



INDUMENTUM



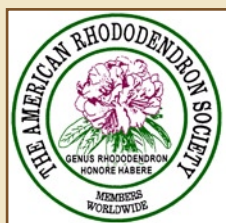
VANCOUVER
Rhododendron
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

September General Meeting:
Thursday Sept. 15, 7:30 p.m.
Vandusen Botanical Garden

Program:
Plant Hunting in Nepal

Plant Sales
Sue Klapwijk, Diane Kehoe



Vancouver Chapter

VRS Website: www.rhodo.citymax.com



Plant Hunting in Nepal with Garth Wedemire

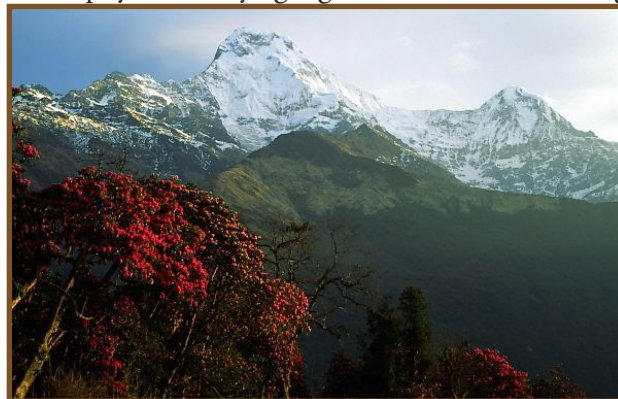
Our speaker to start off the season is well known in the Pacific Northwest. He is the president of the Fraser Valley Rhododendron Society. He regularly contributes to the American Rhododendron Society, District One website. He writes and teaches as well as capturing exquisite photographs which are fine examples of nature's



beauty (photo right, *R. moupinense* by Garth Windemire). We can expect to see some great examples of his photography during his talk with us on his Rhododendron Trekking Expedition to Kathmandu, Nepal and beyond to the South East Annapurna Region in the Spring of



2003. Garth travelled with a group of enthusiasts who visited the Kathmandu Botanical Gardens where they saw flora on display from varying regions of the world. During their trip into the Himalayan mountains of Nepal they likely saw *R. arboreum* in multitudes, all in full bloom forming the canopy and painting the mountain sides pink and red. Other plants known to flourish in this region are *R. companulatum*, *R. barbatum* and the small alpine *R. keleticum* plus glorious magnolias such as *M. napaulensis*. (Photo right by Camarish Landscape Photography, Mountains and Rhododendron of Nepal.)



As Margaret deWeese explains "They (Garth) visited Stupas where the white tinted base represents the four elements: earth, air, fire and water amid lines of prayer flags with their printed mantras fluttering in the wind. They visited the sacred temple and stood under the watchful eyes of Buddha. They saw the prayer wheels where the sacred mantra is printed on scrolls inside the wheels and with every spin the message is sent out into the valley." The spiritual side of his journey must have been as compelling as the plant hunting.



See "Plant Hunting with Garth" on Page 2

Garth is the recipient of the 1989 Bronze Medal for the Vancouver Chapter and the 2001 Bronze Medal recipient for the Fraser Valley Chapter. He is reportedly a former teacher, which would explain why his educational lectures are so well received. While searching for information on Garth we found entire websites dedicated to his photography of plants at UBC, the Washington Species Foundation and beyond. His passion for rhododendrons and new life experiences are sure to shine through during his lecture with us on "Plant Hunting" in Nepal on September 15th. I encourage everyone to join us for this exotic journey to an ancient and rugged region of the world. Photo right, Mount Everest casts the largest shadow, center of picture. Located on the border between Tibet and Nepal in the central Himalaya Mountains. Deep layers of rock were folded and refolded, creating Everest and the other great, rugged peaks of the Himalayas. Photo courtesy of NASA.



