

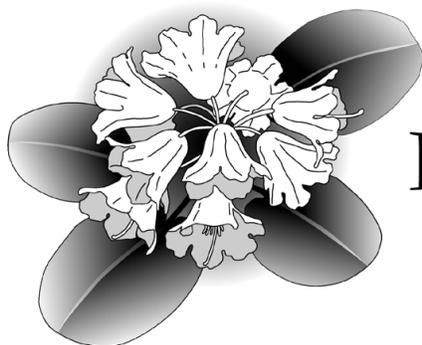
# AtlanticRhodo

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

Volume 36: Number 2

May 2012





# Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society

## Positions of Responsibility 2011 - 2012

<b>President</b>	Ruth Jackson	454-4681	<b>Director - Horticulture</b>	Audrey Fralic	683-2711
<b>Vice-President</b>	Cora Swinamer	826-7705	<b>Director</b>	Cora Swinamer	826-7705
<b>Secretary</b>	Susan Boyd	835-8916	<b>Director</b>	Wendy Cornwall	477-6121
<b>Treasurer</b>	Jim Drysdale	431-0223	<b>ARS Rep.</b>	Anitra Laycock	852-2502
<b>Membership</b>	Ann Drysdale	431-0223	<b>Newsletter</b>	Mary Helleiner	429-0213
<b>Past President</b>	Sheila Stevenson	479-3740	<b>Website</b>	Bob Pettipas	462-5654
<b>Director - Education</b>	Jenny Sandison	624-9013	<b>Library</b>	Jean White	477-2933
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<b>Director - Social</b>	Ralph Pineau	454-9056	<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, 2011 to August 31, 2012, due September 2011. 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: *Lewisia tweedyi* - [Photo Sterling Levy]



## 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.

<b>Tuesday March 6</b>	<b>Jeff Chown</b>
<b>Tuesday April 3</b>	<b>Sheila Stevenson and Stephen Archibald</b>
<b>Saturday April 28</b>	<b>9:00 a.m. Outreach at Stratford Way.</b> See Outreach article.
<b>Tuesday May 1</b>	<b>Members' Plant Sale.</b> See Special Notices.
<b>Saturday May 5</b>	<b>Pickup for Members' Pre-ordered Plant Sale.</b> See Special Notices
<b>Saturday May 1</b>	<b>Public Sale 1:00 to 3:30 p.m.</b> See Special Notices
<b>Saturday June 2</b>	<b>Annual gardens tour and potluck,</b> Annapolis Royal. 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.

**Dorothy Bennett**  
**Darwin Carr**  
**Anita Coady**  
**Chris Field**  
**Susan Grund**  
**Donna & John Murray**  
**Jackie Shields**

**Hammonds Plains, NS**  
**Old Barns, NS**  
**Margaree Forks,, NSS**  
**Halifax. NS**  
**Glen Margaret, NS**  
**Liverpool, NS**  
**Berwick NS**

# American Rhododendron Society - Bronze Medal Citations

## 1. John Weagle

The Atlantic Chapter of ARS is proud to honour John Weagle with the ARS Bronze Medal, the highest commendation a local Chapter can award. John is a consummate plantsman and a life member of the Atlantic Chapter of the Rhododendron Society of Canada. For more than thirty years, he has been instrumental in introducing a diverse range of new plant materials to Atlantic Canadian gardeners.

John is well known and respected, both across North America, and in Europe and beyond, for his hybridizing work, and for the many excellent talks he has presented over the years. He is currently also a member of the ARS Seed Exchange Committee.

John's contributions to our local Chapter have been immeasurable, ranging across all of our activities. Chapter members at every level, from beginner to more experienced, continue to benefit from the enthusiasm and generosity with which John shares his immense expertise. In addition to all that he has personally contributed, he has also been indefatigable in bringing in outside experts from around the world, with a consequent influx of new ideas and new horticultural potential for our region. In recognition and appreciation of all John's contributions, and for the willingness with which he shares with others his knowledge and enthusiasm for the genus rhododendron and its congeners, this Bronze Medal is a token of our appreciation.

## 2. Bob Pettipas

It is with great pleasure that the Atlantic Chapter awards the ARS Bronze Medal, to Bob Pettipas. For more than 20 years, Bob has been instrumental to the success of our Chapter. He was involved from the earliest days in tissue culture plant sales, and still plays a key role behind the scenes today. He was also for many years the organizer of the Society's annual flower show. Bob has been a consistent promoter of the genus rhododendron, and of the importance of keeping records of successful plant introductions to our region. As the current manager of our website, he has contributed much valuable information for all to share. In recognition and appreciation of Bob's contributions in so many areas, and for the readiness with which he shares with others his knowledge and enthusiasm for the genus rhododendron, the Atlantic Chapter presents him with the highest honour that a local ARS Chapter can bestow on one of its members. ☐

## Outreach

### By Chris Hopgood

The Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society has shared the knowledge and physical labour of its members in order to spread the beauty of rhododendrons, azaleas and other plants to the community in which we live.

