

# AtlanticRhodo

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

Volume 32: Number 3

October 2008





# Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society

## Positions of Responsibility 2007 - 2008

<b>President</b>	Sheila Stevenson	479-3740	<b>Director - Social</b>	Shirley McIntyre	835-3673
<b>Vice-President</b>	Ruth Jackson	454-4681	<b>Director - Horticulture</b>	Audrey Fralic	683-2711
<b>R.S.C. (National) Rep.</b>	Sheila Stevenson	479-3740	<b>Director</b>	Cora Swinamer	826-7705
<b>Secretary</b>	Lyla MacLean	466-4490	<b>Newsletter</b>	Mary Helleiner	429-0213
<b>Treasurer</b>	Chris Hopgood	479-0811	<b>Website</b>	Bob Pettipas	462-5654
<b>Membership</b>	Betty MacDonald	852-2779	<b>Library</b>	Elizabeth Naylor	429-0557
<b>Past President</b>	Penny Gael	826-2440	<b>Seed Exchange</b>	Sharon Bryson	863-6307
<b>Director - Education</b>	Jenny Sandison	624-9013	<b>May - Advance Plant Sale</b>	Ken Shannik	422-2413
<b>Director - Communications</b>	Mary Helleiner	429-0213	<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, 2008 to August 31, 2009, due September 2008. 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

Fees are \$57.00 Canadian per year for individuals, C\$61 for family membership and include ARHS membership. Make cheques payable to American Rhododendron Society District 12. For benefits see [www.rhododendron.org](http://www.rhododendron.org)

Cheques should be sent to ARHS Membership Secretary **Betty MacDonald, 534 Prospect Road, Prospect Bay NS B3T1Z8.**

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.

Published three times a year. February, May and October.

#### Editor:

Mary Helleiner  
834 Marlborough Ave.  
Halifax, NS, B3H3G6  
(902) 429-0213  
[cmhelleiner@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:cmhelleiner@ns.sympatico.ca)

Cover Photo: R 'April Rose'. [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.

**Friday August 29**

**22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Steele Lectures Barry Starling on his trip to Yunnan**

**Tuesday September 2**

**Barry Starling** on ericaceous plants

**Tuesday October 7**

**Walter Ostrom:** Indian Harbour Part One. Walter spent years creating a much photographed garden near Peggy's Cove in the daunting environment of the exposed Atlantic coast. Over the years he developed many different techniques to combat the wind and the challenges of the soil. He will show us how the garden developed, and on another occasion its full maturity.

**Tuesday November 4**

**Annual General Meeting**, including election of the board and officers.

**Chris Helleiner:** Plant Hunting in Bhutan, Rhododendrons, primulas, arisaemas.....

**Tuesday December 2**

**Christmas Party** with members' photos. This is our annual wine and cheese party. There will be no speaker. Come and enjoy an evening of food, wine and conversation. Please bring five to ten plant or garden pictures and finger foods or sweets. Wine will be provided by the Society.

**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 May Newsletter.

**Robert Healy**

**Fergusons Cove NS**

# Special Notices

---

## Rhodo 101

From Cora Swinamer: Several members of the Society have been busy showing our presentation to area garden clubs and we encourage any member who would like to borrow the presentation for their club, or who would prefer to have one of us present for them, to contact Cora Swinamer to schedule their club for the upcoming season. The presentation takes between 45 minutes to an hour plus, depending on audience participation. It discusses cultural requirements, growing tips and slides illustrating their use in the landscape. We introduce gardeners to specific varieties of rhododendrons and azaleas that should be successful in local landscapes. Cora can be reached at 826-7705 or via e-mail at [cora.swinamer@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:cora.swinamer@ns.sympatico.ca).

## AR&HS Membership Survey 2008

Update From Sheila Stevenson:

1. Thanks to 76 of you (more or less) who responded at the May meeting.
2. Your replies provided useful information about what interests you and indicate some clear direction for the next few years, e.g.
2. 60 people said that Tuesday night was the best night for our monthly meeting
3. On a scale of 10 to 1 (10 being most important) *how important is it for the membership/society to connect with the international world of rhodos?* 20:1, 10:19, 9:4, 8:23, 7:14, 6:1, 5:6, 3:1, 1:10, ?:1
4. How important is it for the membership/society to be horticultural advocates on the local (Nova Scotian) scene? 10:37, 9:8, 8:23, 7:2, 6:1, 5:2, NA 2 2:1.

**If you were not at the May 6, 2008 meeting, please complete the enclosed copy. Return it by Oct. 7<sup>th</sup> to Sheila Stevenson, 17 Stanbrae Rd., Fergusons Cove NS B3V1G4**

## Talk on Public Parks

The Friends of the Public Gardens will present an illustrated talk "Public Parks: From the Promenade to the Postmodern" by Dr. Marylin McKay, Associate Professor at NSCAD University, Thursday October 2 at 7:30 p.m. Location to be announced.

