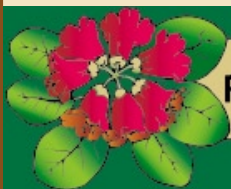




## NEWSLETTER MAY 2006



VANCOUVER  
**Rhododendron**  
SOCIETY

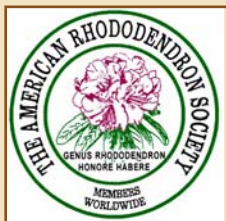
[www.rhodo.citymax.com](http://www.rhodo.citymax.com)

### GENERAL MEETING:

THURSDAY MAY 18, 6:30 P.M.  
VANDUSEN BOTANICAL GARDEN

### LECTURE PROGRAM:

A WALK IN THE VANDUSEN  
SINO-HIMALAYAN GARDEN,  
WITH GERRY GIBBENS.  
WE MEET AT THE GARDEN'S  
MAIN ENTRANCE AND  
WALK IN TOGETHER.



Vancouver Chapter

## A Walk in the Sino-Himalayan Garden

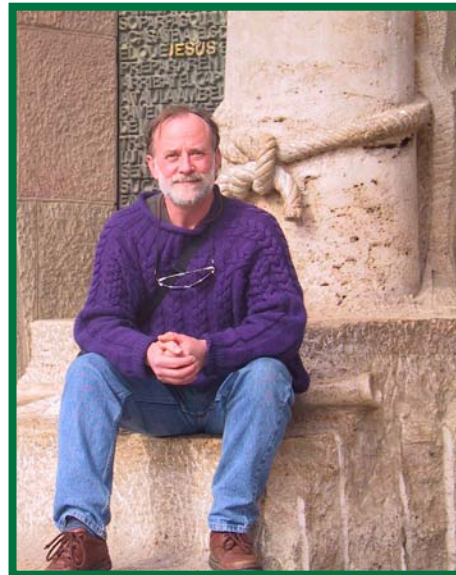
The May general meeting follows our annual tradition of getting outside for a walk in the garden, to enjoy the weather and see the plant we all love so much, the rhododendron. We are fortunate to have Gerry Gibbens take time out of his schedule to act as our tour guide for a walk in the Sino-Himalayan garden at Vandusen.

Gerry has been a fixture in the Vancouver horticultural scene for many years, most notably at Vandusen as the curator of the Sino-Himalayan garden for the past 18 years. His leadership and outgoing nature has kept him active in many areas of the gardening world, offering guided tours at Vandusen, presenting lectures to gardening clubs across BC as well as offering private horticultural consulting services.

He is a journeyman horticulturalist and teaches "applied" educational classes for novice gardeners. This type of popular, hands on learning, is valued and appreciated by his students and currently a vanishing art in BC. Gerry is a former president of the VRS and former BC District Chapter representative for the ARS.

During his early years, Gerry was fortunate to have been mentored into going to England to learn horticulture at Windsor Great Park. Although he may differ on the term fortunate, after enduring the tough living conditions and a strict regime placed upon him by his English mentors. Nevertheless, the experience profoundly changed him for the better and moved him along his path in the Vancouver horticultural scene.

He is an expert on plants of Asian origin, Rhododendron and Magnolia. He is also interested in alpine plants and is a former member of the Alpine Society of BC. He once commented to me that his favourite noxious weed was Horsetail, when I asked him why, he responded, "the darn thing just can't be killed, it is tenacious and relentlessly colonizes any piece of earth it touches." He also mentioned that he wished Horsetail had gone extinct with the dinosaurs.



