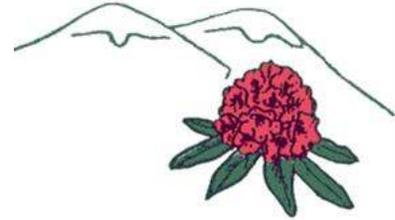


# THE RHODOVINE



**THE MOUNT ARROWSMITH  
RHODODENDRON SOCIETY**

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**PR** - Marilyn Dawson

**Refreshments** - Anne Gutsche

**Sunshine** - Judy McMaster

**Door Prize** - Sandra Hemsworth

**Truss Show** – Glen Jamieson

**Ways & Means** - Don Bridgen

## This Month:

### Rhododendrons

#### from Seed

March is a little too early to plant out tomatoes and hot peppers in the garden, but just fine for starting seeds indoors.

For those who like to start their own baby plants, MARS will be supplying the pots, the “dirt” (sterilized growing medium) and some seeds to grow little rhododendrons.

Rhododendron seed is more like fine powder whether it is from a tiny dwarf or a semi-tropical big-leaf variety. The sprouts take a couple of years to start looking like specimens at a nursery but they are still plenty interesting.

Ann de Brincat has ordered hybrid seed lots from the ARS seed exchange (plenty of mystery as to how they will look) and species seed lots from the Rhododendron Species Foundation (they are careful pollinators so the results should be far more predictable).

Come out and try sowing some fun!

## MARS Meetings

**Qualicum Beach  
Civic Centre  
2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the  
month 7:30 pm**

## Next Meeting

**14<sup>th</sup> March 2012**



*Rhododendron* ‘Olive’ blooms every year in February for Barbara Kulla – and to the delight of all her neighbours and those who drive by.

Photo by Barbara Kulla

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## From Your President...

March is the start of a high activity period for MARS. We have the Truss Show, the Spring Fling and the Garden Tour all within April and May.

For these events to be successful, we need the help of many volunteers. The **Truss Show** needs volunteers for handling and displaying the Trusses for the show, cashiers for the checkouts, volunteers to handle the delivery and pickup of tables and many other duties. Please contact Glen Jamieson to help with this event.

The **Spring Fling** needs donations of plants for sale. As you attend to your garden after the winter, look for plants you can donate. Help with the sale is also welcome. Check with Marilyn Dawson for more information.

Finally, the **Garden Tour** needs sitters at all the gardens. We need volunteers for 48 time periods of 3 hours each. Please contact Ken Jones to volunteer.

We are part way to staffing these events because we have many club members who have already volunteered. Thanks to them all.

These events are important to us all because, without them, we could not operate the club for the next year. All the membership fees we collect go to the ARS so our members can also be ARS members. As a result, we rely on these events to finance MARS operations.

I am very optimistic that these events will go well this year. Hopefully we will have better weather than we had last year, especially for the Garden Tour.

Tony

The Editors reserve the right to edit submissions to the newsletter for purposes of consistency, clarity and space restrictions.

## MARS Tour of West Coast Gardens

Ken Gibson is helping with the planning of our spring trip to Tofino and Ucluelet, but he needs more information in order to do an efficient job.

We have two possible dates and the final decision will be made soon. They are Wednesdays and Thursdays - May 16 and 17 or May 23 and 24. Don Bridgen - who has been helping to co-ordinate this event – knows that some people will want to go for one day, while others will stay overnight.

Tentatively, Ken suggests for the first day that we tour Stubbs Island, the Gibson garden and several others in the Tofino area, squeezing in lunch at some point. He will arrange accommodation for those who wish to stay overnight. The following day will include tours of several Ucluelet gardens, including George Fraser's and possibly a beach hike and lunch at Black Rock.

