



# INDUMENTUM



VANCOUVER  
**Rhododendron**  
SOCIETY

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## GENERAL MEETING:

APRIL 19, 2007, 7:30 P. M. AT VANDUSEN GARDENS

**LECTURE PROGRAM:** MIKE C. SNOWDEN PRESENTS,  
ROWALLANE - A SPECIAL GARDEN IN NORTH IRELAND

Mike Snowden will be our speaker the evening of April 19<sup>th</sup>. Mike is a recently retired Head Gardener at the famous garden Rowallane, in County Down, Northern Ireland.

He began his career in horticulture working as a landscape gardener, then working in 'Local Authority Parks' for several years. During this time he took courses at home, and passed the examination of the Royal Horticultural Society.

He became propagator at Harewood House, in Yorkshire, where propagating rhododendrons formed a considerable part of his work, then moved to Bodnant Garden in North Wales as part of the propagating team there.

With this accumulation of experience in major British gardens, he moved on to take up the position of Head Gardener at Erddig, near Wrexham, also in North Wales, where he was responsible for a major restoration of the formal 18<sup>th</sup>-century garden, its overlays, and the immediate surrounding area. He says that he has 'always had a preference for a holistic approach to gardening'.

It was at this point that he took up the position of Head Gardener at Rowallane, eventually becoming responsible for the total management as Property Manager as well. Rowallane is 'executed on a natural landscape'. The garden was begun in the 1850s by the Rev John Moore, and continued by his nephew Hugh Armitage-Moore, who introduced numerous trees and shrubs including many rhododendrons, both species and hybrids. It was taken over by The National Trust in 1955.

Mike was awarded the British Empire Medal while still at Erddig, and became an Associate of Honour of the Royal Horticultural Society while at Rowallane. He also received the J. A. Whaley Medal for his work with rhododendrons.

He retired from Rowallane in 2000, and continues to live in Saintfield, County Down, Northern Ireland, with his evidently very supportive and inspirational wife June. They continue to be involved in the 'world of gardening within Ireland and beyond'.

Known as a lively speaker, Mike has been the Director of one of Northern Ireland's most distinguished gardens. We should all be looking forward to hearing his talk, 'Rowallane; a special garden in the North of Ireland'.

By Joe Ronsley

First, my apologies for not being present at the first meeting of the new administration in February. Joe and I had long-term plans to be away at the time. I expect to be with you regularly from now on, however, and am looking forward to doing what I can to move the VRS forward. Many thanks to Louis Peterson and the previous Executive for leaving the new one with so much in place with which to work.

As we move into spring we move into our busy time of year. Margaret Charlton has agreed to coordinate the spring open gardens. Surely no one knows gardening and gardens as well as Margaret, and I hope any of you who are willing to open your garden to others will contact her. The garden can be at any stage of development; there is always something for the rest of us to learn and enjoy.

Our monthly education sessions will now be comprised regularly of Douglas Justice bringing and discussing plant samples from the UBC garden. From time to time this will be supplemented by other presentations, but surely a most useful educational presentation is in the introduction to plants and how to grow them.

Meanwhile, to make sure our good friends are not getting off easy, Charlie Sale will be managing a revitalized monthly raffle. The raffle helps considerably toward paying the rent of the Floral Hall, one of our major expenses each year. Charlie may be contacting any of you for contributions to the table, so be ready with something at hand.

Tony Clayton has taken over VRS publicity. We really can't afford paid advertising, but could use all the good public relations we can get. If any of you have inroads to the media, please keep Tony informed. This is extremely important for our Show and Sale, but also for our monthly meetings and guest speakers; visitors are all potential members.

Jacque Clayton and Barbara Forsythe will continue to organize our refreshment table. Cookies and cakes are always welcome from all sources.

In spite of the burden (and joy!) of being Vice President, Sean Rafferty will be arranging for growers at our meetings, and at the Show and Sale as well. We have recently lost a few of our growers for various reasons, so if any of you are aware of people growing suitable plants who would like to be part of the VRS in this respect, please contact Sean. The special plants offered to members at our meetings are one of the real benefits of membership.

And speaking of the Show and Sale, we must be already moving forward toward that. It will take place May 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, from 10 to 3 both days, at Park and Tilford Gardens in North Vancouver. This has proven an excellent venue: it is of easy access either from the North Shore or by the Second Narrows Bridge, the facilities are ample, secure, and aesthetically pleasing.

The garden has an adjacent shopping centre from which to draw extra customers, management is extremely friendly and cooperative, and the price is right. Please don't plan anything else for that weekend, or at least leave enough of the weekend free to spend part of it at P & T.

