

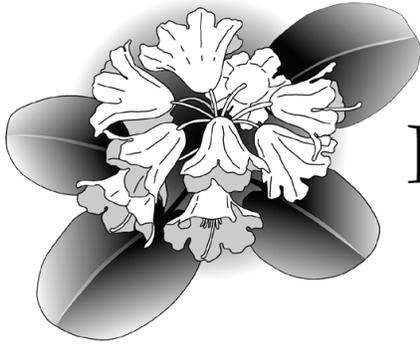
# AtlanticRhodo

[www.AtlanticRhodo.org](http://www.AtlanticRhodo.org)

Volume 35: Number 2

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# Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society

## Positions of Responsibility 2010 - 2011

<b>President</b>	Ruth Jackson	454-4681	<b>Director - Horticulture</b>	Audrey Fralic	683-2711
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<b>Director - Social</b>	Shirley McIntyre	835-3673	<b>May - Pre-Ordered Plant Sale</b>	Ken Shannik	422-2413
<b>Director - Outreach</b>	Chris Hopgood	479-0811	<b>May- Public Plant Sale</b>	Duff & Donna Evers	835-2586

## Membership (Please Note Changes)

### Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society.

Fees are \$20.00 from September 1, 2010 to August 31, 2011, due September 2010. Make cheques payable to Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society. ARHS is a chapter in District 12 of the American Rhododendron Society. For benefits see ARHS website [www.atlanticrhodo.org](http://www.atlanticrhodo.org)

### American Rhododendron Society

Combined ARHS and ARS membership cost is \$50.00 Canadian. For benefits see [www.rhododendron.org](http://www.rhododendron.org)

Cheques, made payable to Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society should be sent to **Ann Drysdale, 5 Little Point Lane, Herring Cove, NS B3V1J7.**

Please include name, address with postal code, e-mail address and telephone number, for organizational purposes only.

*AtlanticRhodo* is the Newsletter of the Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society. We welcome your comments, suggestions, articles, photos and other material for publication. Send all material to the editor.

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Cover Photo: *Cypripedium parviflorum* Var. *pubescens*. [Photo Roslyn Duffus]



# Calendar of Events

All ARHS meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, from September to May, at 7:30 p.m. in the Nova Scotia Museum Auditorium, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, unless otherwise noted. Paid parking is available in the Museum lot. Friends, guests and anyone interested in rhododendrons, azaleas or companion plants are always welcome at meetings or events.

- Saturday April 23**                      **Outreach:** Meagher Garden  
See Special Notices
- Saturday April 30**                      **Pickup for Pre-ordered Plant Sale**  
See Special Notices
- Tuesday May 3**                              **Members' Plant Sale and May Meeting**  
See Special Notices
- Saturday May 7**                              **Public Sale 1:00 – 3:30 p.m.**    See Special Notices
- Sunday June 5**                              **Garden Tours, Bedford – Sackville area 2:00 p.m.**  
**Potluck Supper**                      See Special Notices

**Please Note:** Some members, who have environmental sensitivities, are asking their fellow members please to use no perfumes, scented soaps, etc., on the days or evenings of ARHS events, in order to minimize the risk of allergic reactions.



A very warm welcome to our new and returning ARHS members who have joined since the February Newsletter.

**Theresa Delorme**  
**Marged Dewar**  
**Barbara C. Schatz**  
**Doug Bamford**  
**Patrick McKinnon**  
**Colin Mathieson**  
**David Seigel**

**Bedford**  
**Halifax**  
**Halifax**  
**Halifax**  
**Dartmouth**  
**Head of St. Margaret's Bay**  
**Ormond Beach, Florida (Associate Member)**



## Special Notices

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### **Outreach, the John Meagher Garden Saturday April 23, 9:30 to noon**

**Well, spring is here, but our maritime climate doesn't seem to match the seasonal calendar because it still feels like winter. However, planning must take place and the next Outreach session will be on April 23. It will be a general cleanup, with emphasis on ridding the garden of the Japanese knotweed. We will also have a few little rhodos to plant in the second garden.**

The ARHS Outreach initiative has become a welcome sight each spring at Regatta Point, with residents coming by to say hello and to say thanks.

Please join us in this effort ; all you need is your garden gloves, a rake, small garden hand tools and your good self. Email [chris\\_hopgood@eastlink.ca](mailto:chris_hopgood@eastlink.ca) to advise if you will be there to lend a hand.

### **Plant Pickup for Pre-ordered Plant Sale for Members Saturday April 30**

Plants are to be picked up at 5 Sime Court, Halifax, on Saturday, April 30, between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Sime Court is in the Kingswood subdivision off the Hammonds Plains Rd. Take Kingswood Drive (between Kearney Lake Rd and Farmer Clem's) to Brenda drive (the first street on the right) and follow it to the first left which is Sime Court. Plants are to be paid for when they are picked up. Any plants not picked up on this date will be offered for sale at the Public Sale.

### **May Meeting, Members' Plant Sale Tuesday May 3 7:30 p.m.**

**LeMarchant-St. Thomas School, 6141 Watt Street, Halifax.**

Once again we will have a table for a mixture of members' plants, as well as individual tables for large growers.

Bring the plants you want to sell – **each plant for the members' mixed table must have 2 labels**, one with the plant name and price, one with your name and price. This is so we can give you your money after the sale. Please bring your plants in by 7:00 p.m. so we can get the table organized.

Remember if you are buying or selling you must be a paid-up member and plants should be unusual or difficult to grow. Please donate any of the more common varieties to the Public Sale.

### **Public Sale, Saturday May 7 1:00 to 3:30 p.m.**

**LeMarchant-St. Thomas School, 6141 Watt Street, Halifax**

This is the Atlantic rhododendron and Horticultural Society's famed annual public plant sale, this year on the day before Mothers' Day. Nursery grown and member grown plants (rhodos, azaleas, companion plants, trees) 4 inch to 3 gallon pots. Free parking, knowledgeable gardeners to answer questions. Descriptive list of nursery-grown plants one week before, at [www.atlanticrhodo.org](http://www.atlanticrhodo.org). Contact Donna Evers, 902-835-2586, [devers@eastlink.ca](mailto:devers@eastlink.ca). ☐

## **Garden Tours 2011**

This year's Members Garden Tour will be held on Sunday June 5 commencing at 2 P.M. It takes place in Bedford , Kingswood, Lower Sackville and ends in Waverley.

2.00P.M to 4.30 P.M.;

**Donna & Duff Evers** 5 Sime Court, Kingswood, off of Hammonds Plains Road.

We invite you to come and wander through our garden. We have gardened here for 18 years and collected far too many plants. The gardens begin at the roadside and stop at the lakefront.

The biggest challenges have been the sloping property and the diversity of gardening sites. Terraces, retaining walls and divergent ditches have taken care of the problems associated with the steep slope.

