



# The RHODOTELLER

## COMING EVENTS:

**5 September 2006**

Executive meeting will be held at the home of Harry and Gwen Wright, 769 Chaster Road Courtenay, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

**12 September 2006 — Regular Monthly Meeting**

**Guest Speaker: Robert Argall**

**Topic: Bulbs, bulbs and bulbs**

Fall is on its way and it's the perfect time to plan for your spring garden! Bulbs, perennials, shrubs, trees and annuals all add splashes of colour, and we are fortunate to have Rob Argall preparing to share some of his favourite plants and combinations at our September meeting.

Rob has spent many years developing an extensive garden on Wireless Road, and in the spring it is one of the most sought after garden destinations in the Valley. Rob will talk about some of the bulbs that he plants each year, perennials that put on a great spring show, and other plant treasures that you may wish to consider for your own garden. Please join us September 12<sup>th</sup> for "Colour in the Spring Garden".



## PRESIDENTS VIEW.

Sept already, seems like we must have missed a month or two! Anyway, most of the dead heading is complete and the weeds are under control. Keep watering as the flower buds for next season are still developing.

Our meetings are getting under way again for another season; some good speakers have been lined up with social functions mixed in for a good assortment of entertainment.

I would like to thank those who have completed their term on the executive and a hearty welcome to those joining us.

The foot traffic count at the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden was carried out on Aug 13, over a 12 hour period. In total, 557 people walked through the garden, hence my favourite expression "a lot can be said for location". A special thank you to all those members who donated their time on that hot Sunday.

Work is under way on the new bed at the garden and it will be referred to as the B.O.V.I. bed, (born on Vancouver Island.) So please, when requested to join a work party, lend a helping hand.

## North Island Rhododendron Society

2005/2006 Executive:

### President

Harry Wright .... 338-8345

### Vice-President

Dave Crucq ..... 339-7845

### Secretary

Diana Scott ..... 338-0208

### Treasurer

Don Law ..... 339-2735

### Ways & Means

Dave Godfrey ... 335-0717

### Library

Noni Godfrey ... 335-0717

### Social

Evelyn Wright .. 339-7493

Bernice Morrison 339-0932

### Membership

Brian Staton..... 337-5228

### Historian

Lois Clyde ..... 337-5754

### Publicity

Chris Aldred ..... 335-3231

### Newsletter

Noni Godfrey ... 335-0717

..... Nonigod@shaw.ca

The club meets the second  
Tuesday of the month  
(except May through August)  
at the United Church  
Comox Avenue,  
Comox 7:30 p.m.

**President's hints for September:**

Now is the season to do rooted cuttings, and the use of willow tea that you brew could make this task easier. This rooting compound was discovered over 50 years ago by a professor at the Morden Experimental Station in Manitoba. Common as it is, the willow first gave us the aspirin and now a potent aid to rooting cuttings.

Northwest growers started experimenting with willow tea brew and reported up to 100% success of rhodo cuttings that were nearly impossible to start before. The brew also promotes healthier roots on all cuttings.

To make willow tea, remove tender tips from the weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*). Tips should be pliable and bend easily. Remove leaves and cut tips into 1 inch lengths, place them on a board and pound them till they are slightly flattened and bark is loose. Put 1/4 lb of pounded pieces into a quart jar, cover with water and heat to 120 degrees for 2 or 3 hours. Tea will keep for up to a month in a closed jar and refrigerated.

When cuttings are put into the room temperature willow tea soak only the rooting area for 12 to 24 hours. Harder to root cuttings will need the full 24 hours. Wipe cuttings dry and then apply commercial rooting hormones.

See you at the meeting.....Harry Wright

**MEMBER NOTES:** (by Dave Godfrey)

**"Wasn't That A Party?"**



Despite over cast skies and a few showers, 37 members and guests attend our annual NIRS wrap-up picnic held at the Smith's garden and home on Saturday, June 17<sup>th</sup>.

