



VANCOUVER
Rhododendron
SOCIETY

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GENERAL MEETING:

APRIL 17TH - 7:30 P.M, AT THE VANDUSEN BOTANIC GARDEN, IN THE FLORAL HALL

LECTURE PROGRAM:

MIKE ROBINSON - ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
'ANCIENT AND MODERN, NOTEWORTHY AND NEW:
CULTIVARS GROWN IN THE UK'

Mike Robinson, our speaker the evening of April 17th, lives in East Sussex, England, and is chairman of both the RHS Rhododendron and Camellia Committee, and their Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group. A member of the prestigious RHS Woody Plants Committee, he is also a life member of Magnolia Society International.

He is the co-author of a forthcoming pocket book on the identification of rhododendron species. In his 4-acre garden at 600 feet in East Sussex he has a collection of around 200 *magnoliaceae*, countless rhododendrons, many camellias and other woody plants. He is particularly interested in dark flowered magnolias, in rhododendron species and in propagating late flowering hybrids from the great UK gardens. He has been hybridising rhododendron for lateness, colour and fragrance for some years. Photo above right of

Rhododendron arboreum ssp. *delavayi* var. *delavayi*; photo bottom right of *Rhododendron arboreum* ssp. *zeylanicum*. Both photos by Mike Robinson, from the Royal Horticultural Society. Visit the Royal Horticultural Society website, their rhododendron section, by clicking on the following: http://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/plant_groups/rhododendrons.asp

News of Mike's coming here to speak to the VRS and the SRS, the Seattle ARS chapter, has met with considerable enthusiasm by everyone who knows him. His title: 'Ancient and modern, noteworthy and new: cultivars grown in the UK'

By Joe Ronsley



President's Message

The **open gardens** activity organized by the VRS every spring is a valuable benefit of membership. Aside from the simple pleasure of visiting a garden, and the gardeners, the practical benefit of picking up just one idea as to a plant variety, the arrangement of plants, or other garden features, makes the visit worthwhile. This year we would like to experiment with a new system. Elsewhere in this **INDUMENTUM** are the names and general locations of those VRS members willing to open their gardens to other members on the basis of individual appointments. You are encouraged to contact the members whose gardens you are interested in visiting, and make individual appointments to visit them. If you need a telephone number or email address, please contact me or another member of the Executive.

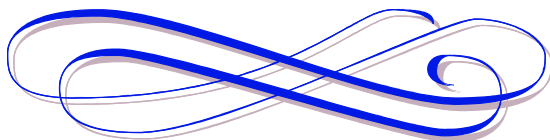
I intend to bring up at our next Executive Meeting the possibility of a **VRS Directory**, to be provided to all VRS members. Every Society like ours should make it easy for members to contact each other.

Don't forget, too, the public gardens will be at their best over the next two months—**UBC, VanDusen, Ted and Mary Grieg Rhododendron Garden in Stanley Park, and Park and Tilford**—all of which have a close relationship of one kind or another with the VRS.

The other big issue this time of year, of course, is our **spring show and sale**, at **Park and Tilford Gardens in North Vancouver on May 3rd and 4th**. Posters will be available if any of you missed the distribution of them at the March meeting. And if you have not already volunteered, or been asked to volunteer, and would like to, please contact me. It's always more fun at the centre of things than on the margins.

April 17th will be the last regular VRS meeting of the 2007-2008 season in the Floral Hall at VanDusen. As is usually the case, we will have a special speaker coming from England, this year **Mike Robinson**, Chairman of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group of the Royal Horticulture Society. I know everybody who can, will want to be in attendance that evening. **May 15th** we'll take a walk in the Asian Garden at UBC, guided by **Douglas Justice**, and on June 8th it's our annual end-of-the-season potluck supper, this year at the home of **Richard and Heather Mossakowski** in Lions Bay. But more on those events in coming **INDUMENTUMS**.

Joanne Ronsley
VRS President



Global Crop Diversity Trust

Some readers may have seen a recent story on the news about the Svalbard Global Seed Vault which is operated by the Global Crop Diversity Trust. Photo below, the entrance to the Svalbard Seed Vault, courtesy of Mari Tefre & the Global Crop Diversity Trust. This is a fascinating endeavour designed to protect seeds of important plant food crops of the world.



The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is located on the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen in the remote arctic Svalbard archipelago. The island is about 1,120 kilometres from the North Pole.

