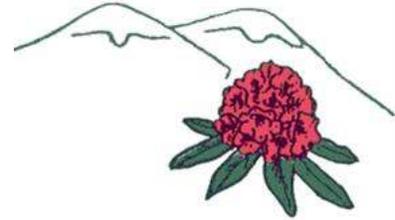


THE RHODOVINE



THE MOUNT ARROWSMITH
RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

MARS
P. O. Box 342
Qualicum Beach. BC

Volume 26, Issue 3

MARCH 2014

2013/2014 Executive

President
Linda Derkach
752-3545 lindaderkach@shaw.ca

Vice-President
Tony Ansdell
752-4475 ansdella@shaw.ca

Treasurer
Bert Harding
752-3923 ruber@shaw.ca

Secretary
Marilyn Dawson
752-3694 dawsom@shaw.ca

Past President
Tony Ansdell
752-4475 ansdella@shaw.ca

Directors
Don Bridgen
723-3916 dabridgen@gmail.com

Ann DeBrincat
724-5594 darrylhatch@shaw.ca

Maria Bieberstein
468-7252 abieberstein@telus.net

Kathy Loyer
738-0138 kathyloyer@shaw.ca

Ray Walker
248-5138 jrjiffy@shaw.ca

Bursary – Tony Ansdell
Christmas Party
Dollar Table - Cassy LaCouvee
Newsletter Editor - Linda Derkach
Garden Tour – Kathy Loyer
Truss Show – Ray Walker
Greeter – Guy Loyer
Historian - Cassy Lacouvee
Library – Donna deBoer
Meeting Coordinator- Tony Ansdell
Membership – Tony Ansdell
Milner Gardens - John England
Program Chair - Ann DeBrincat
PR - Marilyn Dawson
Refreshments - Anne Gutsche
Sunshine – Maria Bieberstein

THIS MONTH:
Our meeting this month is
on **March 19** and not our
usual **second Wednesday**.

Paul Wurz

speaking on

“Upgrading Your Rhododendron Collection”

Paul will answer questions
such as:

- ❖ What makes a good rhododendron?
- ❖ What good new hybrids are available?
- ❖ Are new scented rhododendrons on the market?

Paul and Lynn Wurz run Hidden Acres Rhododendron Garden and Nursery in Campbell River. He is a well-known and knowledgeable rhododendron propagator.

Bring your friends!!

MARS Meetings

Qualicum Beach
Civic Centre

Important Note:

Next Meeting

Wednesday,

March 19

7:30 pm

NEWS FLASH !!

MARS Bus Tour

of Victoria and the
Saanich Peninsula

May 5 and 6, 2014

- ❖ Two full days in exquisite private and public gardens.
- ❖ Overnight at Victoria's Inner Harbour.
- ❖ Fun with Friends!!
- ❖ More information inside!!

Inside.....

MARS Bus Tour Page 2
Important Notice.....Page 3
February Gardens..... Page 5
Propagating Rhododendrons....Page 7
Garden Journal Page 9

***MARS Bus Tour
of Public and Private Gardens
in Victoria
and the Saanich Peninsula***

***Date: Monday and Tuesday
May 5 and 6, 2014***

Our Plans So Far....

Approx. Cost: \$110 per person sharing for hotel and transportation; additional up to \$20 for garden admissions

Hotel:

Harbour Towers Hotel: \$140.00 inc. tax single or double includes a \$13 breakfast for \$5 each. (\$70 per person sharing)

A block of 25 rooms is being held for us at this exceptional rate until April 5.

Bus: \$40 per person based on full occupancy

Garden Admissions:

Depending on the final list of public gardens, there may be admission costs

Private Gardens Confirmed:

- ❖ *Al and Liz Murray*
- ❖ *Ken and Madeleine Webb*
- ❖ *Lois and Roy Blackmore*
- ❖ *Evelyn Weesjes' Towner Crest*

Public Gardens Under Consideration:

- ❖ *Horticulture Centre of the Pacific*
- ❖ *Finnerty Gardens, UVic*
- ❖ *Abkhazi Gardens*
- ❖ *Hatley Gardens, Royal Roads*
- ❖ *Dominion Brook Park*
- ❖ *Government House*

Bonus:

- ❖ Visit to plant propagation facility of Victoria RS and plant sale.
- ❖ Other surprise goodies!

Meals:

Monday:

Lunch – Bring a bag lunch

Dinner - On your own or with a group around Victoria's Inner Harbour

Tuesday:

Breakfast - included in hotel room

Lunch – to be arranged

We have tentatively booked a 47 passenger bus. We need to know how many MARS members wish to join us before opening this tour to the public on Thursday, March 20.