## Cutting Exchange

There will be a rhododendron and azalea cutting exchange at the **Tuesday, October 7** meeting. Many of the members have now acquired rare and unusual plants from ARHS tissue culture sales, May sales and other sources and have them growing successfully in their gardens. Some of these plants are no longer readily available so this would be a good chance to share them by taking a few cuttings and bringing them to the meeting for others to try. Even if you don't have any rare plants please share whatever cuttings you can provide.

Cuttings should be taken from this year's growth wood and be at least 3 – 4 inches long with a good set of leaves. We're looking for both elepidote and lepidote rhodos and azaleas. So if you can find some new shoots on your plants, snip them off using a clean pair of pruning shears, label them accurately and bring them to the meeting.

A brief demonstration of how to plant the cuttings will be held.

This year Audrey Fralic has requested cuttings of some of the old rhodos that are no longer available: 'Cadis', 'Babylon', 'Bravo', 'Beaufort', 'Double Dip', 'Spellbinder' and also some lepidotes (because they are easier to root) such as *carolinianum*, 'April Dawn' and 'April Rose'. ☺

## ARHS Activities

Last fall the ARHS awarded two scholarships to horticulture students. The winners were Kelly Grant at the Agricultural Research Station in Truro, and Adrian de Montfort at Kings-Tech.

The Tissue Culture pick up took place in early April under the efficient direction of Audrey Fralic, with many willing volunteers unpacking, labelling and sorting the tiny plants. This is one of our money-makers, second only to the Public Sale, as well as being an inexpensive source of interesting and unusual plants for our members.

Also in early April Peter Korn spoke on his amazing alpine beds, with the result that quite a few members were inspired to work on crevice and sand arrangements for their alpine plants.

A successful workshop was held at the Irving Centre at Acadia University in Wolfville. There was good attendance and the weather (April 19!) was so fine that we ate our lunches outdoors in the formal garden created with native plants.

We sent a work party to Kentville as usual on the last Friday in April. See **Outreach** in this issue.

The Pre-Order Pickup at the end of April went smoothly due to the efforts of Duff and Donna Evers who once again took charge.

The Members' May Sale held at Le Marchant – St. Thomas School on our usual meeting day was a popular event. This year we did not have a speaker (everyone was really there for the plants) but used the opportunity to have members complete a questionnaire on the Society's activities. A copy is enclosed with this issue for those who have not already completed one.

The Public Sale, once again organized by Duff and Donna, was a big success with only a handful of plants left over. (And these were sold at the potluck). This is the Society's biggest money-maker.

Finally the rhodo year concluded with garden tours on the South Shore, including a tour of fascinating parts of the Bayport property that most of us had not seen before, followed by a potluck in Jenny Sandison's charming garden. ☐

## OUTREACH

The Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society has for the past number of years made a sincere effort to use our physical skills and our knowledge for the betterment of our community. You might recall these outreach efforts. We have provided labour and knowledge to the HRM after hurricane Juan in the cleaning up of the Public Garden's rhodos and azaleas. The ARHS provided the rhododendrons and the labour to establish a restful part of the garden near the new entrance on Spring Garden Road directly across from Sacred Heart School. The work done at the Kentville Research Station has been noted in the newsletter. We have saved and moved rhododendrons from private gardens to public areas, the large rhodo on the Bell Road frontage of the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History was a large project completed in May of 1999. This R. *Maximum* moved from Oxford St. to Bell Road using heavy moving equipment was probably the largest rhododendron moved in eastern Canada. It has thrived since the move, just take a quick look next time you're down that way. Members of the ARHS have also moved some choice rhododendrons from the garden of the late Alex Muntz, Clementsport to Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth and the Annapolis Royal Historical Gardens.

This October 18<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m. will provide the opportunity for members to be involved in another "outreach" program. The late John T. Meagher was a very dedicated member of the society; he was awarded the American Rhododendron Society's Bronze Metal in 1999. Mr. Meagher did his own personal outreach, and one such bit of enterprise is the rhodo and azalea garden at Regatta Point, HRM. Unfortunately this garden has not had the kind of attention that one would like to see, thus we have asked and been granted the opportunity to improve this garden. The Regatta Point Landowner's Association has given the society permission to do so. If you are interested in lending a hand this October 18th, please contact Christopher Hopgood at [cpheer@eastlink.ca](mailto:cpheer@eastlink.ca). ☐



## Plant Portraits

### *Jeffersonia*



*Jeffersonia dubia*. [Photo Roslyn Duffus]

As a plant enthusiast, one of my favourite times of the year is the spring when the woodland flowers make their appearance. This group includes many plants such as Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium*), *Trillium*, Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria*), Mayflower (*Epigaea*), Twinflower (*Linnaea*), and Partridgeberry (*Mitchella*) to name a few. As a plant collector, I am always trying to add to my collection. This has resulted in the addition of other species of *Cypripedium*, *Trillium* and the like as well as plants that I didn't previously have. In this article, I want to talk about the Genus *Jeffersonia* of which there are only two species. One is native to eastern North America and one to northeast Asia. Both will do well in our climate in moist, rich leafy woodland soil.