And finally, there is the question of membership. Philip MacDougall is taking over this crucial area from the capable hands of Carole Conlin. Membership is at the heart of any organization. It provides both human and financial resources, and the organization's very vitality. While we have a Membership Director to coordinate and try to increase membership, we are all actually part of an organization-wide membership committee. So often we have friends who are keen gardeners, and we make no attempt to bring them round to the VRS, whereas very likely they would find much to interest them in our programmes. Sometimes we, ourselves, forget just how much we have to offer, so please glance at the list of benefits printed elsewhere in this *Indumentum*, just to remind yourself—and to feel good about your own VRS membership. And do bring around your friends who are not already members.

I look forward to working with you all.

Joanne Ronsley,  
VRS President



### UBC Collectors Plant Auction

The Friends of the UBC Botanical Garden are hosting an auction of rare specimen plants on Thur. April 26, 2007. There are over 400 very special trees, shrubs, vines and perennials to be offered in silent and live auctions at this gala evening. Food, wine and music are included. Tickets: \$125 per person.

Time: 6:30-10 p.m.

Where: UBC Reception Area.

Dress: Gardeners fancy or casual elegant.

Contact: Pary at 604 822-3928

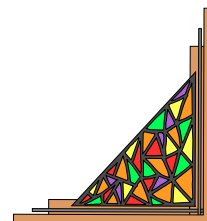
Help Support the Garden,

Judy Gorchynski

Publicity - UBC Shop in the Garden

Phone: 604 224-1141

Email: zenjudy@telus.net





## Vancouver Rhododendron Society Open Gardens Spring 2007

The following gardens will be open for your touring enjoyment. Please put these dates on your calendar as a reminder. Folks go to a fair amount of trouble to have their gardens ship shape for your pleasure. Plan to visit and to enjoy these delightful gardens. Remember to bring the directions.

### Open Gardens in April

**Friday, April 20 from 6pm to 9pm**

**Dana Cromie & Greg Brown: 1118 Lily Street. Vancouver**

This amazing, very tiny, very green multi-layered play of texture and scale is rich in rhododendrons, Lilium relatives, ferns, and clematis. This interesting neighbourhood has many one way streets, so check your map carefully.

**Friday, April 20 from 6pm to 9pm**

**Karen Shuster: 1236 Shorepark Walk, Vancouver**

Karen is a knowledgeable rhododendron grower in a very interesting location. Don't miss the opportunity to visit her garden.

Directions: Shorepark Walk is a pedestrian street in False Creek South, just east of the entry to Granville Island. Entry to Shorepark Walk is off Fountain Way which runs parallel to Lamey's Mill Road which in turn is parallel to and just north of West 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. Park on Lamey's Mill Rd., one of the parking courts at Birch Walk or Alder Walk, or the City lot off Lamey's Mill Rd. just east of Alder Crossing. Or park on Granville Island by the Community centre on Cartwright St., then walk south past the tennis courts to Island Park Walk, turn left & then right onto Shorepine. Karen's place is facing the water. Just look for the rhododendrons!

**Sunday, April 29<sup>th</sup> from 1pm to 5pm**

**Margaret Charlton & Charlie Sale: North Vancouver**

Their garden is called Buckethill, a hillside garden dating back 40 years. It features a broad range of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plantings that constantly undergo change. The garden is located in Woodlands on Indian Arm in North Vancouver.

Directions to Bucket Hill: Find Mount Seymour Parkway, off the #1 highway in North Vancouver and follow the Parkway until you reach the Parkgate Shopping Mall. Turn left after the Mall at the sign for Mount Seymour (there is a traffic light at this turn), proceed along this road and turn right at Indian River (just before the road curves). Take the 2<sup>nd</sup> left at the sign for "Woodlands" and drive almost 6km to Fire Lane 6 (The Fire Lanes are not in complete sequence-Fire lanes 7&8 come before 1 through 6). You will know you are close when you come to a stop sign at the top of a steep hill. Turn left at Fire Lane 6. You will see the garden on your left as you proceed up the lane. Our driveway is the 1<sup>st</sup> on the left and requires a 3 point turn to proceed up it. There is parking part way up the driveway for 2 cars and also at the top of the driveway for 2 cars. Do not park in the space across the lane from our driveway. This is for turning only. There is additional parking back at the 'stop' sign.

Open Gardens continued on Page 4.