The Seed Vault is managed under terms spelled out in a tripartite agreement between the Norwegian government, the Global Crop Diversity Trust and the Nordic Genetic Resource Center. The Norwegian government has funded all of the approximately \$8 million construction cost.

The Global Crop Diversity Trust has played a key role in the planning of the Seed Vault and is coordinating shipments of seed samples to the Vault in conjunction with the Nordic Genetic Resource Center. The Trust will provide most of the annual operating costs for the facility, and has set aside endowment funds to do so, while the Norwegian government will finance upkeep of the structure itself. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has provided approximately \$750,000 to assist developing countries and international agricultural research centers to package and ship seeds to the Seed Vault. An International Advisory Council is being established to provide guidance and advice.

According to the Global Crop Diversity Trust website their mission is to "ensure the conservation and availability of crop diversity for food security worldwide. The fight against hunger is one of the greatest challenges facing the world over the coming decades. Crop diversity is fundamental to defeating hunger and achieving food security. But it is at serious risk."

An increasingly unpredictable and changing climate, and a world population expected to reach 9 billion by 2050, will place unprecedented demands on agriculture."

See "**Conserving the vast diversity of crop varieties**" on page 3

"Conserving the vast diversity of crop varieties is the only way to guarantee that farmers and plant breeders will have the raw materials needed to improve and adapt their crops to meet these challenges - and provide food for us into the future."

The trust believes that "the conservation of crop diversity is neither technologically complicated, nor, considering the importance of the task, expensive. The varieties of many of the most important crops can be simply stored as seed in freezers. It is instead the reliability of funding which is so crucial to conserving seed, as even short-term breaks in funding can lead to cutbacks in basic maintenance and the loss of unique varieties. Currently, with no secure funding, many of the world's 1500 genebanks know neither what is being stored on their shelves, nor even whether the seed is alive or dead."

Nations of the world have adopted a number of international agreements recognizing the need to conserve crop diversity and confirming the important role of collections maintained in genebanks.

Among these are the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (1996); and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (2001).

The Global Crop Diversity Trust website contains abundant information on the design of the vault, their crop programs, priorities, and governance which includes Canadian Board Chair Margaret Catley-Carlson who has a long list of significant international accomplishments in the area of crop protection. There is also a large number of pictures of the seed vault. Some of the pictures have very large file sizes so be patient and allow the pictures to load. If pictures take too long to load, click stop at the top of your browser and choose the next picture.

On the top of the page menu, look in Programmes then crop strategies, for information on their efforts and priorities. They have information on specific crops such as Aroids, Banana, Barley, Breadfruit, Chickpea, Coconut, Grass pea, Lentil, Maize, Oat, Pigeon pea, Potato, Rice, Sorghum, Strawberry, Sweet Potato and Wheat.

When you first reach their website if a dialog box pops up saying "click to run ActiveX control on this webpage" click OK, so the page will run properly. Photos this page courtesy of Mari Tefre & the Global Crop Diversity Trust. Visit their website by clicking on this link : <http://www.croptrust.org>

Information in this article compiled courtesy of the Global Crop Diversity Trust and Wikipedia.



RHODODENDRON SALE & SHOW

MAY 3 & 4 - 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM



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NORTH VANCOUVER

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Rhododendron Species Workshops a Success

Thirteen VRS members attended a series of four Rhododendron Species Workshops at UBC Botanical Garden this spring. Douglas Justice (photo right, by Ron Knight) led the sessions. Participants studied species classification, keying and identification, culture and care, pests and diseases, and propagation. Each session included classroom work as well as field trips into the garden (photo below, Clive Justice and other participants walk in the garden, by Ron Knight).

Cheers,

Ron Knight



20th Annual Burnaby Rhododendron Festival

Produced by the Burnaby Rhododendron and Gardens Society and the City of Burnaby. On Sunday, May 4th, from 9:30am-4:00pm. Admission is free. At the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts, 6450 Deer Lake Ave., Burnaby, BC. The festival includes a variety of musical entertainment and interactive arts activities, site rovers, mini educational workshops, horticultural and nature tours and commercial plant sales. A silent auction, artisan and pottery sales are always crowd pleasing favourites at this fun filled family event!

For more information visit their website at: www.brag.ca or phone them at 604 - 291 - 6864.



