

AtlanticRhodo

www.AtlanticRhodo.org

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Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society

Our Mission

ARHS supports and promotes the development and exchange of expertise and material relating to the practice of creating and maintaining year-round garden landscapes featuring rhododendrons and other plants.

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Membership

Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society.

Fees are \$20.00 from September 1, 2013 to August 31, 2014, due September 2013. For benefits see ARHS website **www.atlanticrhodo.org**

American Rhododendron Society: ARHS is a chapter in District 12 of the American Rhododendron Society.

Combined ARHS and ARS membership cost is \$50.00 Canadian. For benefits see **www.rhododendron.org**

Cheques, made payable to Atlantic Rhododendron & 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 & Horticultural Society. We welcome your comments, suggestions, articles, photos and other material for publication. Send all material to the editor.

Published three times a year. February, May and November

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Cover Photo: R. Glacier Queen, A Weston Nurseries Introduction - [Photo Chris Helleiner]



Calendar of Events

ARHS meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, from September to May, at 7:30 p.m. usually in the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History 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 May 3** **10 am -2:30 pm** Members' Pre-ordered Sale Plant Pick Up.
957 Prospect Road at Petal Pushers, the same location as last year (also the site of the Goodwood Enviro-Depot) **Volunteers needed from 9-3pm!** Contact liz.anne.naylor@gmail.com
- Tuesday. May 6** 7:30 pm Halifax. Members-to-Members Plant Sale 6141 Watt St., LeMarchant-St Thomas School gym. Plants should be unusual or choice in some way. Contact Bob Howard mayflowergardens@ns.sympatico.ca if you have questions.
- Saturday May 10** 1:00 - 3:30pm Halifax. ARHS Annual Public Sale 6141 Watt St., LeMarchant-St Thomas School gym. **Volunteers needed in morning and afternoon to drive plants, set -up, sell, and clean-up** Contact Liz Naylor liz.anne.naylor@gmail.com
- May 15-18, 2014.** The American Rhododendron Society Annual International Convention, **Greater Cleveland area**, along the scenic shores of Lake Erie - WHERE EVERY GARDEN TELLS A STORY. Experience the special beauty and variety of a Midwestern spring in the "City of Trees". Tours in the woods, along the shores, in private and public gardens. Speakers with fresh perspectives and interesting garden themes. All roads and airways (Hopkins International Airport) lead to Quail Hollow Resort Hotel, the convention site. Details: <http://www.greatlakesrhodies.org/>
- May 27 – June 8** Panayoti Kelaidis, Senior Curator and Director Denver Botanic Gardens Outreach, will visit us and give some talks in the Atlantic region.
- Tuesday May 27** **7:30 pm Halifax.** NS Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer St
"Sky Islands of the West: Plants you can grow" (Boreal plants of the American West)
- May 29 & 30** **St John's NL.** Talks to the Rock Garden Club and Wildflower Society
- Monday June 2,** **7:30 pm. Halifax.** Sacred Heart School 5820 Spring Garden Road. "Great Botanic Gardens of Europe" Free public talk for Provincial Gardening Week, co-sponsored by ARHS and The Friends of the Public Gardens Jarvis Lecture Program.
- Wednesday June 4** **4:30 pm Annapolis Royal** Historic Gardens, "Great Rock Gardens of Eastern North America".
- Friday June 6** **10 am. Truro.** Talk to Rock Garden Club. Participate in 50th anniversary events at Dal AC
- Sunday June 8.** Attending ARHS Garden tour and Potluck on **South Shore**
- Friday June 6** **Truro.** 50 years of Rhododendrons at the Dal Ag Campus
- June 6 ,7** **NSAGC Convention, Truro, NS** <http://www.nsagc.com/Info2014.pdf>
- Sunday June 8** **Annual Garden Tour and Pot Luck Supper** in the Chester/Mahone Bay area. **Sandy and Syd Dumaresq** will host the pot-luck supper and open their garden as part of the tour. Bring food. Details re locations and times elsewhere in newsletter.
- June 1-8** Provincial Gardening Week in NS
- Friday June 12** National Garden Day in Canada. **How will you celebrate?**
- Tuesday Sept 2** Speaker to be announced
- A Sept Saturday afternoon:** a cuttings workshop, details TBA

Tuesday **Oct 7** Steele Lecture. Steve Krebs, Leach Research Center, Holden Arboretum “The Best of the Leach hybrids and Moving Forward with his Work”.

