



Rhodovine

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society
October 2021 **Volume 33 Issue 8**

The Rhodovine

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Cover Photo: New growth on
Rhododendron 'Loderi King George'

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, October 13

7:30 pm In person

QB Civic Centre

***The Amazing Gardens
of New Zealand***

**presented by
Linda Derkach**

***Re-new your membership
by November 30 and have
a chance to win a free
membership in MARS***

2021 Virtual ARS Fall Conference

Fall into Gardening

October 23 and 24, 2021

Hosted by Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society and Nanaimo Rhododendron Society in partnership with Vancouver Island Master Gardeners

This virtual conference is at NO COST and open to all interested gardeners - members and non-members – anywhere!

ARS 2021 Fall Conference *Fall into Gardening* Schedule:

- **Saturday and Sunday, October 23 and 24, 2021 at NO COST!!**
- Four presentations each day starting at:
9 am Pacific - 12 noon Eastern – 1:00 pm Atlantic – 5 pm UK – 6 pm CET
- **All presentations will be recorded and available for our members in NZ, Australia & Asia to view at a convenient time.**

Saturday Speakers and Topics:

- Hartwig Schepker, Germany *Sichuan: A Plantsman's Paradise*
- Shannon Berch, BC *Living Soils*
- David Sellars, BC *From Rhododendrons to Rock Gardening*
- Don Hyatt, Virginia *A Walk in the Woods*

Sunday Speakers and Topics:

- David Millais, UK *Conservation of Heritage Rhododendrons*
- Linda Chalker-Scott, WA *Landscape Mulches: The Good, the Bad, and the Just Plain Ugly*
- Richard Dionne, QC *Growing Rhododendrons in Québec's Harsh Winters*
- Don Wallace, CA *Fragrant Rhododendrons*

***Please join us for this fall celebration of gardening!
Invite your friends!***

The Link to register is in the attached flyer.

MARS Needs You!!

Our members are critical to the exciting, educational and fun opportunities that exist with MARS Membership.

Please Re-new Your Membership Today

At the bargain price of \$30, your membership in MARS is renewed from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022.

Here are some ways to pay:

In Person

If we hold inperson meetings in October and November, Tony Ansdell is happy to receive your cheque payable to MARS, or cash. If paying in cash, please make sure Tony records it on the spot.

Mail

Please mail your cheque to:

MARS

PO Box 342

Qualicum Beach BC V9K 1S8

Interact e-Transfer

Send an eTransfer for \$30 to ["treasurer@marsrhodos.ca"](mailto:treasurer@marsrhodos.ca). Use "What's this for" for your question with the answer "Membership".

In Person

If you are near Eaglecrest, you can drop off a cheque or cash in the mailbox in the porch of my house at: 441 Seacrest Place,
If cash, please put it in an envelope with your name on the envelope.

Paypal

Log into your personal account and go to <https://www.paypal.com/myaccount/summary>

Click the Send Icon

Type in prufart@telus.net

On the next page enter \$30 CAD

On the next page select "Sending to a friend" otherwise there will be an additional 2.9% surcharge which will be subtracted from your payment.

MARS does not have a Paypal account so you are sending to Art Prufer, a respected member of MARS, who will forward the money to the Treasurer.

MARS Goes to the Milner Plant Sale



With a goal of spreading the word about our amazing rhododendron club, MARS members Dawn House, Katherine Wasiak, Linda Nicol and Marilyn Dawson devoted their Saturday to the Milner Gardens Fall Plant Sale.

The four, all members of our Propagation group, also spent time tending and nurturing seedlings propagated by the club and chatting with friendly plant sale customers.

Thanks to the hard work of our members and great organization by the Propagation Group, MARS has rhododendron seedlings in several stages of development, being readied for a big plant sale in the spring of 2022.

The propagation group, chaired by Katherine Wasiak, is getting ready to take another round of cuttings next month. Members have asked the group to grow plants more in keeping with smaller yards, dwarf or mid-size rhodos but selection will depend on availability after our long, dry summer.

Meanwhile.....



