’t been there, this magnificent garden is tucked right in the middle of a well-populated residential area – it’s like coming upon Sleeping Beauty’s castle!



Kalmia ‘Pink Charm’

And at once, my love of kalmias was re-ignited! Kalmias are valuable companions for our beloved rhododendrons – blooming when most rhodies are done, and enjoying the same cultural conditions. They are found throughout North America, and grow in moist, humus-rich, acidic soil in part shade, or sun where the soil remains reliably moist. There are seven species of kalmia, with *Kalmia angustifolia* and *K. latifolia* more common in our west coast gardens.

Kalmias are evergreen, slow-growing and suffer few diseases or pests in my experience. Sometimes fungal leaf spots and blight, leaf gall, powdery mildew, weevils, scale, lace bugs and borers may cause problems. I had great success propagating *Kalmia latifolia*. Where it layered itself, digging out the rooted cutting and potting it up was very easy and very successful. Offspring of my old *Kalmia latifolia* still thrive in the gardens of many friends and family via this method. You can also help rooting along by making a small cut in a low branch, staking it down to the ground and waiting till roots form. As well, cuttings taken in late spring or midsummer can be successful.



Kalmia 'Olympic Fire'

Back to Haida Gold where the kalmias thrive in the care of the Wrights, and where so many gorgeous varieties delight the eye. Instantly, I was back in England 2004 and on a visit to Scotney Castle, a magnificent National Trust property in Lamberhurst, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. An early June visit there rewarded us with a glorious display of hundreds of blooming kalmias, along with medieval castle ruins and an enormous and elegant Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*) reflected in the castle moat. It is a sight I shall never forget... and I have longed to return. But now I don't have to! If you want to be delighted by this reliable, varied and magnificent bloomer, just take a trip up island to Haida Gold in June – you will not be disappointed.



Kalmia 'Nancy' with her unopened blossoms resembling sugar candies.

Story and Photos by Linda Derkach

I asked Harry Wright the secret to his success with kalmias. Here is what he had to say:

"Many years ago I bought a flat of kalmias in 2 1/4 " pots from Les Clay and all the books said they grow well with rhododendrons, enjoying the same conditions, which may be true, but they sure didn't respond the same for me. So after babying them for about five years and not being too impressed I informed them that they were going to be put into the landscape.

Well, they pouted for a couple of years and realizing that this was as good as it was going to get, finally started rewarding us. And every June for the last fifteen years or so they have really been putting on a beautiful display.

The branches are a bit more fragile than rhododendrons and the odd year they have received some snow damage, but they are certainly well worth growing, and like rhododendrons, perform best when receiving at least a half day of sun."

Project: Inventory of Rhododendron Varieties in BC

Many years ago I started a project which included collecting rhododendron names and their locations in BC gardens. So far I have 125 gardens listed with an inventory of over 4,000 varieties.

I would like to update my list for the Western Regional Conference in Nanaimo in 2012.

At this time I am asking those who have already sent me their inventory to please update it. Further, I am requesting that those who have not sent me their inventory to please consider participating in this very worthwhile project.

I will accept garden inventories during all of 2011. This will give me time to compile the information before the conference in September of 2012.

Many thanks – and I look forward to hearing from you.
Harry Wright
250-338-8345
Email haidaau@shaw.ca

The General Meeting of MARS was held at the Civic Centre in Qualicum Beach, on Wednesday, September 14 at 7:30 pm.

Minutes of the May meeting were approved as published in the Rhodovine.

Refreshments: Anne Gutsche, Barbara Kulla, Marilyn Dawson

Guests: Harry and Gwen Wright, Dave and Noni Godfrey.

New Member: Yvonne Derksen

BUSINESS ARISING: 1. Because there was no quorum at the May meeting when annual elections are usually held, an election will be held at the end of this meeting for one Director.

2. Tony Ansdell said here is still a need for a Vice-president. He urged members to consider this post as a stepping stone to becoming President next year when current Executive terms expire.

3. Tony also stressed the need for a committee chair for the Truss Show. Most of the committee is in place, but a coordinator is needed.

CORRESPONDENCE: The two latest issues of the B.C. Council of Gardens (not on the internet); a letter from Diana Scott of NIRS thanking MARS for organizing a garden tour last spring for a busload of enthusiasts from Comox; a warm note of praise and thanks from a Maple Ridge couple for our Mother's Day Garden Tour. Q.B. Chamber of Commerce seeks a donation for the upcoming Gala auction; a letter of thanks from Erin Duke, the second recipient of the MARS-VIU bursary.