Tuesday **Nov 5** Richard L. Bitner, author of *Designing with Conifers* http://www.timberpress.com/books/designing_conifers/bitner/9781604691931

Tuesday **Dec 3** Christmas Party and Members’ slide show

Any time, All the time : the Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/340130989363045/> Post and see questions, joys, sorrows, events, and plant and garden photos. We are now 95 individuals in the group

Thank you for avoiding the use of perfumes and scented products when you come to ARHS events.

Editor’s Notes

- Our education director, Bob Howard, has been busy organizing the recent visit of nurseryman and snowdrop nut, Ian Christie, and his supportive wife, Ann. And now the upcoming visit by the international traveller, Panayoti Kelaidis, Senior Curator and Director, Denver Botanic Gardens Outreach. See the Program Calendar for the several opportunities to hear and talk with Panayoti in various locations. The fall lineup looks exciting as well.
- Send your feedback and your suggestions for future speakers or topics to Bob at mayflowergardens@ns.sympatico.ca
- To be reminded of Ian’s lovely style and plantsman’s expertise, have a look at his Nursery Workshop on the Scottish Rock Garden website. <http://www.srgc.org.uk/nurseryws/200704/content.html>
- Volunteers are needed from 9-3pm Sat May 3 for Members’ Pre-ordered Sale Plant Pick Up. Contact Liz Naylor liz.anne.naylor@gmail.com
- Volunteers are needed in the morning and afternoon Sat May 10 to drive plants, set –up, sell, and clean-up at the ARHS Annual Public Sale. Contact Liz Naylor liz.anne.naylor@gmail.com
- OUR NEW WEBSITE is now available for you to try out. Same address <http://atlanticrhodo.org/> but with a new structure, platform, and look. PLEASE PLEASE let me know how it works for you. sheilastevenson17@gmail.com
- We need your good quality, large resolution photographs of rhodie species and hybrids and other plants - close-ups, views of plants in gardenscapes, in all seasons, not just in bloom! In jpg or tiff format, with permission to use for the new website. Please provide plant identification and other useful information such as age, size, general location where growing. The photographer’s name and plant id may be embedded in the image. Please send photos to Sterling Levy, levystr@ns.sympatico.ca



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

Betty Ann Addison
Lorraine Beswick
Dennis Crouse
Suzanne Gauthier
Hilda Taylor

Minneapolis, MN, USA
Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia
Boutlier’s Point, Nova Scotia
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Report on The 2014 Tissue Culture Sale

By Jon Porter

The tissue culture sale was a great success again this year with over 50 orders filled, ranging from just a couple of plants to one order of 185 plants. About half the plants were picked up in Halifax on April 5, with the remainder being shipped to various locations in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland. This year we brought in 12 different rhododendrons/azaleas and 6 different companion plants. Briggs Nursery imposed a strict minimum order of 49 for the L2 plant size, which is the one that ARHS orders, and this created some challenges. We did have to cancel 6 rhododendrons/azaleas because of insufficient orders but avoided canceling others by selling some plants to local nurseries and garden centres. Thanks to all members for their orders and special thanks to the volunteers.

Three Reports on Ian Christie's Nova Scotia Visit



It was a real treat to hear Ian Christie speak several times early in April as we were all trying to drag our minds out of the depths of a long cold winter. I was able to attend 3 of his talks and enjoyed each one as there was something new to see in each one.

The first talk concentrated on Meconopsis and Woodland plants. This talk inspired me to try Meconopsis again in spite of many failures. I was also interested to see how many natural hybrids of Trilliums were shown and I live in hope that my small collection of Trilliums might make me the proud grandmother of some interesting selections someday.

The talk in Truro, to the NS Rock Garden Club, concentrated on Bulbs for the Rock Garden. Many different forms of Snowdrops were shown and again we saw exceptional forms of other species of bulbs, as well as a bonus show of Ian's favourite plants. There was a lot of eye candy and much drawing in of breath as each new image came up. Some of the plants were not what everyone would necessarily be drawn to, but Ian's enthusiasm forces one to give second thought to these selections.

[Photo by Sheila Stevenson] The third talk, back in Halifax, featured Rhododendrons and Peat Bed plantings. We were again treated to an excellent presentation. Some of what Ian had to say I have heard or read before but it never hurts to be reminded of these ideas in order to stimulate me to start putting them into motion now that I have a new garden to develop. There were some good tips on sowing seed as well as protecting seedbeds and young plantings from cat and rabbit damage. Two ideas are covering the seed pots with Remy-type cloth (a crop cover for frost, wind, and insect protection as well as for shade) to keep off the slugs and voles, and the use of the plastic grids to discourage cats and rabbits from digging in or feeding on new plantings. These are problems I have had to put up with and I will try these strategies.