This has been evidenced in past years with trips to the Kentville Research Station, to the Meagher garden at Regatta Point and the latest project with the Halifax Regional Municipality at Stratford Way Park. Before Stratford our work was routine weeding, pruning and garden maintenance with a few plants donated by Audrey Fralic at the Meagher garden; at Stratford it was donation and installation of a good number of plants at a specific area of that garden. This activity was reported by Jenny Sandison in the February 2012 edition of AtlanticRhodo.

The major work has been done by about twelve members of the Society so this year it is our job to return to Stratford Way to see how the plants fared over the winter, do normal spring work, weeding, cleaning up and pruning if necessary.

The date of Saturday April 28 has been set for this effort. The time will be 9:30 a.m., so bring the usual equipment, rakes, pruners, gloves and perhaps a few can bring shovels and forks.

If we have time, it would be useful to check out the Meagher garden as well, since HRM workers did a thorough job on this garden in late summer 2011. It is not expected that much will need to be done there this year.

If you are interested in being a part of the work party, please email Chris Hopgood at [rhodohop@hotmail.com](mailto:rhodohop@hotmail.com).

Happy pruning. ☐

# Special Notices

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## **Members' Plant Sale May Meeting, Tuesday May 1, 7:30 p.m. LeMarchant-St. Thomas School, 6141 Watt St., Halifax**

To buy or sell you must be a paid up member. Plants should be unusual or difficult to grow. Please donate any of the more common plants to the Public Sale.

In addition to individual tables for large growers, there will be a Society mixed table where members can place a few plants to be sold. Each plant must have 2 labels—one with the plant name, and one with your name and the price. This is so we can give you your money after the sale. Please bring your plants by 7:00 p.m. Contact Sheila Stevenson if you plan to sell. [sheilastevenson17@gmail.com](mailto:sheilastevenson17@gmail.com)

The metal plant tags members have been asking for will be available at this sale.

## **Plant Pickup, Pre-ordered Sale for Members Saturday May 5**

Plants are to be picked up at 5 Sime Court, Halifax, between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Sime Court is in the Kingswood subdivision off the Hammonds Plains road. Take Kingswood Drive (between the Kearney Lake road and Farmer Clem's) to Brenda Drive (the first street on the right) and follow it to the first left which is Sime court. Plans 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.

**Duff and Donna specially request that members DO NOT arrive before 10:00 a.m.**

## **Public Sale, Saturday May 12 1:00 tp 3:30 p.m. LeMarchant-St. Thomas School, 6141 Watt Street, Halifax.**

This is the ARHS's famed annual public sale, this year on the day before Mothers' Day. Nursery grown and member grown plants (rhodos, companion plants, trees) in 4 inch to 4 gallon pots. Free parking, knowledgeable gardeners to answer questions. Descriptive list of nursery grown plants. Contact Donna Evers, 902-835-2586, [devers@eastlink.ca](mailto:devers@eastlink.ca).

## **Programmes for the Fall**

**September:** Nick Turland, Associate Curator of the Missouri Botanic Garden is coming in connection with the North American Rock Garden Society. He will speak in Truro and Halifax on "Botanical Field Work in China" and "Alpine Plants of the Austrian Alps." We share this with the NS Rock Garden Club.

