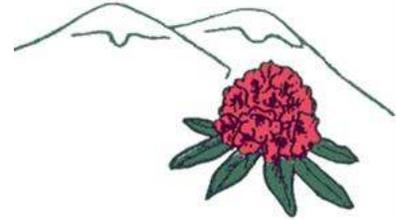


THE RHODOVINE



THE MOUNT ARROWSMITH
RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

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MAY 2011

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Meeting Coor

Membership - Bert Harding

Milner Gardens - John England

Plant Sale - Barbara Kulla

Program Chair - Ann DeBrincat

PR - Marilyn Dawson

Refreshments - Anne Gutsche

Sunshine - Judy McMaster

Tickets - Sandra Hemsworth

Truss Show - Maria & Al

Bieberstein

Ways & Means - Don Bridgen

This Month

Wednesday, May 11

Would you like to tour some marvelous gardens but don't wish to contribute to the carbon footprint of a long airline trip or incur a bothersome credit card bill?

This month we take a virtual tour of Vancouver's UBC Botanical Gardens and VanDusen Botanical Gardens. They are close by and incorporate a wide range of garden styles. Oh yes, and both have plenty of rhododendrons!

May's program provides a taste of both gardens to get you eager to plan your visit to Vancouver. Photography and technical support provided by Quacktacluar Media.



Rhododendron 'McKee's Blue' blooming now in the garden of Joan and Mike Rich, one of the 13 fabulous gardens on our Garden Tour this year.

MARS Meetings

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

Next Meeting

11th May 2011



If we are lucky, perhaps *Rhododendron* 'Weston's Pink Diamond' will be in bloom for the annual **MARS Mothers' Day Weekend Garden Tour on May 7 and 8.**

Be sure to let all your friends know about this 'not-to-be-missed' event.

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From Your President...

As I write this, we have seen the completion of another successful Rhododendron Show and Plant Sale and the Spring Fling. These shows, like the upcoming Garden Tour, are successful because of the efforts of the organizers and all the volunteers who make them happen. On behalf of MARS, I want to thank you all.

The Garden Tour is about to happen and I hope everyone who is able is contributing by volunteering to sit at one of the gardens. The job is to greet our visitors, make them feel welcome and in this way spread the word about MARS and provide a welcome and valued community service.

To those who have contributed, I know you will have been thanked at one of the world renowned event Pot Lucks but, again..... "Thank you from MARS!"

Tony



Our hard-working Secretary, Marilyn Dawson was one of the lucky Raffle winners at the Show and Sale.

Photo by Barbara Kulla

Ask an Expert.....

Linda Asks: Mary – how on earth do you produce rhododendron trusses with so many flower heads???

Answer from Mary Parker:

These are called 'Hammerheads' and my friend Garth says it is the fertilizer mix that I use. The recipe follows:

Using a 250 ml cottage cheese container as a scoop.....mix together:

- 2 scoops canola meal
- 2 scoops alfalfa meal
- 1 scoop dolopril lime
- 1 scoop bone meal
- 1 scoop commercial (Green Leaf) Rhododendron food
- 1 scoop granular moss killer
- 1 scoop Epson salts

I fertilize at the end of February or beginning of March and then a couple of times later I sprinkle just Epson salts. I never fertilize after they bloom.

If they have chlorosis, I use a liquid iron. I find that for rhodies in pots, the iron gets leached out but they are better in pots than in my clay soil.



The gorgeous, lush blooms of *Rhododendron* "PJM" on the balcony at Mary Parker's.

Photo by Mary J. Parker

Rhododendron Show and Sale a Success

No doubt about it, the Rhododendron Show and Sale was a singular event. For April 16, the day was cold and an icy wind was blowing a gale off the Salish Sea. And of course, life in the Parksville Curling Rink felt like working in a walk-in freezer. Nevertheless, stalwart MARS members were unfazed as they entered their blooms, or partial blooms for the judges' table. There was a lot of laughter mixed with groans at the quality of bloom and, compared to other years, the lack of entries. Last year four tables were filled with entries in a colourful display; this year with spring being at least three weeks late entries only took up two and a half tables.

The red category, usually large with lots of 'Taurus' and 'Grace Seabrooks', was small with only a few entries. The category Colour Collection that takes in yellow-orange colours did not exist. Nevertheless, judges Chris Southwick and John Deniseger of the Nanaimo Chapter took their jobs seriously, looking carefully at each entry. Here are the winners:

Blue Collection: 1. 'Muncaster Mist'- Tom Hill; 3. 'Black Satin'- Linda Derkach. **Foliage:** 1. 'Lemon Dream'- Marilyn Dawson; 2. 'PJM'- Barbara Kulla; 3. 'Sir Charles Lemon' - Lorne Hepting. **Lax Truss:** 1. 'Fred Robbins' - Lorne Hepting; 2. 'Whispering Rose'- Anne Gutsche; 3. 'Maureen'- Anne Gutsche. **Pink:** 1. 'Rosamundi' - Maria Bieberstein; 2. 'PJM' - Barbara Kulla; 3. 'Rose Elf' - Joan Cavers. **Red:** 1. 'Grace Seabrook'- Tom Hill; 2. 'Grace Seabrook' - Judy Millicheap; 3. 'Fred Robbins'- Lorne Hepting. **White:** 1. 'Boddaertianum'- Joan Rich, 2. 'Sir Charles Lemon' - Tom Hill; 3. 'Ptarmigan' - Linda Derkach. **Species- large leaf:** 1. *R. pachytrichum* - Tom Hill. **Species- small leaf:** 1. *R. fimbriatum* - Marilyn Dawson; 2. *R. dauricum* - Linda Derkach; 3. *R. ciliatum* - Joan Cavers. **Spray:** 1. 'Mary Fleming'- Maria Bieberstein; 2. 'PJM' - Maria Bieberstein,

3. 'Blue Diamond' - Judy Millicheap.
Protected: 1. 'Else Frye' - Maria Bieberstein.

Tom Hill won Best in Show - Large Leaf with his 'Grace Seabrook' and Lorne Hepting took Best in Show - Small Leaf for 'Fred Robbins'. The fragrant 'Else Frye' won Popular Choice.

At the pot luck at the Biebersteins' that evening, Al and Maria were high in their praise for all the work done by the volunteers. And everyone present added a vote of thanks to the young cadets who performed the valuable task of helping shoppers to their cars and bringing back the carts, avoiding what in previous years has been a frantic search for carts in the parking lot.

Many thanks to all the MARS Members who arose at 6:00 am, stood in the cold arena at the cash desk and the registration desk, or sold raffle tickets. Thanks also to the folks who organized the event, set up and took down tables and found wonderful prizes for our raffle!

While this event is a lot of work, it is much appreciated by our communities from Nanoose to Bowser and from Port Alberni to Qualicum Beach.

Marilyn Dawson



Show organizer - Maria Bieberstein (right) confers with Joan Rich and Marilyn Dawson. Thanks also to Al Bieberstein for organizing this year's event.

More pictures from the Show and Sale....



Despite the cool spring that kept many of our favourite rhododendrons home, many fine trusses were displayed at our show and sale.



Kay Burgoyne and Judy Wood - all bundled up at 7:30 am - greet volunteers and their trusses for the show.



MARS members Don Bridgen and Terry Richmond help out at the annual Rhododendron Show and Sale every year.

A Poem Worth Knowing...

This poem by Ralph Waldo Emerson celebrates the beauty of *Rhododendron canadense*, a native North American deciduous azalea with pink/mauve/purple flowers that open before the leaves and is usually no more than three feet high. It grows in the east, from New Jersey and Pennsylvania, north to Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes and Labrador. It is found in damp and swampy places.

The Rhodora

by Ralph Waldo Emerson

On being asked, Whence is the flower?

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,

I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.

The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,

And court the flower that cheapens his array.

Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,

Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew:
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me there
brought you.

Many thanks to Joan Rich for this contribution to our newsletter.

Spring Fling a Winner

What a gorgeous day to launch the Spring Fling! MARS members did themselves proud last Saturday donating an enormous number of plants that were snapped up in a hurry at the sale at the Qualicum Beach Community Hall.

“It looks like we did as well on one day as two days in Coombs two years ago,” said co-chair Marilyn Dawson, who with Barbara Kulla organized the event. Treasurer Bert Harding will have the final number probably by the May meeting.

With at least three other garden sales on that day in the area, Spring Fling had stiff competition, but by mid-morning volunteers were hearing good things. “You have the best stuff of all the sales,” said one woman, as she picked over the plants spread out over three tables and along the floor.

Volunteers did a tremendous job. “We had the best help we’ve ever had,” said Barbara. “A lot of people pitched in.” The muscle men arrived early to set up tables (and those tables are heavy); then the plants started arriving - a vast array of perennials, shrubs, a few rhododendrons, heritage tomatoes, two attractive containers with oriental greens and much more. There was the unusual and the ordinary and they were snapped up quickly by shoppers who had keen eyes for bargains.

Both Barbara and Marilyn send a huge vote of thanks to all those who took the time to pot up plants and donate them, help with sales, set up and clean-up. Their efforts helped make the sale the success it was.

Marilyn Dawson



MARS Members Barbara Kulla, Marilyn Dawson and Maria Bieberstein early Saturday morning setting up and organizing plants for the sale.



As the morning wore on, more and more plants arrived with our generous members for enthusiastic customers to carry off.



Lots of folks found our Spring Fling partners interesting – local entrepreneurs selling veggies, bread, jewellery, shell crafts, bonsai and perennials enjoyed a brisk business.