Rose's Ricinus communis
(Castor Bean) with all parts
highly toxic
and

Art's Helianthus annuus
(Sunflower) producing food
for the birds were quietly
becoming the talk of the
neighbourhood!!



Changing Climate, Changing Gardens

Jo-Ann Canning, Vancouver Island Master Gardeners

Photos: Chris Southwick

How did your gardens survive our first heat dome in June? This weather event was once considered a one in a 1,000 year event on our Island yet the most recent global warming models from Environment Canada predict it will happen every 5 to 10 years from this year forward. Ouch! These accelerating changes can feel overwhelming, especially after seeing some of our favourite green friends die off. But we are a hardy genus, whether rambling farm folk, carefully potted container planters, or veggie munching urbanites. We can flow with all these changes by rethinking our gardens.



This big leaf *fortunei* hybrid suffered significant sun damage due to lack of adequate shade.

Let's start with what we know. First, we Master Gardeners understand the

principles of climate change, and how it will negatively affect our gardens if we maintain their present configurations. Second, we already mitigate effects of uncommon weather events, like covering half-hardy food crops with a row cover. Third, we understand techniques that help stabilize or slow climate change, like increasing species diversity. We know about rain barrels, rain gardens, mulch, and the annual sun window. If we take stock in autumn, the best time of year for this, we can plan to shift our gardens into resiliency in a changing climate.

The Four Rs of Garden Change: Review, Rejuvenate, Relocate, Replace

We observe all the time, yet often forget to connect the small things we've learned to everything else we do. Each is a starting point to control change. What went wrong this year? When? Why? Chris Southwick shared the following observations from her rhododendron woodland which illustrate how several decision alternatives can arise from a single, seasonal task, and a single genus of plants:

- The rhodos that seemed to burn the least were those that had *tomentum* (hairy covering on the top of their leaves), like some of the cultivars/hybrids with *R. yakushimanum* in their parentage.
- Those rhodos with shade or at least partial shade during direct sunlight in the middle of the day fared better than those without any protection during that hot time.
- Rhodos that had new growth or very young new shoots were vulnerable, so later-blooming cultivars seemed less prone to burning.



This *yak* x with *tomentum* survived the blistering sun, but *R. cerasinum* 'Cherry Brandy' and *R. campylogynum* - both without *tomentum* - sustained leaf burn.

- ... Where I had pruned some overhanging conifer and Japanese maple branches, the underlying rhodos were more vulnerable and did not tolerate direct sunlight as

well as those that were already hardened to direct sun. (Next year I won't prune over hanging trees too early in the season.)



R. piercei with *tomentum* fared well this summer while *R. forestii* x *calophyllum* and *R. primulaeflorum* 'Doker La' suffered sun scald.

Review to Renew

I suggest you begin with your garden journal, and jot down this year's observations. What went wrong, what went right, what did you stop doing? Was it hard-scape, sun window (right-plant-right-place), or landscape management related? Categorizing activity this way points to some long-range design changes that can be done incrementally. Next, ask yourself, "In three years, what do I want in my garden?" Write it down for each area of your landscape. While we take care of the regular tasks, sometimes we see how easy it is to achieve larger ones. Page 7

Now you have all the data you need. The following is basic, but it works: write out a three-year plan on a timeline based on the problems you need to solve. When I had a big, complex landscape, I set up mine like a spreadsheet: projects /actions / problems down the left column, the solutions timeline by season for three years, with costs across the top. Patterns emerged and it saved much time, money, and effort. Now I have a simple container garden, so a list with side notes and seasonal tasks suffices.



Renovate or Relocate

Can you relocate plants or swap out with others better suited to that location? If they can't be moved, will renovative pruning or hard-scape solutions help, like a nearby trellis, pergola, or rain barrel? For example, if you flip over the sod (careful of feeder roots!) under a large deciduous tree and cover the area

with mulch to the drip lines, it won't have to compete next summer with thirsty sod, and the landscape will be less stressed.