Some of the things that I took away from his talks are

- Gardeners are generous people and willing to share seed and slips in order to spread the wealth.
- Don't count on books to tell you what you can or cannot grow because each of us has specific growing conditions so it is worth trying again. Many things that Ian was growing in full sun, we might need to plant in more shade.
- Consider growing things in water lily baskets so they can be lifted out of the ground in order to take well grown specimens to shows.
- Encourage shows.
- Overall, I feel that we all came away with renewed energy and a certain amount of lust for many of the wonderful plants we were shown. Thank you to ARHS for bringing in such an inspiring speaker.

- Roslyn Duffus

We have so much enjoyed those two talks by Ian Christie. I am always amazed at the wealth of knowledge some people possess, and how he works! The idea of saying "oh, I think I'll just move 5 tons of rock today and make it look nice too". Incredible. I suspect he can grow a wider range of plants than we can here. And how he can grow plants, a master grower indeed. We had two lovely evenings and he certainly opened our eyes to wider horizons. Please thank him very much from 2 club members. Cheers,

- Frances Howard

It is great to learn from the experts and wonderful to see gardens that I can only dream of visiting. I come away enthusiastic and recharged. New gardening techniques are often presented and it is a worthwhile exercise to evaluate and decide if they are doable in our Nova Scotia garden. I always learn something and I look at our garden in a new light.

I regret that I don't grow plants from seed when I see what Ian Christie and Ian Young have grown from seed. We have members who do grow wonderful plants from seed and many of us have the evidence in our gardens. The seed exchanges are numerous, generous, and inexpensive. If only I wasn't so lazy.

We have become better gardeners and we grow a wider selection of plants because of our membership in ARHS and all that it offers.

So much to learn and so little time is always the lesson for me.

- Donna Evers

OUTREACH 2014: HARDY SOULS - Clean Up at Stratford Way

Temperature 2 degrees Celsius and windy



Left to right : Steve Lane, Susan Boyd, Roslyn Duffus, Cora Swinamer, Sophie Bieger, Penny Gael, Lynn Brooks. Missing from picture : Krista Rudic and Chris Hopgood. [Photo by C. Hopgood.]

CHINESE WITCH HAZEL (*Hamamelis mollis*) March 12, 2014

By Raymond Fielding (Photo by the Author)



This shrub is a true harbinger of spring. It starts blooming every year in February and continues into April. It reminds me of forsythia, but the flowers are fragrant. (Unfortunately my sense of smell is declining, so I can't verify this!)

This shrub is situated on the lawn in front of our house, squeezed in among other shrubs and a columnar purple beech. It has loosely spreading branches and has reached about six feet in height and width, over 10 - 15 years. It seems to be impervious to insects and disease and to our somewhat-sandy soil. Our climate seems to be satisfactory, and being frequently buffeted by winds coming up the river doesn't seem to present a problem for this shrub.

H. mollis is a native species in China. This species has been used in the production of various hybrids.

Even when we are still experiencing the rigours of winter and snow blankets the ground, this cheerful shrub raises one's spirits. Hopefully spring can't be far away!

Editor's note: In the 1998 Nimbus publication, *Shrubs of Nova Scotia*, Ray Fielding describes 115 species of the shrubs one is most likely to encounter in this province, with comments and suggestions regarding the suitability of various species for use in landscaping our homes. In the winter 2014 Newsletter, he generously invited us to come see his tree collection on the LaHave River in Lunenburg County. He can be reached by email at cleverfield@eastlink.ca. ☞

Garden Portrait: 'HOMEPORT': the Chester Garden of Sandy and Syd Dumaresq

By Sandy Dumaresq

This property is a work-in-progress. Up until the 1920s, the property had been a farm. There were apple trees, a few of which remain. After the farm was abandoned, the white spruce took over the fields. The white spruce aged and were attacked by the spruce bark beetle. Many of these old spruce have fallen down in recent storms.

We are replacing the white spruce with the trees of the indigenous Acadian Forest. We have planted red spruce, white pine (some grown from seed), hemlock, red oak, yellow birch, sugar maple, white and green ash, and butternut. Nature has also given us two American beech and some red pine and white birch and some unique red alders. Native shrubs like witherod, hawthorn, serviceberry, and chokecherry also grow all over the property.