A sign-up sheet will be available at our meeting on March 19 or you can email Linda Derkach any time before that date. Reserve your space with payment of \$40.

Hotel Accommodation:

You can take advantage of the special rate at the Harbour Towers Hotel or make alternate arrangements on your own. Our bus will drop us off at the Harbour Towers around 5 pm on May 5 and pick us up there at 9 am to start our Tuesday tours. You are asked to make your hotel reservation yourself. Details coming soon.

Questions??? Email lindaderkach@shaw.ca or phone 752-3545.

**This will be fun!
Hope you can come!!**

Important Dates to Remember in 2014....

Saturday, April 26

- ❖ *MARS Rhododendron Show and Sale*
- ❖ *Parksville Arena*
- ❖ *Time: 10 am to 2 pm*

Monday & Tuesday, May 5 & 6

- ❖ *MARS Bus Tour of public and private gardens in Victoria and Saanich Peninsula*

Saturday & Sunday, May 10 & 11

- ❖ *MARS Garden Tour*

Sunday, June 22

- ❖ *MARS 25th Anniversary Celebration*
- ❖ *Rotary Park in Qualicum Beach*



Yellow crocuses herald spring!

Important Notice from Your Executive

At the March 19 meeting of MARS immediately following our program presentation, we will put forward a motion that will reserve MARS funds for the development of a species rhododendron garden to be located at Milner Gardens. Please come prepared to learn about this initiative and vote on this motion.

Snippets from Your Executive.....

- ❖ ***Change of Meeting Date for March***

Our March meeting will be held one week later than usual due to an event at the Civic Centre
March 19 is the new date.

- ❖ ***The Rhododendron Show and Sale*** will be held April 26 at the Parksville Arena. Please think about how you can volunteer to help.

- ❖ Our annual ***Mother's Day Weekend Garden Tour*** is fast approaching. We will need garden sitters. Please come to the March meeting prepared to sign up.

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

Ciscoe Morris Wows Them in Qualicum

Marilyn Dawson

A large crowd of gardeners and fans - yes fans - turned out to hear Ciscoe Morris speak at Qualicum Beach Civic Centre. Well known for his television and radio shows out of Seattle, and his trademark "Ooh la la", Ciscoe had the audience laughing for more than an hour, especially when he explained the derivation of his trademark. Instead of weird, it became amusing and a tale to remember. He interspersed his talk with giveaways that included a T-shirt of guess who, a copy of his book "Ask Ciscoe" and other goodies.

His talk centred on wildlife-friendly plants that attract birds to the garden and he had a large selection of photos to illustrate what can be grown in this area. As might be expected, hummingbirds were the focus. One photo that drew appreciative "oohs" was of a huge *Embothrium coccineum* (Chilean fire tree) growing in a Seattle garden. However, the list of bird-friendly plants is not limited to the exotic; his handout included familiar names such as pulmonaria, pyracantha, salvia, crocosmia, hardy fuchsia and more.

Hummingbirds, he said, do not see color; they smell, noting how they are attracted to the sweet, heady scent of *sarcococca*, with its rather insignificant white flower.

The evening did not end with his talk. Many crowded around to have their pictures taken with Ciscoe or just talk to him. He had spent the day hiking around Englishman River and he was in a relaxed mood, laughing and joking with admirers. One couple, fans but not gardeners, arrived early and chose seats as close as possible so they "could finally meet him". Another couple who knew his shows drove in from an outlying area to see him in person.

All in all, the evening was a great success and there were many to thank for their efforts, particularly all those who brought cookies, cakes and doughnuts. Anne Gutsche, Barbara Kulla and Joanne Hamilton worked the tea table. Joanne also brought three of her beautiful floral arrangements to brighten the tables, appropriately designed around February 14. Greeters included Al Bieberstein, Guy and Kathy Loyer, Art and Kathy Jones. Sandra Hemsworth, Donna DeBoer and John England worked the crowd selling raffle tickets. Maria Bieberstein emceed the proceedings including the raffle which saw several rhododendrons and other prizes handed out to lucky winners.

Across the floor, Arrowsmith Greenhouses and Cultivate brought tables of plants for sale, some from the wildlife-friendly list. They opened early and there was a lot of time to look, buy and maybe start the gardening season all over again.

The Spring Garden Starts Early on Vancouver Island

Linda Derkach

Though sleet and snow may still be with us a while longer, some rhododendrons just shrug it off and thumb their noses at the cold, refusing to believe it is still officially winter. John England was the first to announce the unfolding of *Rhododendron strigillosum* in his Qualicum Beach garden.



