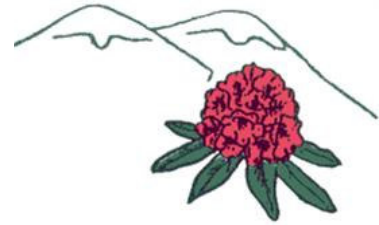


THE RHODOVINE



THE MOUNT ARROWSMITH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

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Sunshine Maria Bieberstein

Truss Show Al Bieberstein

Ways & Means Susan Lightburn



Kew Gardens

Speakers 9th October

MARS members know the Lightburns as active members in the club. Art is past Vice-President and former Program Chair who only developed an interest in rhododendrons about 10 years ago. Since then he's created a series of rhodo beds on his Nanoose property, concentrating on his species collection. Susan, ticket seller and guardian of the monthly prizes par excellence, is known also for her beautiful photos that appear regularly in these pages.

So it was natural that when the Edinburgh Rhodo Conference was held last spring, Art and Susan grabbed cameras and notebooks and headed to Scotland for several weeks. What an excuse to see some of the grand gardens of the British Isles!

Their program tonight features some of those gardens with photos from both Lightburn cameras.

The Lightburns, both retired, have spent their adult life in coastal BC and the lower mainland, raising their family on Queen Charlotte Island and Vancouver Island.

MARS Meetings

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

Next Month's Meeting

Wednesday
Dec. 10, 2008



MARS holds its annual
Pot Luck Christmas Party
Rotary House at the corner of
Beach and Fern in Qualicum
Beach. Details next issue.

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President's Message

Our president is still away and no doubt he and Arlene will have wonderful stories to share with us.

Editor's Corner

Plant Nutrition and Fertilizer

By Terry Richmond

We are fortunate to have Terry as a member of MARS, he has for many years been a lover and grower of Rhododendrons. One of his many projects is ongoing research into the nutrition and fertilization of Rhododendrons. Our Library has a copy of a book containing information that Terry has compiled and articles that he has written. A special thank you Terry for allowing us to share in all your expertise.

Potting up for the spring sale

With the promise of several days of good weather, MARS members are encouraged to look around their gardens and see what they can afford to part with for next springs Oceanside sale. There are usually perennials to divide, plants that need to be moved and always a few volunteers. And if your garden is bare, ask the neighbors if they are throwing anything away. If they are potted up now, they'll have time to get established, maybe even grow a bit, before next spring.

The Oceanside sale is different from the MARS rhododendron show and sale when vendors come from up and down the island. At the Combs sale, we are the vendors and because of that we are able to keep our overhead low. This will be the third year of the sale and Chairman Barbara Kulla hopes that it's bigger and better. Last year members brought in a huge assortment of plants, most of which were sold by Sunday afternoon. They included lilies, hostas, trilliums grown from seed, seedling maples, various perennials and grasses.

Barbara says shoots of "out of the ordinary" perennials are especially welcome. Tag them with a permanent marker. Named plants bring a better price. "If each of us pots up half a dozen good plants, we will have a fine collection for the sale," she said.

If you need pots call Barbara at 250- 752-.7369

Member's corner

October's prize

The special rhodo for the draw is Inkspot, one of those sought-after but hard to find plants. Described as pink to lavender, this hybrid comes from irroratum Spatter Paint x Purple Splendour. Last month's special rhodo, a Ken Gibson hybrid, was won by Tony Ansdell.

New Positions

Arlene Johnston has volunteered to take care of our library and Anne Gutsch the refreshment. Thank you both.

For many reasons we are still looking for volunteers to fill positions to enable our club to run well. You may have talents that you can share with us for program chair, public relations and others. Please contact one of the directors. This is a fun group who work well together.

Something to look forward to as we clean up this fall



Heatherside Beauty
(from Ken Gibson's photo gallery February 2005)

5' , -10F, E, 3/3/3

General Meeting Minutes

Oct. 8, 2008 7:30 pm. at Q.B. Civic Center.

MEETING AT: 7:30 PM. with Vice President Linda Derkach in the Chair. Minutes of the Sept. meeting appeared in the Rhodovine and were accepted as presented. There were no guests.

CORRESPONDENCE: A letter from the Rotary-Chamber of Commerce Gala thanking MARS for its donation of two Garden Tour tickets. Milner Gardens sent thanks for a donation last spring.

REFRESHMENTS: Ann deBrincat and Maria Bieberstein provided goodies for the break.

TREASURER'S REPORT: With Tony Ansdell absence, Marilyn Dawson reported no unusual expenses and that MARS is solvent.

GARDEN TOUR: The Garden Tour in 2009 is chaired again by Linda Derkach. Barbara Kulla and Marilyn Dawson have already toured several gardens. The tour will be concentrated in the area between Eaglecrest and the Alberni Highway. Linda Derkach asked members to e-mail suggestions to Barbara, whose address is bkulla@shaw.ca

TRUSS SHOW: Maria Bieberstein said the Parksville Curling Club has been booked again for the annual Rhodo Show and Sale the date is Sat. April 18 2009

OCEANSIDE GARDEN SHOW: Barbara Kulla told the audience there was still lots of time to pot up plants to get them established over winter for the spring sale in Coombs on April 25 and 26.

MEMBERSHIP: Ann Robertson said dues should be paid now to meet the ARS deadline.

WAYS & MEANS: The door prize R. Grumpy was won by Ruth Harding. Other prizes were: Inkspot won by Wolfgang Ruff, R. augustinii chasmanthum won by Don Bridgen, azalea Nico won by Paul Lawry.