Some of our favourite, non-native trees are two catalpas, a ginkgo, a tulip tree, a copper beech, a Crimson King maple, a golden chain tree, two katsuras, and two flowering cherries. We also have black and honey locust trees. There are many flowering shrubs including dogwoods, tree lilacs, hydrangeas, magnolias, and crabapples.

We have planted many rhododendrons and azaleas in 6 different areas of the gardens. Most of these have not reached maturity (10 or more years). The septic area beside the coach house has about 100 small rhododendrons and a selection of small native shrubs.

On the sea side of the house, we have planted different low-growing evergreens including junipers, boxwoods, heaths, and heathers. The lupins and daisies and wild roses also provide colour. Realizing there actually is some wind protection here, we have now started a new rhododendron garden with some more hardy plants. On the west side of the house is a rose garden planted mostly with the Canadian Explorer roses. On the east side of the house, around the garden shed, we are working on a hosta and fern garden. The large hostas are mostly 'blue umbrellas' or 'sum and substance'.

'Homeport' is a series of gardens connected by grass and bark chip paths. The gardens closest to the house have ornamental plants. The forest and the shoreline gardens contain native plants.

Before the pot luck supper, weather permitting, Syd is excited to offer a short boat tour of Chester harbour for anyone who would like to join him. ☞

Sunday June 8, 2014 Garden Tour and Pot Luck

ARHS members(*) Sandy and Sid Dumaresq will host us for the pot luck supper at 'Homeport', their Chester home and garden. Most of the gardens are in the Chester Basin/Chester area and will be open 12-5 pm, but the Gael and Sandison gardens, in Boutilier's Point and Mahone Bay respectively, will be open from 11 am til 4 pm. Please observe parking instructions, *in italics*, for each location.

Thanks to Jenny Sandison for her assistance in organizing the 2014 tour.

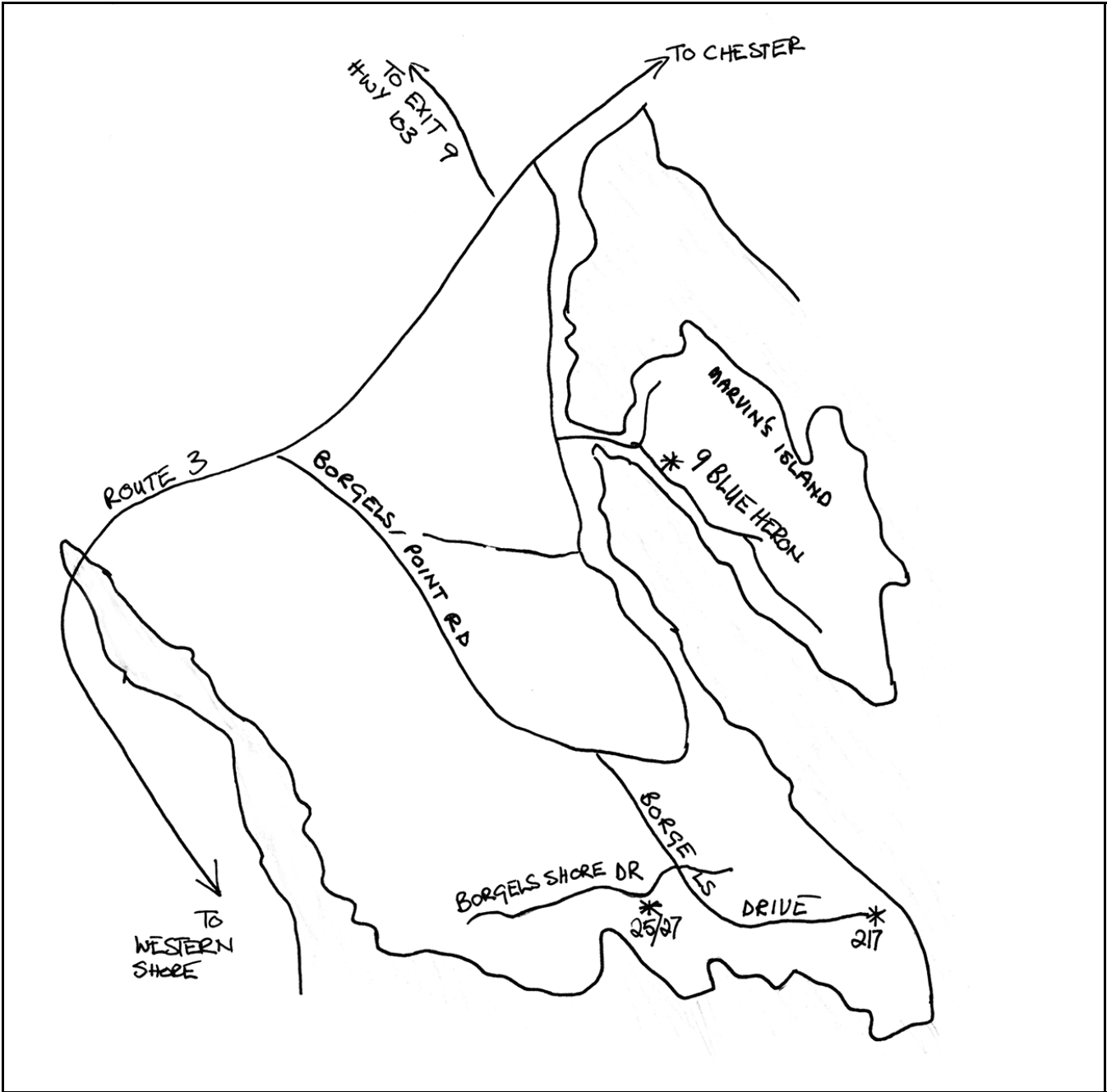
1. *Penny Gael, 211 KENNEDY ROAD (off Route 3), BOUTILIER'S POINT. 11 am -4 pm