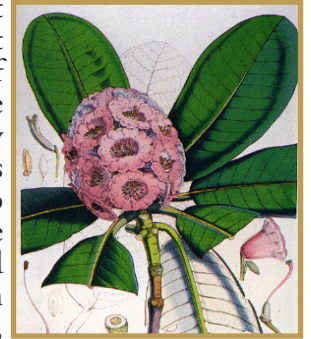
A Rhesplendence of Rhododendrons Observations on the Victoria ARS Convention 2005, By a correspondent

A few of us will remember the first Victoria ARS Convention in 1989. It was the first convention to be held in the newly renovated Empress and just completed and attached convention centre. It had the largest in number of ARS members attending, over 1000 registered to make it the largest ever. Attendance has not been equaled since by any subsequent ARS convention. At the Awards and closing banquet there were over 1000 served; again also a first for the new centre. Warren Berg and Harold Greer received Gold Medals while our own Harold Johnston was awarded the Society's Silver Medal. Exbury's Edmund de Rothschild, Lionel's son, was a featured speaker along with youngest of the Cox's, Kenneth and locals Gwen Bell, Richard Hebda, Bill Dale and Ken Gibson. A featured garden was 1970 ARS Gold Medalist Evelyn and husband Nick Weesje's "Towner Crest" out in Saanich Peninsula's, Deep Cove. The first time it was shown publicly.

In 2005 it was the Victoria ARS Chapter's turn again to host the 61st ARS National Convention. They chose to hold it at the same venue but it was now 17 years older. No more CPR, now, Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, carrying on the Afternoon Tea at the Empress, now at \$50 per pot; with room rates \$165 single per night up \$85 over 1989. As well the Victoria Chapter wished to give a Silver salute to celebrate their 25 years as an ARS Chapter. Early on, they discovered it wasn't going to be a repeat of 1989, 11/9 had changed everything. A New Zealand group who traditionally had always toured the Pacific Northwest and California as part of attending an ARS Convention in the PNW decided not to come (US visa problems). After the 1970 Vancouver Convention I had taken a Kiwi Group on the Olympic Peninsula/ Pudget Sound loop tour. To prove it, I have a photo of them all lined up in front of the bus when we stopped at Deception Pass on Whitby.

A Rhesplendence of Rhododendrons continued

The Program for the 2005 Convention developed by Program Chair, 2003 Silver medalist, Norman Todd included speakers from a world wide range of rhododendron places speaking on a wide range of Rhododendron subjects. Dr. Quentin Cronk the Director of the UBC botanical Gardens spoke on our fascination with the genus, John Hammond spoke on the Scotch dominance and mastery in growing the genus, while Dr. Ben Hall spoke on the changes to classification of the genus, occasioned by DNA accessioning. Dr. Eric Allen's presentation on worldwide plant pest invasion threat and the SOD threat to the genus. Peter Warton curator of the Asian garden at UBCBG gave the best presentation yet of the discovery and rediscovery of the genus in the wilds of China giving due credit to those who had gone before. Judy Walker traced the heritage of the early Vancouver Island and Lower mainland Rhododendron growers and hybridizers. Fraser, Layritz, Lobrunner, the Buchanan Simpson's, the Greig's, and Hyland Barnes. Keshab Pradhan came all the way from India and spoke of the successful efforts of India's 29th and smallest state in the conservation and protection of the genus in the Sikkim Himalaya and their plans to create a heritage trail that traces Joseph Dalton Hooker's journeys (photo right) and rhodo discoveries (photo above) in Sikkim in 1847-48 for rhododendron enthusiast visitors. On Sunday morning speakers Irving and Hebda took up on the origins of Rhododendrons and their migration from North America in extrapolating from a closely related genus Magnoliaceae which has much more fossil evidence to support the migration theory. See the ARS Journal.



The Awards Banquet on Saturday evening saw Robbie Robinson, hail and hearty, honoured by a standing ovation from those assembled, in recognition of Robbie being the last remaining Charter Member of the ARS and Portland Chapter when the Society was formed in June 1945. Keshab Pradhan was honoured with the Society's Pioneer Achievement Award.. Warren Berg, awarded the ARS Gold Medal in Victoria in 1998 was again honoured, not by the ARS but by the RHS winning the Lord Loder Cup for his rhododendron hybridizing. An ARS Gold Medal went to Sonja Nelson, Editor of the Journal she won it for editing of "The Pacific Coast Rhododendron Story" and her book Rhododendrons in the Landscape. The second Gold medalist was Bill Moyles a long time ARS member and grower of Vireya species and hybrids. As Bill was not present to accept the medal you will have to wait for the next journal to read the citation.