**September:** a workparty/workshop at Wendy Cornwall's mature garden near Purcell's Cove.

**October 2:** Steele Lecture with primula expert Pam Everleigh.

**November 6:** Bruce Clyburn of New Waterford will speak on his rhodo hybridizing.

**December 4:** Christmas party and members' slide night.

## **Looking for an Editor**

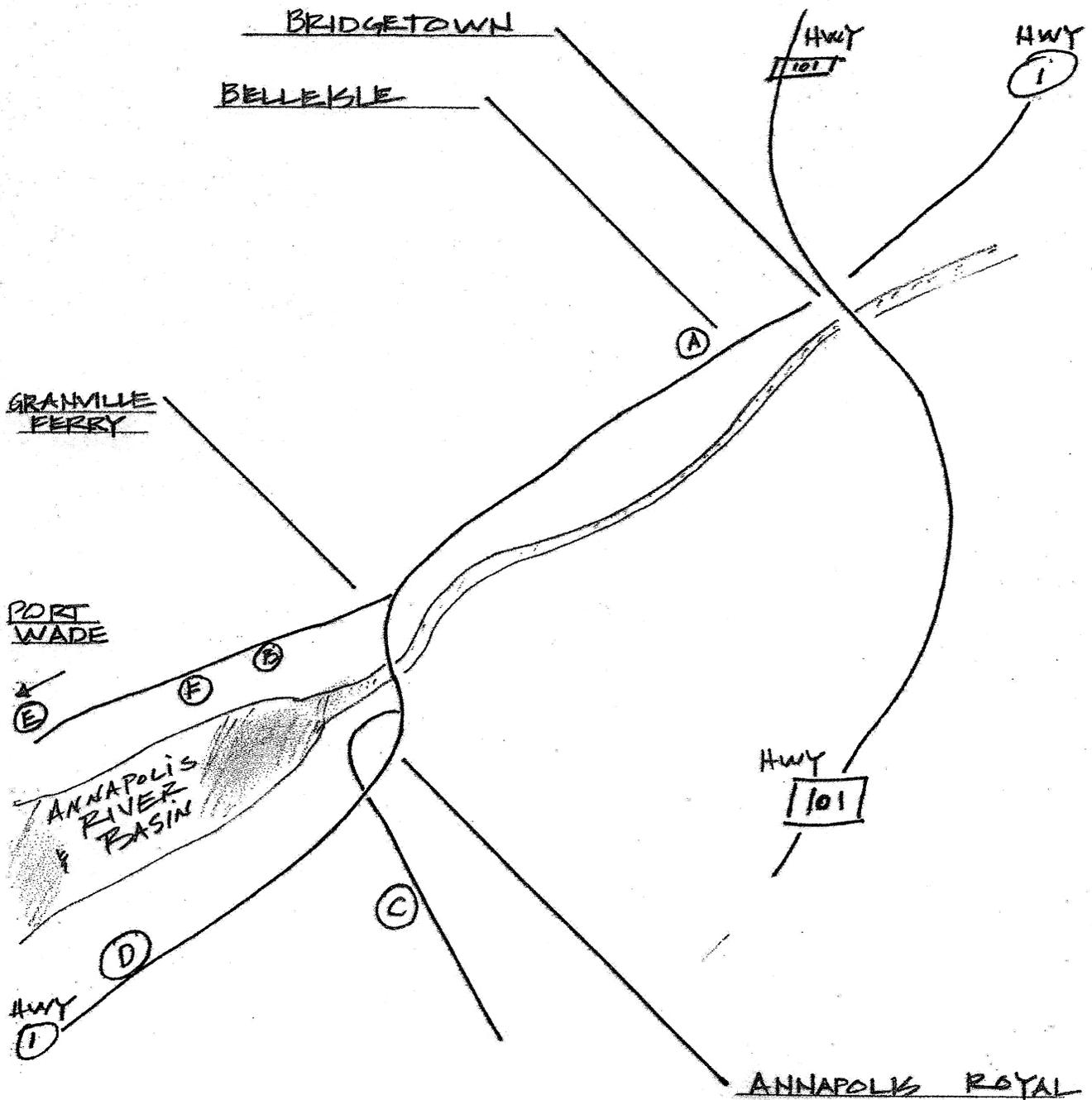
We need a new editor for AtlanticRhodo starting with the October 2012 issue.

The editor finds information about ARHS activities, commissions articles, finds some photos, edits the material, sends it to Sterling Levy who does the layout, then takes his disk to the printers, and, with help, carries out the mailing.

Unless someone comes forward, we may not have AtlanticRhodo any longer.

If you are interested, contact Ruth Jackson or Sheila Stevenson.

# ARHS Gardens Tour, June 2, Annapolis Royal Area



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- (A) SHARON & STEVE HAWBOLDT
  - (B) MARIANNE LAWRENCE
  - (C) ANNAPOLIS ROYAL HISTORIC GARDENS
  - (D) JILL COVILL, PLUNCHBERRY
  - (E) LORRAINE BESWICK
  - (F) BOB & DESSIE HOWARD

# ARHS Gardens Tour, June 2, Annapolis Royal Area

## 10:00am – 12:00 noon

**A. Directions:** From Halifax and up the Valley, take Hwy #101 west to Bridgetown. Exit and turn right onto Hwy #1, and go west to Belleisle. **6601 Hwy #1**. On the right, or North Mtn side.

**Sharon and Steve Hawboldt** are gradually converting the overgrown fields around their home in Belleisle into habitat more attractive to both wildlife and gardeners. Their informal gardens are planted in heavy clay soils on a south facing slope overlooking their pond and the Annapolis River.

**B. Directions:** Continue west on Hwy #1 to Granville Ferry. Turn right onto Granville Road and drive through the village of Granville Ferry to **5092 Granville Road**, on the left.

**Marianne Lawrence** gardens on a 7 1/4 acre property on the northerly shore of the Annapolis River English Basin in a north-south orientation sloping down to marshlands at the water's edge. Gardens surround the house, with a Japanese woodland style garden and pond in the back yard filled with rhodos, azaleas, Japanese maples, unusual shrubs and evergreens, vines, hostas and other perennials.

## 12:00 noon – 3:00 pm

**C. Directions:** Go back east through Granville Ferry. Turn right onto Hwy #1. Cross the causeway into Annapolis Royal. Continue to the first stoplight. Turn left onto St. George Street. The Gardens have a large sign on the right at **441 St. George Street**. Parking in front of the Gardens and across the street.

The **Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens**, designed and created in the early 1980's, sit on 17 acres, overlooking marshland. With over 1800 species and cultivars, the Historic Gardens offer an extensive horticultural landscape displayed in historical themes and as aesthetic collections. We will be hosted by **Karen Achenbach**, the Gardens' horticultural manager. Lunch will be catered for those who pay in advance. Website: <http://www.historicgardens.com/>

## 3:00 – 5:00 pm

**D. Directions:** Go back to the one and only light in town and turn left back onto Hwy #1. Continue west toward Upper Clements. There is a **Bunchberry Nursery** sign on the right side of the road at **2779 Hwy #1**.