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OCEAN PARK 604-535-8853

## Vancouver Rhododendron Society May 2007 Open Gardens

**Saturday, May 12 from 10am to 3pm**

**Richard & Heather Mossakowski: 155 Highview Place, Lions Bay**

**Joe & Joanne Ronsley: 250 Oceanview Dr., Lions Bay**

These two gardens are within walking distance of each other. Both gardens are on challenging sites and the plantings have been magnificently incorporated into the natural West Coast vegetation. Every rhododendron lover should visit the two gardens.

**Sunday, May 13th from 12pm to 4pm**

**Ron Feicht & Derrick Hoffman: 6080 Eagleridge Drive, West Vancouver**

This very interesting garden just keeps getting better & better.

**Iain & Barbara Forsyth: 2939 Mathers Ave, West Vancouver**

Iain & Barbara have a mature garden to which they are giving new life, gradually modifying it to reflect their vision and love of rhododendrons.

**Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup> from 1pm to 5pm** (Today's two gardens are easy driving distance apart)

**Vern Finley: 10476 -125B St., Surrey**

Vern has a very large garden with an extensive collection of mature rhododendrons, including many of her own hybrids.

**Philip MacDougall: 14776 - 90<sup>th</sup> Ave Surrey**

Philip's is a new garden with an impressive mix of plants. His passion for propagating is clear upon entering his new greenhouse.

**Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup> from 10am to 2pm**

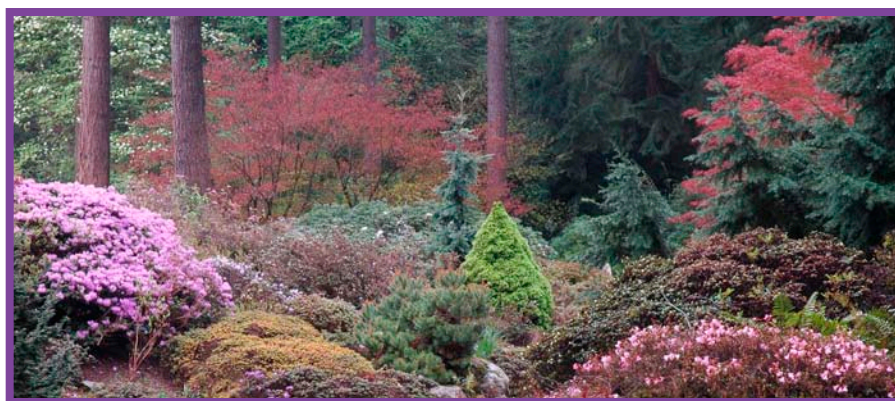
**Geri & Michael Barnes: 1890 - 28<sup>th</sup> St, West Vancouver**

From Marine Drive go north on 27<sup>th</sup> past Palmerston to where the road curves into 28<sup>th</sup>.

Margot Ketchum: 55 Glenmore Dr., West Vancouver

Ray & Brian Talbot: 3254 Mathers Rd., West Vancouver

These three gardens are well established with fine collections of rhododendrons that are complemented by a diverse range of woodland plants. Each garden is unique in its design. These three gardens are jewels.



### Species Study Days at the RSBG

For the 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive year a comprehensive study session of the Rhododendron Species will be held at the Rhododendron Species and Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington on the following Saturdays, **April 7, April 21, May 19.**

The sessions are directed by Steve Hootman, RSBG Co-Director and well known for his expertise, many plant expeditions and new plant introductions. No prior knowledge of the subject material is necessary, the course begins with fundamentals progresses in detail at

each session. The majority of previous participants attend for the positive experience that the sessions generate.

The sessions begin at 10:00 a.m. and end at approximately 4:00 p.m. The mornings are generally spent reviewing various topics of botanical interest relative to rhododendron species followed by instruction and keying plant material currently blooming in the garden at that time. After a short lunch (12:00 -12:30), the afternoon is spent touring the RSBG and identifying and discussing the wonderful collection of rare and exotic plants.

The course fee is \$35.00 per session and proceeds are used to provide a stipend for instruction and a donation to the garden. A nominal sum of \$5.00 is charged for lunch for those wishing to participate. The facilities for instruction at the RSBG are limited, 28-30 people can be accommodated. Arrangements for car pooling will be made. Please confirm your interest as soon as possible and forward payment to: Mike Bale, 33623 Wildwood Drive, Abbotsford B.C. V2S 1S2. Contact Mike Bale at Email: [lu\\_zhu@telus.net](mailto:lu_zhu@telus.net), or phone: 604 853-8839.