Replace to Renew

Revisit xeriscaping principles. Replace thirsty plants, not all at once, just one at a time, or one bed at a time, following your lists or spreadsheet. Within three years, you can enjoy a garden of drought-tolerant plants filled with colour and pollinators. Group thirsty plants and keep a rain garden or barrel nearby so you use less water during the summer. Visit the Okanagan Xeriscape Association website for their very impressive plant data base and for classes on xeriscaping.

Sometimes, things just gotta go. Try evolving to a lawn that is better adapted to a warming, drier climate with an autumn weeding project. Each weedless hole becomes a planting spot for clover or meadow mix seeds. Autumn rains will keep the seeds damp, and every weeding shifts the lawn to something better. You could also change a thirsty lawn bit by bit into wide green paths between new perennial veggie beds (which take about one third the water of a lawn) or a low-maintenance bed of

ornamental grasses and a heat-loving fig tree.

And finally, a Fifth R: Redesign from the Lists

If you can't mitigate extremes, embrace them. When I lived in the Southwest a Navajo neighbour said, "When water is scarce, do not beg the thunder god for rain, learn to drink less." Bit by bit you can shift your garden's design toward more resiliency. A hot spot can become a mounded rock garden of spring bulbs and succulents. A scorching driveway can sport a storage bench and self-supporting pergola made from fence lattice with a bamboo curtain hung at the back to shade a large window (or a vulnerable shrub), then be removed when winter light is needed.

A rain garden or quick shallow pond made from pond mats with a sluice gate at one end can make either a boggy low spot or some high ground sequester enough water from winter rain to slow run-off and gravity feed trees and shrubs. A cubic foot (30 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm) is 7.5 gallons, so it doesn't take a big area, or many small ones, to create a good reservoir that acts like a self-watering planter for the landscape.

What can you change to make your garden's leisure time more pleasant? Creating more shade with a fast-growing weeping tree, like dwarf birch, cherry, crab apple, or elm will, with a little pruning, make a blooming umbrella when you take care to keep the soil from compacting with a repurposed wooden pallet through which a trunk can expand. In the meantime? Bean trellises or squash in planters on the pallet and an umbrella next to the young tree to protect you both from a scorching sun.

Sometimes an emergency action can morph into a design plan or structure. It happened for me this year with that bench and pergola project I mentioned above.

Now what?

Congratulations! You have started a workable plan that is inclusive, manageable or easily reprioritized. Take a breath. Make a few notes while you watch the squirrels, rabbits, and flickers who play this time of year in the autumn evening. Soon the trumpeter swans will settle into the estuaries and specially planted fields where the wildlife-friendly grass and northern oats will feed them for the grey months ahead.

Autumn Joys

Words and Photos: Linda Derkach

Autumn brings a mellow warmth to the garden – showcasing some of the loveliest garden inhabitants. Many of the best wait until the noise and heat and chaos of summer is over and bring their best to shine.



Helianthus 'Lemon Queen' blooms from August until frost and fills the garden with sunlight – even on the gloomiest of days. Growing to 8 feet, this perennial sunflower is happy at the back of a border in full sun. 'Lemon Queen' also plays nicely with other plants, such as....

Buddleja davidii
'Buzz Purple'

This new series of *Buddleja*'s are available locally. Plants are compact and easy to grow. Great in a container as well. Hummers, bees and butterflies love this plant.

H. 'Lemon Queen' has the Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.



Buddleja davidii 'Buzz Purple' with *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen'.



Part of the fun in gardening is creating great combinations – whether by accident or design.

Helianthus 'Lemon Queen' is holding its own with *Rosa rugosa* 'Hansa' – looking great with the bright red rose hips of autumn.

Great plant combinations are best with plants of equal vigor so that one is not overwhelmed by a garden thug.



This eye-catching combination of *Hydrangea* 'Limelight' and *Thalictrum delavayi* 'Hewitt's Double' is a mutual admiration society.

Hydrangeas are great plants to follow rhododendrons in the 'blooming plan' and most last long into late winter looking fabulous.

Thalictrums are often somewhat gangly but can use their friendly neighbourhood hydrangea as a "stake" – bringing a lovely, frothy swath of effervescence to the somewhat dull leaves of the hydrangea.

A captivating combination that always elicits oohs and aahs from visitors to my garden!!