A charming secret garden with an extensive collection of Rhodies. *Coming from Halifax, Kennedy Road is to the left off Route 3. The house number is clearly marked on the right. Follow the winding driveway to the end and park on the left.*

2. Dr Don Craig's cottage, 25 & 27 Borgels Shore Drive, CHESTER BASIN. 12 noon - 5 pm. Dr Craig planted many rhododendrons, including his hybrids, around the old cottage. The plants are now ten feet tall. *Borgels Point Road is a loop. Please enter at the Gold River-Western Shore end. At approx. 1 km, turn right onto Borgels Drive. After 400 yards, at the barn, turn right onto Borgel's Shore Drive. The cottage is on the left. Please park appropriately.*
3. Elizabeth Parr-Johnston, 217 Borgels Drive, CHESTER BASIN. 12 noon- 5 pm.
A designed garden. Drive right to the end. Please park appropriately, and do not block the neighbours' gates.
4. Brenda Franklin, 9BLUE HERON DRIVE, MARVINS ISLAND, CHESTER BASIN. 12 noon – 5 pm Some wonderful ideas regarding vegetables in this pretty garden. Raised beds and planted enclosures. *Please park on Borgels Point Road as the road on Marvin's Island is one lane. Walk across the bridge, turn right at the Y-junction, and it's the second house on the left.*
5. *Jenny Sandison, 1510 OAKLAND ROAD, MAHONE BAY. From 11 am – 4 pm. A half-acre garden on the waterfront planted with numerous perennials and shrubs. *Please park off the road. You can use Lantz Cove road as well.*
6. Joan and Ted Cleather, 24 OAKHILL LANE, MARRIOTT'S COVE ROAD WEST. 12 noon – 5 PM. *Marriott's Cove is between Chester and Chester Basin. Once you have turned off route 3 take the west side of the Cove. Park on the road appropriately.*
7. Sylvia MacNeil, 'Sheet Anchor Garden'. 38 CENTRAL St. CHESTER. 12 noon – 5 PM. The garden is walled and fenced and best described as a casual spring garden. It has many perennial beds and very mature trees. Sylvia is a Master Gardener and past president of the Chester Garden Club. *The Sheet Anchor house, directly across from the Captain's House, is only a few feet away from the Parade Square. There is ample parking on both sides of Central Street (unless there is a function at the Captain's House). There is also ample parking around the Parade Square.*
8. The Parade Square garden is maintained by the Chester Garden Club and the Armillary Sphere (sundial) was a gift of two American members of the Club.
9. *Sandy and Syd Dumaresq, 'Homeport' 139 PENINSULA ROAD EXT, CHESTER. After 3 pm. 'Homeport' is a series of gardens connected by grass and bark chip paths. The gardens closest to the house have ornamental plants. The forest and the shoreline gardens contain native plants. *Parking at #s 129, 131 and 139, off Peninsula Road, as shown on the map.*

Sandy and Syd are hosting our pot luck supper. Before supper, weather permitting, Syd is excited to offer a short boat tour of Chester harbour for anyone who would like to join him. ☼

Sunday June 8, 2014 Garden Tour and Pot Luck



Celebrating Our Broom Crowberry

By David Patriquin



Male (towards back) and female plants (foreground) in flower, late April. [Photo by author]