There are areas of dry shade, full sun and a bog. Getting the right plant in the right spot has always been a challenge or an excuse for another plant.

So many ARHS members have been to our garden to help with plant sales or to pick up plants that we feel we need to assure you that we won't put you to work. Sorry no cookies this time.

**Susan & Russell Boyd** 633 Shore Drive Bedford

Russ and Susan have been in their home on the Bedford Basin for 25 years, but they've been seriously gardening only since Susan joined the ARHS about 2000. Not surprisingly, rhododendrons are their most abundant plant, but lots of other shrubs (magnolias, hydrangeas, roses) and perennials (day lilies, peonies, clematis) plus a vegetable garden also vie for their attention.

**Emily & Dawson Miller** 54 Hartford Dr. Sackville

The Millers refer to their garden as "Eclectic". After 18 years of collecting plants there is always something in bloom. Dawson has a delightful heather garden in the front-yard.

### **4.30 P.M. Onward with the Potluck**

**Roslyn Duffus** 156 Ridge Ave. Waverley

Roslyn's garden was started in 1986. It is sandwiched between Lake William and a peat bog, with the challenge of wind exposure, seasonal flooding and not enough time. It is a collector's garden with special interest in woodland, rock garden and alpine plants. Oh, Oh! And new daylilies.

### **Potluck 6 P.M.**

Everyone should bring ready to eat food such as appetizers, salads, sliced meat, desserts.

Bring a lawn chair. Wine will be provided by the Society

**Maps are on the next page**



## Duties of Social Convenor

We are looking for someone to take over as Director-Social. If you are interested please contact Sheila Stevenson or any member of the executive.

For meetings from Sept. To April inclusive, except December; see that someone will bring juice and a snack. Be sure there are enough disposable glasses and serviettes. This is paid for out of funds.

At present we are using a sign-up sheet in the fall, covering the months involved. This seems to be working.

### Christmas Party;

Get a liquor permit from the Gaming Association. This has to be applied for ahead of time.

Book the space back of the auditorium with the museum.

Purchase disposable wine glasses, serviettes, other glasses, juice for those who don't drink wine.

Arrive at 7 P.M. sharp to set up tables. That is the earliest you can get in.

Arrange for someone to oversee opening the wine, opening only as needed.

Remind members at the November Meeting to bring finger food for the Christmas Party

### Members Garden Tour;

Plan and organize. Start to plan in the fall and finalize early winter. This means deciding the area to be on the tour. Contact members to see who will show their garden. Find someone who is willing to host the potluck. Again buy the wine- no permit is needed since it is not in a public place. Work out with the hostess the purchase of disposable plates, glasses, cups, serviettes and wine glasses.

A write-up for the newsletter with all the details of the tour and a map needs to be ready by the end of March.

Attend the three executive meetings held during the year. ☐

## From Captain Steele to DNA

Taken from an article in the Columbus University magazine FOCUS by Walter Ostrom.

Botany was far from Kevin Burgess' thoughts as he grew up in a small fishing village on Nova Scotia's southern shore. But that changed when 14-year-old Burgess crossed paths with Canadian war hero-turned-botanist Capt. R. M. Steele while en route to apply for a lucrative job unloading scallop-dragging boats. "I was passing by Capt. Steele's plant farm and, on the spur of the moment, I stopped in and asked for a job. I was surprised when he said, 'Can you start tomorrow?'" That detour set the course for Burgess' career in plant ecological genetics. Now 43 and an assistant professor at Columbus State University, he recently helped forge a breakthrough in plant science and is now guiding Columbus State students in related research. Burgess is among 52 scientists from 10 countries who have collaborated to standardize a plant DNA barcode. Announced this summer in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the metaphorical barcode — a short sequence of DNA unique to every species — can be used to quickly and accurately catalog about 400,000 land plants around the world. Beyond providing an efficient means for species identification, bar coding will help confirm whether a plant is common or rare, poisonous or edible, or being traded legally or illegally.

The department is one of CSU's healthiest academic units, growing 14 percent over the five years leading up to fall 2008, when it was the academic home of 425 biology majors. Burgess said he enjoys the research mentoring opportunities he's found since joining CSU in 2008. "I love to teach about plants, whether it concerns conservation, evolutionary ecology or gene flow among species," he said. His passion was sparked by Steele, the retired decorated naval officer who was inducted into the Order of Canada, that country's highest honor for lifetime achievement in a given field, as "one of North America's leading experts (and breeders) of rhododendrons and azaleas." "When I first started working for Capt. Steele, it mostly involved manual labor like weed pulling, mowing and potting plants," he said. "But as we worked side by side over the next eight years, he would share his war stories," including tales of World War II battleship combat on D-Day and in the Battle of the Atlantic, plus commanding a Korean War battleship. "He also shared a lot of insight about his adventures in plant breeding and collecting, as well as his visits to some of the world's greatest botanical gardens and arboreta," Burgess said. "Eventually, I was hooked." Burgess went on to work at institutions such as the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, the Wilson Botanical Garden in Costa Rica and the World Conservation Monitoring Center in Cambridge, England. ....

... \* Steele, now in his early 90s, continues to operate his 40-acre farm on Nova Scotia's south shore, where he has grown close to 30,000 plants and created more than 100 new hardy varieties of rhododendrons. "It is really a joy when I go home to Nova Scotia and talk with Capt. Steele about the world of plants, a discussion that inevitably takes us for a trek beneath the thousands that we planted together in my youth."

\* *Written before Captain Steele's death.* ☐

## Plant Portraits

### Ferns

When Mary asked me to write a plant portrait for the newsletter, I wondered what I could talk about that hasn't already been covered in past issues so I decided to look through the last 8 or 10 years of issues that I have and found that there was not a lot about ferns. Since there was a fern offered with the tissue culture plants in the October 2010 Newsletter and it happens to be one I have, that seemed like a good place to start.



*Athyrium felix-femina* 'Frizelliae'.

[Photo Roslyn Duffus]

*Athyrium felix-femina* 'Frizelliae' came into my garden from Garden Import in 2002 and has been slowly and reliably increasing ever since. The species, *felix-femina*, is much larger than this cultivar, with fronds reaching upwards of 3 feet where as 'Frizelliae' stays closer to 12 inches. The plant is also known as Mrs Frizzel's lady fern or Tatting Fern, and is so named because the fronds have their leaves reduced to rounded lobes that look like handmade lace made with a tatting bobbin. This is a very different form from what we think of when visualizing a fern frond. The plant stays as a clump and has not grown much over 10 inches across in the 8 years I have had it. It is very well behaved and easy to grow. I expect that it might have grown more if given more nourishment than I have but it is planted along the edge of the driveway in dappled light amongst species tulips which are overplanted with annuals which are fertilized on planting, and given occasional waterings in the driest summers. The books say to grow it in neutral to slightly acid, fertile soil enriched with compost or leaf mould, moist but well drained. Last spring, I bravely cut a piece out of the rhizome and gave the division away to see how well it would grow. I await with anticipation to see how it came through the winter.