MEMBERSHIP: Bert Harding said he would be accepting membership dues, still kept to \$30 a year, most of which goes to support MARS membership in the American Rhododendron Society.

TREASURER: Bert said the club is in a good financial position, thanks to the spring fund-raisers which help to pay such bills as room rent, storage, speakers' fees and expenses.

NEWSLETTER: Editor Linda Derkach urged members to send her photographs of their plants, at this time of year focusing on fall foliage, including the non-blooming foliage of rhododendrons. She welcomed submissions and ideas.

GARDEN TOUR: As outgoing chair of the Garden Tour, Linda Derkach said Ken Jones will head up this year's committee. There is still a need for someone to choose the gardens for 2012.

WAYS AND MEANS: Door prize was *Rhododendron fastuosum* won by Carol Hansen. Other prizes were *R. 'Horizon Monarch'* won by Sandra Hemsworth and *R. davidii* won by Kathy Jones.

NEW BUSINESS: 1. Tony Ansdell reported that MARS 2010 membership grew by more than 10 per cent, again qualifying for a shipment of rhododendrons from Briggs Nursery sometime this fall. If they arrive in time, they will be raffled off at the October meeting for those with paid up memberships.

2. Victoria Rhododendron Society is compiling a book of Norman Todd's writing, which is expected to go on sale in November. Interested MARS members should give their names to Marilyn Dawson.

3. It's not too early to mark your calendar for the annual Christmas party at Rotary Hall to be held Saturday, December 10 at 5:30 pm.

4. Terry Richmond brought a list of plants he acquired from Norm Todd's sale. Interested members should contact him before the October meeting.

5. Tony said he had visited the Rhododendron Species Foundation in Federal Way, Wash. during the summer and urged anyone going that way to visit. MARS members get free admittance with our yearly membership. He heartily recommended the bonsai collection.

GUEST SPEAKER: Well-known local birder Mike Yip provided a presentation of backyard birds that had the audience marvelling at the amazing photography. He also brought along calendars and autographed copies of his books for sale.

AGM

At the election after the speaker, Don Bridgen was voted in for a second two-year term as director. Other members of the Executive have another year to serve in their two-year terms.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm



Magnolia grandiflora 'Timeless Beauty' thrives in a pot on the patio of Mary Parker.

Foliage....Just Another Reason to Admire Rhododendrons



Rhododendron 'Neat-O'



R. campanulatum var. *aeruginosum* at Harry Wright's Haida Gold Nursery in Courtenay



R. pachysanthum at Haida Gold



New growth on *Rhododendron makinoi* in a pot at Mary Parker's home. (Photo by Mary Parker)



R. bureavii W.W.C. Form at Haida Gold

Detractors of rhododendrons claim they are only interesting for a few weeks in the spring while in bloom....but clearly they have not seen the fascinating new growth, mysterious indumentum or varied leaf colour present in many cultivars during the rest of the year. Rhododendrons add structure to our gardens in the depths of winter, stand guard over tiny bulbs, and silently offer a reliable backdrop for our summer bloomers!!

Bulbs and Propagation

By Kim Hammond



Now that summer is officially over, it's time to start thinking of next year's show. Hopefully the bulb catalogue you received in July isn't still at the bottom of your reading To Do pile and you have already placed your order. Early orders are far more

likely to be filled without substitutions and you are more likely to get all of your order and not just what is left on the shelves. While you are waiting for that order to arrive give some thought to, if you can bear it, taking a bulb or two of your favourite new arrivals to do some propagation for the future.

We use the term bulb rather loosely in our collective gardening circles. One's immediate point of reference would be the tulip but quite often the term is used in reference to almost anything outside the root form of perennials and shrubs. Inside that collective description lie the two forms of bulb, tunicate and scaled, and the corm, alongside the rhizome, the tuber and the fleshy root.

The best time to propagate bulbs is at the end of their dormant season. To propagate a standard tunicate bulb, you can use the scooped or scored method. Using a melon baller or even a grapefruit knife scoop out the the basal plate of the bulb, exposing all layers



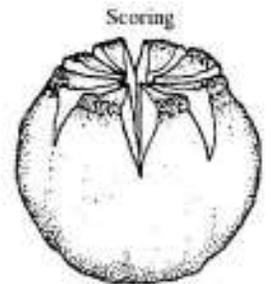
of the leaf structures inside. Dry the bulb, cut scales exposed, in a pot or tray of dry sand. (or only very lightly moistened) Within two to three months bulblets will

form on the newly cut surfaces. Plant the whole thing bulblets up, lightly covered. The following spring will produce a number of leaflets. At the end of the season lift, separate and replant. In three years you will have many new bulbs, free.