See "First Meeting" on Page 2

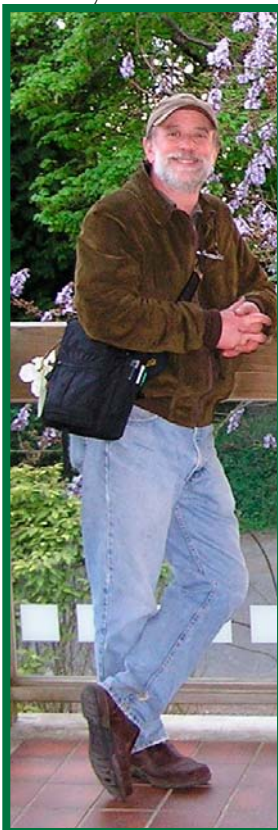


My **first meeting** with Gerry was an odd one, and not particularly an enjoyable meeting I must say. I was working in the garden training students to divide pachymorph rhizomes. We were working at dividing *Hedychium gardenianum*, which has a thick fleshy rhizome, I was carefully and specifically showing them how to cut the rhizome into pieces using a sharp clean knife, so as to avoid excessive tissue damage and to maximize the amount of division stock from the mother plant. I had spent fifteen minutes demonstrating the specific technique and location on the rhizome to cut, when I heard this voice from behind me say “that’s a waste of time, don’t be so fussy, just take a shovel and chop the thing into pieces and be done.” Well I was livid, after all the inclass theory and field demonstration I had been through and all the students were finally understanding the value of precision and working smart, then out of nowhere a voice from the garden contradicts me. The students were shocked, they looked at me and they looked at him, and Gerry said, “oh, excuse me, carry on.”

Since that meeting, Gerry and I have become close friends, I value his opinion, his expertise and his experience and I learn something every time we walk in his garden. He is an excellent speaker and tour guide, particularly when he is at home in his beloved Sino-Himalayan garden. We shall all enjoy a walk with him in the garden he has dedicated much of his life toward building into a first class collection of plants from Asia. I encourage everyone to join us on May 18 at 6:30 pm for a Walk in the Sino-Himalayan garden with Gerry Gibbens. We will meet at the entrance to Vandusen Gardens and wait for everyone before we go in.

By Todd Major

VanDusen Botanical Gardens Masterplan created by Dan Matsushita and Bill Livingstone 1972. This botanical garden was created on the site of the original Shaughnessy Golf Course, thus benefiting from the large number of mature trees. The intent of the original plan was to showcase both native and imported plants in a setting appropriate to local environmental conditions, and features lakes, bogs and streams, as well as a vast collection of plant species.



## Presidents Message

Probably all of us know, and have heard the message ad nauseum many times before, the Show and Sale on Saturday May 13th at Park & Tilford Gardens is our main fund-raising event of the year. It is also an excellent opportunity to display to the public (a source of new members) the many colourful facets of our namesake plant, the genus *Rhododendron*.

Everyone (or as many as possible) is requested to bring in a truss or two, either for the competitive (judged) or non-competitive (not judged) sections, to help create a most memorable Show.

We will also have a Memorial Display Table this year, in honour of several pillars of our Society – Frank Dorsey, Gordon Finley, Mike Trembath and Jack Lofthouse. Anyone wishing to contribute trusses to this Table is welcome to do so. If you would like an excellent primer on ‘Preparing a Truss’ by Karen Shuster, I can send you one by email, or you may consult the April 2005 *Indumentum*, or call 604-921-7260.

Members can also help by posting our flyers in their neighbourhood, and by encouraging gardening aficionados to come to the Sale. We do need buyers!

While most roles are covered, there is still a need for volunteers to help with set-up and take down, to add pleasantries to the day by meeting-and-greeting the public as they arrive, and by providing expert advice where needed. A big ‘thank you’ to members who have already signed up for a ‘duty role’. Members who still wish to sign up, welcome! - Please call me at 604-921-7260 or anyone on the executive.

By Louis Peterson

## LIFE FORCE



Dandelion growing up through asphalt. A week prior to this photo the asphalt was flat. Photos by Todd Major



## Rhododendron hybrids available locally for BC coastal gardens in the post World War I period. (Part 2 continued from the April Indumentum)

By Clive Justice

George Fraser, out in Ucluelet, in his 1925 four page catalogue listed several of the same hybrids that appeared in the 1921-22 Layritz list. These included the popular and easy to grow *R. 'Boule de Neige'* and *R. 'Cunninghami'*, (Cunningham's White), the Waterer hybrids: red 'Michael' and Pink 'Kate', Mrs. Holford (but spelt Halford in Fraser's list) with mauve semi double 'Fastuosum Flore-plenum'. Fraser must have overseen the printing and editing of his catalogue as all of the plant names both English and Latin had greater numbers spelt correctly, unlike the Layritz list.

In addition to those carried by Layritz Fraser's list had; *R. 'Mrs. [John] Clutton'*, white with small yellow-green blotch. An Anthony Waterer hybrid, 50% *R. maximum* 50% unknown cross that received an FCC in 1865.