There are many other ferns suitable as companion plants for Rhododendrons. These include the Japanese painted ferns (*Athyrium nipponicum*) of which there are many cultivars. I have had A. 'Pictum' since 1999, and added A. 'Pictum-Applecourt' and A. x 'Ghost' in 2009. Others include *Polystichum acrostichoides* (Christmas Fern) and *Polypodium* (Rock Cap Fern) both of which are evergreen. There are also ferns to be wary of, unless you have lots of space, as they spread vigorously by rhizomes. Two that I am trying to control now are *Matteuccia struthiopteris* or Ostrich Fern, not to be confused with the edible fiddlehead fern and *Onoclea sensibilis* (Sensitive Fern).

There are many other lovely ferns to choose from and several other club members have much larger collections and much more experience with these nice plants than I do. There must be room for a few ferns in your garden.

– Roslyn Duffus

### Ranunculus ficaria 'Brazen Hussy'

The name says it all. She's in your face, she's bright, she's outrageous. She comes very early, just as the tiniest green leaves are unfurling and then those brassy, shiny flowers are gleaming from the ground. This kind of ranunculus is called lesser celandine in the U.K., and is one of the earliest and most welcome of the early woodland flowers. This particular celandine arose as a chance seedling and has quite incredible purple-black leaves against which those flowers just shine. Because celandine is quite a spready weed I was very cautious about letting this plant loose in my garden. I planted it in the shrub border under *Daphne* 'Carol Mackie' where it could spread if it wanted. It hasn't proved too vigorous. The clumps have spread slowly over ten years and are now maybe twelve inches across. Some of the new seeded plants aren't quite as chocolate black but are still quite lovely. They are summer dormant so wither away as the daphne comes into full leaf which works quite well. They seem to really like being under a deciduous plant where they get the early spring sunshine and then can disappear and keep dry through the summer. I would still caution you if you have a small garden, but I recommend it.

– Jenny Sandison

### Cypripedium 'Gisela'

Back in 2006, I wrote a profile on *Cypripedium calceolus*, the yellow lady slipper. I am not sure that that was the correct name as it is more likely to be *C. parviflorum* var. *pubescens*, but it is still doing well and has been successfully divided a few times. Since then, I have acquired *C. reginae* from Walter Ostrom which is also doing well but could be doing better. Time for some soil improvement I think.

I wanted to talk about the hybrid *Cypripedium* 'Gisela' which is a cross between *C. macranthos* and *C. parviflorum*. *C. macranthos* originates in eastern Russia and down the eastern side of the continent as far as Korea and *C. parviflorum* is a North American species. My plant also came from Walter at the members plant sale probably around 2007 or 2008. This lady slipper is one of the easier ones to grow here, probably thanks to its *C. parviflorum* parentage. The white or pale yellow pouch is blushed with pink and there are pink spots on the light interior. The tepals are a rich burgundy striped with yellow and are slightly twisted. There are some variations amongst images seen on the internet so sometimes it is hard to come up with a true description. This just happens to be what I have.

There is always a lot of concern over soil mixes for Cyps, and you can find copious recipes and opinions on soil mixes on the internet these days. Sometimes I think you do better without all the conflicting information. I have been lucky with this particular plant, so I got something right. I have it planted on the edge of a wooded area on a bit of a hump but below the natural crest of the ridge so it is protected from the very strong prevailing south winds of the summer but does get a buffeting when the winds are out of the north. The light is morning sun and dappled the rest of the day. I can't be positive what I used but I think I took some forest soil and mixed in some of the coconut fibre that you can find in garden centres. I also used some leaf mould and grit and top dressed with pine needles. I probably added a little lime too. It is a free draining mix! The main thing to be aware of is that the roots need to have an airy mixture around them and should be spread out flat, around the crown, in the top couple of inches of mix and they don't want to be really wet through the dormant period. Take care not to damage the roots as that can make them prone to rot and fungal infections. The more lean the mixture is the less prone to fungal damage and it is easy to fertilize with 1/4 strength liquid if needed. Water with rain water if possible.

Well, I hope that inspires a few more to try these wonderful plants. Yes, I know, they are expensive and I have lost a few in my time. Another one arrived the end of March for me to try. I hope I will be able to report good things about that in a few years time.

– Roslyn Duffus

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Rhodo Leaves Curl in the Cold – Why?

When the temperature drops below the freezing point, the leaves of evergreen rhododendrons curl up. The colder it gets, the tighter they curl, but when it warms up, the leaves uncurl again. Why do they do this? The reasons are not completely clear, but undoubtedly the process helps the plants survive the winter. The hardier the rhododendrons, the more readily do they seem to curl their leaves. The curling of the leaves probably helps the plants in three ways. First, it prevents the leaves from losing water. Once the ground is frozen, the roots cannot take up water, so it is important to keep as much as possible from evaporating through the pores (stomata) of the leaves. Secondly, the leaf tissue can be damaged by freezing and thawing. When the temperature rises above the melting point, the frozen leaf will thaw more gradually if it is curled than if it is flat, minimizing the damage. And finally, sunlight can burn a frozen leaf. If it is curled up, it is not exposed to as much sun, so sunburn is less likely. Rhododendrons look quite unhappy when their leaves are curled up, but they seem to know best how to survive the harshest time of the year.

### Indumentum

Most of us grow rhododendrons mainly for their spectacular flowers, but the flowers last for only a short time. For the rest of the year we appreciate the appearance of the leaves – usually evergreen, with an interesting diversity of shades of green and variety of shapes. One aspect of the leaves of many rhododendrons is the *indumentum* – the fuzzy stuff on the underside. It actually consists of a mat of very fine hairs. Depending on the species or cultivar, its colour varies from white through ivory, cream, yellow or tan, to rusty and brown. For the most part, indumentum persists for much of the year. Some kinds of rhododendrons also have a corresponding mat of hairs on the upper side of the leaves. This is called *tomentum*. In most cases it is found on the young leaves as they expand, and then disappears. Descriptions in our lists of plants for sale usually mention indumentum if it is present. In our garden, plants with prominent indumentum include several Yak hybrids, including 'Golfer' and 'Mist Maiden', and *R. makinoi*.

### Tissue culture

Each year in early spring, our society brings in batches of tissue-cultured plants, mostly rhododendrons but also a few other kinds of plants. Over the years, several dozen different varieties have been made available. When they arrive, the plants are tiny. They require a bit of extra care in the early stages, but with patience they grow into respectable, mature plants. The initial cost is low enough to make it feasible to try a lot of them, currently about \$5 each.