*Jeffersonia diphylla*, commonly called twinleaf because of the deeply divided kidney shaped leaves, is found in the Eastern States and up into southern Ontario. I received my plant from a member of the ARHS last year but it hasn't

flowered for me yet. According to the books, it will have 1 inch, short lived, eight petaled, white flowers similar to Bloodroot and will reach a height of 8-10 inches. The flowers are borne on slender stalks and displayed above the foliage which unfurl with a slight tinge of red but fade to a light green on maturity. I look forward to seeing it in flower. The seed pods, according to H. Lincoln Foster, in the book *Cuttings from a Rock Garden* "add another dimension of structural beauty as they ripen in late June." I look forward to seeing it in flower next spring.

*Jeffersonia dubia* came into my collection by the way of seed that I got through the Ontario Rock Garden Society ephemeral seed exchange in 2003. One seedling appeared in May of 2004 and it flowered for the first time this year. This species may, by some, be considered superior to and more dainty than its American cousin. The leaves are a lovely burgundy red as they emerge and make a lovely background for the 6 petaled flowers which open a pale lavender colour. The leaves turn green as they mature and often retain an edging of red into summer. The leaves are a similar shape to *J. diphylla* but not as fully divided. I was thrilled to have 6 flowers on my plant this year and was watching with great anticipation as the seed pods ripened. I planned to collect seeds and plant them immediately as seed germinates best when fresh. One day, when I went to check progress, I found two seed pods open and empty, two seed pods in the process of being emptied by ants and the two remaining and smallest pods still intact. Altogether, I collected perhaps 15 seeds which have been planted, some at the base of the parent, where in nature they seem to germinate very well, and some in pots. I look forward to seeing seedlings appear next spring or perhaps the following spring, and in only another three or four years, I'll have a whole clump of flowering *Jeffersonia*.

--Roslyn Duffus

### The Hardy Gesneriads

Most people are familiar with the tender tropical gesneriads – African violets, gloxinias, streptocarpus – whether or not they grow them or like them. But how many of us know the hardy gesneriads that can be grown outdoors in Nova Scotia?

*Ramonda myconi* from the Pyrenees is the one we grew first. It looks something like an African violet, but softer in colouring and more elegant, a pale mauve blue, with small neat rounded hairy leaves; altogether a subtle plant. After succeeding with this one, we tried the white and pale pink forms (*alba* and *rosea*). These were even better since the pale colours showed up particularly well in the shade (these plants require shade) and against background rocks. We tried another species of *Ramonda*, *Ramonda serbica*, but although it didn't die, it didn't do much living either, just pattered along flowerless.

Our next gesneriad was a *Haberlea rhodopensis* from Bulgaria and Greece. This is a bigger, more vigorous plant than *Ramonda*; I was able to split the first plant I received into three on arrival. *Haberlea* has flowers in mauve tints, shading to white, and its leaves are somewhat longer and less hairy than *Ramonda*, with toothed edges.



*Ramonda myconi alba*. [Photo C. Helleiner]

The queen of the rock garden gesneriads is *Jankaia heldreichii* found on Mount Olympus in Greece. In its photographs it looks wonderful. The only source I know sells them planted on tufa at a very high price and I haven't tried one. Whether it is truly hardy I don't know, but I'm suspicious. I'm still watching for seed in one of the exchanges. Luckily, however, there is a *Jankaia/Ramonda* hybrid, *Jankaemonda x vandemii*. This is a truly beautiful plant, with neat mauve blooms that fit perfectly with the tight hairy leaves, like an even better *Ramonda*, and one that has grown well for us..

All these plants need shade and very good drainage and are best planted on a slope or better yet in a crevice in a wall. When we first acquired them, we placed them in the openings of a strawberry pot, with one of the *Haberleas* on the flat top. They were in a coarse gravelly mixture with limestone chips; a little lime seems to be appreciated. Because we didn't know anything about their hardiness, the strawberry pot spent its winters in a leaky cold frame. By the spring the plants (which are evergreen) often seemed dried up and brown, but a good watering brought them back to life as good as new.

Having successfully grown these plants with cold frame protection, we decided to try them in the open. This worked remarkably well. A white flowered *Ramonda* planted in a low limestone wall has survived a good many winters, and shows up wonderfully against the dark grey. The *Haberleas* do equally well in the wall, one of them on level ground at the top. They are protected with fir boughs in the winter.

These plants are said to be easy to propagate from leaves, like African violets, with the proviso that the leaves should be taken right at the base including a tiny growth bud. They should also be reasonably easy from (tiny) seed.

Try them – you may be surprised.

-- Mary Helleiner

## HEY!

By Sheila Stevenson

We have an interesting job ahead of us. Members at the May 08 ARHS meeting voted to spend ARHS money to engage in the business of the American Rhododendron Society, as a means of connecting with folks in other parts of the world [and in our district] who share our plant and environmental interests.