The second method is to score the basal plate several times, being sure to cut the leaf scales within (about 1/4 inch). Allow time to dry the bulb - it will open or separate at the cuts, (a day or two) and follow the same procedure of planting the cut bulb upside down, covering lightly and lifting and separating at the end of the next season. This process will work on tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, muscari, and even snowdrops.

Many bulbs will naturally produce smaller offsets which are simply gently separated and planted.

A scale-like bulb such as *Lilium* 'Stargazer' has a visibly more open and fleshy scale structure and is a slightly different process. To propagate the scale-like bulbs, gently fold back or carefully cut a scale ensuring a piece of the basal plate is included. Place in a moistened tray or pot of sandy soil, covering with the tips exposed. You can leave the tray in a cold frame or outside. The following spring small leaves will grow and when dormant again, lift, separate and replant. One other method is to place the cut scales in a baggie of moistened vermiculite until sprouted and then plant.

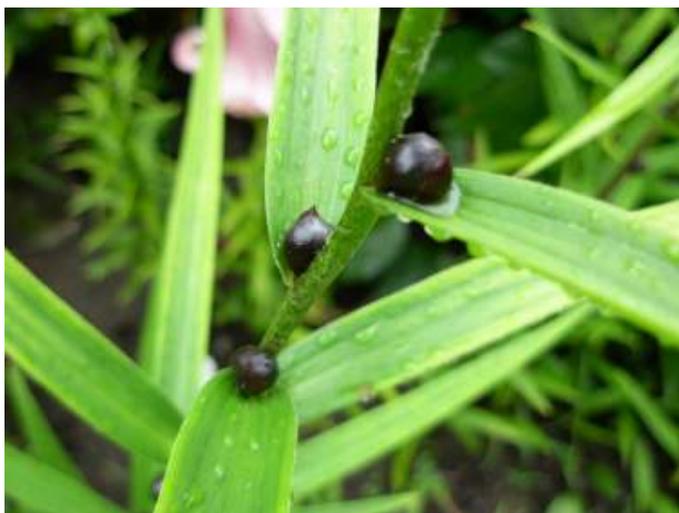


Both of the above methods should be done early in the season for best results, ie. August. Corms like crocosmia, freesias, caladiums and colchicums are very hard and slightly flattened with no visible separation between the layers of scales or leaves. Each year the flowering stem dies off and a new corm forms for the following year. As the corm goes into dormancy it will form cormels or offsets between the old and

newly forming corm. A unique feature of corms is that the deeper they are planted the more cormels are formed. Deeply planted gladiolus have been known to produce over 50 cormels per bulb! So the added bonus of planting them deeply to reduce the need for staking is more free plants. Lift, separate and replant.



Bulbils or tubercules as in the orange Tiger lily form in the axils of the leaves and are usually quite a dark brown or black. They fall off readily and if you pull one off you will see the tiny little root already forming that, once fallen, immediately pulls itself into the ground and is ready for next year. If collected, cover lightly in a tray or section of soil in the garden for a show of lilies in varying ages and heights for years to come.



When all else fails, save viable seeds, and sow in fall, and wait and wait, and wait...

Words and Photos by Kim Hammond, Grower and Groundskeeper at Milner Gardens and Woodland

Books We Love....

Ellen Rothwell relies on The Hillier Colour Dictionary of Trees and Shrubs, by Christopher Brickell, Hillier Nurseries.

Ellen writes: "Here is an exceptional, fundamental reference on companion trees, shrubs, climbers and conifers for the rhododendron enthusiast."

A simplified explanation of plant classification, along with many charts and diagrams, makes this perfect for expanding your knowledge.

Arranged alphabetically, it is easy to use. As it includes twenty-six pages of rhododendron listings and a chart for choosing the best rhododendron, it would be great for a novice.

"Some 3,500 woody plants are listed, with brief descriptive and cultural notes, and over 600 colour illustrations." Great for identifying that flowering tree you've admired in someone else's garden.

Editor's Note: *While this book is now out of print, many reasonably-priced copies can be found on the Chapters website under Used and Rare Books. While first published in the early 90's, most plant names will be current. It is important to note that many plant families have recently had their names changed...further confusing us old-timers!!*



Rhododendron 'Peter Koster' blooming in June at Haida Gold Nursery in Courtenay