All the plants of one variety are genetically identical – they are a clone. They are produced by dissecting out tissue from a desirable plant under sterile conditions, and separating individual cells by gently shaking them in a liquid medium for several days. Every cell has all the genes of the plant. Under suitable conditions, the cell divides and eventually

differentiates into all the structures of the plant you see when it comes to you. The trick is finding those “suitable conditions” to allow this to happen. Usually the cells are grown on a layer of jelly containing nutrient salts and growth hormones; once they have grown into little plants, they are put into miniature pots with a soil-less medium. Up to this point, the plants have been growing in sterile conditions, because otherwise yeasts and fungi would quickly outgrow them. But now they have to face the real world.

Clones of rhododendrons can also be made by layering or rooting cuttings. Because tissue cultures start from single cells, thousands of plants can be obtained from a single starter plant. This is the major advantage of propagating plants in this way.

– Chris Helleiner

## Magnolia Grandiflora – Will it Survive in Northern Nova Scotia?

By Bruce Clyburn, New Waterford

Magnolias have proven a delightful companion to rhododendrons in our plantings here. We have located our accessions in a large common area we call ‘magnolia orchard’. Most deciduous magnolias have done well once they get to a size of a meter or so. We have a climate that is conducive to a large number of species and hybrids with one exception; we lack summer heat, which is an asset in ripening new wood and maximizing hardiness. This is why small plants get some winter die-back until their root balls reach a decent size. With the bit of encouragement we’ve had, it’s left us pushing the envelope and trying to establish more desirable but slightly tender magnolias. What defines the epitome of magnolias for a northern gardener better than *M. grandiflora*, the southern evergreen with its huge white flowers and their scrumptious scent? *M. grandiflora* is native to moist woods in the coastal plain from central Florida, north to North Carolina, and west to Texas.

I made two separate attempts to establish *M. grandiflora* 15 years ago with what most growers thought at that time was the most cold hardy *M. grandiflora* cultivar for northern climes – ‘Edith Bogue’. Plantings were done in the spring and both times the outcomes were identical. The plants sailed through our winter and came out with all leaves intact and deep green. As other garden plants started pushing new growth *M. grandiflora* went into a downward spiral. Leaves browned and fell; a closer inspection revealed heavy bark split near the base of the plants. On both occasions they didn’t recover. I put the idea of growing *M. grandiflora* on a back burner and there it remained for years.

In 2009-10 I corresponded with two gardeners who had succeeded in establishing *M. grandiflora*, one in USDA zone 6 and the other in USDA zone 5. I compiled an amount of advice concerning what they accredited their success to. When I considered sharing this information via a newsletter article I faced a dilemma – should I wait 4-5 years until I actually could validate my test plantings here and establish some creditability or share the information now so another ARHS member might put the information to practice and in 4-5 years have a hardy *M. grandiflora* growing in his/her garden. I went with the second choice. What follows are two accounts of established *M. grandiflora* in two cold gardens. The first garden is zone 6b but the low temperatures are on par with what we’ve experienced in Cape Breton (6a) during recent winters. We do have times of protracted cold and have more frequent desiccating winter winds. The second garden is zone 5a and *M. grandiflora* reacts entirely differently there. I’ve used the gardener’s first names only to afford them privacy:

### Zone 6b

Louis is a professional landscape designer twelve years into the creation of his own private garden on a couple of country acres in Hopkinton, Rhode Island. His *M. grandifloras* are fully evergreen and besides hardiness he addresses the threat of structural damage from snow loads. He’s worked around this by growing *M. grandiflora* as an espalier tied to light weight aluminum posts. *M. grandiflora* ‘Bracken’s Brown Beauty’ (BBB) is the one to plant; it thrives all over the coastal belt of New England but you can’t just plant it and forget it:

1. *Magnolia grandiflora* is spring-plant only. Keep indoors, in a greenhouse or unheated garage until spring.
2. *Grandifloras* need all possible sun, heat and wind shelter. They are great planted against west or south walls. The young branches are very flexible so the plants are easy to espalier. He just ties his branches with plain old cotton-wrapped nylon clothesline. His magnolias are espaliered on a free-standing galvanized-pipe frame. He reties his magnolias in July, because by then they really put out new growth and need to be "compacted".
3. Consider this further kindness: you could also get wind-baffle-fabric (like that put around tennis courts) cut and grommated so that you can tie it across the entire front of the espalier and you can spray the magnolias with anti-desiccant (WILT-PRUF®).
4. 2 to 3 foot plants are likely to have significant challenges. He doesn't recommend, even down there, planting smaller than 5 - 6 footers. That said, larger-size magnolias can struggle too if they don't form good root balls. Grow your *M. grandiflora* on for a few years first, outside for summer and putting it in an unheated garage for winter or a cool greenhouse. Upsize containers as needed so the roots can grow outward.