Old plants of Mrs. John Clutton are mixed with others in a street side hedge like planting across the front of George Fraser's old nursery. I haven't yet been able to track down who Mrs. John Clutton was.



Photo above by Clive Justice, circa 1960s, hedge of rhododendrons in front of George Fraser's old nursery in Ucluelet, V.I. Whites may be 'Boule de Neige' or 'Mrs. John Clutton', while the pinks, roses and mauves are old John and Anthony Waterer catawbiense hybrids.

*R. 'John Waterer'* a crimson to scarlet.

*R. 'Mrs. [John] Waterer'*, rosy crimson with dark crimson spots.

*R. 'John Waterer'* is a 50% *R. catawbiense* 50% unknown cross, with quite purplish flowers, created before 1860 and according to Salley and Greer it is still in cultivation after 150 years.

The origin of Mrs. John created around about the same time as husband John's namesake is much later blooming but the parentage is unknown. Cox says it may include *R. catawbiense*, *R. ponticum* and *R. arboreum*.

The Waterer family was a large one so there are at least a dozen rhodo hybrids with the Waterer surname made in Victorian England.

*R. 'Mrs. Milner' & R. 'Stella' [Waterer] & R. 'Crown Prince'*, Mrs. M is crimson, Stella is rose, as is the title given Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria. All of these are 50% *R. catawbiense*, 50% unknown crosses, made by Anthony Waterer 'Stella' sometime before 'Mrs. M'. 'Stella' got an FCC in 1865. 'Mrs. M' was introduced later but it was before 1900. 'Mrs. Milner' is probably named in honour of the wife or mother of Alfred Milner 1 Vicount Milner (1854-1925) who after passing out of Oxford with honours he became Assistant Editor of the Pall Mall Gazette, moving on to become Undersecretary of Revenue for Egypt. His book "England in Egypt" came out in 1892. In it he recommended independence for the then British Protectorate. After 1900 he became Governor of Cape Colony S.A, and then Transvaal. He was secretary of War during the Boer war and WWI.

There is another hybrid rhododendron named 'Mrs. Milner' extant but without the Mrs. prefix that was created, named and registered at a much later date, in 1962, than the first 'Mrs. Milner' by another Vancouver Island nursery: Ted and Mary Greig's Nursery in Royston just south of Comox. Its name is 'Veronica Milner' and honours the second wife of the Edmonton lawyer and business man Ray Milner whose summer home was in Qualicum. The cross is 50% *R. campylocarpum* with 25% *R. neriflorum* -25% *R. forrestii repens* in the hybrid *R. 'Little Ben'*. You can find out about Mrs. Veronica Milner and the Qualicum garden she made and left to Malaspina College in Margaret Cadwaladr's book, "In Veronica's Garden" it's a great read.

Both Layritz and George Fraser listed a number of deciduous Azaleas in their 1920s nursery lists. Fraser even hybridized one, naming and registering it prior to 1921, and calling it 'Fraseri'. I found it growing well in Finland in 1996, but I'll leave all that for next time along with the story of the New Zealand hybrid named 'Frisly Knickers'; synonym: 'Pink Panties'; pink of course.

My thanks to Leslie Drew of the Cowichan Valley Chapter, ARS who uncovered a cache of Layritz Nursery catalogues held in the Kelowna Archives.

Photo right, close up of some of the old hybrids George Fraser grew in Ucluelet; photo by Clive Justice circa 1960s.



## VRS Sale and Show

The VRS Executive has already begun planning for the annual Sale and Show. This year we are holding our annual fundraiser at the Park and Tilford Gardens, in North Vancouver. The annual plant sale is a very important fund-raising event and the revenue generated provides our Society with the resources to provide the benefits that members enjoy.

Please note that the **sale poster** on **page 9** is designed for all members to **print off and distribute** in their neighbourhood to help promote our Sale and Show. Please help promote our VRS Sale and Show!