**Jill Covill** at Bunchberry Nursery has the most inspiring entry plantings of any nursery I know. Dwarf rhodos, dwarf conifers, magnolias, heaths and more in artistic groupings that make me want to copy the look in my own garden. The nursery should be well-stocked by early June, so you might do a little plant shopping as well. Website: [Bunchberry Nurseries.ca](http://www.bunchberrynurseries.ca)

**E. Directions:** Return on Hwy #1 to Annapolis Royal and continue through that same light (when green) to Granville Ferry. Turn left on Granville Road and go through Granville Ferry and all the way west to Karsdale (approx 15 km). **2875 Granville Road** is on the right.

**Lorraine Beswick** has gardened, imagined and made art in this garden for over twenty years. Two acres surround an 1800s farmhouse with mixed borders. This is a working garden of a florist, collector and teacher. Website: <http://www.beswickflowers.ca/>

## 5:00pm

**F. Directions:** Return east toward Granville Ferry to **4690 Granville Road**, on the left. Potluck at **Bob and Dessie Howard's**, a new property for us, looking for garden ideas.

## **Reserve Your Lunch**

Sign up now to reserve a lunch and entry fee at the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens.

A catered lunch is available only to those who sign up in advance (\$10.00 - until May 20). Lunch includes a good-sized sandwich from Leo's Café (meat and vegetable available), ½ brownie or cookie and a drink (water and soda available). If you prepay your Historic Gardens entry fee (\$8.63) also that will make things simple.

Please make cheque for \$18.63 to ARHS and mail c/o Bob Howard, 4690 Granville Road, Granville Beach NS, B0S1K0.

If you have any questions email Bob Howard [mayflowergardens@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:mayflowergardens@ns.sympatico.ca)

## Plant Portraits

### Two New Hellebores

I bought 'Pink Frost' a year ago, and it is now (late March) blooming in the garden for the first time. In the catalogues it is listed as *Helleborus x ballardiae* 'Pink Frost'. *H. x ballardiae* is a hybrid of *H. lividus*, a rare tender species native to Majorca, and *H. niger*, our familiar hardy Christmas rose. Helen Ballard, after whom it is named, was a famous British hellebore hybridist.

'Pink Frost' has flowers which open white, with a rose-washed reverse, but which steadily become pinker (actually more like rose) as they age, ultimately becoming a deep salmon. 'Frost', to me, seems inappropriate. There is nothing frosty about them, and the leaves, which resemble the Christmas rose, are pretty much solid green. Like most hellebores, the flowers on 'Pink Frost' are long lasting. Whether the plants are hardy is unknown: this was such a strange mild winter that they were not tested. The buds started to appear in late fall, like most hellebores, and I covered them with damp peat moss and fir branches, but this was probably unnecessary this year. These plants seem to be successful in sun or part shade, but probably need fairly moist soil. Sometimes a little lime helps.

*H. x ballardiae* 'Cinnamon Snow', which the ARHS is bringing in this year for members, comes from the same parents, but instead of rose/salmon, the pink colour has a cinnamon shading. Both 'Pink Frost' and 'Cinnamon Snow' are sterile and are produced by tissue culture.

'Snow White' is another new hellebore which we are growing for the first time. It is a hybrid of two old favourites, *H. hybridus*, the Lenten rose, at one time known as *Orientalis* hybrids, and *H. niger*, the Christmas rose. Hybridizers tried for years to make this cross without success, until a bee managed to do it in a Japanese nursery. The flower is white, with a faint pink wash on the reverse, on a straight stem about eight inches high, and faces out, unlike its parents. If it turns out to be one of the few hellebores that will survive in water, it will make a good cut flower. This plant too is sterile and is a tissue culture product.

- Mary Helleiner

### *Shortia uniflora* (Nippon Bells)

This is a rare and beautiful Japanese plant. I was lucky enough to get one three years ago, grown from seed by John Weagle. If you happen to know *Soldanella*, this looks like a huge pink *Soldanella* with its graceful fringed bells. It has round shiny green leaves, flat to the ground and is more or less evergreen. I was told that what it wanted was rotten wood, so it was planted in a mixture of compost and rotted wood, and mulched with more rotten wood.

It is growing in the high shade of a tall witch hazel which has been limbed up to let in more light, with the result that it gets a few hours of sun in the spring, and dappled shade the rest of the time. When we have a dry spell it is watered. Each year it has increased in size, and last spring produced three exquisite flowers. Part shade and dampish acid soil seem to be what it requires.

There are several other species of *Shortia*, mostly Asiatic, but one North American, *Shortia galacifolia* (Oconee Bells) a rare plant of the southern Appalachians. It also said to be growable, and to be equally stunning, with white instead of pink flowers. Both shortias can be grown from seed, with difficulty.

- Mary Helleiner.