Broom crowberry, *Corema conradii*, is our earliest flowering native species after skunk cabbage. It is dioecious (separate male and female plants) with terminal flowers appearing in April, (sometimes in March) through to mid-May, depending on the site and year. Male plants (and colonies developed from a single male plant) are much more common than female plants. Raymond Fielding in *Shrubs of Nova Scotia* (1988) aptly describes male colonies as presenting "a haze of wine-coloured anthers".

one of three crowberries

Corema conradii, the broom crowberry, is one of three “crowberries” found in Nova Scotia. The others are the black crowberry, *Empetrum nigrum*, and the pink or (or red or purple) crowberry, *Empetrum eamesii*. They are low evergreen shrubs with small, needle-like ericoid leaves and reduced, wind-pollinated flowers. In Nova Scotia, the *Empetrum* species are largely restricted to coastal barrens. *E. nigrum*, black crowberry, can occur inland but only in more damp and exposed locations.

Where the three species co-occur, in some coastal barren habitats, all form fairly low, creeping mats and may require close inspection to tell them apart when they are not flowering or in fruit. (See www.nswildflora.ca/species/Ericaceae/CorConradii/ for details).

In this case, the common name “crowberry” also reflects the modern molecular phylogeny, *Corema*, *Empetrum* and *Ceratiola* constituting the 3 genera of the Tribe Empetreae (subfamily Ericioideae, Family Ericaceae).

Corema conradii habitats

The prime habitats for *C. conradii* are

- droughty, acidic, rocky outcrops or barrens usually set back by a few hundred meters from the coast
- the inland sand or pine barrens in the Annapolis Valley and to a more limited extent in SW Nova Scotia
- absent from Guysborough and Antigonish Counties and Cape Breton.

On rocky barrens, broom crowberry commonly occurs as discrete patches up to 5 m diameter which have developed from a single or a few initial seedlings over several decades. Reindeer lichens often fill in spaces in less dense colonies or where older ramets have died out. Large, dense, meadow-like stands can develop on sand barrens, sometimes mixed with bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) or sweetfern (*Comptonia peregrina*).

On inland sandy habitats where only *C. conradii* is likely to be found, this species assumes its characteristic broom-like stature and can look very much like a garden heath (*Erica* spp.), growing 30- 50 cm in height. I have wondered if it could be domesticated for use in gardens. A splendid example of its potential as such can be seen near Kingston in the Annapolis Valley where a gardener has integrated large patches of naturally occurring broom crowberry into a residential landscape and even mows some of it. My limited experience suggests broom crowberry takes quite readily to a garden situation if given appropriate soil conditions - very well drained, acidic, sandy or coarse soil in sunny location.

a fire-dependent species

Broom crowberry is considered to be a fire-dependent species. Its vegetation is completely destroyed by most fires, but it regenerates from seeds stored underground. An interesting twist: broom crowberry co-opts ants to assist in seed dispersal, equipping each of its fruits with a fat-rich packet called an elaiosome. Ants carry the fruits into their underground nests where they feed the fruity tissue to their larvae. The seeds are discarded but remain in storage until stimulated to germinate by a fire. In some near-coastal barrens, stresses other than fire may be sufficient to limit competition and allow regeneration without fire. However, recurrent fire appears to be required for most populations to thrive.

“nationally unique and globally rare”

My favourite setting for broom crowberry is in association with jack pine, also fire-dependent and a boreal species. The two are found together only on scattered rocky barrens along the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia, and in a few locales in Maine. Thus the association is considered nationally unique and globally rare. Traversing these barrens, one has a sense of walking through a garden. The broom crowberry forms as tidy a heath as any of our garden heaths of exotic origins. Glacial boulders provide accent. Rhodora in wetter spots provides spring blooms and Sheep laurel and the rare golden heather and mountain sandwort offer their blooms in summer. Blueberries and huckleberries can be bountiful in August, especially a few years after fires. Finally, huckleberry produces sweeps of fire-engine red vegetation in a final blast of fall colour before winter sets in.

In Nova Scotia, we tend to take broom crowberry for granted. We shouldn't. This Atlantic Coastal Plain species has a NatureServe¹ S4 status (apparently secure) in Nova Scotia, but is precarious outside of Nova Scotia and is losing ground within Nova Scotia. It is imperiled (S2) in the



Broom crowberry and sweet fern on sand barrens in SW Nova Scotia. [Photo by author]



Developing fruits and elaiosomes in July. [Photo by author]

Magdalene Islands of Quebec and in P.E.I.; it has S3/S4 status in Maine and S1 (critically imperiled) to S3 (vulnerable) status for other U.S. states where it occurs (Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York). It was either never present or is extirpated in New Brunswick.