See "ARS Convention" on page 4

NEWS AND NOTES

New Developments at the Rhododendron Species Foundation

Toward the end of this year, November or December, the Rhododendron Species Foundation (RSF) will be publishing the inaugural issue of its new yearbook, *Rhododendron Species*. It will contain 176 pages, in addition to 16 pages of colour photographs, and will include several articles written by noted authorities on species rhododendrons and related matters, the spring, 2006, plant distribution catalogue, and a directory of members. It is expected that an index will be published every five years. *Rhododendron Species* will be sent to all RSF members as one benefit of membership.

Other new RSF innovations now being considered include a 'Members' Day', comprised of a short AGM, an illustrated lecture, a walk in the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden with the two co-Executive Directors present for discussion and to answer questions, and an evening dinner event. Also being contemplated is reciprocal complimentary admission to major botanic gardens here and abroad. The special education sessions, which many Canadian members have been enjoying, will continue during the coming year, as will the newsletters. Finally, it should be said that because of new propagation facilities and techniques, there should be far fewer disappointments when members place their plant orders, and these orders are now available for pickup by Canadian members at the UBC Botanic Garden.

Not everything, the 'Members' Day' and the reciprocal admission, is yet in place, but other new innovations are in process with the intention of making the RSF more relevant and 'user-friendly', and to extend its international profile. For membership and other information, go to the RSF website at www.rsfcitymax.com. Or contact me at 604-921-9444 or jronsley@telus.net.

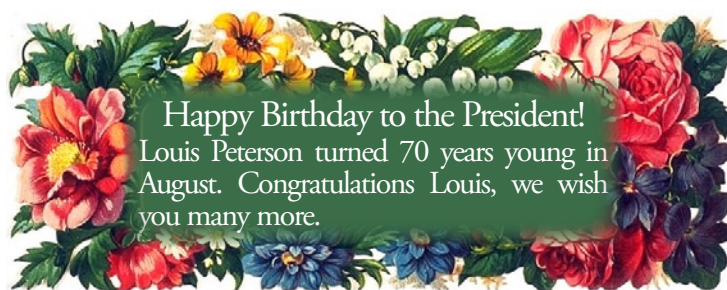
Joe Ronsley,
President,
Rhododendron Species Foundation



Help Wanted - VRS Executives Needed

Looking for strong minded and opinionated individuals. Must be willing to discuss everything at nauseum. Must be flexible but not a pansy. Lousy pay, few benefits, but very rewarding. All nominations for the VRS Executive will be published in the January Indumentum and ratification occurs at the January AGM.

Letters to the Editor can be sent to Todd or Shannon Major at stmajor@shaw.ca. All letters must be sent in Microsoft Word, MS Notepad, MS Wordpad or in the body of your email to us.



Happy Birthday to the President!

Louis Peterson turned 70 years young in August. Congratulations Louis, we wish you many more.

Bronze Medal Award Nominating Committee

Lothar Mischke the Chair of the Nominations Committee is calling on all members to nominate those people in our club who have given of themselves to improve our Society. The Awards Program is a way to recognize the contributions of members through award of a bronze medal. Send your nominations to Lothar at: cindymischke@aol.com

Stanley Park Azalea Walk Project

Volunteers were busy this past spring numbering, photographing and taking cuttings of the hybrid azaleas in the Stanley Park Azalea Walk located in the Ted and Mary Greig Rhododendron collection.

The collection is surprisingly large with well over 200 individual plants. We are at the point now of attempting to identify the plants through our photos, and we also hope to produce a map of the walk. If all goes well, permanent identification labels will be installed during next year's flowering season.