Thank you,  
Todd Major

## Volunteers Needed for the Sale and Show

Our annual SALE & SHOW on May 13th is at the Park & Tilford Gardens in North Vancouver from 10 am to 4 p.m. VOLUNTEERS are needed for the following positions, training is provided:

### Cashiers:

- 4 people from 9:30 to 11:30
- 4 people from 11:15 to 1:30
- 4 people from 12:45 to 2:30
- 4 people from 2:15 to 4:15

### Membership, Raffles, Teddy Ball and Card Sales Table

- 3 people from 9:30 to 11:30
- 3 people from 11:15 to 1:30
- 3 people from 12:45 to 2:30
- 3 people from 2:15 to 4:15

Volunteers are also needed for rhodo SHOW duties on Friday evening, as well as set up on Saturday morning and take down Saturday evening. We need members to contribute flowering trusses to make the show beautiful and interesting for the public. Please contribute a truss or two, just for Show, not for competition.

If you can help, please let me know which positions you would like to participate in and we have other work to do. A sign-up sheet will be available at the April meeting, please look for it and sign up for your preference. Refreshments are provided for those who assist in the Sale & Show. Your help on the Golden Anniversary Sale & Show would be appreciated.

Thank you,  
Carole Conlin  
VRS Membership Chair  
(Phone: 604-921-7260; Email: cconlin@alumni.sfu.ca)

## Remembering Mike Trembath

You are cordially to an open house in memory of Dr. Mike ( Margaret ) Trembath.

Date: May 27, 2006

Time: 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Place: 25149 72nd Ave, Aldergrove BC

Please join our family, share some memories, some wine, some eats ( desserts were her favourite part of a meal ) and enjoy a walk around her beautiful gardens.

Thank You,  
Ann Trembath

## In The Library, by Iain Forsythe



Our VRS library contains a wealth of information and good reading for every member of our Society and one of the recent additions, Jane Brown's book "Tales of the Rose Tree" fills both criteria admirably.

The illustrated book brilliantly recounts the history of the genus *Rhododendron* in detail going back 250 years and suggestively for thousands. No plant except perhaps for roses has so influenced garden design throughout North America, Asia, Australia more than the *Rhododendron* and it is implied that it was directly responsible for the spread of the notion "le jardin Anglais".

Every non-technical aspect of the collection, hybridization, propagation, planting and politics of the glorious shrub and the patronages involved, almost too profusely, along with ecological and medicinal aspects, is included. Is lime toxic to *rhododendron*? Is there a place for exotics or should we only plant native species? Has the incursion of the *rhododendron* into the landscape become a menace? An of course, the "vi-reya revolution".

The first page of the book tartly states, "it is dedication to all *rhododendron* haters and "slashers" with the hope that rumours of the book's existence, if not my actual words, will cause them to have second thoughts." A good riposte to the native plant brigade for it is thought the species once circled the globe.

This is a fascinating and eminently readable book, filling in detail for the expert, and encouraging note taking for the novice. I can highly recommend the "Tales of the Rose Tree".





## The Fraser South Rhododendron Society Presents:

### The American Rhododendron Society (ARS) Western Regional Fall Conference Highlighting Rhododendrons Around the World

The 2006 ARS Western Regional Conference is to be held at the Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa from Friday, September 22 to Sunday, September 24.

The town of Harrison Hot Springs is renowned for its breathtaking scenery and for the natural hot springs. It is situated at the southern end of Harrison Lake which runs for a total length of almost 48 miles. The view from the town is spectacular with the surrounding mountains bordering the entire length of the lake.

The Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa (photo right and bottom right) is a luxury hotel with many superior facilities. The resort hosts five hot indoor and outdoor pools, each fed by the natural mineral hot springs (photo below) that have remained a primary attraction for visitors for more than 100 years. The resort has its own golf course and many other outdoor recreational facilities. The Healing Springs Spa was built at a cost of \$2.2 million dollars and is a recent addition which was opened in 2001 and provides state of the art therapeutic equipment and treatment rooms. The



dining facilities are superior and include the world renown "Copper Room." The Conference reception and plant sale will be located in the Exhibition Hall adjacent to the hotel and the lectures and banquet in the Conference Centre. The reception area for the lectures and banquet will be located in a magnificent room affording panoramic views along the entire length of the Harrison Lake.

This conference features some top notch speakers from Canada and the U.S. Speakers include Des Kennedy, Steve Hootman, Dalen and Lori Bayes, Collen Forster, Glen Jamieson, Don Martyn, Charlie Sale, David Sellars and Norma Senn.