Threats to broom crowberry habitats

The threats to broom crowberry habitats as cited by the Center for Plant Conservation in the U.S. apply to Nova Scotia. These include

- o shoreline erosion
- o deer browsing
- o trampling
- o fire suppression
- o development
- o invasion by Scots Pine



One-year old Jack pine seedling and recently-germinated broom crowberry in late August 2010 in an area burnt in the spring of 2009.
[Photo by author]

The Annapolis heathlands, dominated by broom crowberry, have been reduced to less than 3% of their pre-colonial area of approximately 200 km². Our rocky crowberry barrens are being whittled away by development, especially in the Halifax area. Also, barrens close to settled areas tend to be favourite sites for mountain biking and atvs, both of which, if not focused on specific trails, are very destructive of barrens habitats.

Broom crowberry is a species Nova Scotians should celebrate and brag about – and protect from further losses!

1. NatureServe is a non-profit conservation organization whose mission is to provide the scientific basis for effective conservation action. NatureServe and its network of natural heritage programs are the leading source for information about rare and endangered species and threatened ecosystems <http://explorer.natureserve.org/ranking.htm> ☞



Jack Pine/Broom crowberry barrens in Purcell's Cove Backlands. [Photo by author]

About NS Garden Culture

By Sheila Stevenson

One lovely August Friday last summer, I had the good fortune to be present for a couple of conversations among gardeners and plants people, hosted by the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens. One was focused on: What do we know, what can we say, about NS Garden Culture?

First we waded into a discussion of what is a ‘garden culture’? In Nova Scotia, we have a tradition of practical horticulture, of growing food, but more recently, of ornamental horticulture. We touched on the aesthetic, the economic, and the health dimensions of gardening. And when we talked about why we would talk about this, we heard comments like “Plants are fundamental to every aspect of our existence.” And “It would be great to raise the status of plants and the value of gardens in the public mind.”

Bev MacPhail of the Halifax Public Gardens told us that a survey to find out what people value in the Public Gardens revealed that they consider the HPG as their backyard. It’s also an idealised setting for fantasy – for prom and wedding pictures. And it’s a lunchtime sanctuary for reading and eating a sandwich. The place is spirited.

When we considered how to get at the nature of our garden culture here in NS, the talk touched on Maker, Doers, Collectors, Spaces, the intersection between people and plants, Experiences, Observers, Design, An aesthetic, and Value.

And how do we regard what we do? It’s an art form. It’s functional. It’s moral (referencing Michael Pollan’s *Second Nature*). It’s aesthetic, intimate, and about creating an atmosphere. And, plants are important.

Special guest and first-time visitor to NS, Jill Ragget, Royal Horticultural Society member, British gardener, and garden interpreter, wrapped up the discussion by telling us: “If NS garden culture is what you see from the road, it is lots of grass and lawn mowing. It is vegetable gardens in front yards. It is lots of decks, and decorating of decks and yards with craft. And people talk about “yards”, not “gardens”.

What do you think, dear reader?

A group of self-identified ‘philosophers’ agreed to carry on with the discussion at some future date. On another August day in 2014, Jeff Morton, Bob Howard, John Brett, Nina Newington, Beverly McClare, and Sheila Stevenson will reconvene. If you’d like to join the conversation, please be sure to tell us so we can include you in the planning. ☞



ARHS Plant Donations to the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens Collection

By Karen Achenbach, Horticultural Manager



ARHG Rhododendron Collection. [Photo by Trish Fry]

Since 1996, the Historic Gardens in Annapolis Royal has been the recipient of annual donations of plant material from the Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society. This has contributed to the growth of our collection to over 120 rhododendrons and azaleas. The generosity of ARHS has made it possible for the many people who visit the Gardens to learn about and enjoy many new and interesting plants. Though the donations have been primarily rhododendrons and azaleas, we have also received other plants such as magnolias and other deciduous trees, conifers, and perennials.

The Gardens' main rhododendron collection is located on a sheltered southeast facing slope beneath the shade of mature English oaks and along the edge of the lowest of a system of three ponds. We have lifted the branches of the oaks to give the optimum amount of sun and shade. We are considered to be zone 6b, but have found niches where zone 7 plants do well for us.

