



RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society
P.O. Box 3040 Langley, B.C. V3A 4R3

NEWSLETTER

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 16th, 1991 at 8:00 P.M.

BILL DALE, of Victoria - whom we all enjoyed the company of on our bus tour last spring will be speaking on one of three presentations which he has. We look forward to seeing him again.

There will be the usual plant sale following the meeting.

CUTTING EXCHANGE: Members are requested to bring cuttings taken from their plants. Plants should have been watered for two to three days before being taken. Plant name to be written on back of leaf with a soft felt point pen. Harold Johnson will give a short dissertation on cuttings and how to handle them, along with a demonstration.

WED. NOVEMBER 20th: Mr. Norbert Wuensche will have a short program for us with some wonderful "double slide" work. This is also our Annual General Meeting night.

NOMINATIONS : Harold Johnson has appointed Pat Glennie and Dave Crabb to assist with nomination. Members who would like to stand for election or nominate someone should contact Harold_ 531-5253. Pat 538-2844 or Dave 534-4884.

LIBRARY: Pat Dahl has the video "Glory of the garden" available in the library. She is asking that anyone who has a video of gardens to consider giving a copy to the library.

P.N.E.DISPLAY: A letter to the Children's Hospital along with a cheque for \$231.04 which was the amount collected from the pond has been sent.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR : At a meeting of the seven chapter presidents of district 1 of the A.R.S. Our very own president Les Clay was unanimously nominated to be district director with Everett Jefferson of M.A.R.S. chapter as alternate director for the next two years. Congratulations.

Sickness: Sorry to report that our good friend Gerry Emerson is in Langley hospital and is quite sick. We send our heartfelt thoughts and regards to Gerry and Lillian.

MEETING: ST. ANDREWS ANGLICAN HALL, 20955 OLD YALE RD., LANGLEY

PLEASE: Only one QUESTIONNAIRE has so far been turned in, which was asked for in the June bulletin. Come on members, lets have them at this meeting so we know what we are doing right or wrong.

CONSTITUTION: Chris Ballyn, Mike Trembath and Les Clay have now got the revision of the constitution completed which will be discussed at the meeting. We feel more input from the members should have been forth coming.

Kitchen: Once again the behind the scenes Melba Johnson has come forth to take over the kitchen duties. Please, get behind Melba and help her out with goodies etc. Thanks again Melba.

T-SHIRTS: We had difference of choice of T shirts. One acquired in Lynden and modelled by Janette. More enquiries will be made about cost etc. Pat and Diane ,please don't fall out about it.

RAFFLE: We had a good raffle table and we thank all those who donated to same. Keep up the good work. All the proceeds go along way to keeping us afloat. Thanks Pat for doing a good job in the absence of Chris, who we hope to see at next meeting.

LABELS: A tip in the Fraser Valley News letter is copied as follows: Aluminum pop and beer cans make excellent plant labels. One can will yield four single or two double labels with sufficient space to record plant information in letters large enough to be readable from a reasonable distance. Push hard with a ball point pen to permanently imprint information on the label. The cans are easily cut with a pair of scissor.

ANNUAL DUES: The executive decided that the dues be will as follows for the year 1992.

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| Full Membership-one or two names, same address- one vote - | \$30.00 |
| Family Membership - two names, same address - two votes - | \$35.00 |
| Associate Membership - Member of an other chapter - one vote- | \$10.00 |
| Local Membership - one vote in local chapter affairs only - | \$12.50 |
| Commercial Membership - one vote | -\$60.00 |
| Life Membership - one vote | ----- |

BOARD of DIRECTORS: The next meeting will be held at Harold and Melba Johnson's home on October 22, 1991 at 7:30 P.M.

Executive for 1991

President: Les Clay (530-5188) :
 Vice-President: Dr. Mike Trembath (856-7261)
 Treasurer: R. Mann (Interim) 576-8889
 Secretary: Sue Finley (888-0920)
 Directors: Chris Ballyn (3 years)
 Harold Johnson (2 years)
 Pat Glennie (1 yr)(538-2844)

Committees

Programs: Harold Johnson - 581-5253
 Les Clay
 Membership: Chris Ballyn - 857-0253 (987-2991)
 Publicity: Diane Scott - 533-4378
 Library: Pat Dahl - 534-5200
 Hospitality: Mrs. Phil Anderson - 856-8139
 Bulletin: Ella Crabb - 534-4884

The above welcome your questions, suggestions as to future events, articles for the newsletter etc.