Tours are available of the following attractions: Bridal Veil Falls, Minter Gardens, Ferncliff Gardens, Westminster Abbey and the Harrison Lake Boat Tour. There is also the town of Harrison close by for sightseeing and shopping.

Members from all B.C. rhodo chapters are most welcome to invite relatives, friends, neighbours and especially other gardening enthusiasts to attend the ARS Fall Conference at Harrison Hot Spring Resort & Spa. Membership in the ARS is not a pre-requisite. This would be a golden opportunity to expose individuals to our passion and recruit more members for all Chapters.

The \$40.00 registration fee offers great value and affords full participation in most activities at the Conference including the Bonsai & Ikebana Demonstration, the Wine & Cheese Reception, attendance to the keynote and all the lecture presentations including the Sunday morning session on hybridizing and Rhododendron Species. Also provides access to the video displays, photo exhibition and the plant sale. The plant sale includes Rhododendron species, Vireyas and many special companion plants. Full conference details are available at the [www.arsfallconference2006.com/](http://www.arsfallconference2006.com/), or [www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth/index.asp](http://www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth/index.asp) or [www.rhodos.ca](http://www.rhodos.ca), or phone 604 853 8839. For Harrison Hot Springs Resort information go to [www.harrisonresort.com](http://www.harrisonresort.com).





## Spring Events 2006

- May 13 : Vancouver Rhododendron Society Show and Sale, 10 am - 4 pm, at the Park and Tilford Gardens, 333 Brooksbank Ave. North Vancouver (at Main Street).
- May 18 : VRS General Meeting - Asian Garden Walk with Gerry Gibbens, Early meeting time 6:30 PM, meet at the entrance to the VanDusen Garden, we will wait for everyone and go in together.

## VRS Open Gardens Spring 2006:

- May 13 : Caron Gardens Open House, 11:00 am - 4:00 pm, 4622 Beaumont Road, Garden Bay Pender Harbour.
- May 14 : The Glades Garden, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, 561 - 172nd Street White Rock.
- May 14 : Powroznik and Lamont Garden, 1:00 am - 5:00 pm, 17918-68th Avenue, Surrey.
- May 20 : Mossakowski Garden, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm, 155 Highview Place Lions Bay.
- May 20 : Ronsley Garden, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm, 250 Ocean View Road Lions Bay.
- May 20 : Feicht and Hoffman Garden, 11:00 - 4:00 pm, 6080 Eagleridge Drive, West Vancouver.
- May 21 : Finley Garden and Nursery, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm, 179 - 216th Street Langley.

## Annual VRS Potluck Picnic

June 11 : Our VRS Potluck Picnic Starts at 3:00 pm, Powroznik and Lamont Garden, 17918 68th Avenue, Surrey.

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OCEAN PARK • 2124 128TH STREET NORTH VAN • 3147 WOODBINE DR (EDGEMONT VILLAGE) & MARINE DR AT BEWICKE

**What's Your Opinion?**  
**Have You got Some News or an Announcement?**  
**Send us a Picture of Interest!**

Letters to the **INDUMENTUM** editor, news, pictures and anything rhodo or otherwise, can be sent to Todd & Shannon Major at [stmajor@shaw.ca](mailto:stmajor@shaw.ca). We need pictures too! The larger the picture file size the better the result on screen and in print. If you don't send something, then you will have to live with what WE print, so get involved!

Todd & Shannon Major,  
**INDUMENTUM** Editors



Members have asked the **INDUMENTUM:**

Which very early blooming rhododendrons are available in our area? By Ron Knight



Very early blooming rhododendrons are truly heralds of spring. A few will come into flower with the first crocuses and during our rainy winter months these rhododendrons provide gardeners with splashes of colour that can help drive away the winter doldrums.

For purposes of this article, “very early blooming rhododendrons” are defined as the ones that Harold Greer codes with the symbol “VE” in his guidebook (Greer’s Guidebook to Available Rhododendrons, 3rd edition, Offshoot Publications, Eugene Oregon, 1996, ISBN 0-910013-05-5). Generally in the Pacific Northwest, these plants will flower between late January and late March. Having said this, there are some rhododendrons which Greer codes “E” for “early spring blooming” that also flower during the winter months in our area. Examples are *R. praecox*, *R. ‘PJM’*, *R. ‘Maxine Childers’*, *R. ‘Snow Lady’*, and *R. ‘April Mist’*. Bloom time depends on the specific plant and the climatic zone in which it is located.

