

# Indumentum

## Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

Volume 35, Number 1, September 2003



The Vancouver Rhododendron Society is a chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

### 2003 Executive

**President:** Ron Knight

**Vice President:** Louis Peterson

**Past President:** Gerry Gibbens

**Treasurer:** Barbara Sherman

**Secretary:** Bill Spohn

**Membership:** Carole Conlin

**Newsletter:** Douglas & Karen Justice

**Program:** Joe Ronsley

**Directors:**

**Bill Herbst (3 years)**

**Todd Major (2 years)**

**Joanne Ronsley (1 year)**

**Education:** Louis Peterson

**Advertising:** Tony Clayton

**Publicity:** Martie Irwin

**Library:** Jasbir Gill

**Refreshments:** Mary Dorsey

**This Month's Meeting: September 18<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 pm,  
Floral Hall, VanDusen Gardens**

**Show Slides and Trophy Presentations**

**Program: Ian Sinclair 'The Scottish Plant Collectors'**

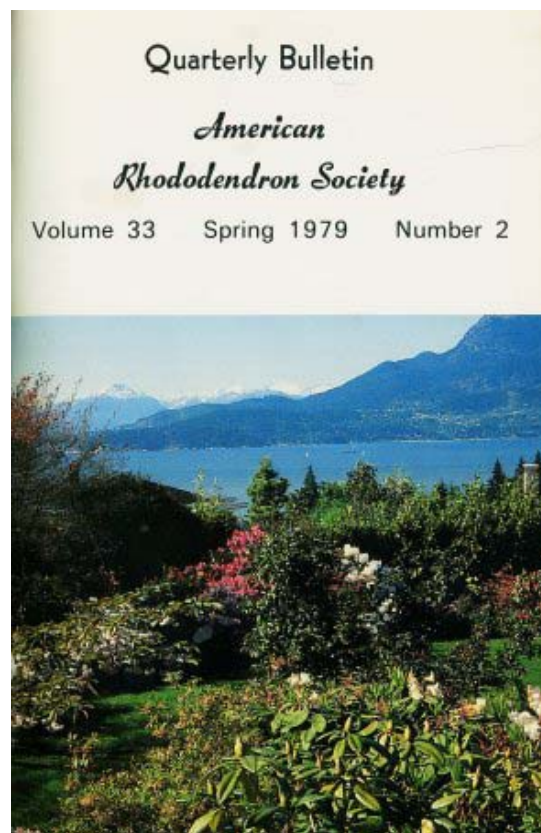
### Lillian Hodgson, 1911-2003

Rhododendron lovers in ARS District 1 and members of Vancouver Rhododendron Society lost one of our pioneers with the passing in mid-July 2003 of Lillian (Lill) Hodgson. Lill was a charter member of the Vancouver Chapter of the ARS. There were no other ARS chapters in BC for many years after 1955, so Lill knew everybody connected with rhodos in the province. Lill served as Chapter Secretary, was a Director and founded, typed, edited and mailed out the chapter's two-page, Gestetner-produced newsletter for some 10 years. Lill had a talent for flower and nature photography. As an artist and water colourist, her knowledge of rhododendrons—particularly the English hybrids—equipped her to excel as a show judge. Lill's service to the chapter and her dedication to the genus earned her the Society's Bronze Medal; she was Vancouver's second recipient.

Lill wrote for the *ARS Journal* and previously for the *Quarterly Bulletin*. Her own photograph of her garden in the UEL, ablaze with rhododendrons, with Vancouver's outer harbour, and West Vancouver's forested slopes and shoreline (with the Tantalus Range behind) appears on the cover of the Spring 1979 Quarterly Bulletin. It announced the ARS National Convention at the Bayshore, for which Lill served as Registrar.

There is a hybrid named for Lill created by Dr Bob Rhodes, then of Maple Ridge, 'Solent Queen' × 'Old Copper'. I never asked her whether she liked it or not; however, I do. *Rhododendron* 'Lillian Hodgson' is sweet and pink on the outside, fire inside; with a heritage to fit the *grande dame* of the VRS.