Following a walking tour of the gardens provided by Roberts, a delicious pot-luck dinner was served up by our social team of Evelyn and Bernice. Members contributed a wonderful variety of dishes, which were enjoyed by one and all.

With bellies full, many of the members signed up for the bean bag toss tournament, which got underway right after coffee and desserts. 13 teams began the tourney, which saw some excellent tossing by some and hilarious misses by others. The team of Noni Godfrey and Dave Crucq were out to defend last years championship, but unfortunately they were knocked out of contention in the quarter finals by Betty & Paul Pflugi.

The field was narrowed to Harry & Gwen against Jim & Lois in the finals. Although it looked like a runaway game for the Clydes with a 17 to 7 lead after 6 ends, the Wrights rebounded to close the score to 18 - 16. The score remained close to the end, with Lois & Jim this year's champions with a final of 21 to 19.

Tournament director, Dave Godfrey, presented awards to

many who participated. Harry Wright was rewarded for "Best Form" and, not to be outdone, Gwen was recognized for "Worst Form", given her many throws which hardly made it halfway. Although in the finals, Gwen did shock everyone by throwing a sinker!

Marlene Crucq won for "Longest Toss", while Lois' friend Bev won for "Wildest Toss."

Betty & Paul Pflugi received the third place prizes, along with Harry & Gwen for second and Lois & Jim for first place. We hope that they will be back next year to defend their title. Does anyone suspect that there might be a trophy up for grabs in future?

Special thanks to scorekeeper Dorothy Law and organizer Noni Godfrey for their assistance in keeping track of the craziness. And very special thanks went to Roberts and Adela Smith for hosting this year's event at their lovely home and gardens.

**GEORGE FRASER DAY** (by Dave Godfrey)  
**UCLUELET**

It seems so long ago now, but the memories of the George Fraser Day in May are still strong. Noni and I attended again this year, to pay tribute to Mr. Bill Dale of Sydney, BC.

The day began with the unveiling of a special bench in Bill's honour on the waterfront promenade, behind the George Fraser Memorial Park. Bill Dale, an associate member of NIRS, was there with the assistance of his son, Chris. Bill's daughter, Cathy, who usually accompanies Bill to the events, was away on holidays in Italy.

Following the unveiling and photo ops, the gathering of special guests and interested individuals then took an hours walking tour through the streets of Ucluelet and past the remains of George Fraser's gardens. Many private gardens, especially along Helen and Pine Streets, are still adorned with some of George's original rhododendrons, some now well over 10 feet in height.

As the tour arrived at the UAC hall for the Heritage Fair, a delicious lunch including a famous west coast seafood chowder was served. Then the tributes to Bill began.

Speakers included Mr. Lynn Watts, past President of the ARS, Dr. Bob Rhodes, Joe Daly of Victoria's Beacon Hill Park, and yours truly, as a founding member of the George Fraser Memorial Project. Mr. Jim Smith, who recently restored George Fraser's original fiddle, read a poem he had composed about George Fraser.

Bill was truly honoured by all the accolades and gifts that he had received in recognition of his tireless efforts to have Fraser's memorial continue to be recognized, not only within the Rhododendron societies, but within the community in which he spent so many years propagating and hybridizing different plants.



L to R: President Wanda McAvoy, Dave Godfrey, Bill Dale and Mayor Diane St. Jacques



Bill Dale and guests in front of the George Fraser Display at the Heritage Fair

## GARDEN CHATTER, NATTER AND NOTES

(by Mary Palmer)

### NEEM OIL

I have often wondered what this oil comes from, and how to use it, so when I saw an article written by Susan Jones in the June 2004 issue of "Orchids", the journal of the American Orchid Society, I felt the material contained would be useful information for both the Orchid Society and the Rhodo Society.