(More than half the members who responded to the 2008 survey question on the importance of international connections also gave it high values 20:1 10:19 9:4 8:23 7:14 6:1 5:6 3:1 1:1 0:1 ?:1 >1 )

District 12 of the American Rhododendron Society includes the Atlantic Chapter (Atlantic Rhodo & Hort), the Toronto and the Niagara Chapters. Atlantic Chapter has been unconnected for a long time. That's about to change.

Your board agreed at their July 11 meeting to proceed with finding interested people with related board experience and a knowledge of the ARHS to take on the jobs. A requisite qualification for the job is ARS membership.

The two people in these jobs will fit into an existing management group for District 12, made up of ARS members in the Toronto and Niagara Chapters. It's they who have been carrying the ARS connection, providing the Reps and Alternates, the membership coordinator and the treasurer. Rich Birkett, outgoing Alternate Rep to the long-serving and now resigned Peter Newbauer, says, "It's a lot to learn, so it will take awhile. That's OK." He says they "are pleased to have Atlantic take over for a while." Financial costs for travel and operations now will be shared among the three chapters.

<http://www.rhododendron.org/> says "The American Rhododendron Society is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to encourage interest in and to disseminate information about the genus Rhododendron. Members' experience ranges from novice to expert. Society activities include public education, flower shows, seed exchanges, scientific studies, and communication through publications and local and national meetings. ARS chapters are located throughout the United States and Canada and in Denmark, Holland, Scotland, Sweden and Sikkim."

Join ARS through Betty MacDonald, Atlantic Rhodo&Hort membership coordinator.

### Call to local ARS members

Do you have an interest in representing District 12 at American rhododendron Society board meetings? The Atlantic Chapter of the ARS (i.e. the ARHS) needs 2 local ARS members to participate on the board of the ARS (American Rhododendron Society), starting in winter 2009. ☐

## ARHS 2009 TISSUE CULTURE ADVANCE SALE

Once again it's time to order your tissue culture plants for the spring of 2009. We will have some new varieties as well as some older ones that our newer members may not have. We try to keep the price as low as possible so the price again this year will be \$5.00 for each plant.

DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY WITH YOUR ORDER. YOU WILL BE BILLED WHEN YOUR ORDER IS PICKED UP OR SENT ( special shipping charges may apply.)

These plants will be available for pickup in early April. The exact time and location will be announced at a later date. All members will be advised of the date and location once confirmation is received of the plants' arrival. In addition to your order there may be leftover plants available for sale on the day of pickup.

An order form is included with the Newsletter. PLEASE MAKE SURE YOUR PHONE NUMBER AND, IF POSSIBLE, YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS, IS INCLUDED ON YOUR ORDER FORM. IF YOUR ORDER CANNOT BE PICKED UP THE DAY OF THE SALE BY YOU PLEASE INDICATE ON YOUR ORDER FORM.

Orders that are not picked up in Halifax on the pickup date will be sent collect by the method you have indicated on your order form. Where shipping options are limited, the parcel will be sent Canada Post at your cost. PLEASE REMEMBER TO MAKE A COPY OF YOUR ORDER. The deadline for submitting orders is Friday, December 12, 2008.

Please send orders to: ARHS,  
c/o Audrey Fralic  
RR1 Port Mouton, N.S. B0T1K0  
902-683-2711  
[alfralic2@yahoo.ca](mailto:alfralic2@yahoo.ca)

Please remember that these plants have not been hardened off. We recommend that you give them a good watering and pot them in 3-4 inch pots. A good mix to use is 1 part commercial mix, 1 part perlite and 1 part peat. Wet this mix with hot water, mix well and let cool completely. DO NOT OVERWATER. Keep them inside under lights in a cool place until the risk of frost is over. (At least late May). In June, gradually place them outside. Plant them in a coldframe or some other well protected area by late June. Mulch to keep the moisture and soil temperature stable and water as needed. For the first winter provide some protection such as a coldframe, burlap, fir boughs and mulch.

Good luck with your plants and keep some records of how they do. We'd love to have some feedback on their performance. HAPPY GARDENING – Audrey Fralic. ☺

## ARHS 2009 TISSUE CULTURE ADVANCE SALE

RHODODENDRONS (all rhododendrons are elepidotes unless otherwise stated)

VARIETY	HYBRIDIZER	DESCRIPTION
R. Astrid	Hachmann	This rhodo is described as a first class red <i>yakushmanum</i> hybrid with flowers opening from deep red buds to form full, round ball trusses. The red flowers show a muted streak of white. The foliage is lush and slightly glossy. A compact plant growing to about 3 ft. in 10 years. Hardy to -15 F.
R. Dora Amateis	Amateis	Lepidote. Pure white flowers are profuse on this low growing bushy plant. Deep green foliage is highlighted with bronze tones and is prettiest when grown in full sun. It has a spicy scent and will only grow to 3 ft. in 10 years. Hardy to -15F.
R. Excelsior	Heinje	This is a <i>yakushmanum</i> hybrid with attractive dark green foliage and lovely large pink flowers with red rims. Cold hardy to - 15 F. Compact to 3 ft.