The initial plantings included large blocks of hardy catawbiense hybrids, such as 'Catawbiense Album', 'Catawbiense Boursault', and 'Lee's Dark Purple' making up the bulk of the beds. We have been adding to our collection over the years, showcasing many of the Kentville and Brueckner hybrids, several from Capt. Steele, and John Weagle's Scotian series. We also have a prized few from local breeder, the late Alex Muntz. Many of these plants have been ARHS donations.

The Historic Gardens is now going into its 33rd season, and it seems like a good time to assess our collection and see how they are doing! We hope to write a series of articles for this newsletter describing some of the plants that were donated by ARHS and how they are faring.

Rhododendron bureavii, planted in 1999, was described as a species with spectacular foliage and this has proved to be correct! The new leaves and stems are covered with rust coloured hairs and the mature leaves are shiny green with thick rusty red indumentum. There are many different forms of *R. bureavii*, and the plant we received is the 'Ovate Form' with a more broadly elliptic leaf than others. The specimen in the Historic Gardens has grown to around three feet tall by three and a half feet wide in 15 years. It blooms in mid May but the foliage alone makes it one of our favourite plants. *R. bureavii* occurs in the wild in northern Yunnan, China, in open pine forest and rhododendron thickets, at elevations from 10,000-12,800 feet.



R. oreotrephes 'Equisetum'
[Photo K. Achenbach]



R 'Calsap' [Photo Trish Fry]



R. bureavii [Photo Trish Fry]

It was introduced into cultivation in 1917 and is named for a French botanist and professor of taxonomic botany, Louis Edouard Bureau (1830-1918). *R. bureavii* is a parent of 'Smirbur', 'Kodiak' and 'Teddy Bear', all great foliage plants.

R. 'Smirbur' is a Vineland Nursery cross between *R. bureavii* and *R. smirnowii*. ARHS donated a specimen of this plant to the Gardens in 2005. It is now around three feet in height and width. It has grown very well for us, and is a compact plant with glossy foliage and a silvery indumentum. *R. 'Smirbur'*, which blooms in early June, has buds of deep pink opening to a lovely medium pink.

Rhododendron oreotrephes 'Exquisetum' was donated in 1998. This rhododendron species is native to Burma and south-west China, and was collected in Sichuan in 1904 by Dr. Ernest Henry Wilson. The cultivar 'Exquisetum' is described in H.H. Davidian's *Rhododendron Species Vol. 1* as being very similar to the species, but having larger leaves and flowers. Our plant is an upright shrub, around five feet tall with oblong, bluish leaves up to 2 inches in length. It has very attractive red petioles. The flower colour of the species ranges from mauve to mauve-pink, rose, lavender-rose or purple. Our specimen has lilac-purple flowers. It is very floriferous and blooms for us in mid-May.

Rhododendron 'Calsap' is, I'm sure, admired by many. It is a cross between *R. catawbiense* 'Catalglia' and *R. 'Sappho'*. Our gardeners certainly count it as one of their favourites. We received our plant in 2001. This rhododendron sports shiny, leathery dark green foliage and purple buds that open up to huge long-lasting white flowers with a burgundy flare on the upper lobe. It is a very vigorous plant for us and has grown to around five feet in height and six feet wide with a neat upright habit. It blooms towards the end of May.

Magnolia 'Legacy' donated in 1996, is an early bloomer, coming into flower shortly after *M. 'Merrill'*. A hybrid magnolia (*M. sprengeri* 'Diva' x *M. denudata*) bred by David Leach in 1991, it is a deciduous tree which typically grows to 20' tall over the first 20 years. Ours was planted in 1996 in a fairly exposed site, but has done very well, being close to 30' tall in less than 20 years. It sports very large flowers (9-11" across) that bloom in late April or early May, depending on the year. Each flower is purplish red at the base, gradually lightening to pale pinkish-white near the outer edges of the petal-like tepals. Flowers are white inside. A truly gorgeous tree.

These are a few of the many plants donated to us that we are learning to grow and appreciate. We are grateful to the members of the Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society who have supported us through the years, and we are pleased to play a part in educating people about the interesting world of rhododendrons and other plants. ☼

Editor's Note: To sign up for the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens' Bloom Report, go to http://www.historicgardens.com/explore_bloom.php



Magnolia 'Legacy'. [Photo K. Achenbach]



Volunteer members Peggy Brewster, Wendy Cornwall, Jeff Chown receiving the money at the Tissue Culture Sale, April 5. [Photo by Sheila Stevenson]

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