Anemone 'September Charm' and *Aralia cordata* 'Sun King' have surprised me as a wonderful pairing for dappled shade. 'Sun King' brightens up a shady corner from spring to fall, then is joined by the fall-blooming anemones to continue the dance until frost.

'Sun King' was perennial plant of the year for Fine Gardening magazine. It can spread quickly, but in my small garden is quite happy in a large pot in a situation where nothing else will grow. Purportedly deer resistant – but then a hungry deer will eat almost anything except euphorbia which they may try and spit out after unearthing!!

The fall-blooming anemones are notorious for spreading and even more so for being extremely difficult to eradicate if you no longer want it. I know this as I have tried and now that 'September Song' has put on such a beautiful show I have conceded and will let it wander where it may. Just a note – the spring blooming *Anemone nemerosa* and *Anemone blanda* do not spread like their autumn cousin – and are great early spring ephemeral additions to every garden.

Keeping our hummers happy through Autumn - with almost anything that is red and tubular...



Aeschynanthus buxifolius came in a small pot from the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden many years ago. As it is a bit of a “snowbird”, I have allowed overwintering in my cool greenhouse and I bring it out to a shady spot in summer.

Blooming now in autumn, it is attracting hummingbirds and lots of compliments as a very attractive addition to a shady, summer garden.

Evergreen, and related to African violets, the bright orange/red flowers look amazing with the attractive dark green foliage.

Proof that good things do come in small packages.



Fuchsia 'Genii' has lime green leaves which I'm sure help to attract hummingbirds to the purple and magenta flowers.

Spectacular!!

I keep this plant in a pot and try to position it up high so that hummers feel safe dining at this glorious buffet.

Fuchsia magellanica is a very reliable, robust, deciduous shrub blooming all through summer and into autumn – to the absolute delight of my hummingbirds.

In the ground it fell prey to the bunnies. So up it came for its own protection and that of my hummers who feed daily right outside out the window.



Fuchsia magellanica is now in a large pot up high so that hummers can feed safely away from neighbourhood cats. Eventually it can grow to 10 by 10 feet like my friend's down the road!!

How to Plant a Rhododendron

Since Autumn is the best time to plant rhododendrons and many other perennials, shrubs and trees, here is some timely advice. And with our winters getting wetter, excellent drainage for your rhododendrons is absolutely essential to their survival.

Here is a website with very good information and demonstration videos on how to plant a containerised rhododendron.

www.murcottgarden.com

Click on Talks and Articles and then click on Planting a Containerised Rhododendron.

Some Tips for Success

- Your plant must have good drainage.
- Soil pH should be between 4.5 to 5.8. If you are not sure, test the soil. (MARS has a tester you can borrow.)
- Generally, plant in dappled shade, or on the east or north side of your house. Different species and hybrids can tolerate differing amounts of sun, so do some research on the particular plant you have. Protect from the hot afternoon sun.
- Water your plant well. Be sure the root ball has not dried out.
- Once you have removed the plant from the container, you should scuff up the roots if they have been pot-bound to give them the best chance to make good contact with the soil.
- Huge, containerized plants with roots hard packed against the sides of the pot may need some knife cuts to help the feeder roots to grow outward. The video on the website has a very good demonstration on how to do this.
- Some growers plant right on top of the soil while others plant in a slight depression.
- Depending on your soil you may need to mound bark mulch around the roots or mix a large amount of bark mulch rotted leaves with the native soil to ensure excellent drainage.
- Research your rhododendron – some like to be grown in a stump or container, while others can tolerate a less friendly environment.
- Keep soil moist and mulch to protect from heat and cold.

**Mount Arrowsmith
Rhododendron Society
General Meeting**
Held at the Qualicum Beach
Civic Center on
September 15, 2021 at 7:30 pm

This was our first in-person meeting of the 2021/22 season, and 20 members attended. We were all asked to be fully vaccinated in order to attend.

Dawn House, new President of MARS, introduced herself and stated that we are on the lands of the Coast Salish people.

Treasurer's Report - Ray Walker presented the audited financial report as of August 31, 2021. **Motion:** Ray moved and Glen seconded that the financial statements be approved. Members present approved, however there was not a quorum.