VARIETY	HYBRIDIZER	DESCRIPTION
R. Ken Janeck	Janeck	One of the best forms of <i>yakushmanun</i> with its appealing, heavily indumented foliage and its richly colored pink flowers. The only <i>yakushmanun</i> to receive the Award of Excellence. Grows to 3 or 4 ft and is hardy to -15 F.
R. Pekka		This is a very hardy hybrid from Finland. A large plant, it produces abundant dome shape trusses of light pink flowers speckled with brown. Hardy to -29F.
R. Polarnacht	Hachmann	This rhodie will grow to only about 3 ft. but may spread to twice as wide. Frilly deep purple blooms with spotted red throats come out in midseason. Hardy to -15F.
R. Tina Heinje	Heinje	Red, bell shaped flowers in loose trusses on nicely rounded leaves adorn this compact growing plant in midseason. Hardy to -25 F. 3 ft. X 3 ft.
R. Victoria's Consort		This too is a fairly compact rhodie growing to about 4 ft. Flowers are large and funnel shaped, yellowish white with a green eye. Blooms late midseason. Hardy to -25F.
R. Weston's Pink Diamond		Lepidote. This PJM and <i>R. mucronulatum</i> "Cornell Pink" hybrid flowers very early with semi- double fuchsia pink flowers. Grows to about 4 ft. and is reliable and hardy to -25F.
R. keiskii 'Yaku Fairy'	Starling	This is a beautiful little plant with its pale yellow flowers that bloom profusely from an early age. Very compact, it will only reach about 2 ft. Hardy to -10F.

#### DECIDUOUS AZALEAS

Double Parfait	Mossman	Semi-double pink, fragrant flowers adorn this compact azalea. Grows to 3 ft X 2 ft. Zone 5.
Lemon Lights		This hardy azalea is another from the breeding program at the University of Minnesota. It features an abundance of lemon-yellow flowers in late mid-season. Grows to 5 ft. Hardy to -30F.
Weston's Popsicle		Wonderfully fragrant, dark pink flowers with an orange flare open early summer, well after most azaleas are done blooming. Burgundy fall foliage. Upright habit to 5 ft. Zone 4. -25 F.

#### COMPANION PLANTS

Actaea 'Hillside Black Beauty'		The darkest of the purple leaved snake-roots. The nearly black leaves are topped by 10-14" long racemes of pink tinted white flowers in late summer or early fall. Likes lots of moisture and is darkest in full sun. Grows 5-7 feet tall.
Calamagrostis 'Avalanche'		A variegated sport of 'Karl Foerster' with central white stripes on the leaves. Makes a striking accent in a perennial border or shrub planting. 46-60 " tall. Zone 5.
Hosta 'June'		This lovely hosta has leaves with bright gold centers surrounded by irregular blue-green margins. Pale lavender blooms appear in midsummer. A standout with awards to prove it. Grows to 15" x 36" Zone 3.

VARIETY	HYBRIDIZER	DESCRIPTION
Hosta “Blue Mouse Ears”		This tiny hosta sports small round leaves are very thick. A must have for the rock garden enthusiast or collector. Lavender flowers in midsummer. Dwarf, less than 10 “ high.
Kalmia latifolia “Big Boy”		This mountain laurel has larger foliage than other kalmias. Growth is slow, upright and compact. Flowers are soft pink. Size 6 ft. x 6 ft. Zone 5.
Kalmia latifolia “Sarah”		The best red flowers of any mountain laurel. Very bright and dazzling. Excellent foliage and habit. Size 4 ft. x 4 ft. Zone 5.
Pieris “Brouwer’s Beauty”		This dense compact pieris bears horizontal panicles of white flowers which open from purplish-red buds in early spring. Size 5 ft. x 5 ft. Zone 5.
Pieris “Mountain Fire”		This pieris is popular for its flaming red new growth which is abundant in spring. White flowers in early spring. AGM winner. 6 ft. x 4 ft. Zone 5.

□□□

## ARHS 2008 Garden Tour



ARHS group enjoying the 2008 Garden Tours & Pot Luck. [Photo Barbara McLean]

# Some Green Thoughts

## Say Goodbye to Plastic Pots

By Jenny Sandison

As a landscaper I am always amazed at the end of a day's planting to see how many little plastic pots are neatly stacked in the truck. Every two weeks or so, on the day before the garbage pick-up, I am almost embarrassed at the number of stacked plastic pots that we squeeze into blue recycling bags. Off they go, out of sight, but where do they end up? Nowadays we are so conscious of the finite areas of our landfills, and the proliferation of plastic in the environment that recycling is a way of life. However the most recent guide from the recycling facility admonished us to improve our ways and make sure those recyclables were clean. I certainly didn't wash those little plastic pots – there were too many of them. What to do?

Plastic pots have been a boon to the nursery trade, and they revolutionized the industry. In my father's day an individual would send off for plants in late winter and they would arrive bare rooted and needing immediate attention and planting. Bare rooted plants would have had all the soil washed off their roots and they would have to be dormant. All the previous generations accepted that this was the only way to transport plants any distance.