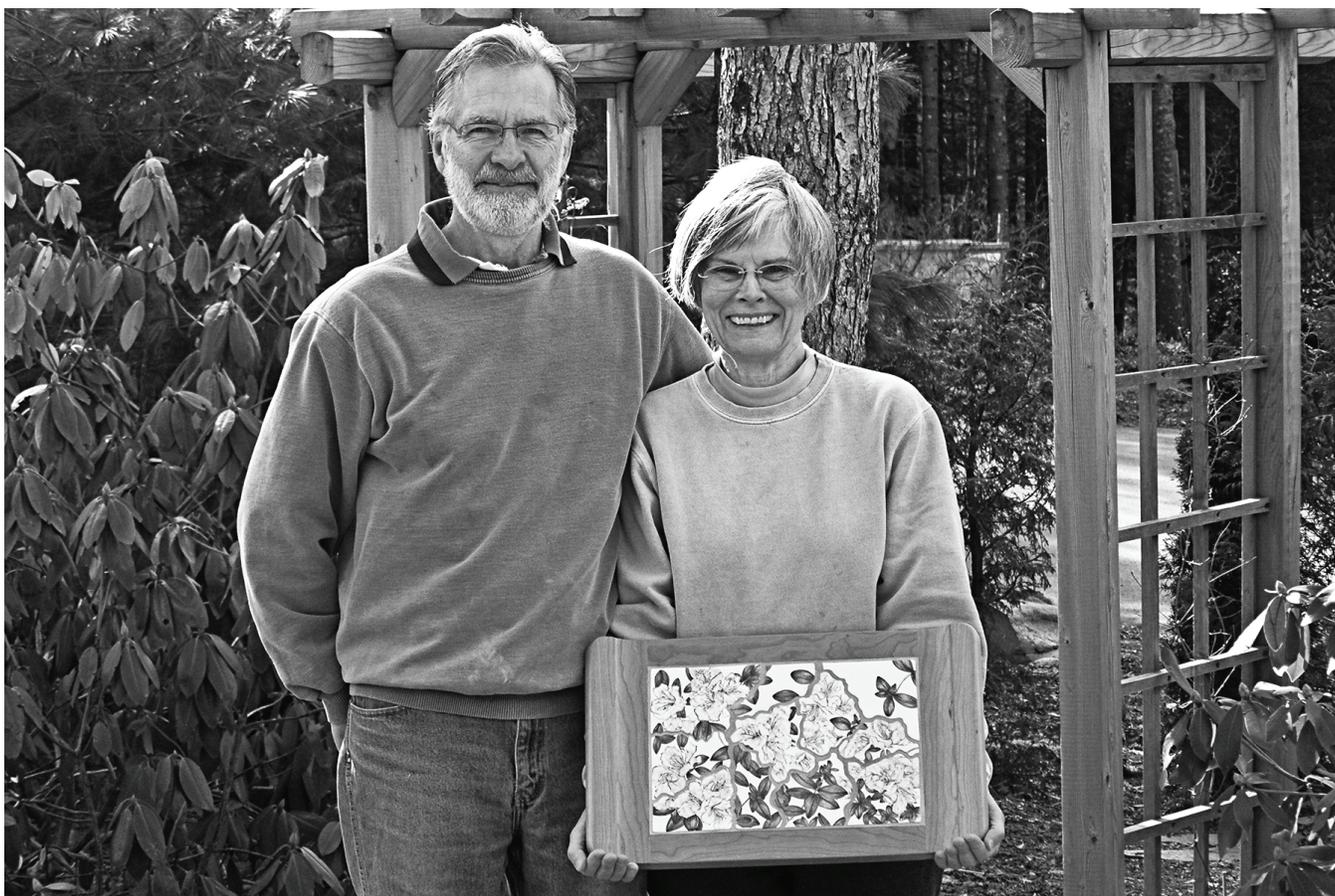
## Zone 5a

Kevin's garden is in northern Illinois with winter lows of -28C (-18F). *M. grandiflora* 'Bracken's Brown Beauty' is perfectly happy being a semi-deciduous plant in this location. By April, the leaves have turned brown. By May, the plant is bare of all leaves. By June, it has leafed out anew, with the typical beautiful foliage. In July, it is covered in fragrant blooms. It grows happily, putting on 18-24" a year. From the way it looks, he thinks it could go on in this manner indefinitely. Unfortunately, it's an ugly mass of brown leaves or bare sticks for a couple months out of the year. Then again, it's a source of great green leaves through most of the winter when little else has leaves at all. Winter snow is usually light and dry, Kevin's been successful growing his plant 'free-standing'

1. Kevin sought out a 7', 1 1/2" caliper tree grown in a large container to get started. There was no transplant shock evident.
2. He planted it in the most sheltered spot he had, in the "L" created by his house and garage, with the 2 story red brick walls of the house and garage on the north and west sides of the tree. There is very little wind there but plenty of snow in the winter (it drifts as well). It also gets plenty of sun (facing east and south as it is) for the morning and early afternoon.
3. Kevin feels it is best the first few winters to make a "house" of burlap for *M. grandiflora* to shade it from winter sun and keep the snow from piling up on it too much.

## Getting Started in Cape Breton

This summer (2010) I acquired three 2-ft *M. grandiflora* 'Bracken's Brown Beauty' from Nettlecreek Nursery, Fonthill, Ontario. Separately, I have a some cuttings being rooted. That means my plants are from two distinct sources; I want to make sure I have the true 'BBB'. The three magnolias in containers were moved into my garage for winter in December; they'll go out in June next spring. I will not plant out until they are 5-6 ft. tall. It may be a while before you hear about these again but I'm confident I'll have one established even if it performs as a semi-deciduous *M. grandiflora* like Kevin's. I can live with that! ☐



Donna & Duff Evers were presented with an ARHS Tray in recognition of their work with the Club Plant Sales. [Photo Chris Helleiner]

## A Garden Built On The Rock Of Bedford

By Shirley MacIntyre



[Photos by Shirley MacIntyre]

Before moving to Halifax I lived in the Annapolis Valley, in Port Williams and outside Kentville. I didn't realize until I moved to Bedford how lucky I had been to have gardened where there is a good soil depth. Soil is the foundation of gardening. It was no big deal to dig up a new area for a flower bed or vegetable garden or to dig a hole to plant a tree.

I bought my home in Bedford in 1993, five years after it was built in an area that had been natural, with trees on rock, I first saw my home in a winter where there was deep snow. By summer I realized I had a long narrow lot with grass and a huge natural rock mass at the back. This rock mass had the only landscaping with three shrubs. I remember thinking that you can't do anything with a narrow lot, with grass abutting my neighbors grass on either side. I had been used to acreage in the Valley where what your neighbor did didn't matter. Fortunately for me a group venture was starting which proved very educational and beneficial to me. It was known as the Residential Naturalization Network and was co-ordinated by a member of the Sackville Rivers Association. Emphasis was on the natural approach to managing your land and in what you grew. We began with a full day of hearing talks by experts. We met weekly at a different member's home, also having an expert to speak on a specific topic. There was an expert who had been involved in experimental turf growing near St. Mary's University, without pesticides and herbicides. This was in 1993, before the No Pesticide law was in effect. Jeff Morton, who was involved in experimental work with propagating native plants for the landscape business was another. We learned about soil, plants and composting

My first focus was my lawn, which remains a challenge with its shallow soil depth, sometimes rocks only two to three inches below the grass, and lawns abutting my neighbors. Those on one side used all the chemicals going to care for their lawn. I didn't want to do that.

I'd always had a vegetable garden, so decided that the low area at the back, below my rock would be a good location. I edged the area with railway ties and bought a truckload of soil. It was easy to unload because the lot behind didn't have a lawn. My vegetable garden produced lovely large sized produce the first few years when my neighbors' maple trees were young things. After about twelve years the maple trees grew to a size that was a

detriment to my garden; too much shade and taking nutrients from the soil. Sometimes now I wonder why I bother with it, much as I want my veggies, fresh from the garden.

I have mentioned the large natural rock with three shrubs at the back. So I decided that was a good place for a rock garden. In 1996, I gave the juniper tree to a neighbor behind me, leaving two spirea. The rock garden has gone through various types or styles of plants providing me with colorful shows, especially in May and June. My most recent interest has been alpine plants, which I am trying to establish in part of the rock area. I changed the soil to a sandy mix suggested for alpins. The survival rate of the plants is challenging.

By the autumn of 1996 I wanted a perennial bed, so probed the soil depth above the rock which led to the choice of creating a bed by my property boundary. This meant buying another load of soil. That area has expanded a few times. I've enjoyed working on getting plants that bloom throughout the gardening year.

At the front in 1994 I dug up a small area for annuals, once again challenged by rocks. Then in 2002 I did a major overhaul, changing the bed to one for acid-loving plants. More soil was needed plus lots of peat moss which I soak in hot water (it's supposed to hold the moisture better if you do this) Then the bed was planted with *Pieris japonica*, heaths, heathers and rhododendrons plus some spring flowering bulbs.