## Grow the Sale and Show

Spring is just around the corner and our annual Sale and Show will be held at Park and Tilford Gardens on May 5th and 6th. This is our main fundraising event for the year and as the picture to the left indicates, we need volunteers to help with the following Sale and Show duties:

- Set up and Take Down
- Cashiers
- Flower Show Hosts
- Membership Table
- Food Preparation
- Distribution of Show Flyers
- Grower Assistance



The revenue generated by the Sale and Show allows the VRS to provide for the rental fee for the floral hall at Vandusen and to provide the high quality line up of speakers and other benefits for our members. The VRS Executive is asking for all members who are willing and able to contact the President to indicate which duties you can help out with. Contact information for all members of the Executive are shown on page 6. Please help us put on a great show for the public. You will have fun, make friends and learn something while you are there.

Best Regards,  
Todd Major

## Species Study Days in Vancouver?

The VRS Executive is looking for expressions of interest to find out if anyone would attend a Species Day workshop if held in Vancouver or Victoria. There are a number of our members who have not attended Species Days because they feel it takes too much time and money to travel to Seattle.

A locally held Species Study Day will only be held if there is enough interest expressed. It would be more efficient and affordable to hold such a valuable learning experience in Victoria or Vancouver.



Contact Joanne Ronsley if you are interested,  
Email: [jronsley@telus.net](mailto:jronsley@telus.net) or Phone: 604-921-0444

## Join the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

Become a member of the VRS for only \$25 per year and receive the following benefits:

- 9 issues of the **INDUMENTUM** our monthly newsletter.
- 7 regular monthly meetings at VanDusen's Floral Hall.
- 6 illustrated lectures by distinguished speakers on various subjects given at our monthly meetings.
- Educational sessions at monthly meetings.
- Education through informal conversation with knowledgeable members.
- Special plant sales of rare rhodos at monthly meetings.
- Discounts at selected nurseries.
- An annual guided walk in May, through a public rhododendron garden (usually a botanic garden).
- Tour open VRS member gardens in spring.
- Potluck picnic at a VRS member's garden each June.
- Contact and sociability with people who have a common interest.
- Annual convention of the American Rhododendron Society (held somewhere in North America).

Members of the VRS are not interested only in rhododendrons, but in gardens, woodlands, and other plants as well, so membership provides many opportunities to learn about gardening in general.



## Just For Interest

Photo below R. 'Golfer', by Ron Knight



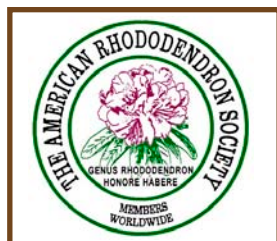
## Membership Report

I look forward to meeting you all, please come and meet me at the Membership Table at the monthly meetings.

Membership dues for 2007 are now due and I will be pleased to renew your membership (and welcome new memberships) at the meetings or by mail.

Thank you. See you at the April meeting. Guests are always welcome!

Philip MacDougall  
VRS Membership Chair  
14776 90th Avenue  
Surrey, BC V3R 1A4



**Vancouver Chapter**

## Do You Have Some News or a Picture?

Letters to the **INDUMENTUM**, news, pictures and anything rhodo or just for interest, can be e-mailed to Todd or Shannon Major at [stmajor@shaw.ca](mailto:stmajor@shaw.ca). If you wish to mail us an article or some pictures (which we will return to you) please give us a call at 604 941 7507 to obtain our mailing address. We need pictures! 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!

Visit our online repository for past **INDUMENTUM** issues, hosted by the UBC Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research at this link: [www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org/vrs](http://www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org/vrs)

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Todd & Shannon Major,  
**INDUMENTUM** Editors

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Iain Forsythe





## Snowdrops in England - Fascination and Obsession by Joe Ronsley

After being threatened with a possible diversion to Glasgow due to a snowstorm we landed at Heathrow without incident, but the ground was covered in snow. In contrast was the warm smile of Chris Brickell as he greeted us. I said that I thought he had referred to snow drops, not just snow. We don't have to go anywhere from Canada to see that. But the snow melted during the next couple of days and the snowdrops reappeared in all their glory—and all their diversity! By staying with Chris and Jeanette Brickell we were at the very centre of the galanthomania that grips Britain every February (photo right, part of the tour in Chris Brickell's garden). Well, perhaps not quite the very centre; a nurseryman named Joe Sharman was at the very centre, holding a giant gala with thousands of snowdrops on display, to which 300 to 400 people flocked, some coming from Holland in coaches for the occasion.