Whoever invented the plastic pot and the soil-less planting medium produced a system that allowed the grower to produce a plant that could continue to grow for months, and wasn't too heavy to ship. Nowadays we think it normal to visit the nursery anytime of the growing season and find plants (for the most part!) in good health and ready to be moved to our gardens. As a landscaper I can order up a perennial border and get it into the ground from April to October. But those plastic pots!

Actually I have just phoned the Lunenburg Recycling Facility and a friendly voice who went off to speak to a supervisor has reassured me that as long as the pots are mostly clean and don't have pieces of earth clinging to them they will be sent to recycling. Maybe I will be extra sure in future, especially on muddy days, to try to keep the pots clean.

There are 125 million container plants purchased annually in Canada. Most nurseries don't reuse the pots because of the risk of disease transfer, and many cities don't recycle them. On an individual level many of us will use some again, and I have lots of friends who phone me for them because they know I go through a lot. A local grower is always quite grateful for the large ones that are expensive.

### Compostable pots

However a few months ago I was intrigued to read in the Canadian Landscape Newsbrief of a 100% biodegradable and decomposable pot, Napac Nature Pots. These pots are made from *Miscanthus* (elephant grass) and natural binding agents. *Miscanthus*, cultivated in southern Germany and Switzerland, is an environmentally friendly crop. A large perennial grass (it can grow up to thirteen feet in height), it is a high yielding, low input perennial. I have got this information from the website of [getgreenstar.com/napac](http://getgreenstar.com/napac) which is geared towards growers and offers answers to questions such as: What sizes are available? Can the pots be branded? Will they deteriorate if left outside in the rain and if yes, how quickly?

As a potential user I am intrigued. It seems they are stable for at least a year but eventually they will start to break down. Moisture, either of rain or humidity, will begin the decomposition after that, so they might be a problem if I wanted to overwinter a plant. They are designed to be placed in the ground with the plant, a practice I am not keen on, but as they are only stable for a year the plant shouldn't have become rootbound. Evidently tossed into the compost heap it decomposes in six months.

Do I think the industry will embrace this idea? Well, change always comes slowly, and many nurseries will think "I need to overwinter the shrubs I didn't sell. I don't want the pot falling apart in the spring." Then there will be the cost factor. I'm sure these pots will be more expensive and the nurseries are always having to compete with Canadian Tire and Walmart. But I still think it is a step in the right direction. What can we do? I think we all have to start asking our local nurseries and garden outlets to use this kind of product. Consumer demand is a potent force, and like the electric car or the hybrid, compostable pots will only be there when we all insist they are essential.

Say Hello to biodegradable pots and guilt-free gardening.

## The Black Vine Weevil – Biological Control

By John Weagle

Many novice gardeners may not be aware of the most destructive of pests on ornamental plants – the black vine weevil. These weevils thrive in cool, moist climates similar to ours in Atlantic Canada and relish open moist soils – the very type we try to create in our rhododendron beds - where they can easily hide by day.

The black vine weevil is not to be confused with the very beneficial black ground beetle which is larger (1-1.5”/ 2-2.5cm long) and has a shiny black-purple exterior. This beetle is a frequenter of gardens and is usually seen scrambling around on a mission or struggling on its back down trying to right itself. The black vine weevil is significantly smaller – ‘one quarter to one half inch long -- with a prominent snout, matt/dull brown or charcoal black and emerges in late spring. They will live year round in cool and warm greenhouse conditions. Finding the crafty adults can be most difficult as they are nocturnal. At night they can be found eating on leaf edges; even a sudden flashlight beam will cause them to run away, drop or fall and play dead. This leaf-notching will usually start in June on the tender new leaves.

Initially the gardener will be most concerned with the obvious damage done by this nasty pest – the notching of leaves on rhododendrons and azaleas. This is most apparent on rhodos grown in too much shade or other unsuitable conditions; planted in full sun there is little damage. The notches on the leaves are unmistakable and quite unlike the chewing done by caterpillars. Weevil notches are reminiscent of little bays or harbours - extend from the leaf edge where the biting begins and increase in size toward the leaf interior. This unattractive cosmetic problem portends a far more serious problem lurking just beneath the soil and mulch.

Bad news - the weevils are all female and lay hundreds of tiny round eggs just below ground. The eggs hatch as larvae – these grubs are ‘C’ shaped, legless and with a small golden head. The young larvae eat the outer younger roots of rhododendrons and then continue on to the older and larger roots – plants will exhibit a lack of vigour or even sudden collapse. In latter extreme cases they have girdled the trunk just below or at mulch level, it is not unusual to see azaleas simply fall over rootless in summer.

More bad news, the weevil is a connoisseur of the crème de la crème of the plant world. The *Ericaceae* family, alpine plants (especially in screes, troughs and pots), the primula family, shortias, hens and chickens and many bulbs are all on their extensive menu. Generally they will simply eat the roots off and the plant will suddenly wilt when the humidity drops in late July. With cyclamen they will first eat the roots and then proceed to enter the bulb from below, hollow it out and then the plant collapses or falls out of the pot. Yews are a particular delicacy and a good indicator plant for weevils – if you see random dead twigs on Taxus, check the lower part of the stem where the damage ends and you will see where the weevils have girdled the shoot.