"The Neem Tree, *Azadirachta indica*, also known as Indian Lilac or Margosa, probably originated in India or Burma. Neem is a large, fast-growing evergreen that can reach 40-80 feet in height. This tree is drought-resistant and heat tolerant, and may live up to 200 years. It grows in many Asian countries, as well as in tropical areas of the Western hemisphere. Neem oil, which is extracted from the tree's seeds, has been used for its medicinal and insecticidal properties for more than 400 years".

Some of the many uses people have had for neem products over the years including warding off mosquitoes, controlling diseases, treating lice and scabies, termite control. Neem leaves placed in woolen jacket pockets ward off moths, and placed in grain storage bins, repel insects. Some dog soaps and shampoos have neem added to repel fleas and ticks, cattle feed has neem added to kill parasites.

The wood is used for firewood and housing material. Twigs are used for toothbrushes. The oil is burned for lamp fuel, as well as being added to toothpaste, soaps and mouthwash.

Neem has been used for various medicinal purposes for thousands of years. It has useful insecticidal properties, but is harmless to people and pets, birds and earthworms.

Here is a recipe for a foliar spray for house or garden plants:

Add 1 tsp. (5 ml) of neem oil and 1/2 tsp (2.5 ml) of a gentle, plant-safe liquid soap (as a spreader and sticker) to 1 qt (.9litre) of warm water. You can use a 50/50 solution of isopropyl alcohol and warm water instead of plain water. Be sure to shake the solution often during application. It is best to make up only enough solution for one application at a time, and repeat after rain as well as every few weeks to catch new generations of pests. Don't use the spray in hot weather or in direct sunlight, avoid hitting bees with it, and don't use it on orchids such as *Miltonia* and *Masdevalia*.

### DEER RESISTANT PLANTS

Are there any? I think that in general, deer will nibble on anything they walk past. This year, several plants in my garden have been tasted for the first time - Oak-leaved Hydrangeas for instance, and a friend complained that even ferns have been chewed.



However, Helen Chesnut, writing in the *Victoria Colonist*, has again given a list which is probably safe - for this year anyway. "Not generally browsed", she wrote.

"Dahlia, daffodil, rhodo, azalea, pieris, heather, lavender, rosemary, primula, zinnia, marigold, calendula, lupin, iris, St. John's wort, hellebores, foxglove, daphne, smoke bush and butterfly bush".

Of course, some of these I can disagree with - they ALWAYS EAT Evergreen azaleas; they nibble deciduous ones. I gave up on primulas years ago for they ate every one. The rest of the list are safe - so far.

By the way - slug hunting is on again, and I have to report there are many more (giant black or brown) in and near the flower beds this year. Previously they were mainly on paths in the wilder parts of the property. Also, snails - many more than I had noticed previously. As for rabbits - of course there are rabbits, all over the north part of the Island. I cannot see that they have done much damage here as yet.

## NOTES FROM FINE GARDENING (MAY-JUNE 2006)

Cut 6 ft. or so off an old soaker hose, reattach the end cap, and use at the end of a regular hose to give a newly planted tree or shrub a good soaking.

If you don't have room for a large Buddleia, look for a new type, named English Butterfly Series, which grow to 1/3 size of other buddleias.

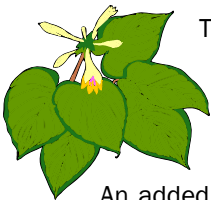
Here's a way to make a pile of inexpensive pot feet: buy a bag of mortar mix, spray the inside of paper egg cartons with cooking oil, fill each section with wet mortar mix and leave for a few days to dry. These are easy to break apart, and easy to make enough for all your pots, even some for your friends.

Old laundry baskets make great shade houses for newly planted transplants or small shrubs. They are also handy as weed-gatherers. Easy to stack in the shed when not in use.

## HOSTAS

Too many bright-coloured ones make the garden look chaotic, says Bonnie Blanchette, writing in Fine Gardening. Use mainly green, blue, or subtly variegated, to show up the brightly coloured hostas or to support other plants and add structure to the garden.

Afternoon sun can scorch the leaves of golden coloured hostas; in full shade they turn chartreuse. Morning sun is just right.