If you are able to help with the identification process, please contact Bill Herbst

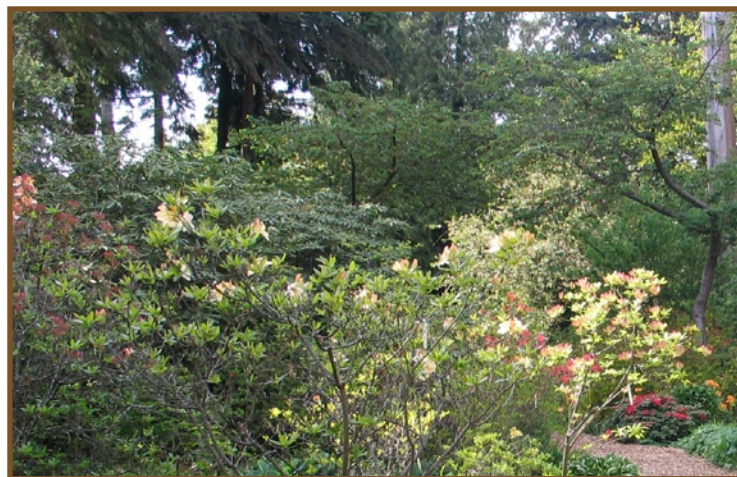


Photo above - Ted and Mary Greig Garden in Stanley Park

ARS Convention continued

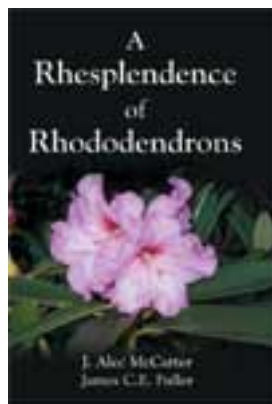


All the Garden tours were sold out. Some repeats of 1989 but unlike buildings the gardens seen 17 years ago have matured and enhanced like fine wine. Attendance at the talks ensured and late comings minimized by the draws at the beginning and at post coffee break times. There was a great selection of rhodo species and hybrids on sale in larger than usual sizes.

Since 1989 collecting seems to have fallen off as attendee members get older have filled up their gardens. The procedure of Phyto certification is still more of a hassle and still daunting. Only 30 phytos were issued versus some 300 or so in the rush of '98.

For me the surprise and delight of the convention was the paperback included with the registration package. Titled, *The Rhesplendence of Rhododendrons*. I should have remembered it was a repeat of '98 when they included the book *Rhododendrons on a Western Shore*. Both were edited by Alex McCarter, who unfortunately passed away in January of this year. Luckily the former had a joint editor, James Fuller, who carried on to produce *Rhesplendence* . . . while the latter book full of stories by Vancouver Island and Victoria Rhododendron Society members is still around.

The *Rhesplendence of Rhododendrons* consists of selections from the Victoria Rhododendron Society Newsletter over their 25 year history. I read it through at one sitting when I discovered it among the brochures in my registration bag. Many of the stories are by Norman Todd. He has a passion for the species and with his knowledge, wit and writing has finally brought humour to rhododendrons and hybridizing.



If you registered for the Conference and haven't found *The Rhesplendence of Rhododendrons* among the brochures and other touristy stuff handed out in the registration packages, rummage about in the convention bag, find and read it. If you didn't attend the Victoria convention then you will have to order it from James, the Victoria Newsletter editor, through his Email: jfuller@vicsurf.com You will find it is one great rhodo read.

By Clive Justice



"Carry The Torch"

Commentary on the Show and Sale

This past show and sale was held on April 23, 2005, at the Port Coquitlam Recreation Complex in beautiful downtown Port Coquitlam. Our club took a risk in holding the event outside the usual venues of Vancouver and North Vancouver with the intention of exposing other Lower Mainland municipalities to our wonderful club.

Although financially it was not our most successful sale, the general feedback we received from our growers and the public was very positive. However, there was a noticeable weakness in the number of entrants in this year's truss show. Our entry numbers were down from previous years and if it were not for some of our show's regular and senior members, the show benches would have been bare. Perhaps the membership, and in particular our younger members, feel that their plants are not "good enough" to exhibit, or that they don't have a chance to win. But I would encourage all members to be involved and bring what they have to fill the show benches.

One of our missions is to expose rhododendrons to the general public and one way of accomplishing this is through our annual show. There is a tremendous amount of work done by our volunteers and judges to put on the show, and it is disheartening when club involvement is lacking. It would be a shame to lose this event due to lack of interest.

The time is near when our senior members will no longer be able to contribute at the level that they have in the past so we need our younger members to step up and carry the torch into the future for our club and our favorite plant, the genus rhododendron.