## Plant Portraits

### *Sanguinaria canadense* (Bloodroot)

Bloodroot is one of the loveliest of Nova Scotia native wildflowers. It is not found on the Atlantic side of the province, but in richer soil areas like the Annapolis Valley or Cape Breton. The flower, which has eight or so petals, appears wrapped in its gray-mauve leaf, and usually lasts only a day or so, less if the weather is bad. The roots, if severed, ooze a blood red sap. Some shade and nice humusy soil are the requirements. Eventually, like all the spring ephemerals, it disappears later in the summer, only to reappear, increased, very early in the spring.

Double bloodroots have been around for a long time, and they are, in their way, almost as stunning as the singles. The flowers last much better in the garden, sometimes for a week or so. They are strong growers, unlike the double forms of some plants, and a clump of the white doubles makes a real splash in the shade. They can be divided every few years, since they make ever larger clumps. They are not even prohibitively expensive, in contrast to double trilliums or hepaticas.

There is a rumour of pink or pinkish bloodroots: I have not managed to find one yet. ☐

- Mary Helleiner.



*Sanguinaria canadense*. [Photo Chris Helleiner]



*Sanguinaria canadense* double form. [Photo Sterling Levy]

# Growing Lewisias – Worth the effort

By Sterling Levy

Lewisia is a genus of about 20 species native to the mountains and high altitude plains of Western North America. The name commemorates Merriweather Lewis of the famed Lewis and Clark exploration team. He collected specimens of a plant at a site near the Bitterroot River, Montana in 1806. The plant he collected was subsequently named *Lewisia rediviva*, commonly known as bitterroot. The roots were used as food by the native people and were boiled to reduce the bitter taste.

I saw my first live plant in John Weagle's garden over 30 years ago. It was a *Lewisia cotyledon*, growing happily in a stone wall. Prior to this I had only see photos in cactus and succulent literature.

I subsequently obtained plants by mail order and planted them in my garden retaining walls. The standard growing advice was to plant them in the side of a vertical wall to ensure maximum drainage. These first efforts were not exactly a rousing success. Plants survived for a winter or two but never bloomed; likely, they were too shaded. They eventually turned to mush and disappeared.

At that time, most of the cultural information on growing Lewisias was from British gardening sources and mainly geared to pot and Alpine house culture. Drainage was pointed out as the most important concern. I did learn that they grew "easily and quickly from seed".

I soon discovered that seed was usually available from seed distribution programs of the various Rock Garden Societies. Most of my subsequent plants have been grown from seed. It is an inexpensive way to get plants for experimenting with various growing conditions.

Lewisias have adapted to life in areas that are cold in winter and dry in summer. When the plants are under snow or frozen, they are dry. They get lots of moisture from melting snow in spring to enable them to bloom and set seed. In summer, when the conditions get dry, they cope by going into a dormant state. Some are completely deciduous; they shed all of their above ground parts and wait for cooler temperatures and autumn moisture. Those types that stay evergreen stop growing and go into a sort of suspended animation until the cooler weather arrives. Excessive amounts of water while dormant can be fatal for the plants in this condition.

In their native habitat there are often heavy summer rainstorms. The humidity is very low so most of the moisture either evaporates or runs off. This allows the dormant plants to stay quite dry. They all have thick fleshy roots that act as food and moisture storage during this period.

So basically, Lewisias want to be cold and dry in the winter with lots of moisture in the spring. A dry summer followed by a bit of autumn moisture will get them ready (form feeder

roots and set flower buds) before the next winter arrives. By taking what we know about the native environment and trying to adapt our growing methods to control moisture, we can hopefully increase our chances of success.

One challenge for gardeners in our Atlantic climate, especially near the coast, is the wild fluctuations in winter temperature with the freeze/thaw cycles. This can result in a lot of moisture around the plants unless steps are taken to allow it to drain away (sloped or vertical planting sites). Wet humid summers add to the problems, allowing fungal diseases to attack or kill mature plants.

## Lewisias in the Garden:

Lewisias need good light in order to bloom well but do not want to be baked in the hot afternoon sun. An open site with morning sun works well. Some growers recommend a location with a bit of open shade from the hottest afternoon sun. But if all you have is a site in full sun then, plant them there.

Drainage is the most important feature of any planting site. Do anything you can to keep excess water away from the plant especially around the neck of the plant at the soil line. This is one of the reasons why planting on a sloped site, in rock crevices, rock walls or in raised beds is recommended. A soil mixture containing lots of coarse grit/gravel with a mulch of small stones is a good choice.

I have had some success growing *L. cotyledon* in a level raised gravel bed (60%+) but mature plants have rotted in wet summers. They just do not like being wet during the after bloom dormant rest period. I have lost as many plants during a wet summer as I have during winter. My next project is to make raised crevices in the gravel bed to see what effect it has on survival rate. If you can, planting them on a slope is the best choice.

Since the gravel soil mix may be low in nutrients, I feed the plants during the spring bloom period with a diluted (1/4 strength) liquid plant food. Any plant food will do as long as the nitrogen level is not too high. I prefer liquid feeding because it gives more control. Slow release fertilizer pellets need a specific temperature to release the nutrients but the plants may be already starting dormancy by the time this temperature is reached.