Clive Justice



## President's Message

At our June executive meeting, we completed a detailed evaluation of our 2003 Show and Sale, which was held at Park and Tilford Gardens. I've summarized our discussions below, by means of a list of positives and recommendations. If you have questions or additional recommendations, please contact me.

### Positives:

- ♣ **Todd Major** and his staff were extremely helpful.
- ♣ The gardens provided a beautiful setting and were accessible to the public.
- ♣ Set-up and clean-up times were greatly reduced from last year.
- ♣ The location was protected from the types of winds we had at VanDusen.
- ♣ VRS members were generous in volunteering their time.
- ♣ 8 new members were signed up.
- ♣ Attendance was good, perhaps because of the new banners and paid advertising.
- ♣ The truss and bonsai shows were located in elegant settings and received a good response.
- ♣ Security was excellent.
- ♣ The growers were well organized and happy with their sales figures.
- ♣ Gross profit was almost \$15 000 and our net profit was \$3100. Comparable figures from 2002 were approximately \$12 400 and \$2 200.

### Recommendations:

1. Hold the 2004 Show and Sale at Park and Tilford Gardens.
2. Find ways to reduce crowding in the sales area.
3. Increase the number of clerks to 3 per line. Provide the extra clerks with 3-part receipts/sales slips to be completed before buyers reach the cashiers.
4. Protect the membership table with a larger tent.
5. Ensure growers are paid within 30 days.
6. Increase the amount of publicity sent to local garden clubs.
7. Place VRS volunteers (with Greer's guidebooks) in the show and sales areas.
8. The executive should call all VRS members in the new year about volunteering.
9. **Roger Low's** bonsai show should be closer to the other events.
10. We need better directional signs within the gardens.
11. Truss show entries should be labelled with the rhodo's name.
12. The grower identification labelling system needs to be improved.



*Diascia rigescens*

Photo: UBC Botanical Garden

13. We need a crew of volunteers to help buyers take large orders to their cars.

In general, executive members were very pleased with the 2003 Show and Sale. They felt that although the change in venue created a lot of extra organizational work this year, it was well worth the effort. They look forward to an even better Show and Sale in 2004 and are willing once again to assume all the major leadership positions. On their behalf, I would like to extend a huge thank you to all the VRS members who helped make the event a success. At our next VRS meeting on September 18<sup>th</sup>, we will be honouring these volunteers with colour slides showing them in action during the Show and Sale. **Gerry Gibbens** will also be presenting trophies to our truss show winners.

I look forward to seeing all of our members again at the start of our new season.

*Ron Knight*

## Membership

Welcome back – Fall 2003 is Membership Renewal Time – no fee increases!

Further to the seven new members announced in the May edition, please join me in welcoming three new memberships: **Jennifer & Michael Berg** (Vancouver, Washington); **Iain & Barbara Forsyth** and **Katherine Ruffen & Doug French**. Look for these new members at the meetings who will be wearing the ARS logo on their name tags.

Notice of Membership Renewals have been mailed. You can mail in your renewal or see us at the Membership table on September 18th. The new membership cards are valid to December 31, 2004 and this year your name is printed on a map of the world and the card is laminated. Benefits of membership, including discounts at nurseries and a summary of the 2003/2004 program, were enclosed with your renewals. New members joining now receive the balance of 2003 and all of 2004 for the regular annual rates of:

\$50 ARS Membership (price includes 4 ARS journals a year)

\$25 VRS membership (no ARS journals; journals may be borrowed from VRS Library)

\$10 Associate Members – must already be a member of a Canadian ARS chapter

\$10 US Assoc. Members – must already be a member of a non-Canadian ARS chapter.

Thank you for encouraging membership. We grow, share and enrich our knowledge because you do!

Carole Conlin, VRS Membership Chair, 604 921 7260  
[conlin@sfu.ca](mailto:conlin@sfu.ca)

◆ **Contributions to the Raffle Table** help offset the rental of the Floral Hall. Plants, books, fresh eggs, etc. are always welcome!

◆ **For the Refreshment Table**, donations of cookies, cakes, cheese, and other snacks are greatly appreciated.