Chris himself has a considerable collection. There are only 14 or 15 different species, but apparently these species do all kinds of things together which are better left unmentioned, producing any number of odd offspring, hundreds of which have been given clonal names. From above, say from the perspective of a normal person standing up, there is not a great deal of variety, other than in their sizes. Some, you will not be surprised to know, are larger, and some are smaller. All are white. But getting right down to the earth, and turning up their customarily down-turned faces, there are all kinds of differences. Some are remarkable for their deep green markings, some for their pale green markings, and some for their yellow markings. Some are double, evidently with all the variations of deep green, pale green, and yellow. Anyway, Chris has a lot of them, and clearly a good collection of the different kinds, since at a luncheon the day following our arrival all the guests moved through the garden very slowly, bending down and turning up the flower heads amidst extended esoteric discussion. I became a little worried when Joanne, bending down to examine them with the others, started to get excited in her observations. My comment later in the afternoon that 'You've seen one, you've seen 'em all' had a decidedly mixed reception—perhaps more exclamation than applause!

While we were with the Brickells we visited the Chelsea Physic Garden where we saw more snowdrops and attended a lunch given by the curator in celebration of the season. We may not think of February as a month that deserves much celebration, but it is snowdrop time in Britain and therefore one of the very peaks of festivity. Hence the gracious, celebratory lunch. We saw still more snowdrops, aside from those along the roadsides everywhere, another day at the Royal Horticulture Society winter show, a kind of mini Chelsea, but here the snowdrops were combined with all sorts of other small bulbs and shrubs, often presented in very beautiful garden displays. We also visited Wakehurst Garden, immediately upon our entrance encountering a vast drift of snowdrops (see photo top of page 8), which Chris immediately noticed were wrongly labeled, and made a note of it. I mentioned at dinner that evening that I too had noticed that they were wrongly labeled, but didn't want to say anything. Then Chris asked me what the correct name was. The subject changed to the spectacular drift of *Daphne bholua* we had also seen at Wakehurst.



Continued, see **"The snowdrop highlight"** on page 8





**The snowdrop highlight**, however, in terms of quantity and variety was at the home of John Sales, photo left, (who spoke to the VRS a couple years ago, but not about snowdrops) in Gloucestershire, about a two and a half hour drive from the Brickells' home in West Sussex, where we went for lunch, and of course for a tour of the woods and garden, filled with huge drifts of snowdrops in their infinite variety photo left below. The double track driveway, into the property was bordered on either side and filled down the middle between the two tracks with winter aconite, but I digress. In the customary manner we all —there were about twelve of us altogether—went from one clone to another, admiring the different variations. Stopping at a specimen that was just a little less impressive than most of the others, John told us that it sells for 60 quid. I asked how many bulbs one gets for the 60 quid, and was promptly told, 'one'. Some, I understand, have been sold for as much as £150. I don't remember the names of any of the cultivars, except one: 'Rosemary Burnham'. Actually we didn't see 'Rosemary Burnham' at all, but everyone praised it highly. And sure enough, it is named after our very own VRS member, Rosemary Burnham. So I hope that from here on, everyone will treat Rosemary with a respect consonant with her galanthofame celebrity.



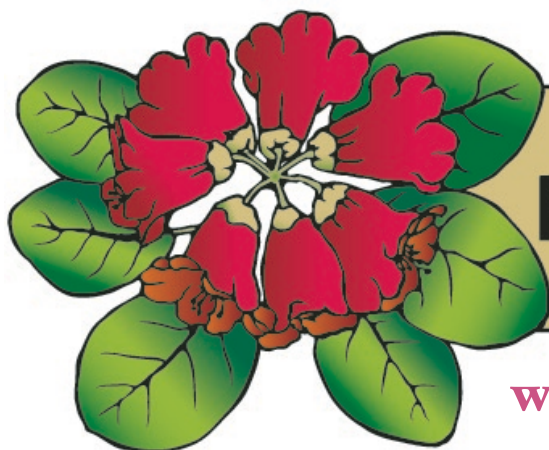
It was a wonderful week, and when I observed to some of our British friends, new ones and old, that there was an element of what might be called British eccentricity in all this, in fact, that they were quite out of their minds, they were quite ready to concede this in good spirit. After all, it's not as if they were talking about rhododendrons all this time! But out of their minds or not, we loved being with them. In fact, to tell the truth, we weren't really there for the snowdrops as all, but for the very special people who just happen to go a little berserk each February.



# **Rhododendron Show and Sale**

**Saturday May 5 & Sunday May 6**  
**10:00 am - 3:00 pm**

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