## Growing in Containers:

In an effort to increase my success rate, I decided to try growing in the more controlled environment of a container. I had a supply of Styrofoam "fish-box troughs" and a selection of seedlings so I thought I would plant them and see what developed. I used a free draining mixture of compost and pea-stone gravel (about 60% gravel) and transplanted seedlings of several species into troughs. The

troughs are kept on the edge of a covered porch with a wide overhang facing west so they get a good deal of sunlight. Occasionally in a windy storm, some rain will blow onto them, but for the most part they are quite dry unless I water them. I use the same diluted plant food as I use in the garden. The plants have thrived.

After flowering has finished, I just stop watering them until late summer (early September) when I give them water so they can get ready for winter. Of course, during a rainstorm they do occasionally get some water but not enough to cause a problem.

In the winter, they stay on the porch. I just move them back six feet next to the house where they are subjected to winter temperatures and occasionally wind blown snow or rain. Some have just finished their fifth winter under these conditions and are in excellent condition. A few troughs have self-sown seedlings.

Containers would seem to be the best way to ensure maximum success because they provide control over growing conditions. They can be displayed in the garden while the plants are in flower, and then stored somewhere else where they can be sheltered from the rain to keep them dry. In winter they can be put in a covered frame, garage or shed to keep them cold and dry.

#### **Growing from Seed:**

If you can get seed, it is an easy way to build up a supply of plants. The seed exchanges of various Rock Garden Clubs are a good source. An Internet search will provide contacts for commercial sources.

Germination is quite simple. I use a mixture of a soil-less growing mix (Pro Mix e.g.) and coarse sand. The seed needs a period of cool, moist conditions (stratification) so I usually plant the seed and set it outside in February-March with the rock garden seed pots. Keep an eye on the pots because lewisias germinate early at low temperatures, so the seedlings may get too leggy if they don't get enough light.

I usually keep them in the seed pot for the first year, with regular watering and occasional feeding with a dilute plant food. Even the seedlings of deciduous types will continue growing for most of the summer if watered regularly. Just be careful not to keep them too wet.

The young plants are usually stored in a cold frame for the first winter and planted out into the free draining gravel mix the following spring.

Here are brief descriptions of *Lewisia* species I currently grow. Other species are in the works.

#### ***Lewisia cotyledon:***

An evergreen plant, this one is the most easily obtained. As a result of breeding and seedling selection, it is available in a wide range of colours from pure white, pink, red and yellow, mostly in pastel shades.



*L. cotyledon.* Typical rosette

The flat and glossy leaves are arranged in a rosette. Clusters of flowers rise from the leaf axils. A mature, well-grown specimen in full flower will certainly attract attention. In recent years, they have become available in local garden centres. In the summer of 2011 I bought a pot containing 3 blooming plants at a local Home Depot for around \$10.00.

A word of caution, these pot grown plants are planted in a peat-based mixture which will keep the plants much too wet. Unless it is removed before planting in the garden, the plants will likely rot off by the first winter.

I usually enjoy the flowers and wait until the end of summer dormancy before doing this. After flowering just let the pot dry out. The leaves will shrivel a bit but the plant will be OK. In early September, take the plants out of the pot and carefully remove all the soil. Dip the roots into a bucket of water until all the bits of peat are gone. Let them dry and then plant where they are to grow. The new soil should be slightly moist. The moisture will encourage feeder roots to quickly form. When the leaves start to firm up, the plants can be watered normally if they are in a container. Of course, autumn rain will do this in the garden.

#### ***Lewisia tweedyi:***



*L. tweedyi.* New Spring growth.

This one is considered the jewel of evergreen lewisias. When you see it in full flower you will want one. The flowers are large and come in pastel shades of peach, salmon and yellow. There are white ones but I have only seen photos.

*L. tweedyi* has the reputation of being the most difficult to satisfy in the garden. It is very cold tolerant but sensitive to excess moisture around the crown. After a couple of less than successful attempts in the open garden I have moved all my plants to troughs where they are doing well.

Plants are available from West Coast nurseries but are likely expensive. All of my plants have been grown from seed.

#### ***Lewisia rediviva:***

This plant was the first of the genus to be collected and is commonly known as bitterroot. It is a completely deciduous plant; it flowers, then goes dormant and disappears during the hot summer. When the weather cools and it gets some autumn rain, new growth will start again. This growth will remain during the winter. As soon as the temperature starts to warm, the leaves will elongate and another cycle begins.

The plant has thin leaves that grow in an upright cluster. Once growth has started, the plants will take lots of water but may rot if watered too early in the season (a lesson learned the hard way). If the plants are old enough (2 years?) they will form flower buds with one flower to a stem. The leaves will start to wither as the blooms open, leaving the naked flowers sitting on top of the soil.

The blooms are terrific, a silvery-pink shade, two inches or more in diameter. A mature plant will have multiple blooms making a very showy display.

#### ***Lewisia pygmaea:***

This is another deciduous species that disappears as the soil dries out. It will stay and bloom for most of the summer if kept watered. It is small plant, not at all spectacular, but there are a lot of flowers so it has a certain charm. The blooms are about half an inch in diameter. The plants I have grown have white flowers with pink markings.