By Bill Herbst





R. luteum

50TH GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY



R. flavidum

Vancouver Rhododendron Society Golden Anniversary (1955-2005) Reflections and Projections about our Chapter

As we begin the new season of VRS activities, the Golden Age of fifty years is a time for the Society to look forward as well as back. I call this a 'Reflections and Projections' period in our fiftieth anniversary year. It is appropriate to acknowledge the contributions of the Executive Boards, members and supporters who have sustained the Society over the years, we thank you all!

I have had the good fortune of enjoying useful chats with several time honoured members – Francisca Darts, Alleyne and Barbara Cook, Clive Justice, Vern and Gordon Finley, past and present executive colleagues, to name a few, and I look forward to meeting with others during the Golden year in order to glean further perspectives about our Society.

The days and months prior to 1955 was a time when rhododendron horticulture in B.C. was in its infancy, but growing fast on account of developments elsewhere, mainly in the U.K. and the U.S.A. Aware of horticultural potential, a meeting-of-the-minds of a number of entrepreneurs, including Alleyne Cook and Clive Justice, led to the founding of the VRS on June 15, 1955. The VRS was the first Canadian Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, eventually followed by eight others in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island. This group of nine Chapters constitutes District #1 of the ARS today.

Now, it is only possible to imagine the excitement, enthusiasm and commitment that fostered the early expansion of rhododendron horticulture in gardens and parks in the Lower Mainland and outlying areas. Knowledgeable green thumb experts and landscapers made more and more species available, and novel hybridization experiments no doubt added zest to gardening activities. The VRS Shows and Sales enjoyed substantial successes for many of the succeeding years.

A good account of the early history of the VRS can be found in Clive Justice's article, 'the Vancouver Rhododendron Society – a History', currently available on the VRS website, www.rhodo.citymax.com. Another comprehensive source of garden lore for the period 1888-1999 exists in Clive's doctoral thesis, "The English Garden Legacy in Western Canadian Ornamental Gardens".

The activities of the VRS have no doubt changed and evolved over the years, in ways that others more qualified than me could comment upon. Currently we maintain a Speakers' Programme that attracts international as well as local experts. They deliver a wide range of well-illustrated topics about rhododendrons, maples, magnolias, and other companion plants, sometimes based on gardens or parks established many decades ago, sometimes based on challenging expeditions to remote regions of the world.

Memberships in specialty clubs such as ours may have plateaued as interests have moved to include broader-based, more varied gardening activities, an evolving trend that the VRS (and the ARS) is addressing. Note the broad range of topics featured in our Lecture Programme (see Archives on our website). Nowadays residential lots and space for the home-based garden are smaller, while apartment buildings offer patios and sun decks for space-saving container plantings. An emphasis on the smaller rhododendron and on specialty features such as early bloom or fragrance may be a desirable focus for all of the rhodo-based organizations.

See "Projections" on page 6



Photo Above - Name this Rhododendron grown by Linda Quarberg in Hawaii, send your guess to the Indumentum Editor at stmajor@shaw.ca



Projections

Finding presenters for each Thursday evening's "Education Session" is always a challenge, but among our successes we should mention "hands-on" workshops on propagation by seeds and cuttings (Todd, Garth), the renewed "mini-show" of early bloomers (Richard, Alleyne, Jim, Karen) and the very popular "Francisca Bouquet" (Douglas). Many interesting suggestions have been made and we have been able to act on some of them. Can anyone suggest presenters for other topics?

Most Thursdays we welcome opportunities to purchase rhododendron and other plants at preferred prices from growers who support our Society. Donations to the Raffle table – a source of income that helps offset Floral Hall rental expenses – are always greatly appreciated, especially by those with winning tickets!

Changes of significance include the production of a high quality newsletter, the 'Indumentum', electronically deliverable to those with Internet access. Begun by Douglas Justice more than five years ago, it continues in this mode with Todd and Shannon Major as current editors. For this year you may have noticed a new "Golden Anniversary Feature" section, as well as topical "What's in Bloom" and "Back to Basics" articles.

A second significant contribution to the life of the Society occurred with the creation of our own website, a fount of information ably managed by Webmaster Bill Spohn, and a source of links to other horticultural organizations. If ways can be found to assist others to embark on the "friendly" use of computer technology, a whole new world of horticultural information and educational material will become available to them.