About 20 people have signed up to go by car-pool, some with question marks as they were unsure. We need to know the following:

- **Do you plan to limit yourself to a one-day visit?**
- **Do you plan to stay overnight?**
- **Do you need accommodation?**

These questions will be put to MARS members at the March meeting. If you can't be at the meeting, please email Marilyn Dawson with your answers. And if you haven't signed up but intend to go, let her know also at [dawsom@shaw.ca](mailto:dawsom@shaw.ca)

Ken has been very gracious in offering to line up an interesting tour, so the more information we can give him, the better it will be.

Thanks to Marilyn Dawson for this article.

# Spring Fling

## Saturday, May 5

Spring Fling - MARS' annual sale of members' garden plants - is part of a town-wide celebration this year. Sale date is **Saturday, May 5** at the Qualicum Beach Community Hall. Outside is the Farmers' Market on Veterans' Way and along the streets uptown everyone will be taking part in the Fire and Ice Festival.

To top it off, the town of **Qualicum Beach is marking its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2012** so there may be other events as well. With all those extra people in town (Fire and Ice always draws a crowd) we may have a chance to present our sale to a wider audience than usual.

**At this point what can be done?** MARS takes up a good size space in the hall but doesn't need all of it. Tables are available for \$15 to like-minded groups, craft groups and home hobbyists. Last year there were tables selling annuals and other plants - jams and jellies, baked goods, jewelry and pottery. Some of them are part of the Farmers Market and will likely be outside this year. MARS members are urged to pass the word along to friends and relatives. Who knows? There might be a budding entrepreneur in the family.

### What sells and what doesn't:

- All plants should be in **clean containers, trimmed neatly**, roots clipped if necessary so they don't protrude.
- **Plants should be tidied up**; bug-bitten leaves do not sell. Think "would I buy this plant?" If the answer is no, that's a good indicator that some improvement is needed.
- **No invasives** please and that includes periwinkle.
- The emphasis should be on **the unusual or tried and true old favorites**. Japanese maples, dwarf anything, pieris and hostas

are all good sellers, as are organic and/or heritage tomato plants.

- **Label plants**. Named plants bring a higher price. Include color. Note if it is tender.
- **Some grasses sell well**, but they have to look good. Some grasses are slow to show new growth in the spring. Leave them at home.
- **Forget about day lilies** unless the color is highly unusual. Asiatic lilies sell well.

Look around your garden and see what needs to be divided or thrown out. Most gardeners have plants they want gone to make room for something else. Dig them and pot them up. Someone else may have space for them.

Think outside the box: put a mini planter together with volunteer plants from your garden or from the remnants of a fall planter. Last year, for example, plants that had outgrown a small dish-garden were recycled, some individually in larger containers, others clumped together with colourful grass.

**Coordinators for the Spring Fling are Barbara Kulla and Marilyn Dawson.** If you are in doubt about what to bring, or need more information - ask them. Anyone interested in selling tables for the event see either coordinator.



A sure sign of spring, these hellebores in a Salt Spring Island nursery are jostling for new homes.

Text by Marilyn Dawson  
Photo by Barbara Kulla

## Ask an Expert....

Have you been wandering around your garden....thinking about spring and all the work ahead....and wondering how you can snag one of those blue ribbons at our annual Rhododendron Show and Sale???

We asked Al and Maria Bieberstein – noted experts and knowledgeable growers of many fine rhododendrons and their companions:

**Is there anything we can be doing this month to get our rhododendrons into good shape for the truss show??**

### **Maria and Al's response:**

We have had a nice, mild winter – so far – no snow breakages to speak of and we shouldn't be suffering from bud blast due to unexpected frost. So...keep your fingers crossed.

Don't forget to make sure your plants get lots of water. You think that the rain will do the job, but under trees it is quite dry. A good soaking wouldn't hurt.

And while you are looking carefully at your rhododendrons, look for that perfect truss potential - clean foliage, nice circumference of leaves around your bud, and hopefully, it will open in time for the show. Hang a little tag or ribbon on your choice and then hope for the best.

At our house, we clean up under our rhododendrons, but others believe in the fallen leaves becoming a mulch. I like the clean look that doesn't harbour any bugs under the plants.