By 1995 I was getting braver and realized I could dig up an area to make another bed. These digs were always a challenge. I never knew what size rocks I would find underneath. Thank goodness there was still woods across the road which was the ideal place to dump rocks and stones.

1999 time to dig again, another small bed which I edged with a rock wall. This has a variety of plantings including a peony.

In 2002 after redoing the bed at the front I also dug up and removed shrubs from a bed at the front of the house. That close to the house I didn't expect so many rocks, but they were there, especially one large one. Again this is an area for acid-loving plants so it got the treatment of additions of soil plus the peat before planting to pieris and heath and heathers.

All this time I'd been wanting raspberries, so in 2006 after seeing other people with just a few canes I had a grandson build a raised bed at the side of my house. Now I can enjoy some fresh raspberries, a change from my Valley days when we had long rows of berries and froze and even sold some.

Some wildflowers, such as Dutchman's breeches, violets, nodding trilliums and bloodroot have been tucked in here and there in a suitable habitat.

While my garden is small, in my senior years, it is enough. It gives me a lot of pleasure and is a good excuse to get outdoors. ☐

# Placing Rhododendrons in your Garden

By Jenny Sandison

We all end up sooner or later exiting the garden centre with a plant we have fallen for. Then we spend quite a lot of time wandering around our yard trying to find a place to plant it. The poor thing often lies neglected in a corner, and it may be weeks before, in desperation, we shovel it in somewhere and several years later find we have developed a negative attitude to the same plant. It wasn't the plant's fault!

## General

Most plants these days come with a label which states the height and width of the plant at maturity. That lovely little leafy thing will grow, sometimes startlingly well and vigorously. Even the height and width on the label is an approximation, probably what the plant may look like in ten years. But remember it will actually get bigger than that! I have had Rhododendron 'Mist Maiden' in the front yard and it is a perfect 3 ft. by 3 ft. However I was amazed to see one at Dick Steele's at Boulderwood, probably forty years old, which was 10 ft. by 10 ft. Oh well, mine will just have to take over that side of the yard, but I won't be here to see it. More on that later.

The important thing is to consider the position of your windows and doors, and overhead lines and cables.

Also we always stress that rhododendrons are an enormous family. All our rhododendrons originated from wild plants. These wild plants have evolved to take advantage of some niche in nature. Some plants come from mountain tops with lots of sun, lots of wind and not a lot of moisture. Some come from misty cool valleys under the shade of larger trees. In order for the plant to be successful in your garden it needs to have these considerations at least thought about.

Rhododendrons with small leaves can generally stand sun and not a lot of moisture. Those with large leaves need some shade and more moisture. Deciduous azaleas need sun. If you keep those basic principles in mind you won't go far wrong.

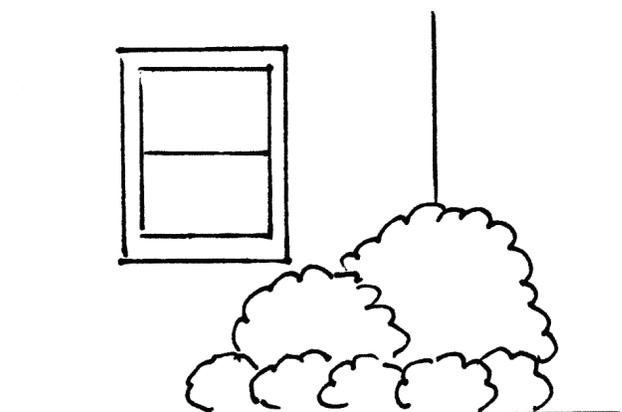
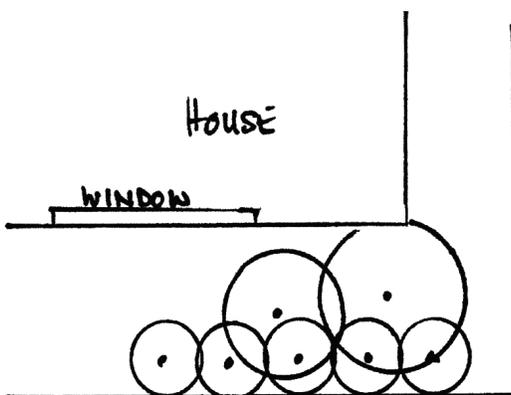
## Design

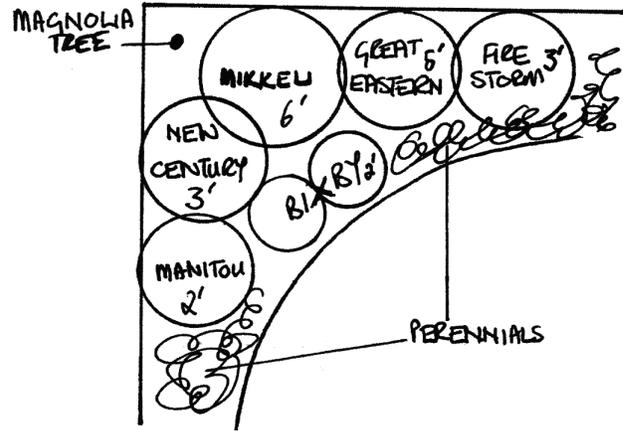
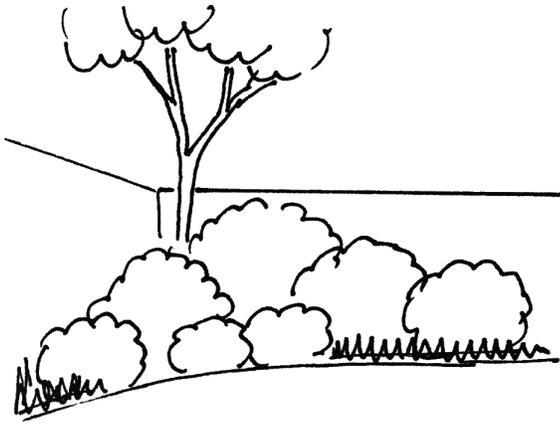
Rather than just spacing plants down a flower bed, think about creating some groupings. The easiest to plan is a group that includes large/medium/small. Here you plant the largest growing plant towards the back. A medium sized one to the side and forward, and the smallest at the front and you might have several of them. A diagram makes this easier to understand.

The back rhodie might be 'Chatterbee', the medium sized one 'Boulderwood Blue' and the smaller ones at the front, the evergreen azalea 'Mangetsu'. They could also be five of *Leucothoe* 'Scarletta'. Note how this idea calls for more of the smaller ones. The *Leucothoe* is especially effective at providing a wider "skirt" that visually places the taller plants on a wider base.