Unfortunately, very early blooming rhododendrons are difficult to find in retail garden centres. The reason is that these stores usually bring in the first rhododendrons of the season from their wholesalers in mid-March. The majority of varieties they order are hybrids that will bloom after delivery to the garden centre.



Examples would include *R. ‘Cheer’*, *R. ‘Grace Seabrook’*, and *R. ‘Bob’s Blue’*. Therefore, it is extremely rare to find retail garden centres that sell early blooming species (which often take several years to flower) or the winter blooming hybrids that Greer codes as “VE”.

The following list of eight very early blooming rhododendrons, in no particular priority order, contains a mix of both hybrids and species. What they have in common is that they are relatively easy to grow, are not prone to disease, and are fairly easy to obtain through local rhododendron clubs and their member-growers. Moreover, the list contains both low and tall growing plants that will fit any garden situation.

*R. dauricum* extremely hardy rhododendron, native to Siberia. It is one of the first to flower. Like most other very early bloomers, the leaves and flowers are on the small side. However, in January or February when not much else is blooming, its purplish-pink flowers are winners. There is an albino form that is available through rhododendron clubs on Vancouver Island.



*R. mucronulatum* is upright-growing and deciduous with bright little flowers in various shades of pink. Its bloom time is often concurrent with *R. dauricum*. The flowers appear before any leaves are evident.



*R. moupinense* is a low-growing shrub that has white flowers with pink markings. In the shade, it tends to assume a rather open growth habit. It is the parent of many fine early blooming hybrids.

See “*R. pemakoense*” on Page 8



*R. pemakoense* originates from Tibet and has light, pinkish-purple flowers that are relatively large and appear singly or in pairs. Cox says that this plant is the most floriferous of all species dwarfs. It grows compactly in full sunlight.

*R. 'Olive'* is one of the first hybrid rhododendrons to bloom, often in late January or early February. It has pink flowers on a leggy, upright growing plant. Its parents are *R. moupinense* and *R. dauricum*.

*R. 'Bo Peep'* is a cross of *R. lutescens* with *R. moupinense* and has light yellow flowers. The plant has a low, erect habit. It is not as cold hardy as most of the other very early blooming rhododendrons and is best planted where it has some protection from wind and frost.

*R. 'Bric-a-Brac'* comes from *R. leucapsis* X *R. moupinense*. It is a semi-dwarf plant and the best forms, according to Cox, have pure white flowers with chocolate coloured anthers. The attractive leaves are covered in hairs and the new growth is bronze in colour. The plant needs some frost protection.

*R. emasculum* (see photo on previous page) is likely from the same cross as *R. praecox*, which is *R. ciliatum* X *R. dauricum*. The flowers are a nice light pink colour and in this area appear at about the same time as those on Praecox. In the shade, the plant assumes a twiggy, upright growth habit.

Many other excellent early blooming varieties can be grown in the Pacific Northwest and further information and recommendations can be obtained from rhododendron club members. All photos by Ron Knight.



*R. pemakoense*



*R. 'Olive'*



*R. 'Bric a Brac'*



*R. 'Bo Peep'*



*R. lutescens*



# Rhododendron Sale and Show



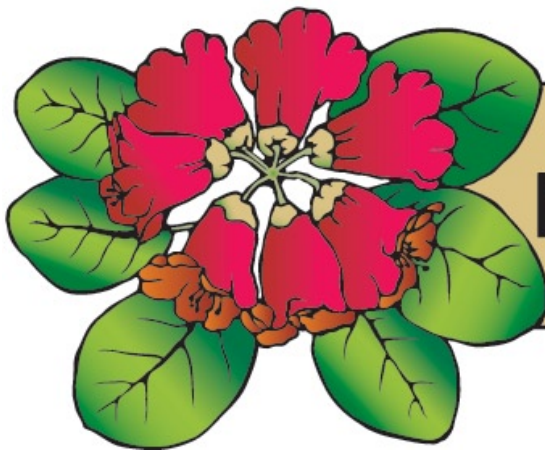
**Saturday May 13th**  
**10:00 am - 4:00 pm**

**At the Park and Tilford Gardens**  
**333 Brooksbank Avenue and Main Street**  
**North Vancouver**

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