Otherwise there doesn't seem to be any tried or true way of hurrying the blooms along.

To whet your appetite for the rhododendron season just around the corner, here are some fabulous blooms found in the garden of Maria and Al Bieberstein last May during our tour for the North Island RS.



*Rhododendron 'Phyllis Korn'*



*Rhododendron 'George's Delight'*



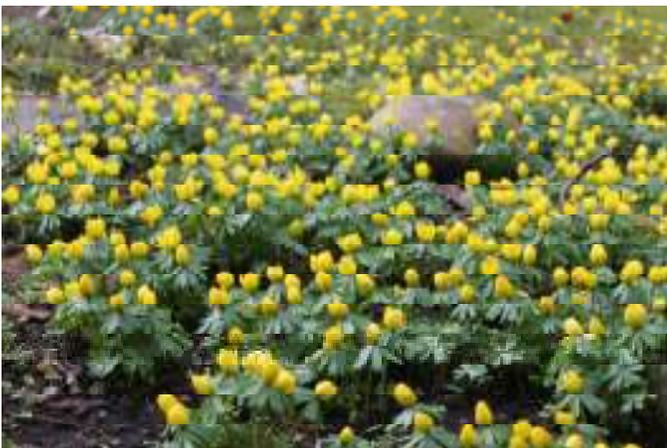
*Rhododendron 'Anna' x yak*

# Winter Walk in Milner Garden

Before the mercury dropped to three degrees today in mid-February, my daughter and I took up the Milner invitation to walk among the snowdrops in the garden. We were delightfully surprised, and found many brave winter bloomers to brighten up this dreary day.



*Rhododendron* 'Hummingbird' is a huge shrub at Milner, with many buds anxious to bloom very soon.



This patch of *Eranthis hyemalis* (Winter Aconite) has likely been spreading for decades – here under deciduous trees at Milner. An extraordinarily early bloomer, it quietly spreads and grows and mixes well with snowdrops. A member of the Ranunculaceae family, it can sometimes be confused with the perennial buttercup weed. So be careful when weeding at this time of year – this is a rare plant to treasure.



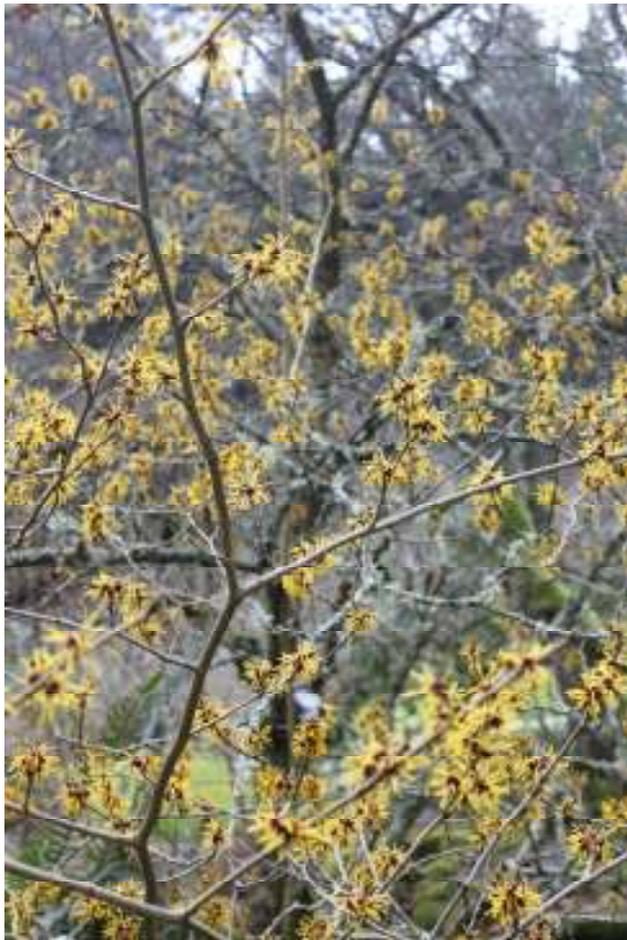
This clump of *Helleborus foetidus* is in full bloom right now and very healthy indeed. A reliable winter-blooming evergreen, *H. foetidus* produces many cymes of bell-shaped green flowers – stunning in a large grouping - and known to be deer resistant.