I grew these in the open garden where they persisted by self-sowing. They were eventually crowded out and disappeared. There are still some seedlings in one of my troughs.



*L. rediviva* New Spring growth.

A fresh batch of seed is currently being stratified, awaiting spring germination.

#### ***Lewisia nevadensis:***

This one grew from seed that was labeled as *L. brachycalyx*. It does not match this plant's description in the literature. The most likely match is for *L. nevadensis*. It is deciduous.

It is a small tufted plant with bright green leaves and pure white flowers. The flowers are small but there are lots of them so they are showy in their own way. They are currently growing only in a trough. There are self-sown seedlings that I hope to move into the gravel bed to see how they fare in the open garden.

#### **Lewisia hybrids:**

Plant growers are busy breeding and selecting new and better plants. There are hybrids on the market that have been selected for increased tolerance of moisture and their ability to cope with garden conditions. Hopefully, they will soon become more widely available.

Meanwhile, in spite of the effort needed to grow *Lewisias* successfully, the results from these spectacular plants make the work worthwhile.

#### **Books on Lewisias:**

Most of these are out of print but likely can be found at used book stores on-line.

*Lewisias*; Roy Elliot, 1978 Alpine Garden Society

The Genus *Lewisia*; Brian Matthew, 1989 Timber Press ISBN 0-88192-158-0

Bitterroot; Jerry DeSanto, 1993 ISBN 0-9637889-0-6

*Lewisias*; B. LeRoy Davidson, 2000, Timber Press ISBN 0-88192-447-4



*L. nevadensis*. New Spring growth

# Iron Clad Rhododendrons

By Ruth Jackson

You have probably heard the expression **Iron Clad** rhododendrons. Where did the term originate and exactly what plants does it refer to? The iron clad rhododendrons were hybridized by Anthony Waterer in Britain in the 1800's for cold and heat tolerance. The iron clad hybrids are crosses of *R. caucasicum*, *R. catawbiense*, *R. ponticum* and *R. maximum*. The hybrids were tested in Boston for their ability to withstand the coldest winters at Arnold Arboretum. In 1917, Ernest Henry Wilson (Keeper of the Arnold Arboretum) published a list of what he termed were the "Iron Clad" rhododendrons, meaning those which had been planted in the Arnold Arboretum and were able to survive many winters successfully. This group included:

1. 'Album Elegans', a pale purplish pink *R. catawbiense* hybrid or selection, 6 feet or taller.
2. 'Album Grandiflorum', a pinkish white *R. catawbiense* hybrid or selection, 6 feet or taller.
3. 'Atrosanguineum', a bright red with purple markings *R. catawbiense* hybrid that grows to 4 to 6 feet.
4. 'Caractacus'\*, a magenta *R. catawbiense* hybrid.
5. 'Catawbiense Album', a pinkish white *R. catawbiense* hybrid or selection, 6 feet or taller.
6. 'Charles Dickens', a crimson red with purplish markings *R. catawbiense* hybrid.
7. 'Everestianum', a frilled purplish-pink with green markings *R. catawbiense* hybrid
8. 'Henrietta Sargent', a deep pink *R. catawbiense* hybrid, 6 feet or taller.
9. 'H. W. Sargent'\*, a crimson *R. catawbiense* hybrid.
10. 'Lady Armstrong', a deep purplish pink with red markings and pale center, *R. catawbiense* hybrid.
11. 'Mrs. Charles S. Sargent', a rose pink *R. catawbiense* hybrid, 6 feet or taller.
12. 'Purpureum Elegans', a pinkish purple *R. catawbiense* hybrid; 4 to 6 feet.
13. 'Purpureum Grandiflorum', a violet with green flecks *R. catawbiense* hybrid; 4 to 6 feet.
14. 'Roseum Elegans', a lavender pink with green markings *R. catawbiense* hybrid, 6 feet or taller.

\*Ten years later 'H. W. Sargent' and 'Caractacus' were removed from this list and it became the "Dozen Iron Clads". One unintended affect of this list is that many people assumed these were the only hardy rhododendrons. In fact, they were the hardiest of the plants imported from the Anthony Waterer firm.

Some of the original hybrids are no longer readily available. The term iron clad rhododendron, in general use, refers to plants that have the ability to prosper in cold winters and have been in cultivation for an extended period of time. A list of modern iron clads follows from Richard Murcott (for 50 years a member of the American Rhododendron Society):

1. 'Boule de Neige' a pure white with green spotting, great leaves (*caucasicum x catawbiense* hybrid), 4 to 6 feet.,
2. 'Catawbiense Album', a pinkish white *R. catawbiense* hybrid or selection, 6 feet or taller.
3. 'Catawbiense Boursalt', a lilac purple *R. catawbiense* hybrid or selection, 6 feet or taller.
4. 'English Roseum', a lilac rose with orange blotch, *R. catawbiense* hybrid, 6 feet or taller
5. 'Ignatius Sargent', a deep rose pink *R. catawbiense* hybrid, 4 to 6 feet.
6. 'Ken Janeck', a pinkish white *R. degrobianum ssp yakushimanum* hybrid; 3 to 4 feet.
7. 'Lee's Dark Purple', a royal purple with a yellow blotch *R. catawbiense* hybrid; 6 feet or taller.
8. 'Minnetonka', a lavender-pink with a chartreuse blotch *R. ponticum* hybrid; 3 to 4 feet.