Other things you should consider here are

– the position of the window. By placing the tallest plant off to the side things should be all right.





- how far apart. Remember the eventual size of the plants and give them the space. There will be a lot of space between the plants at first but you can put in some perennials or annuals to start. Later on the plants will grow together but that is good.
- exposure. If this side of the house is south-facing this planting will not work as most of the plants need some shade. This is for east or west-facing.
- overhang. Most houses have a roof that overhangs the bed underneath. This prevents a lot of the rain wetting the ground. Plant outside of the overhang. If the overhang is considerable you will have to reconsider what to do.
- watering. It is always good to water occasionally the first year while plants are growing a larger root system. Mulch will help to conserve water. Eventually the plants will not need more water.

Another area we can consider is a corner of the garden. This is an ideal place for a tree that will have the space to grow and will be indirectly part of the other gardens that back onto the area. The tree will provide some shade at its base and less shade further away from the trunk. Here we might plant *Magnolia* 'Galaxy' in the corner and a grouping of different rhododendrons, paying attention to their size as indicated, to create a leafy corner under it. You may need to prune off lower branches of the magnolia as it grows, to keep the space open for other shrubs. Always prune magnolias in midsummer. Keep the edge of the grass a gentle curve and you will find lots of space to add perennials to this corner and the person who mows will find it easy to whip around the front.

Groupings are a good way to think about a new area. If you put several groups together within a large flower bed you will create an interesting arrangement. Use different shrubs and flowers and consider the shade patterns where you are planting them. In large properties we often incorporate island beds, where you can walk all around the bed, and here trees add height, shrubs give substance and different sides of the bed offer different growing conditions.

### Some Other Considerations

- It's not possible to make a huge list but here are some general placement categories.
- Front of planting: Evergreen azaleas, *R. impeditum*, 'Patty Bee', 'Steele's Late and Lovely'
  - Mid-planting: Yak type, 'PJM', 'Manitou', azaleas, 'Firestorm', 'Rangoon'
  - Under trees: Large leaved rhodies 'Janet Blair', 'Scintillation', etc.

After twenty years things will have changed. Pruning may become an annual necessity. Reorganization may be necessary entailing removal of some plants. This is inevitable but if you made wise choices it will not be overwhelming. Some writers point out that we change residences more frequently so this may never become your problem. Personally I feel that to actually destroy a plant after twenty years is not a crime. It may have outlived its usefulness. You have the choice to start again with the same plant or just let the planting fill in. Many times I am asked if a plant can be moved. The answer could be yes but you would have to consider the amount of effort required and the time and money this may entail. ☺

## **Captain R. M. Steele, C.M. A Tribute in Perpetuity**

Captain Steele loved plants. He believed in beauty as an antidote to ignorance and evil. To him the making of a garden is all about the future; he believed gardens were a civilizing force in a chaotic world.

The Captain Steele Fellowship in Horticulture is being established to celebrate his life and work as one of the great plantsmen of his generation. His passion for ericaceous plants and their allies led him to become a plant collector and internationally renowned hybridizer of rhododendrons and magnolias. At the same time his research trials dealing with hardiness extended the list of plants that can be successfully grown in the Maritime provinces. Many of these plants have become mainstays in the nursery trade and indeed, our gardens.

Fortunately his contribution was acknowledged during his life time with many awards including the ARS Gold Metal and ultimately honoured in 2004 by his appointment to the Order of Canada.

Captain Steele was a natural teacher, eager to share his knowledge and enthusiasm. Along with Leslie Hancock and a few other Ontarians, he founded the Rhododendron Society of Canada during the early 1970's. He began our local chapter with fewer than 15 members and it has grown to over 250. It is easy to forget his enormous impact on our Society and our gardens. (1.)

A group of friends, admirers and acolytes have established the Steele Endowment at the Nova Scotia Agricultural college in Truro to honour his memory. The goal for this year is to raise \$25,000 minimum which will produce a \$1,000 Fellowship annually. If the Steele Endowment can ultimately reach \$125,000 we will be able to award \$5,000 annually and really make a huge impact on the lives of the recipients.

The goal sounds aggressive but as a recently retired academic, I am distressed at the debt many young graduates are carrying, some as much as the ultimate goal for this endowment! We are confident his admirers will support this project where their gifts to the Steele Endowment are guaranteed to be used to benefit exceptional students for generations to come. Endowed awards also create the chance a member of a contributor's family just might be the one to earn it, 10, 20 or 100 years from now!

This project allows his friends, students, admirers and family, for that matter, to celebrate his life by building a legacy, the Steele Endowment to fund a Fellowship in Horticulture which will bear his name. His hybrids are currently being collected for posterity by the VanDusen Botanical Garden, Vancouver; similarly, this endowment will celebrate his horticultural achievements in perpetuity.

The Fellowship will be awarded to a graduating student for post graduate study and research. The emphasis is placed on developing an advanced level of plantsmanship. Ideally, the student would be accepted as an Intern at a botanical garden, such as the Royal Botanical Garden, Hamilton or the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard. (2). As much as he respected basic research, Captain Steele's interest centered on living plants and their use in the landscape as opposed to molecular theory.

The Steele Endowment has been set up at the Development Office of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College. To that end, we are delighted that almost 1/3 of this years goal has already been committed by a nucleus of generous donors..

A pledge card (3). is included with a 'ssae' to facilitate your participation for the Captain R.M.Steele Endowment. It's Spring and a busy time of year, but please reserve a place among the causes you support to honour the memory of our respected friend and mentor.

**Walter Ostrom, C.M.** [wostrom@hotmail.com](mailto:wostrom@hotmail.com)

**Gwen Romanes** [romanesg@eastlink.ca](mailto:romanesg@eastlink.ca)

Footnotes:

(1). *Obituary, John Weagle* [http://atlanticrhodo.org/hybrids/Steele/Cpt\\_Richard\\_Steele\\_Tribute.hotmail](http://atlanticrhodo.org/hybrids/Steele/Cpt_Richard_Steele_Tribute.hotmail)

(2) *Kevin Burgess* [http://alumni.columbusstate.edu/FOCUS\\_Fall09.pdf](http://alumni.columbusstate.edu/FOCUS_Fall09.pdf)

(3). *TAX DEDUCTIBLE*

## Book Review

### **Plants from the Edge of the World – New Explorations in the Far East.**

**By Mark Flanagan and Tony Kirkham, Timber Press, 2005, 312 pages, \$54.95**

During the night of October 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>, 1987, a violent storm hit southern England. It caused tremendous damage, more than any storm in 250 years, it is thought. Among the victims were the Royal Botanic Garden Kew and its satellite outpost, the arboretum at Wakehurst Place. Trees which had been growing for centuries were uprooted, the gardens devastated. It was clear that major efforts would have to be made to restore these historic sites by planting replacement trees. This provided opportunities for improving the arboreta. For one thing, it was discovered that the root systems of even the biggest trees were not nearly as deep as had been thought. There was therefore no point in preparing very deep holes for new trees. And it had long been apparent that the origins of many of the old trees were often unknown. By starting over, the directors of the gardens could provide a scientifically valid description of every new tree.