This very old and fragrant *Viburnum farreri* is covered with pink blossoms over a skirt of *Galanthus nivalis* (snowdrops) - happy to multiply under deciduous shrubs or trees. Sunlight pours in during late winter, and then the deciduous leaves provide a cool and shady spot for snowdrops to sleep through the hot summer. *Galanthus nivalis* is particularly good for naturalizing and spreading. There is much debate as to whether it is best to plant these bulbs in the fall or transplant "in the green" after blooming. Experts warn about damaging growing roots if transplanting in late spring, so do it carefully and quickly. Or wait until the green leaves have withered and try transplanting then.



Beauty can be found almost anywhere in a garden – here moss clinging to the bare branches of *Magnolia stellata*, buds almost ready to burst forth once again.



This fine – and very old specimen of *Hamamelis mollis* (Witch Hazel) - is now a huge tree, absolutely covered with blossoms to brighten the gloom. If you don't have one in your garden, you are missing a winter delight. Most witch hazels available today are a cultivar

of *H. x intermedia* - a cross between *H. mollis* and *H. japonica*. Two standouts are *H. 'Jelena'* (copper-orange blossoms) and *H. 'Arnold Promise'* (gold blossoms). Witch hazels can gracefully preside over a carpet of Winter Aconite or *Iris reticulata*. And as a bonus, the fall colour is brilliant!



Mahonia with its sprays of usually fragrant yellow flowers is common in many gardens now – evergreen through winter and blooming very early. They can provide nectar for early bees that may be around.



*Viburnum davidii* has become so common that it is often passed over for more exotic cultivars. This fine specimen at Milner has metallic blue berries still clinging under the leaves at the same time as new blooms are getting ready to show off.

Text and photos by Linda Derkach



The **Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society** has organised another exciting two-day tour of special gardens of the Vancouver area on May 11 and 12 - peak blooming times for rhodos and many other plants in several impressive private and public gardens. Local garden club members and others will also be joining us. Features planned:

- Deluxe highway coach transportation from downtown Duncan to Vancouver on Friday morning with a return to Duncan on Saturday evening.
- A relaxed cruise over breakfast aboard the *Queen of Oak Bay* from Nanaimo to Horseshoe Bay terminal.
- Visits to some spectacular private gardens in West and North Vancouver including lunch at the beautiful 3 acre Park and Tilford Gardens with 8 separate themed gardens. We'll also visit the impressive UBC botanical gardens and the VanDusen Garden.
- Overnight at the comfortable Delta Airport Hotel and a fun Friday evening in Richmond for a Chinese Hot Pot dinner experience.
- A visit to several specialty nurseries - plant buying opportunities to fill up the bus!
- Return to Duncan via Swartz Bay on BC Ferries *Spirit of Vancouver Island* featuring sumptuous Pacific Buffet dining and their decadent dessert bar.

The total cost including all meals except Friday breakfast on the ferry (2 lunches, 1 breakfast, 2

suppers), coffee breaks, garden entry fees, hotel, bus transportation, ferry fares, gratuities and taxes is \$320 per person (double occupancy). Single supplement is \$75 extra. Advance booking is now required to guarantee your seat on this great tour. This is your opportunity for a nice, well organised trip with fellow gardeners and rhodoholics and to see some impressive gardens while enjoying a visit to the lower mainland and we do the driving! CVRS trips have a solid reputation for quality service, food and content.

*Departure will be from the Duncan Train station at 7 am on May 11 with a return by bus to the Duncan train station by 8 pm on May 12.* Participants should be in good physical condition but the sites are mostly well accessible.