### Eliminating Vine Weevils

Now what to do about this pest? When powerful insecticides were the order of the day weevils were still very difficult to eliminate – orthene, chlordane, endosulfan, chlorpyrifos and the like might have knocked the bugs back but they gave rather poor control of the problem below ground. The new systemic insecticide, imidichloprid, approved by the EU, gives very good control and bifenthrin (a new generation pyrethroid) gives close to 100% control even at year three. These two controls are not available to the consumer.

Now some good news. Nematodes are natural soil parasitic worms and luckily these have an appetite for weevil larvae. A promising new nematode, *Steinernema kraussei* (Nemasys-L), was discovered in the woods near Fife, Scotland. Now after 10 years of research it's been proven safe and to work well in soil temperatures from +5C to +29C. The nematodes enter the weevil larva, once inside they release symbiotic bacteria that quickly kill the insect. Reproduction inside the larva releases a new generation of hungry infective juveniles which disperse in search of further prey.

These nematodes can be pre-ordered at most garden centres. Six million of these nematodes will cover an area of about 75 square meters (800 sq. ft.) and cost you the equivalent of a small bottle of insecticide. Remember these will not kill the leaf-chomping adults, only the larvae – given a couple of applications the populations should be drastically reduced.

Keep in mind the nematodes are live, have an expiry date and must be refrigerated until they are ready to be mixed with water and applied. Here are the application requirements as outlined by the maker Becker Underwood:

- The area to be treated must be moist, after a heavy rain is the best time to apply. The area must be kept moist for at least two weeks after application so the colony can establish.

- Do not apply in sunny conditions but in the evening or when overcast. Exposure to direct sunlight will kill the nematodes.
- The entire packet must be used at once, immediately after mixing.
- If using a sprayer make sure it is perfectly clean with no insecticide or other chemical residue. Remove the filter screen from the sprayer.
- Applied in July or August a follow up treatment is recommended in October for bad weevil infestations and hatching-egg control. Following that an annual treatment in mid-summer should suffice.
- Mix the contents of the package in 4 litres of lukewarm water and apply using a hose-end sprayer to thoroughly cover 75 sq. meters. Or add ½ liter of the above mix to an 8 liter watering can and fill to the brim, apply until 4 litres of mix are used up in the cover area. The nematodes must then be watered in well so that they reach the root zone where the weevils live. Keep the treated area well watered for at least two weeks. We will have a demonstration of the mixing technique at an autumn meeting.

For more information and photos of symptoms, weevil larvae and adults visit [www.beckerunderwood.com](http://www.beckerunderwood.com) and follow the links to Nemasys-L.

The only good thing I can say about this horror of a pest is that they most satisfying crunch when squished.

## **Organic Control of Lily Beetles**

**By Mary Helleiner**

It has been suggested that lily beetles can be controlled, at least to some extent, with Neem oil. This is an organic product, produced from the tropical neem tree, and is apparently (or so they say on the internet) used on human skin and hair, externally of course. As a beetle control it is applied, mixed with water and a few drops of detergent, as a soil drench before the lily beetles emerge from the ground, and also as a spray on the larvae and adults found on the lily plants.

If anyone is lucky enough not to know the lily beetle, the adult is bright red and unmistakable; the larvae are revolting and look like bird droppings. They single out lilies to feed on; martagons seem to be a particular delicacy. (Note that we are talking about true lilies, genus *Lilium*, not day lilies, genus *Hemerocallis*). The beetles are also said to feed on fritillarias and erythroniums. So far most of us have been trying to cope with them by collecting the adults daily. This has to be done with care, as at the first inkling of capture the beetle drops to the ground, never to be seen again. I haven't tried neem oil yet, but I have a little bottle of it waiting for the spring. ☐

## **The 2009 ARHS Seed Exchange**

We are anticipating the upcoming 2009 Seed Exchange with great interest. Last year's contributions were very well received, and we thank all who participated as donors or as purchasers. We encourage any member to donate seeds from interesting plants in their gardens; be it rhododendron, azalea or a companion plant. We also encourage members to give growing rhododendrons and azaleas from seed a try. Cultural information is readily available, and the rewards are heartening. Results, from a bloom standpoint, often appear in as little as 2-3 years.

The Seed Exchange includes seed of rhododendrons and azaleas, wild and cultivated, species and hybrids, both hand pollinated and open pollinated. It also includes other unique shrubs, trees and perennials.

Seed should be fresh, clean and labeled. A concise description would be helpful. Please ensure that the envelopes used to transport seed are sealed along the seams to prevent leakage.