In the annals of the VRS there occur frequent events that could add significantly to that part of our role that is to encourage and promote interest in the genus rhododendron. One such event is the Convention of our parent organization, the American Rhododendron Society, when held in our locality. It is attended by several hundred delegates and features a programme of many international horticulturists and garden tours. The event this year in Victoria coincided with the Silver Anniversary of the Victoria Chapter and the Golden Anniversary of the Vancouver Chapter. The cost, unfortunately, precludes participation by many members, and there is no provision for the recruitment of potential new members. Low cost guest registration fees may well be worth consideration.

While Societies such as the VRS are able to thrive as long as members so desire, each Executive Board inevitably has but a limited lifetime. Essential tasks dealing with Program, Membership, Treasury, Education, Fund Raising and other events must be continuously undertaken and refreshed, and work-loads and legwork need to be shared wherever possible. Replacements for outgoing Board Members by "new blood" to continue these roles are regularly needed for the ongoing good of the Society.

The VRS Executive hopes to provide interest and useful gardening tips for the whole range of gardening members, from novice to expert, in an enjoyable, sociable atmosphere. New ideas are always welcome.

With support from its members (and welcome comments on and additions to my opinion piece about items I've overlooked or forgotten!), the Vancouver Rhododendron Society can look forward to continued prosperity for the next 50 and more years to come.

Activities in 2005: A Golden Anniversary Feature in our "Indumentum" was created, and articles about or by the very early members have appeared. The Indu can be found at www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org/vrs. Mary Comber Miles kindly gave us access to some of her early paintings of rhodos which we have printed on commemorative cards. The June picnic at Joe and Joanne Ronsley's place was a well attended celebratory event. We were delighted that Harry Wright (District Director), Ron McMaster (MARS) and Paul Wurz (NIRS) were able to attend.

Under Bill Herbst's guidance, a project to preserve the heritage of the plants in the Ted & Mary Greig Walk in Stanley Park was begun. We have applied to the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust for a grant to facilitate the printing of Clive Justice's book "Canadian Westcoast and Prairies Provinces Gardens: The English Legacy". The book is based on Clive's doctoral research thesis, and is a work of considerable historic merit, covering the period 1822-1999.

Other tentative ideas that are under consideration include: (i) the possibility of an inclusive "Grande Reception" for all Societies in District #1 and possibly other garden clubs as well, in the late Spring of next year; (ii) a fund raising auction; (iii) a scholarship fund; (iv) and (v) expansion of our activities to include the "younger element" as well as seniors groups; and (vi) production of an illustrated version of our "History". There is the crucial caveat that the success of any of these suggestions will depend on our ability to engage willing volunteers to do the behind-the-scenes organizational work.

By Louis K. Peterson, VRS President



Members Asked the Indumentum How to Use a Computer to Keep Garden Records ?

Once a rhododendron collection reaches several dozen plants, it's difficult to remember where each one is located or who sold you that yellow-blooming "Purple Splendour". With a few hundred rhododendrons, the task becomes virtually impossible. Moreover, making and modifying hand-drawn garden maps and lists of information about each plant can be a cumbersome task.

A simple solution to garden record-keeping problems is to put plant information into a computer database. For PC users, a well-known database program is called "Access" and it is included in the Microsoft Office Professional edition. The equivalent program for Macintosh users is the AppleWorks database which comes bundled with iMac computers.

A rhododendron database is like a deck of index cards. Each card, called a "record", contains information about one rhododendron. On the cards are pre-printed boxes, called "fields", into which separate bits of information about each plant are entered. The fields can have a title and can be set up in any shape, size, color, or order that the gardener chooses.

The specific information in each field can be input in either text or numerical format. For example:

- code for the plant's location in the garden
- text entry giving its name
- number showing its height in ten years
- description of its flower color
- rating of its foliage
- date telling when it was planted
- a box to allow entry of miscellaneous information, such as where the plant was purchased
- an identification number corresponding to a number on the tag attached to each rhododendron in the garden

Figure 1 (bottom of page) shows the fields that are entered in the author's database for the rhododendron "Grace Seabrook". Most of this information was obtained from books by Greer and Cox. Eight such records can be printed on a standard sheet of paper although more entries per page are possible with a reduced type pitch.