This makes the starting point of this book. The authors were sent to collect seed, mainly of woody plants, from the richly diverse areas of eastern Asia, the “Temperate Loop”. In the autumn of 1989, they explored Korea. Further expeditions went to Taiwan (1992), eastern Russia, including Sakhalin Island (1993), and Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan (1997). A day-by-day account of these trips tells about the scenery, the people, the lodgings, the food, the comforts and discomforts (mosquitoes!) they encountered. Of course, botanical work was foremost in the authors’ minds. Each seed collection was meticulously recorded and herbarium specimens obtained to provide accurate identifications of the plants. A great deal of effort was devoted to cleaning the seeds to ensure their continuing viability. All this is illustrated with photographs and maps of the regions visited.

In the final chapter, the authors visited Kew in the summer of 2000. The garden’s experts had successfully germinated many of the seeds, and were growing them into mature plants. The plants from the 1989 Korean expedition were growing vigorously, in some cases already fruiting, but those from Hokkaido were still in greenhouses. In all, the authors had contributed 1223 accessions to the Kew plant database, comprising 426 species and varieties. As they say, they felt justifiably proud of their achievement.□

– Chris Helleiner



*Stylophorum diphyllum* one of the early “Wood Poppies” [Photo Sterling Levy]

# The Stratford Way Park

**By Therese Delorme**

*The Stratford Way Park is located on Stratford Way, off Lacewood Drive, near the Keshen Goodman Library. Therese Delorme, Parkland Planner for HRM, has asked ARHS to help with rhodo plantings in the park. The material below is provided by Therese.*

## Concept

This park is an active-passive park which also hosts the Memorial Garden for the South Korean war veterans. The active area is comprised of a playground, basketball court and a future outdoor gym. The passive area features the Memorial Garden, gazebo and pergola, park furniture, special gardens such as the tai chi lawn, the rose garden, the butterfly garden and others.

## A Bit of History

The development of this park started in 1998 with the installation of the playground and basketball court. Then in 2004 funds became available to install a fence along the very deep ditch and spread a 30 cm layer of soil over the stone base of the park. In 2006, the Memorial Garden for the South Korean war veterans was started. This garden will be completed in the last phase. The Nova Scotia Association of South Korea fundraised locally, nationally and internationally for this park and provided \$47,000 for its construction.

In 2008 the lighting system was installed along with an electrical plug-in system for use during activities and ceremonies.

Now, in 2011, the park will become live with the construction of the paths, garden beds, pergola, park furniture, patios and outdoor gym. We are also hopeful that efforts to include art forms in the park will be successful.

## Design Guidelines

This park is accessible, designed for the enjoyment of all visitors from children to adults and seniors. Active areas pay attention to the needs of all age groups. The passive area invites visitors for a stroll in the park among the plants. For example, the rose garden is designed in a series of rose groupings. These groupings are creating a maze. The crushstone surface around the rose groupings not only keeps the area easily maintained but provides paths to walk around the roses. The visitor will have the possibility to touch, smell, walk from one rose bush to another. A park table is set in the garden for rest.

The tai chi lawn is located at the farthest corner 350 feet away from the active space.

The different gardens and patios are linked by secondary paths accessed off the main path and go into the heart of the gardens. Fifteen tables and benches are spread in the different gardens and placed in the sun or shade in active or passive areas. Lighting extends to visiting time until 11:00 p.m. all year.

## Choice of Plants

The choice of plants is meant to bring all season interest. They are also chosen for their hardiness and easy maintenance. What makes a plant easily maintained is as much its companion planting as the intrinsic characteristics of the plant. The fact that the plants are grouped in theme gardens presents an opportunity to control the type of soil need for specific plants.

Safety is the key and it is part of the planning and concept. For example, strategic placement such as beds with standard lilacs, hydrangea, creeping junipers as ground covers, will ensure that there is visibility of the park through the vegetation from the street and beyond the playground.

A limited variety of shrubs was chosen to maintain a balanced look, yet provide all season interest.

**Rhododendrons are placed all over the park but most of them are grouped for better design efficacy and maintenance.**

## Maintenance

Special attention is spent on reducing the maintenance needs of such a park throughout the season and as years pass by. This is done through the choice of plants and their placement, the quality of the soil and the design of different gardens. The soil quality will be controlled to avoid the introduction of weeds through the use of contaminated composts. Soils will be mixed for special needs of plant groupings.

Stones that have been reserved from the installation of the light system will be placed along the fence to create a definite framework and barrier that will assist in controlling weeds that could migrate through the root zone from the adjacent property. A filter fabric will line the back portion of the bottom of the bed between the stone and the growing medium. In all garden beds, ground cover plants will control the weeds. These ground covers are chosen for their aggressive growth, the compatibility of their root zone with other plants and their aesthetic value. (Bishop weed [goutweed] is not acceptable.)

Another example: sunchoke (topinambour), Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*), sage (*Salvia*) and others whose growth habit is aggressive enough to control weeds will be used in groupings to hedge the fence.

### **Construction and Planting**

The tender for the construction of all beds, paths, park furniture, pergola will be let mid March. The construction is scheduled for May and will last about three weeks. The trees will be planted and maintained by the HRM arboriculture services.

### **Working with the ARHS**

It has been a few years now that plans of working with the Society were initiated. I am happy to say that the project is now ready to be undertaken. We at the municipality are happy for the initiative. I am looking forward to this cooperation and I am sure that I will have fun with you through it. This garden is a live template and can welcome your suggestions and views as they do correspond with the framework I tried to explain above.

The members are also welcome to suggest other plants that they would like to see planted in the garden. As mentioned, the actual plan provides a frame to which 'star' plants can be added. There is also much space for choosing and planting perennials and ground covers. This part of the concept has been left vacant purposely. We want your input for cultivars etc.

It is now time to organize our meetings to see this project happening.

Contact Therese Delorme at [delormt@halifax.ca](mailto:delormt@halifax.ca) ☐



*Anemone blanda*. [Photo Sterling Levy]

# Photo Album -



*Cypripedium 'Gisela'*. [Photo Roslyn Duffus]



*Athyrium x 'Ghost'*. [Photo Roslyn Duffus]



*Corylopsis pauciflora*. [Photo Sterling Levy]



'Steele's Late and Lovely'. [Photo Chris Helleiner]



'Wintonbury'. [Photo Chris Helleiner]



'Pohjola's Daughter'. [Photo Chris Helleiner]



'Bayport 82-1'. [Photo Bob Pettipas]



'Capistrano'. [Photo Bob Pettipas]