Thick-edged hostas are more resistant to slugs (but not, alas, to deer). Suggested hostas include *H. sieboldiana* var. *elegans*, Blue Angel, Sum & Substance, Sagae, June, Halcyon or Inneswood.

An added note by MP on hostas: This year we had some trees chopped down (too close to the house or dying of root rot) and unfortunately for the hostas, their bed lost most of its shade. I now have some badly leaf-burned plants that will have to be moved in the fall. Those worst affected have thin yellow or green and white leaves. Those with thick blue leaves look much better. Of course, we don't usually have several bouts of extremely hot weather early in the summer.

## BAMBOO

Many people are terrified at the thought of having one of these beautiful plants in the garden. Here is an article by Gail Dupont in the Whidbey Island Rhodo group, that should calm these fears.

"I've always been fascinated with bamboo and have noticed several articles cropping up about this plant lately. Now before your eyes widen in horror let me ramble on a bit about what might be an interesting plant to add to your garden.

It's important to know that there are two types of bamboo, running and clumping. It



is running bamboo that is feared and loathed with a vengeance. Yes, this is the one that the neighbour three acres over planted as a screening hedge and which is now coming up in your front yard.

Clumping bamboo, on the other hand, is very well behaved as it spreads slowly, much as a clump of iris would. With a little shade and soil that isn't waterlogged, it will provide you with landscape interest while increasing only a few inches each year.



Besides being self-contained, clumping bamboos have other qualities. They come in a variety of textures, colours and leaf sizes. You can find them in bright emerald or pale green, tinges of blue or striped in white. Leaf shapes vary from lance-like to broad and stocky; heights range from 5-15 ft. The spiky new shoots of some varieties are red, white or yellow. They can lend a tropical flavour to an entrance, sigh with a rustle in the slightest breeze, or cast ever-changing reflections at the edge of a pond. And if you need an informal backdrop to set off that new rhodo, start looking for some of the new varieties of clumping bamboo being released."

## RHODOS

No, I haven't forgotten the rhodos. I was terribly upset when my *R. auriculatum* suddenly shed nearly all its old leaves - they turned yellow and dropped within a week this summer. And not one flower! I gave it extra water, and all the new leaves opened out and the plant looks fine now. (As you know, this rhodo blooms in July). On checking with Harry Wright, this happened to auriculatums in other gardens also. I feel better now, but I wonder what happened? Maybe the plant doesn't like 4-5 very hot dry summers in a row. Maybe it is old and tired? Should it be cut back? Growing rhodos is so exciting!



*R. Sir Charles Lemon* is looking wonderful this year. I have found that if we have a hot spell in May, when the new leaves are opening out, it is wise to cover the plant with an old curtain for a week or two. This year, the hot spell came later and there are no burned leaves.

All plants with thick indumentum look especially bright and healthy this summer. They all get a great deal of sun and very little water (shallow well, you know) but they all look happy.

It is August, and most rhodos are busy forming buds for next year's flowers. Do give them water if you can, and pray for a good heavy rain sometime soon. No fertilizer this month, but extra water for any rhodos that are spending their first summer in your garden. And, after a few inches of rain, a layer of compost for the winter.



## SNIPPETS FROM SAYWARD

(by Rose-Marie Silkens)

### AUGUST LETTER FROM SAYWARD

This has been an extraordinary summer, not least because it has flown by with record speed.



Sayward skies rained incessantly from January through the end of March, but we've scarcely had any rain since. I've been a slave to my watering chores, and any absence from home requires a great deal of planning to ensure I won't find a desert of wilted plants on my return. With a major forest fire now burning to the north of us, I'm ready for rain.



I don't usually pay a lot of attention to whether a plant is touted as 'drought-resistant,' as that is seldom a requirement in damp Sayward. However, I do notice that the perennial lavateras deal with this new phase in our climate very well indeed. Lavatera 'Barnsley' and its relations have become almost a cliché in the gardening world, but as with all plants that are very popular, there is a good reason for that – they perform.