The real pay-off with databases is that the imaginary deck of index cards can be instantly resorted according to a gardener's wishes. An alphabetical sort is a logical choice; it's useful to take a printed copy when purchasing rhododendrons, to help remember which varieties are already in the collection. On occasion, a sort by planting dates might be of interest. As new plants are added to the garden, or as specimens are lost, the computer can be asked to re-sort all data.

Another database advantage is that a subset of all the rhododendron records can be requested, based on certain fields. For example, the computer could be asked to show just the imaginary index cards that have information about white dwarf specimens, all species rhododendrons in the collection, or all plants in one specific room of the garden.

See "**Pinpointing Location**" on Page 8

70	Grace Seabrook	bright blood red
Location NW	Blooms: early April	Ht. M Flower: 4.5 Foliage: 4
11/5/95	1965 Time-Life award winner; Taurus flowers identical but have red buds; another specimen on east side of upper pond.	

Figure 1



Pinpointing the exact location of each rhododendron in a large garden can be simplified by using the database in conjunction with a map drawn by the computer or by hand. In the author's one-acre garden, each room is given a one or two letter location code. For example, in Figure 1, the database record for "Grace Seabrook" indicates that she is located at "NW" which stands for the north-west garden. Part of the computer map for this room in the author's garden is shown in Figure 2. A sketch map of the north-west garden was created with the aid of a computer drawing program. Then, a unique identification number for "Grace Seabrook" (#70) was typed onto the map in the exact planting location.

Figure 2

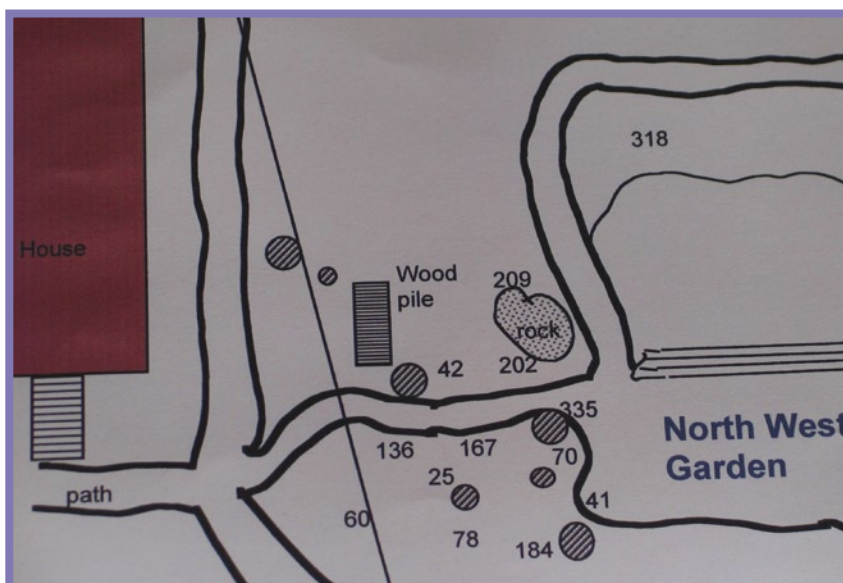


Figure 3



In the north-west garden, "Grace Seabrook" has a metal tag attached to one of her branches, showing her identification number, as well as a code for red colour (R), medium height in ten years (M), and April bloom time (A). (See Figure 3.) The number simply indicates that "Grace Seabrook" was the 70th plant to be purchased for the collection. In order to locate "Grace Seabrook", a look at the author's alphabetical database of 450 rhododendrons shows that this plant is number 70, and is located somewhere in the north-west garden. Then, a glance at the map of this area pinpoints her exact location on the west side between "Apricot Fantasy" (#41) and "Walt's Legacy" (#335).

Databases are relatively easy to create. The initial layout requires a few hours of work and about the same level of computer sophistication as is needed to set up and use a spreadsheet. After the initial layout is completed, new rhododendron records can be input in less than a minute each. Best of all, databases are fun to use, and they eliminate the drudgery of manual garden record-keeping.

Article and Photos by Ron Knight.

Ron is a past-president of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society. His rhododendron garden is located on British Columbia's Sunshine Coast. Ron can be reached through his website: www3.telus.net/rcknight