Rhodos to Grow By Ron Knight

Rhododendron 'Paprika Spiced'
(Hotei X Brandt's Tropicana)

This hybrid is a show-stopper. Everyone who sees its flowers for the first time is fascinated by the paprika red spots. These blooms are rated 5/5 by Greer. The plant retains its leaves well in filtered shade, forming a dense low mound that reaches a metre tall in ten years. It won't likely require pruning and is a great plant to put in a small garden space. Occasionally it can be found at retail garden centres but it's available year-round from VRS grower Sue Klapwijk. (Photo by Ron Knight)

Vancouver Rhododendron Society Open Gardens

VRS members have kindly offered to open their gardens to fellow members this spring, by appointment. You are encouraged to contact the members whose gardens you are interested in visiting, and make individual appointments to visit them. If you need a telephone number or email address, please contact me or another member of the Executive. Our phone numbers and email addresses are listed elsewhere in this Indumentum.

Joanne Ronsley
VRS President

Members with Open Gardens:

Michael Bale, Chilliwack

Dana Cromie & Greg Brown, Vancouver

Erwin and Eva Diener, Robert's Creek, Sunshine Coast

Ron Feicht & Derrick Hoffman, West Vancouver

Vern Finley, Chris & Sue Klapwijk, Surrey

Margot Ketchum, West Vancouver

Ron & Carla Knight, Pender Harbour, Sunshine Coast

Kathy Leishman, Bowen Island

Philip MacDougall, Vancouver

Lothar & Cindy Mischke, North Vancouver

Richard & Heather Mossakowski, Lions Bay

Glen Patterson, Vancouver

Glenda Powroznik & Mark Lamont, Surrey

Joe & Joanne Ronsley, Lions Bay

Karen Shuster, Vancouver

Ray & Brian Talbot, West Vancouver

Garden Smart

GardenSmart events are being offered to help gardeners this spring. A new partnership between the Lynn Canyon Ecology Centre, the North Shore Edible Garden Project and the North Shore Recycling Program means with our pooled resources, GardenSmart is offering more learning opportunities. Check out the great April programs at the North Shore Recycling Program!

GardenSmart event registration call (604) 990-3755, or visit our website at <http://www.gardensmart.ca/>
Contact: Elizabeth Leboe
North Shore Recycling Program
Email: elizabeth@nsrp.bc.ca

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NORTH VAN: 604-980-6340 OR 988-8082

Join the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

Come out and enjoy our monthly lecture programs with insightful speakers working in the fields of horticulture, botany and plant preservation. Share with others the knowledge of rhododendrons and acquire plants from member growers. Receive monthly email issues of the **INDUMENTUM**.

Guests are always welcome at our monthly meetings!

Philip MacDougall,
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Contribute to the INDUMENTUM

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. 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, you'll have to live with what we print.

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

Visit our website at www.rhodo.citymax.com

Todd & Shannon Major,
INDUMENTUM Editors

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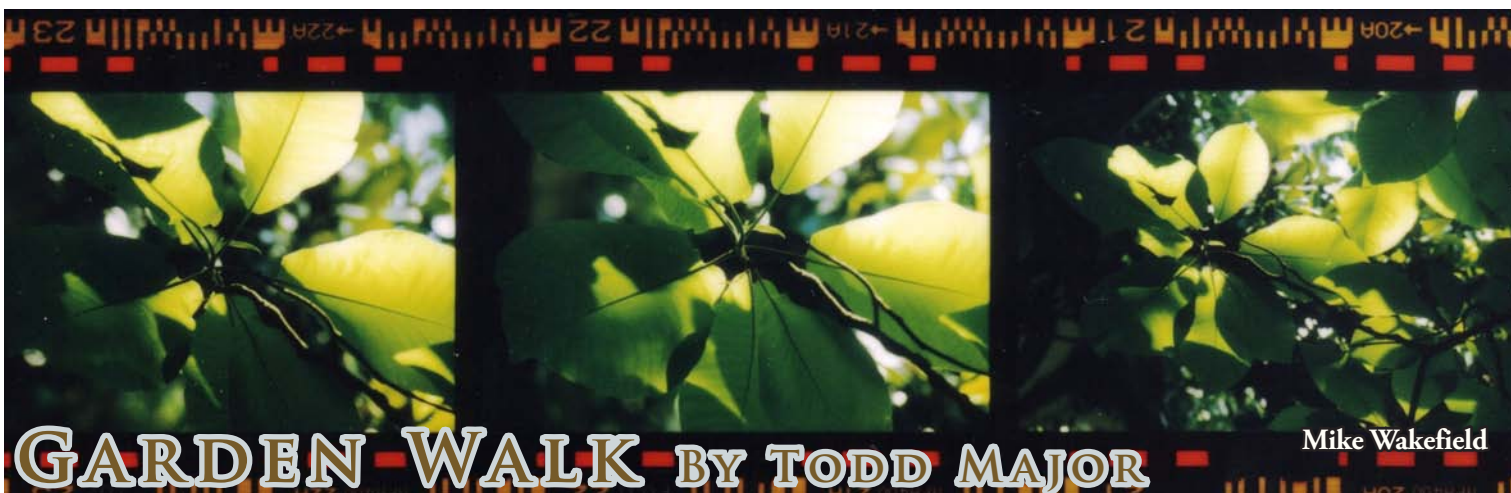
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TAM