To join the tour you must send a cheque for \$150 per person made out to Bill Dumont, 1753 Peerless Road, Cobble Hill, BC V0R 1L6 by March 20, 2012. Please provide an **email address, street address, postal code and phone number** and advise of any food allergies/requests. Balance will be payable by May 1, 2012. For further information please contact Bill TO CONFIRM at 250-743-9882 or [wedumont@hotmail.com](mailto:wedumont@hotmail.com). This tour will sell out quickly so don't delay in submitting your deposit. First come first served!!



*Here is a fabulous rhododendron with prolific blooms as seen on the North Island RS tour of our members' gardens in Nanoose and Port Alberni last May.*

Minutes of the **MARS General Meeting** held at the Civic Centre in Qualicum Beach on Wednesday, February 8, at 7:30 pm.

**MINUTES** of the previous meeting were approved as published in the Rhodovine.

**REFRESHMENTS:** Provided by Anne Gutsche and Bernie Schmidt

**BUSINESS ARISING:** 1. Tony reported on the fire that destroyed Nita Looijen's home in San Pareil. Nita has been a member for many years. MARS members have offered comfort and moral support and Nita says the home will be rebuilt.

2. Tony urged anyone who has never been to an ARS convention and plans to attend the spring event in Asheville N.C in May to apply for a \$400 subsidy from MARS. There will be a draw if more than one person applies.

3. The lunch being planned for Jim and Jean Greig has been postponed until Jim's health improves.

4. Marilyn Dawson handed out Dates To Remember memos and urged members to pass them out to friends.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** An email from Fraser's Thimble Farm highlights the Hellebore festival Feb. 17-27 on Salt Spring Island.

**TREASURER:** Bert Harding said he had paid a year's storage; by paying in a lump sum, we get the 12<sup>th</sup> month free. He will also be paying MARS membership in the ARS this month.

**PROGRAM:** Ann DeBrincat said the speaker is Agnes Lynn from Victoria who will be talking about the "wonders of wildflowers on the island". In March a workshop is planned and Ann is busy organizing seeds for that night. In April, Duncan nurseryman Bernie Dinter will be the speaker.

**WAYS AND MEANS:** Don Bridgen outlined the night's prizes. Door Prize: *Rhododendron* 'Rosamundi' was won by Marilyn Dawson; *R.* 'Blaney's Blue' was won by Barbara Kulla and *R.* 'Everestianum' by Wolfgang Ruff.

**EVENTS: Truss Show:** Chairman Glen Jamieson said he had hoped to include plants from the Norm Todd and Harry Wright gardens, but that is not possible; otherwise the sellers are lined up and the committee is moving forward with plans for the April 21 event.

**Garden Tour:** Chairman Ken Jones said that 12 gardens are confirmed and next month he will bring the board for sitters to sign up. Some members have already requested specific gardens.

**Spring Fling:** Marilyn Dawson said she and co-chair Barbara Kulla are working on selling tables at \$15 in the Community Hall for the May 5 event. She asked members to pass the word around encouraging craft, baking or gardening groups to take a table.

**Nanaimo Conference Plant Sale:** The conference web site should be up and running by the end of February for the Sept. 21-23 event. Marilyn said that Chris Southwick from the Nanaimo Chapter will visit MARS during the March meeting to provide an update.

**NEW BUSINESS:** 1. Tony told members to be ready to renew their memberships in Milner Gardens and Woodland at the March meeting. He expects a representative will be on hand although he did not have confirmation of that. In the past Milner has offered a special reduced fee at that time.

2. Long-time member Ken Gibson has indicated a willingness to set up a tour of Tofino and Ucluelet gardens and possibly a trip to Stubbs Island. At least 20 people indicated an interest in the trip. Suggested dates were either May 16-17 or May 23-24.

**GUEST SPEAKER:** Agnes Lynn of Victoria provided a spirited presentation entitled Beyond our Gardens with photography provided by her talented husband, Dave. The emphasis was on wildflowers and native plants found all over the island with a multitude of beautiful photos to back her up. Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.