While doing some brush-up reading for my newspaper column this week, I came across some notes I had taken at a lecture on hydrangeas when I was in Holland. The speaker pointed out the lesser-known fact that hydrangeas often change flower colour in response to transplanting. Their first year or two in a new location may produce a change in colour that doesn't necessarily reflect soil conditions. They will stabilize by the third growing season, so we should hold off on inducing any changes until then.



A couple of years ago I lamented in this newsletter that I have never been able to grow hardy cyclamen here. In response, then-editor Mary Palmer gave me some plants she has found unequivocally reliable. I planted them this spring, and they are now in bud. Thank you Mary! However, the tag had disappeared from the pot (Mary always labels everything very carefully but my resident jays love plant tags), so I'm not sure which species they are.



In the vegetable garden, I tried a new zucchini this year. It is an Italian variety called 'Largo,' and it is appreciably different. It looks rather like an extension of the plant stem, and is attractively ridged, creating a striped effect. 'Largo' is much crisper than others I

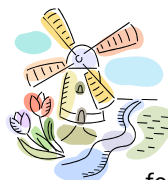
have tried, and while no zucchini bombards the taste buds, this one does have a fresh flavour.



My big perennial border, once my pride and joy, is gasping its way through the summer. We have had westerly gales or near-gales daily, so many tall plants are listing wildly, rather like our boat crossing Johnstone Straits. I have to be careful with water as there's no way of knowing when the well will be replenished by rain, so every plant is stressed. I chose this spring to treat myself to a fernleaf peony, *Paeonia tenuifolia*, which of course must be coddled with daily waterings. I just hope the established plants don't resent it to death.



## NURSERIES



Soon it will be time to look for a special tulip or daffodil, so it is time to review the nurseries. Several places have sales on right now, and it might be a good time to search for a special shrub or grass. I have found it is necessary to check the roots first, after giving a good drink of water, and after trimming or unwinding roots, transplant them immediately into larger pots, where they can stay until we have a couple of good heavy rains in the fall. Water them regularly meantime, and if you give fertilizer, be sure it has little or no nitrogen in it.

Mystic Woods, north of Campbell River, on Gordon Road, is out of the retail plant market. The plan is to concentrate on landscaping, and the building of a botanical garden.

Just a few hundred feet further along the road is Hidden Acres, Paul Wurz' rhodo garden, a wonderful place to go in spring to see hundreds of rhodos in bloom, then pick out the ones you want. You can look at and buy the plants in fall, but if you need a certain colour, spring is the best time to view them.

Campbell River Nursery, on Peterson Road, has expanded and re-arranged the area. Rhodos are all in a shade house. There are many varieties of Hydrangeas as well as quantities of other shrubs and trees. This is a great place to go in fall to see tree leaves of many colours, just like Joseph's Coat. If it is raining, you can pop into the huge greenhouse where there is always an interesting display of plants.

Driving south on the Old Highway it is always a good idea to drop in to Black Creek Farm & Feed where there is a small nursery, always stuffed with many unusual varieties of trees, shrubs, fall bulbs, and of course, food for your garden birds, who will be coming back to their winter homes soon.



Have you ever looked around the Outback Nursery on Headquarters Road? This place keeps expanding so that now there are 5 greenhouses stuffed with every kind of shrub, beds of shrubs, another greenhouse full of cuttings, friendly, knowledgeable people and reasonable prices.

Another small, interesting nursery is Stonetree on Lake Trail Road. There is a little house full of bonsai plants, beds with pots of various shrubs and perennials, and a beautiful garden where you can roam or sit with a picnic lunch on Sundays. You will find shrubs like Pittosporum for the lucky people in Zone 8 or 9, and hardy geraniums for those in Zone 7. This nursery is a lovely, peaceful place to visit.