9. 'Mrs. Charles S. Sargent', a rose pink *R. catawbiense* hybrid, 6 feet or taller.
10. 'Nova Zembla' a bright red with black spots, ('Parsons Grandiflorum' x hardy red hybrid), 4 to 6 feet.
11. 'Olga Mezitt', deep-pink flowers *R. minus*; mature leaves are small bronzy green; to 4 feet.
12. 'PJM', a lavender-pink *R. minus*; mature leaves are small bronzy green; to 4 feet.
13. 'Purpureum Elegans', a purple with brown spots; *R. catawbiense* hybrid, 4 to 6 feet.
14. 'Purpureum Grandiflorum', a violet with green flecks *R. catawbiense* hybrid; 4 to 6 feet.
15. 'Roseum Elegans', a rosy lavender with reddish spotting, *R. catawbiense* hybrid, 6 feet or taller.

#### References:

*Hybrids and Hybridizers Rhododendrons and Azaleas for Eastern North America*, 1978, edited by P.A. Livingston and F.W. West. Harwood Books, Newton Square Pennsylvania. ☐

## Favourites: The Winners!

We have now received lists of favourites from 26 members, in our entirely unscientific survey.

The two most popular are 'Golfer' and 'Mist Maiden'.

The runners up are 'Barbara Hall', *camtschaticum*, *fortunei*, 'Great Eastern', 'Isola Bella', 'Nancy Steele', *oreodoxa*, 'Percy Wiseman', 'Pohjola's Daughter', *schlippenbachii*, 'Teddy Bear', 'Vinecrest', Yak 'Koichira Wada'.

#### Final lists:

**Gloria Hardy:** 'Dora Amateis', 'Girard's Chiara', 'Isola Bella', 'Midnight Ruby', 'Serendipity'.

**Rachel Martin:** 'April Mist', 'Teddy Bear', *fortunei*, 'Northern Lights', 'Mist Maiden'.

**Walter Ostrom:** *roxieanum*, *pachysanthum*, *caloxanthum*, *camtschaticum*, *schlippenbachii*. ☐

## Book Review

### **Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada By William Cullina, Houghton Mifflin, 2000, 332 pages, \$40.**

As book devoted to wildflowers must come to terms with the meaning of the words *native* and *wild*. The author defines them like this: "Growing in North America prior to European settlement." By "North America", he means temperate regions of the continent. The typical flowering plants offered in most garden centres are usually easier to grow than native plants, and often showier. They have been selected over many generations for easy propagation and reliable garden performance. Wild plants have become adapted to the often rather narrow range of conditions present in their native environment, and do not often take kindly to the conditions of an ordinary garden. So why should we bother trying to achieve the often difficult aim of cultivating wild flowers? The author puts it like this:

*I firmly believe that if we all decide to make an effort to restore some of the local plants to our landscapes, we will in no small way help make our own piece of the world a richer, more diverse, and by consequence, a healthier place. This is not politics, it is simple truth.*

In order to be able to grow a wild plant successfully, we must meet its requirements under three headings: light, soil and temperature. Each of these is discussed in a detailed introduction. None of the three is quite as simple to define as would at first appear, but soil is a very complex issue. In fairly simple language, the author devotes several pages to a discussion of soil structure, its organic component, fertility and pH.

All this makes a very well-reasoned introduction to the main part of the book – a list of over 150 genera of mostly herbaceous, perennial native wild plants. Under each genus, one or more species is discussed in detail, giving its natural range, conditions for growing it, an estimate of the ease (or difficulty) of cultivation, and in many cases a picture (one assumes of a plant growing in the nursery of the New England Wild Flower Society, though he doesn't tell us). Propagation is dealt with in a separate section, concentrating on collecting, storing and germinating seeds, with some references to cuttings. In addition, there are lists of plants suitable for various sites and purposes.

Sources of wild plants are listed, with the admonition that we should ensure that the plants offered are not collected from the wild, but are truly nursery grown. We must be aware that plants propagated in the nursery will almost always be more expensive, and we should be willing to pay for them. Finally there are lists of botanic gardens specializing in native plant collections, and societies devoted to this topic. It's nice to see The Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical Garden, as well as the Wildflower Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society included. □

– **Chris Helleiner**



*Jeffersonia diphylla* - A North American Spring wildflower. [Photo Chris Helleiner]

# Photo Album -



*Helleborous* 'Pink Frost'. [Photo Chris Helleiner]



*Helleborous* x 'Snow White'. [Photo Chris Helleiner]



*Shortia uniflora*. [Photo Chris Helleiner]



*Lewisia rediviva*. [Photo Sterling Levy]



*Lewisia nevadensis*. [Photo Sterling Levy]



*Lewisia pygmaea*. [Photo Sterling Levy]



*Lewisia cotyledon*. [Photo Sterling Levy]



*Lewisia cotyledon*. [Photo Sterling Levy]