Propagation Update – Katherine Wasiak updated us on the status of our rhododendron collection which has fared tremendously well, thanks to the dedication of several members who are babysitting several hundred plants each. Over the summer, rhodos from the Wurtz collection were potted up, a potting bee was held to pot up last Fall's cuttings, and seedlings from the ARS seed exchange last year are now living in 3" pots. Katherine also has 26 Desert King fig plants growing happily in 1 gallon pots.

She emphasized the need to develop a sustainable plan for housing plants before doing more propagation.

Greig Species Garden – Marilyn reported that at the end of April some members were allowed into Milner for the first time since it closed down from Covid. For 6-7

weeks they mulched, worked, mulched again. Thanks to Rose Prufer, Kathy & Guy Loyer, Chris Southwick, Katherine & Ed Wasiak, Linda & Ken Nicol and John & June Deniseger for their efforts. There are now 250 rhododendron species in the garden. John has been working with Steve Hootman at the Rhododendron Society Garden in Seattle to procure hard-to-find plants and large leaf species for the next phase. Once the US border opens, some plants may be ready to ship. The garden, which was started in 2016, looks fantastic! Companion plants and orchids have also done well.

Communities in Bloom – MARS member Marlys Diamond spoke about the 100th Anniversary of the Canadian Horticultural Society next year, and what Qualicum Beach garden clubs could do with town council and potentially Milner, to highlight the anniversary, and what role MARS could play. She asked that we look further into some ideas and possibly participate.

MARS Fall Plant Sale – Rose reported that there will be a Fall plant sale for club members, and will be held on October 1, 2021 from 1-5 pm. There will be no pre-ordering, and payment is by cash or check. Locations are the homes of Dawn House and Marilyn Dawson. There will be about 200 plants including Rhodos and hostas.

Rose reiterated the need for a sustainability plan for our propagation program.

Fall into Gardening Virtual Conference – MARS and the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society, in partnership with the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association are hosting this webinar conference being held

October 23 and 24, 2021. There is a broad list of speakers, with a range of topics, so there is something for everyone. The event is FREE, but everyone MUST REGISTER.

Greeter – We need a new Greeter for our meetings, as Guy Loyer is stepping away from this task. Please contact Dawn if you are interested.

Membership – Tony asked that everyone renew their membership. The annual cost remains at \$30 and covers 1-2 people living in the same household. Fees can be e-transferred to treasurer@marsrhodo.ca, or cash and cheques at meetings or cheques in the mail. There are 74 memberships, with a few from Australia and New Zealand.

Door prizes – winners were Glen Jamieson, Rose Prufer, Linda Derkach (who donated it back), Marilyn Dawson (who donated it back), Art Prufer and Susan Blacklin. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.



Rosehips on this rugosa rose bring a smashing bit of colour to the fall garden.



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Farewell

Marjorie Zimmerman

Marjorie passed away in August at the age of 91. She and her husband moved to Parksville in 1975 to enjoy gardening on our beautiful island. She loved her family, pets and beautiful gardens and was a MARS member for many years. All of her children learned their love of gardening from their Mom and continue her passion. Here she is on a MARS Garden Tour a few years ago.

Well done, Marjorie!

**MARS Executive Committee
2021 – 2022**

President – Dawn House

dl.house@telus.net

Vice-President – David Landry

david.landry@shaw.ca

Secretary – Karen Bennett

karenbennett51@gmail.com

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Committees and Activities

Facebook – Rose Prufer

Garden Tour – Linda, Marilyn

Membership – Tony Ansdell

Newsletter Editor – Linda Derkach

Programs – Glen Jamieson

Propagation – Katherine Wasiak

Species Garden – Tony Ansdell

Truss Show – Kathy & Guy Loyer

Webmaster – Diane Henders

Member Care

Meeting Goodies – Jane Walker

Greeter – Susan Blacklin &
Roelof Elzinga

Meeting Coordinator -
Tony ansdell

Plant Prizes – Sherry Thompson

Sunshine – Judy Wood

MARS

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