All-out war on a beautiful foe

Derrick Warner is a National Trust for Scotland ranger at Brodick Castle on the island of Arran. He also doubles up as special constable, wildlife writer/photographer, general conservation dogsbody and occasional seal rescuer. Local wits have added another dimension to Derrick's occupational tally-- triffid hunter

John Wyndham's botanical fantasy hasn't shown up for real on the Firth of Clyde, but instead rhododendron ponticum is running out of control across thousands of acres and is every bit as bad to deal with.

It is the lilac-flowered bush often to be seen on Scottish hillsides. On the west coast, it is so common that nature-lovers often think of it as a native plant. The spring flowers have become a staple image, enriching the manufacturers of Kitsch calenders; Scotland's tourist brochures are full of the stuff.

Given that image it's not surprising that Warner's relentless war to eradicate rhododendron ponticum attracts occasional newspaper letters (usually from south of the Border) accusing him of rural vandalism. Standing amid acres of cut and poisoned rhododendrons, Warner is entirely unapologetic. "You could call me an anti-rhodie fanatic.

So, increasingly, are most of his fellow Arranachs. Volunteer community squads go after rhododendrons with all the commitment of Wyndham's post-disaster survivors. If--as Warner hopes-- the Government can be persuaded to extend financial incentives to farmers and land-owners to uproot the plants, its days could be numbered.

Put very crudely, rhododendron ponticum amounts to an 18th century pot plant gone ape. By the mid-19th century and the advent of the modern sporting estate, it had moved from the drawing room to the hills and glens. The imported plant was supposed to provide cover for pheasants--and feed deer. According to its critics, all it did was encourage rabbit infestation and inflict vitamin deficiencies on deer.

One thousand acres of Brodick Castle park are infested with the plant. Ecologists have warned that it puts native wild-life at risk. Every part of western Scotland --with its combination of acid soils, moderate climate and high rainfall--is under threat.

Warner admires his enemy. "Ponticum has its own in-built anti-freeze, defeating frosts. Waxy leaves deter insects and disease. And the whole thing is so recent that nothing else has adapted to attack it yet." Until the rescue squads got moving, the rhododendron had made a fair fist of destroying all else around it. Brodick's Merkland Wood--a natural woodland since the last ice age-- rhododendron infestation had begun to eliminate plant and animal rivals. The original habitat is only now struggling back to life. As little as 5 per cent of natural light penetrates a ponticum canopy-- and other young trees fail in its shade. Bird life dwindles; Merkland Wood's treasured role as the west of Scotland's oldest recorded heronry was at risk.

Now, primroses, wood anemonies and brambles are back-- along with a nearly-vanished population of bank voles.

Like most conservationists, Warner doesn't relish using agricultural chemicals. New shoots-- it immediately replicates itself if a drooping branch even touches the ground--returns in months. Burning and clearing are only part of the battle.

And human life is at risk. Last year, Arran's mountain rescue team was called to locate an elderly couple hopelessly lost in a huge rhododendron thicket. Warner has come close to being benighted in a natural maze himself. "I've found the skeletons of sheep, cattle and even dogs that have wandered in and died." Warner states.

The rare nightjar migrates from Africa to Arran every summer. Emergency action in conjunction with the Forestry Commission has been taken to create clearings in infested zones to save the nightjars' habitat. "The fear is that we may be too late," says Warner.

History too has vanished under the relentless march of dense rhododendron walls. A stone age cist was recently revealed when volunteers cleared an estate path and such has been the plant's advance that even the graves of the Dukes of Hamilton were almost lost.

A recent conservation conference heard that at least £35 million is needed to rid Wales's Snowdonia of its rhododendron acres. Campaigners shrink from even suggesting a cost for clearing Scotland.

Arran has won a few battles against a formidable foe. In the rest of Scotland, the war against a once-revered botanical curiosity has only just begun.

NEWSLETTER : The above article appeared in a Scottish daily newspaper last year and I thought it would be of interest to members. A few members have visited Brodick Castle gardens where they have a great collection of Rhododendrons so it should be of special interest to them.

As Ella is visiting her mother in Scotland. I have been left with the job of putting together the Bulletin and not having any idea what I'm doing, this is the best I can come up with. Sorry.

It is with regret we announce the passing of Gerry Emerson, one of our Charter Members September 30, 1991. Our deepest sympathy go to Lillian and the family.