Gardeners and preservationists should lament the death of three large beautiful trees at the Park and Tilford Gardens. Yes I know it's only three trees, what's the big deal, considering that trees are at risk all over the world, not just three trees but whole forests. These trees however were our trees, part of the lower mainland's botanical heritage; they were a living accomplishment of our desire as arborists, gardeners and plant lovers to push the envelope and grow the extraordinary for all to enjoy.

I believe there are always options to tree removal and I care as many other people do, about our heritage and in particular heritage trees. What follows below is without prejudice and expressly my personal opinion, of the removal of heritage trees at the Park and Tilford Gardens.

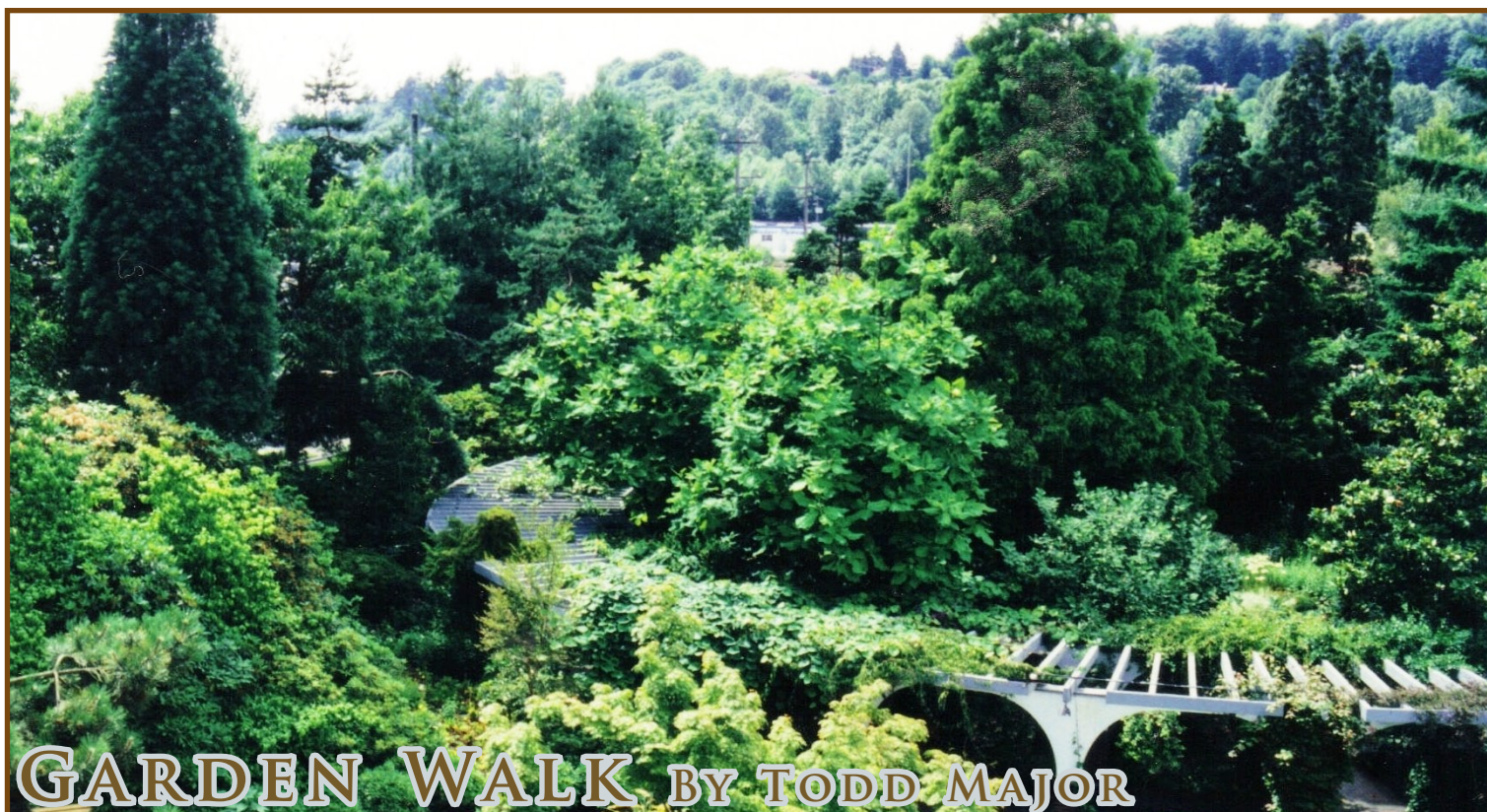
A friend of mine suggested that I visit Park and Tilford to see first hand some of the work being done in the garden. So last week I visited the garden and the first thing I noticed was the recent crown raising (pruning off lower trunk branches) on many trees in the gardens. And while I think the quantity of branch removal has been done aggressively, which is a common reality these days, the technical aspects of the work has been done correctly in most cases, and the results will likely yield lasting benefits to the gardens, primarily in the form of increased light for lower plantings. The negative effect of this work will be increased heat during summer and increased cold during winter throughout the gardens. Aggressive crown-raising can also contribute to tree blow down, because removing too many lower branches concentrates weight on top of the tree and reduces the number of lower branches that would otherwise thicken the trunk to provide structural support for the crown.