The last one to mention today is Harry Wright's beautiful garden and nursery, with a huge collection of rhodos, as well as many other plants. In June, when most of the rhodos are finished, there is a good supply of Kalmias in bloom and for sale (the only place in the area to find them, I think).

I know I have not covered all the nurseries - Art Knapp's for bulbs in fall and orchids year-round, Canadian Tire and Home Depot and grocery stores, and Ann Doolittle's nursery on Quadra, and further down Island .... But I can't cover them all this time. There are enough in this list to keep us happy and broke for a few months.

### GARDEN TOOL KNOW-HOW

**Make your tools measure up.** Turn your hoes, rakes, and shovels into handy rulers. Just paint or notch marks for inches and feet on the wooden handles of your tools. That way, you'll always have a measuring device when you need one.

**Seal with a twist.** After you flush and drain your irrigation system, make sure to seal the ends of the pipes for the winter. To do this cheaply and easily, slip a plastic sandwich bag over the end and fasten it with a twist tie.

**Scour tools with homemade paste.** Rusty gardening tools? Get them back in tiptop shape with a little salt and lemon juice. Mix enough salt into a tablespoon of lemon juice to make a paste, apply to rusted areas with a dry cloth, and rub.

**Give rusty tools a vinegar bath.** Before you decide to throw away that rusty trowel or other gardening tool, try soaking it overnight in cider vinegar. Wipe away the residue with a cloth, and you may find it's as good as new.

**Dispense oil the easy way.** Oiling your tools doesn't have to be a messy job. Put some mineral oil in an old bottle of lotion or hand soap and simply squirt it on your tools. Wipe them down with fine steel wool, and they're good as new.

**Use old oil to keep tools looking new.** Kill two birds with one stone as you prepare your tools for the winter. Drain the oil from your power tools, then use the oil to rustproof your metal tools. Just dip a rag in the oil and wipe them down.

**Add rust protection to your toolbox.** Tired of the same sad story of the gardener and the rusty tools? Then check out this absorbing tale. Put a charcoal briquette or a piece of children's sidewalk chalk - the thick, colorful kind - in your toolbox during the winter to absorb moisture. This time, your story will have a happy ending.

### RECIPE REQUESTS:

#### CANDIED BUTTERNUT SQUASH

3 Cups peeled & diced squash  
3 Tbsp unsalted butter  
1 Tbsp sugar  
½ tsp ground cinnamon  
¼ tsp ground nutmeg  
Salt & pepper to taste



Cook squash in salted water until tender. Drain. Melt butter in large skillet over fairly high heat. Add squash, then all the other ingredients. Shake pan to glaze squash on all sides. Serve...very attractive side dish!

#### GREEN TOMATO CHUTNEY

5 lbs green tomatoes  
1 lb onions  
1 oz salt  
1 lb sugar  
2 pints apple cider vinegar  
8 oz raisins  
8 oz sultanas  
1 lb cooking apple (peeled & sliced)



Slice tomato and chop onions. Mix these in a basin with salt and allow to sit overnight.

Next Day: Add sugar to vinegar and boil. Add raisins, sultanas and apple. Simmer 10 minutes. Add drained tomatoes and onions. Simmer until thickened.. About 1 hour.

Pour into sterilized jars and seal.



#### MISS EDNA LEWIS'S APPLE (OR PEAR) CHUTNEY

2 Cups apple cider vinegar  
2 Cups white sugar  
1 ½ lbs tart apples (or pears)  
3 Tbsp lemon juice  
10 clove Garlic  
3 inch piece fresh ginger  
1 ½ Tbsp salt  
6 dried red chilies  
1 ½ Cups raisins  
2 Tbsp mustard seeds



Put vinegar and sugar into large stainless steel pan, bring to boil then simmer for 10 minutes (stirring often)

Chop apples and toss with lemon juice. Finely chop the garlic, ginger and chilies, add salt. Add everything to the vinegar/sugar mix and simmer 45 minutes until somewhat thickened. Stirring often.

Spoon into sterilized jars and seal.