Photos by Barbara Kulla

Mt. Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society

Meeting held at the Civic Centre in Qualicum Beach on Wednesday April 13, at 7:30 pm

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

Refreshments: Provided by Anne Gutsche

BUSINESS ARISING: None

CORRESPONDENCE: The two DVDs, ordered from the ARS, have arrived. They will be used at a meeting in case the speaker doesn't arrive and later will be put in the library for lending.

MEMBERSHIP: Bert Harding says we have 96 members and a total of 58 memberships.

TREASURER: Bert said the club is in a good financial position for this time of year when expenses are higher and revenue from our three fundraisers is yet to come.

PROGRAM: Ann DeBrincat said plans for the May meeting are in the works, but nothing concrete as yet.

TRUSS SHOW: Maria Bieberstein as co-chair with husband Al, urged members to bring whatever trusses they had to the show on Saturday. The long cold spring has caused a lot of the usual blooms to still be in bud form and there was a danger that the judging table would be sparse. The signage is in place and most vendors will be at the rink.

GARDEN TOUR: Linda Derkach said there is still a need for a few sitters for the Mothers' Day Weekend event, a great tour of San Pareil and Nanoose properties. Crews are in place to erect highway and public signs, and for our newly-painted garden signs. As Rhodovine editor, she asked for photos of members' plants, offering to photograph them herself, if necessary.

WAYS AND MEANS: Don Bridgen said the draw prizes included *R.* 'Hansel', *R.* 'Purple

Gem', frog labels and a selection of perennials, including cyclamen, from speaker Bill Bischoff and his wife Carla.

NEW BUSINESS: 1. Maria Bieberstein gave a short talk on preparing trusses for judging, pointing out the need to tidy up the bloom and remove excess leaves (but not too many). She went over the process of registering and placing blooms in bottles provided for new members. Look over the list of categories and if you have nothing in bloom, look at the foliage and see what can be entered. It is also important to be on time. Entries brought in after 8:30 am will not be judged but placed on the Exhibition Table.

2. Back in 1995, Harry Wright of the North Island Chapter edited Rhododendron Varieties and Their Locations in B.C. and he is now in the process of updating it to have ready for the 2012 ARS Convention in Nanaimo. John England told members who have an established named rhododendron and don't mind cuttings or pollen being taken from it, to send the information to Harry by this fall, either by email or post.

GUEST SPEAKER: Bill Bischoff, President of the Fraser South Chapter, gave a spirited and amusing presentation of his award-winning garden that he tends with his wife Carla. Photos showed the progression from the beginning to the more mature present, with plants of all kinds crammed into what he called the "usual urban lot". With a good many plants in pots placed around the garden, one questioner wondered about the watering schedule; it had to be by hand. Was there time for anything else in the heat of summer? The answer: Not really.

At the end of the meeting, Tony announced the winner of the ARS Convention draw: Barbara Kulla will receive the \$400 subsidy after she attends the convention in Vancouver, Wash. next month. The grant is open to members who are going, but have never been to an ARS convention before.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm

Favourites from Ken Gibson...



Rhododendron barbatum in the Tofino garden of Ken Gibson.

Blooming now in Qualicum...



Rhododendron 'Linda'



Rhododendron dauricum sempervirens



Rhododendron 'Cilpinense' is an early bloomer.



Rhododendron 'Shamrock'

Garden Journal

From your Newsletter Editor....

I love rhododendrons as much as the next gal....but there are lots of other charming and useful plants that are not only good companions to our rhodies, but provide much-needed colour and interest while waiting for our favourites to bloom.



For the many areas of dry shade that plague any of us who have large evergreens, epimediums are a great solution. With evergreen, heart-shaped leaves through the winter, they push their delicate flower stems upward in April followed by often subtly variegated foliage. Through the summer, the leaves often fade to green and last through the winter. No later than February, cut off all of last year's foliage so that the new flowers can shine. *Epimedium x versicolour* 'Orange Queen' and *E.x versicolour* 'Sulphureum' are two favourites. Low-growing, epimediums can be a great under-story plant for rhododendrons.



For at least a month now, *Lathyrus vernus* has been quietly basking in the glow of the early spring sun...or rain. Regardless of the weather, this hardy spring bloomer arrives on schedule to brighten a

supporting cast of shiny green-leaved rhododendrons not yet ready to make a show.



Above is the species and below is *Lathyrus vernus* 'Rosenelf'. Both have been gracing my early spring garden for the past three years undaunted by our long and sometimes cold and soggy winters.



Pulmonaria is another garden-worthy shade lover that blooms early in my dry semi-shade. They come in a range of colours – blue, pink, white and often with mottled leaves. *Pulmonaria longifolia* 'Roy Davidson' (below) has light blue flowers and silvery-speckled leaves. *Pulmonaria angustifolia* has deep blue flowers and is available at Milner Gardens. At the end of winter, remove last year's leaves to welcome fresh growth.