Upon a closer look around I noticed that two, of the original three, Cucumber Magnolia (*Magnolia macrophylla*) located along the Colonnade adjacent to the Dawn Redwood, had been cut off at the ground. *Magnolia macrophylla* produces a lightly fragrant flower, one foot wide and six inches tall with petals as thick as cardboard. A truly spectacular sight when an entire group of these trees is adorned in abundance with such impressively sized flowers hanging amongst the giant fourteen inch long leaves (photo top of page). The loss of these trees represents a diminishing of our botanical heritage, not just on the North Shore but in British Columbia.

I believe the removal of these two trees was unnecessary and an unacceptable option to deal with the shade problem in the garden or any perceived problem with crowding or artistically bending trunks. Furthermore, the middle tree of this group of three Cucumber Magnolias (photo right, by Todd Major) was an exceptionally rare form of Cucumber Magnolia, with darker leaves that remained on the tree longer than the regular species and a slightly larger flower. It cannot be replaced.



Continued See "*These Magnolia macrophylla*" on page 9



These *Magnolia macrophylla* are not just some pretty trees you would see anywhere in our region, they are (or were) three of the oldest and largest specimens in all of Canada . (Photo right, these *Magnolia* in bloom and photo above these trees in the center of the picture, by Todd Major). They are extremely rare in our part of the world, very hard to grow to mature size, and they do not exist anywhere in Canada at that size, age or with such historical relevance, not even at the Riverview Arboretum, UBC Botanical garden, VanDusen Botanical garden or Darts Hill. A third *Magnolia* (*Magnolia x soulangeana* 'Lennei') by the moon gate entrance to the Asian garden has also been killed. This species of *soulangeana* is not rare, but the variety 'Lennei' with her large goblet shaped flowers, thick petals and late season bloom, is very hard to find in B.C., especially a forty foot tall specimen. While 'Lennei's' leaning shape may have precluded its salvation for liability reasons, at minimum, cuttings of all removed heritage trees should be taken to preserve genetics. The loss of these three trees is a significant reduction in the quality of Park and Tilford's collection of heritage trees and the loss diminishes the botanical and historical importance of the garden, which I guess suits some people. After all, fewer plants and trees in any garden means less maintenance cost.



Who cares right? No one I guess. It seems to me that tree protection bylaws will protect Hemlock and Douglas Fir, but rare trees, well they are not protected and are just firewood. As for the Garden Review Board, who has at its disposal a wide range of City arborists, managers, landscape designers and horticulturists to provide advice, it failed to prevent the death of these trees or comprehend their value and perhaps even approved of the work. I guess that botanical sedition is becoming the norm in the world these days. We are all a little poorer and less diverse today than we were yesterday.