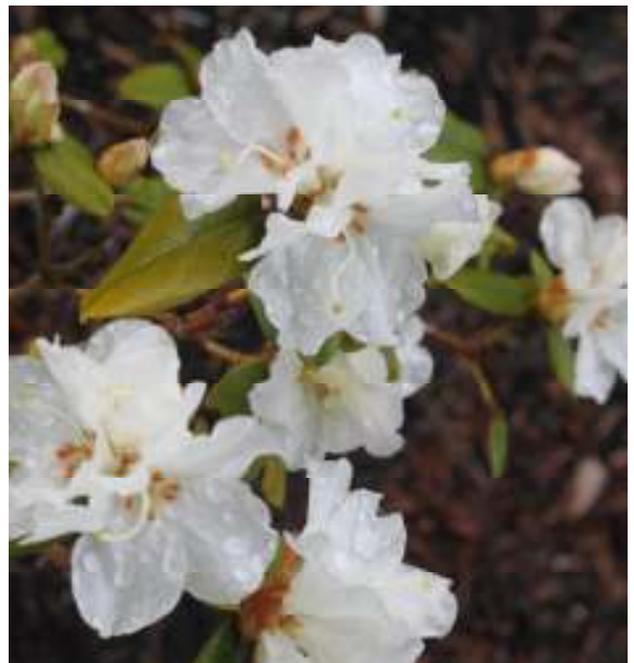
Here *Rhododendron strigillosum* is unfolding its delightful pink blossoms on February 20.



Rhododendron 'Harry Carter' is blooming in the garden of Ken Gibson in Tofino. This plant was named after the first gardener in Stanley Park, Vancouver. Ken says that it is a reliable early bloomer.



MARS member Barbara Kulla is a great fan of *Rhododendron 'Olive'* seen here on February 22 after a snow fall. Ken and Madeleine Webb also report *R. 'Olive'* in full bloom in their Saanich Garden. Another reliable winter bloomer in Barb's garden is *R. 'Tessa Bianca'* below.





Rhododendron 'Olive' is not afraid of a little snow. While many blossoms suffer irreparable damage from a late frost, *R.* 'Olive' seems to be holding up well.



Rhododendron 'Cilpinense' is one early bloomer whose flowers can be quickly damaged by frost. After several moves in the garden, this specimen has found true happiness in a pot that is moved under an overhang or under evergreen trees when a killing frost is predicted. This prevents the lovely pink flowers from turning to a nasty brown. On February 21 it is almost in bloom!



Frost and sun combine to create this lovely scene in the garden of Shirley and Dougal Meekison. *Cyclamen coum* and friend (the best kind of mouse) are thriving in their February garden.



Viburnum bodnantense 'Dawn' is elegantly clothed in a mantle of snow....and waiting for a hummingbird to arrive for a meal in the Meekison garden.

Photos: Ken Gibson, Dougal Meekison, Linda Derkach

Gordon Wylie's Advice for Propagating Rhododendrons from Seed

From a presentation and handout by Gordon Wylie at the ARS Fall Conference in Newport, Oregon.

Linda Derkach

Gordon Wylie received the Gold Medal after serving the ARS as president and on countless ARS Committees. He also received two Bronze Medals from the same ARS chapter. Gordon, a retired attorney, has gardened for years. He is just now establishing a new garden in Creswell, Oregon. Below are Gordon's simple and successful techniques for growing your own really big rhododendrons from tiny seeds.

Notes from Gordon's Presentation...

Rhododendron seeds are best started in December or late November.

The plastic grocery store clamshell containers are very handy for this purpose. Be sure to put holes in the bottom for drainage. Four inch pots with plastic wrap overtop also work well.

Put perlite in the bottom of the container and a layer of peat on top. Pat down - but not too much. Use enough peat to keep the seed damp until germination. Sterilizing the medium is not necessary if you are using clean material right out of the bag.

Moisten the perlite with warm water. The peat is usually moist but you may need to add a little moisture by misting.

Sow the seed thinly. The seed needs to be in contact with the peat that must be damp. Now close the cover.

Monitor by making sure there is moisture accumulating at the top of the container. Be sure to label each container.

Bottom heat can speed up the process, but lights on for 24 hours or on a window sill with no direct sun or top of fridge work fine as well.

Sow half the seed - not all at once. After the seed germinates, expect to lose some - species fail to germinate more than the hybrids. Gordon keeps the little plants on a heated mat until he pricks them out.