NEW BUSINESS: 1. Art Lightburn told the audience about the phytophthora seminar being held at Beben Park on Oct 27 and had a sign-up sheet for those wanting to carpool. The speaker is Ian Wright of Great Britain, who is speaking to several groups on the coast of the dangers of this disease that is sweeping the British Isles. MARS contributed \$200 for the Nanaimo event.

2. Vice-President Linda Derkach said MARS still needs a Program Chair, who will get pointers from Art Lightburn. He's done the job for three years. We also need someone to organize entertainment for the Christmas Party on Dec. 10.

3. Linda asked the audience how they felt about an earlier start to the meeting, perhaps 7 pm. Amid a few groans, she asked for e-mailed views.

4. Mary Parker asked the executive if they would consider a smaller cozier room for the general meetings. She found it difficult to hear in the current room.

GUEST SPEAKER for the evening was Garth Wedemire, who gave a powerful presentation on Dr. Mike Bales' garden called Lu Zhu. This is a 25-acre property on the eastern side of Mt. Woodside, where Dr. Bales has so far covered about six acres with rhododendrons and other plants. Mr. Wedemire said



he has visited the garden about 10 times in four years, taking more than 1,000 photos of plants often shrouded in mountain mists.

Mike Bale creator of Lu Zhu



MEETING ADJOURNED AT: 9:30 pm
Linda Derkach, Vice-President
Marilyn Dawson, Secretary
Linda Derkach Vice President
at our October meeting.

THE GARDEN VISIT

By Norman Todd

Beverley Nichols advised that when faced with a garden visit and when that inevitable time barrier hits you head-on, trim the edges of the lawn and leave the grass uncut. I don't have any lawn so his advice doesn't help me at all.

I have never - not once - been able to get our place in shape for visitors. I always tell myself that people like coming here because they go home feeling their own garden is Eden compared to ours. As a consequence of the perpetual unmaintained look I try to sound superior about it and call it a 'natural West Coast garden.' It doesn't really fool anyone but it eases my own sensibilities a little.

I am sure you know this line well, but despite its triteness, I find it still works quite effectively. Actually there are two lines - 'You should have been here last week', and 'In two weeks time this will be a blaze of colour' and always have a few horror stories ready. Visitors then think how lucky they are, and they then don't ask so many embarrassing questions.

I usually start by informing them that I carry extra insurance because the place is so dangerous. Then I point out *Rhododendron aureum* which Dr. Koelpin used to try to cure arthritis, which it did a bit, but killed his patients in the process. I also point out the poisonous berries on the *Daphne laureola* and the remains of our Heritage Tree - a native dogwood which needed some dead limbs removed. The butchers who came to do the job misunderstood the arborists' instructions. They thought they were to 'remove the dogwood' when the order was 'remove dead wood.' That gets some sympathy as I lead them past a particularly noxious patch of brambles.

I find it helps to just keep talking - don't give opportunities for questions or comments. Nothing will spoil your day more than when some insouciant visitor tells of his specimen of such-and-such that is twice as big as yours and blooms the whole year. The late Maggie Whitney had a tactic that was pretty drastic but worked well. When someone would say, 'It must be beautiful when everything is in bloom.' She would reply, 'If you don't think it's beautiful now you are not a gardener so 'OUT,' and she would point the way.

But don't use that method right after the 'You should have been here last week' line. It helps a bit if you have some juice or pop or coffee available and some chairs. A lot of visitors will just stay near the refreshments and forget all about going round the garden. Normally I serve the coffee from the greenhouse but last year I had one group - all nice blue-rinse ladies - who came when I wasn't ready for them. My wife was out of town so it wasn't just the garden that was needing maintenance - regardless I just gave them the run of the house.

They found the ugliest spoons and mugs for the coffee and used paper towels instead of napkins. They were in every drawer and cupboard looking for utensils. While I was called away for some other commitment, they fended for themselves just fine.

One thing I have observed is that a surprising number of visitors arrive with full bladders. The coffee station has some consequences to it too, which should be borne in mind. So this year we are going to build a toilet that is accessible without going through the whole house. I say ours is a private garden and by that I mean that some of us can remedy the bladder problem en plaine air but that is not satisfactory for all guests, so one has to be prepared to offer other arrangements.

If you really want to put on the dog, think about charging admission. This will bring you a lot of respect I have noticed. People will talk in hushed tones when going around. You can say the admission is for a charity if you want the voices to be even more hushed. However, paying people will stay longer to get their moneys' worth and more will come with bigger pockets to take home samples. This spring I took pride in four little plants of *R. recurvoides*. After one noisy visitation, I had three and after the next there were two. A lot of garden visitors know their 'onions.'

Some garden owners ask visitors to sign the guest book. We don't have one. We are waiting to get an autograph that is really worth something before investing in a fancy album. But it has the advantage of giving you a record of who might have made off with the prize *R. proteoides*.

I think it is important to wear grubby clothes when taking people round the garden. It shows you are a worker and closer to Lady Chatterly than most of the observers. I always look at peoples' hands. If they are not as dirt engrained as mine, I write them off as being theoretical gardeners only. From experience, I now know that it will be impossible to get the place in shape for the Royal Visit so I don't worry about it anymore. You will no doubt be asked to show off your garden this year as members of our club just love coming to criticize all your hard work. Remember that you can be the visitor in many more gardens than you can be the host, so just check that you have something to drink and a convenient toilet and if you have a lawn do the edges first.

(Norman Todd is ARS Director-at-Large and is a member of Victoria Chapter. Permission to use was granted by Alec McCarter, Editor of Victoria *Rhododendron* Society Newsletter and was sent by email message to be used in this newsletter.)