## Plants in Bloom - *Sinocalycanthus chinensis*

It's tough to find rhodies in bloom in late August, other than the precocious blooms of dwarfs like 'Ramapo' (mine is in a pot at the front door and regularly produces flowers at this time). I know, I know; somebody, somewhere has an *auriculatum* or a *hemsleyanum* (probably with an air conditioner in close proximity) that is still in flower, but really, these things flower in July.

Summer flowering plants are scene-savers in a rhododendron garden. Unless you leave town for the summer and avoid the garden completely—hopefully leaving a soaker hose going while you're gone—one eventually tires of only restful foliage. We are fortunate in the Vancouver area to be able to grow a large number of summer flowering plants. Granted, some look a bit odd with rhodies and other woodlanders. I've always felt that buddlejas look better dressing up a gravel pit, and even the sun-loving dwarf rhodies look out-of-place with more riotously coloured South African bulbs, hebes or (gasp!) bedding plants, but maybe I'm too fussy. My tastes run to more "naturalistic" summer value plantings, such as lacecap and species hydrangeas, viburnums (with showy berries now), hedychiums and *Kirengeshoma*.

On my list is a less well-known companion, *Sinocalycanthus chinensis* (Chinese spice bush), a relative of the California spice bush (*Calycanthus occidentalis*) and Carolina allspice (*C. floridus*). Flowering even in deep shade with large, white and yellow camellia-like blooms (see photo above), *Sinocalycanthus* has broad, shiny dark green deciduous leaves and an open, vigorous habit. The common name is a bit of a misnomer as the fragrance of the flowers is slight, but the plants themselves and the seed capsules in particular, do have a spicy aroma when handled. At UBC, plants in full sun are more compact, but still grow large (2m after eight years), and produce pink tinged flowers. An excellent hybrid (*S. chinensis* × *C. floridus*), with the unwieldy name ×*Sinocalycanthus raulstonii* 'Hartlage Wine', has attractive, deep brown-red flowers that are intermediate in shape between its parents. Both would be worthwhile additions to any rhododendron garden.

Douglas Justice

Please patronize our advertisers; they support the VRS and make the newsletter possible

### Subscription Rates

VRS + ARS Membership (US & Overseas)	\$50.00 \$US 28.00
VRS Membership (no ARS Quarterly Journal)	\$25.00
Associate Membership (member of another ARS Chapter in Canada)	\$10.00
Associate Membership (member of another ARS Chapter outside of Canada)	\$US 10.00

### Advertising Rates

	1 month	3 months	8 months
Business card	\$10.00	\$25.00	\$50.00
$\frac{1}{4}$ page	\$25.00	\$67.50	\$160.00
$\frac{1}{2}$ page	\$40.00	\$108.00	\$256.00
full page	\$70.00	\$189.00	\$448.00

### Vancouver Rhododendron Society 2003 - 2004 Program

- 18 September **Ian Sinclair**, formerly Assistant Director of the Younger Botanic Gardens, Benmore, now in a private horticultural design and consulting business, **'The Scottish Plant Collectors'**
- 16 October **Douglas Justice**, Associate Director, UBC Botanical Garden, and Co-Editor of the VRS *Indumentum*, **'Observations on Recent Asiatic Maple Introductions to UBC Botanical Garden'**
- 20 November **Chip Muller**, Gardener and Plant Explorer, Seattle, **'People, Plants and Peaks: Sixty Years of Family History in the Nepal-Sikkim-Tibet Himalaya'**
- 15 January **AGM**, Election, and Members' Slides
- 19 February **John Schroeder**, founder and owner, Valleybrook Gardens, Abbotsford, **'Shady Companions: Herbaceous Partners for Rhododendrons'**
- 18 March **Steve Hootman**, Director of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, Federal Way, Washington, **'The Rhododendron Species Foundation'**
- 15 April **John Simmons**, Honorary Curator, Castle Howard, England, **'Plant Collections at Castle Howard: With Special Attention to Ray Wood'**
- 20 May **Alleyn Cook** leads a walk in the Ted and Mary Greig Rhododendron Garden, Stanley Park
- 20 June **Pot Luck Picnic** at the West Vancouver home of **Ron Feicht** and **Derrick Hoffman**