When pricking out, let the plants dry a little and you can tease out with a pencil more easily. Handle the little plants by their leaves and not the stem.

Mix bark mulch with perlite and peat about 2 1/2 inches deep in a flat. Transplant into the flat. Lower the seedlings into the planting medium. They like their own company and they like to be close together. They can be planted a little deeper now. Raise the container off the heat mat and if you are going away, set in a pan of water.

And from Gordon's Handout...

1. Rule one is careful hygiene. A weak solution of household bleach applied to tools and containers, followed by a good rinse, is your best friend.
2. Sow seed on the surface of the medium but do not cover the seeds with medium.
3. Except for bottom drainage, the germination container should be a closed environment providing essentially 100% humidity. Seed and the surface of media must remain damp for germination to take place.
4. Bottom heat of 70 to 75F (21-24C) probably aids and speeds germination, but is not a necessity. Seed environment should not exceed this temperature range...or conversely be in a cold situation such as outdoors or unheated space in the winter.
5. Never allow sunlight to reach the container. On the other hand, artificial lights overhead will likely assist initial growth. But such lighting is not essential.
6. Begin gradually exposing plants to the air when cotyledons (first pair of juvenile leaves) appear. Don't forget to keep watered after air exposure begins. Gentle misting is the best method.
7. Misting every ten days to two weeks with a weak (25 - 50%) mixture of liquid fertilizer after first true leaves (second pair) appear will assist initial growth.
8. Prick out individual plants to a container where they may grow on in a group after two or more sets of true leaves appear. Careful, delicate handling is needed at this stage; allow some drying to assist in separating roots. Timing of this step isn't critical as plants may be kept almost indefinitely in germination container so long as moisture is supplied.
9. The next transplant can be to individual containers, and outdoors if you have a protected spot such as a cold frame when frost is possible. After further growth, the plants may be treated the same as young plants from a nursery.
10. Enjoy your new plants and anticipate their flowers.
11. Take extra care to always keep labels with your seedlings.



Rhododendron 'Snow Lady' blooms in March.

Garden Journal

Linda Derkach

The calendar tells me that February has morphed into March - a time to clean up the garden and anticipate spring. But winter maintains a grip and I can only admire from afar some garden treasures that brave temperatures hovering around zero. Here are some March horticultural delights.



Iris danfordiae is new to my garden. The dozen that I planted in a shallow alpine dish in the fall have emerged to brighten the gloom. At 4 to 6" tall, this *reticulata* works well as a rock or alpine plant. Plant in sun in well-drained soil. Keep soil dry during summer dormant period.

I look forward to my little clump of *Iris reticulata* every year. The electric blue flowers shine from an alpine dish or well-drained spot in the garden. An experiment this year finds them

playing a new role as understory to the bright yellow blooms of *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Arnold Promise' - hopefully a winning combination as the clump expands.



Hellebores are a stalwart of the winter garden. Deer resistant *Helleborus x ballardiae* 'Pink Frost' (above) boasts a multitude of lush, pink, long-lasting blooms from February through March. Strong stems hold many outward-facing flowers above the foliage, sniggering as deer walk past to something tastier. Forming a two foot clump at 12 to 18" high, *H.* 'Pink Frost' enjoys neutral to alkaline soil and dappled shade. All hellebores need shelter from strong, cold winds. Avoid dry or water-logged soil.



Helleborus x nigercors 'Honeyhill Joy' displays multiple blooms on each robust stem and so far has resisted the virus that challenges so many hellebores. Amazingly low maintenance, *H.* 'Honeyhill Joy' enjoys a sunny position in spring under deciduous shrubs and protection from sun and rain once leaves emerge.



Pulmonaria rubra 'Red Start' is the first lungwort to bloom. Coral-red flowers mass over evergreen leaves in February and are deer-resistant. A great addition to the woodland garden, pulmonarias need moist, well-drained soil. Water regularly during the growing season for continued healthy-looking foliage.



Rhododendron 'Cilpinense' puts in an early appearance, but the delicate pink flowers are often damaged by a late frost. A location under an evergreen or in a pot that can be moved to a protected area when frost is predicted will save these lovely blooms. *R.* 'Cilpinense' thrives in a large pot.



Hepatica nobilis is a dainty but robust alpine best displayed in a trough or dish. Slow-growing semi-evergreens, hepaticas enjoy humus rich, well-drained soil in part shade. Top dress each year with leaf mould or compost in autumn. Great in a shady site in a rock or woodland garden. Rust and leaf smut can occur.