To advertise in *Indumentum*, contact **Tony Clayton** Tel: 604 921 7947 [tclayton@telus.net](mailto:tclayton@telus.net)

## Discount Nurseries and Garden Centres

The following nurseries and garden centres offer VRS members a discount:

### Island Specialties Nurseries (companion plants)

8797 Chemainus Road,  
Chemainus

### Art's Nursery

8940 - 192<sup>nd</sup> Street, Langley

### GardenWorks

9 locations in southwest BC

### Wrenhaven Nursery

16651 - 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Surrey

### David Hunter

2084 W. Broadway, Vancouver

### Made in the Shade

4586 Saddlehorn Crescent,  
Langley

### Murray Nurseries

31140 W. 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver

There are also other VRS member-growers who sell rhododendrons at preferred prices at our monthly meetings, and who would be pleased to respond to inquiries by telephone.

Trevor Badminton

Harold Fearing

Lilli Anne Hemminger

Diane Kehoe

Gifford Robb

Margaret Charlton



The following VRS member-nurseries, specializing in rhododendrons, offer VRS members preferred prices.

Les Clay & Son

3666 - 224<sup>th</sup> Street, Langley

Gordon Finley

10476 - 125B Street, Surrey

David Shantz

32224 Dewdney Trunk Rd,  
Mission

## News and Notes

## Congratulations!



The winner of the **Name the Rhodo Contest** is **John Anderson**, who identified the azalea 'Balsaminaflora' (left) and the rhododendron 'Queen Anne's' (left below). (Photos: Bill Spohn)

Honourable mention to **Dot and Ken Gibson** and **Karen Schuster**, who also correctly identified 'Queen Anne's'.

Speaking of the **Gibsons**, theirs was one of three Tofino area gardens profiled by *Vancouver Sun* garden columnist and VRS member **Steve Whysall** in the June 27 issue of the *Sun*.



VRS Secretary **Bill Spohn** also had a brush with fame this summer. He not only managed to get a photo of his flowering *Rhododendron auriculatum* into the *Globe and Mail* newspaper, but had them mention the VRS, as well.



## September Speaker

**Ian Sinclair**, our first speaker for the 2003-2004 activities year, comes to us from Scotland. This is appropriate, since our last two speakers came from Ireland and England. (We must now look to Wales.) But he is here for more reasons than can be found in mere geography. Ian “trained and developed his horticultural skills for over 10 years at the world famous Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, and then spent a further decade as Garden Supervisor at the renowned Younger Botanic Garden Benmore, near Dunoon, Argyll. He is an acknowledged expert on rhododendrons and conifers, and was recently appointed a Director of the Scottish Rhododendron Society.”

Much of Ian’s knowledge, after his formal training and practical work in the major botanic institutions in Edinburgh and Benmore, evidently originates in his participation in several plant hunting expeditions to the Himalayas, especially in Bhutan, and also to Yunnan in China, and to southeast Asia, particularly Borneo and Sarawak. Currently Ian is a garden designer and consultant, having founded Sinclair Horticultural Services in 1995. In this capacity he has designed and worked on many important public and private gardens. Some of the more prominent ones include the Crarae woodland garden, Ardanasaig house gardens, Glentyan Estate, Kinnell House, Stonefield Castle, Kilmun Arboretum, Muncaster Gardens, Burncastle Estate, the Stirling University campus, where Ian was a consultant on rhododendrons, and the Drimsynie Estates.



*Rhododendron auriculatum*

Adapted from an illustration by Marianna Kneller in *The Book of Rhododendrons*, Timber Press, Portland, 1995.

Ian comes as a highly recommended speaker, and will be presenting at several ARS chapters in Washington and Oregon, as well as to the VRS. His subject here the evening of September 18<sup>th</sup>, **The Scottish Plant Hunters**, is historical in nature, and fascinating for anyone really interested in rhododendrons.

**Joe Ronsley**