We welcome questions and feedback. [sbryson@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:sbryson@ns.sympatico.ca)

Send seed by December 15, 2008, to:

Sharon Bryson, #407 Old Maryvale Rd. RR#3 Antigonish NS B2G 2L1

## Gardening on a Slope in St. Margaret's Bay

By Cora Swinamer



The Garden in 2008 & Magnolia 'Curly Head'. [Photos Cora Swinamer]

From my first visit to the property that is now home in Mason's Point, Head of St. Margaret's Bay, I imagined the myriad of possibilities that lay ahead. It was almost an acre on a sandy hillside facing south with a few old apple trees, weigela, *Kolkwitzia* (Beauty Bush) and honeysuckle. The original owners had planted spruce and pine trees along the north-east side about 40 years ago, which provide great wind protection. They had also planted spruce along the southwest which had been kept topped into a now odd looking hedge about 15 feet tall. We were lucky enough to be left with a photograph taken back in the 1960's.

When we put our property in Queens County on the market, we spent many hours potting up my collection of tissue culture Rhodos that just had to make the journey with me. And of course, there was the 'Curly Head' magnolia that had already lived with me in Dartmouth and East Port Medway, that insisted on coming too. Then, I couldn't forget the assortment of daylilies I had collected over the years (they needed dividing anyway) and thought I should also take cuttings from the viburnums bought through the society, and who would miss those little evergreens and variegated lilac (*Syringa vulgaris* 'Aucubaefolia' 1998 Tissue culture order) I had grown from those 4 inch pots that were finally starting to grow. So many pots, so little space.

By now I realized that I had several truck loads of plants that needed care and watering for several months between the time we put our East Port Medway house on the market and actual moving day. Enter the source of my gardening inspiration, my Mom, Ilene Ruggles. She created an incredible garden on the shores of Mahone Bay during the past twenty years, of which I became the frequent beneficiary of cast-off shrubs and perennials that were surplus as her garden matured and her landscape design was refined. In the shade of her oak trees, my plants spent many months (some over a year) until I could prepare beds here. We moved to Mason's Point in July 2002.

As soon as we were settled, my husband Carl and I set to work creating gardens. The first is what I termed 'the holding garden' which five years later is similar, just the plants are bigger and need moving more than ever. In addition to the garden, we also wanted to try and carve a gentler path down the steep slope. Lucky for me, Carl enjoys building rock walls and I enjoy planting them. What a team!

### Gardening on sandy soil

I was unfamiliar with gardening in sandy soil and was concerned my plants wouldn't do well. One benefit we noticed as soon as we started planting the slope was, because the soil didn't become water logged, there was very little problem with erosion. As each shrub or perennial went in, we created as level a planting hole as possible, using individual rocks to retain small sections of the slope. I tried to place my small evergreens and deciduous shrubs strategically so that over the years they would cover the slope (and be less for me to weed). I filled the balance of the slope with perennials, realizing that over the years they might get crowded out. We applied a layer of bark mulch and that seemed to protect the root zone and compensate for the sandy soil.



After six years, the gardens are closely packed but there is still be room for self-seeding rudbeckia, lupin and mallows, and did I mention horsetails? I like a bit of everything but the horsetail (which I learned at the Irving botanical garden was a valuable medicinal herb!), is one which I could do without. I have removed some underperforming shrubs recently to make room for another magnolia (the definition of ‘underperforming’ changes as my space becomes limited). I want to have them lining my path down the slope. My collection includes a couple of *Magnolia sieboldii* including ‘Halifax Hardy’ grown from seed by Audrey Fralic, a ‘Wada’s Memory’ I just planted today (a gift from my mother’s garden) as well as the fore mentioned *Magnolia* ‘Curly Head’ (‘Editor Hopkins’) purchased from the Society in 1998. I still want to add a couple more but I’m running out of room. There is also my seedling of pink flowering horse chestnut from Stan Dodds that needs its ‘forever’ home and the black walnut that I started from seed that needs to be placed far from its neighbours... oh my, the gardening continues! ☐

## Book Review

**Buried Treasures,  
Finding and Growing the World’s Choicest Bulbs, by Jānis Rukšāns  
Timber Press, 2007, \$39.95**

Jānis Rukšāns operates a bulb business in Latvia. He does not attempt to compete with the big Dutch firms, leaving them to supply the world market with the popular varieties of crocuses, tulips and daffodils. He specializes instead in rare and unusual plants, many of which are not available anywhere else. His interests include not only bulbs in the strict sense, but also any plant with an underground structure which can be shipped – corms, tubers and fleshy rhizomes. In the first part of *Buried Treasures* Rukšāns describes his methods of propagating, growing and harvesting his “treasures”, as he always calls them. The conditions in Latvia are not very different from those in Nova Scotia – cold winters (often to -30°C) with intervals without snow cover (he uses a peat mulch to protect his plants), and damp summers with occasional droughts, requiring watering. Almost anything he can grow is likely to do equally well in Nova Scotia. He puts a great deal of effort into making sure that any bulb he sells is in good health, and always destroys any stock with fungal, bacterial or viral infections.

The remainder of the book, about three quarters of the total, consists of descriptions of Rukšāns’ trips to various parts of Europe and Asia, observing and collecting plant material. He is a modern-day plant hunter, a great collector and discoverer of previously undescribed plants. (He remarks that the only way he can afford to do this is from the profits from his nursery). For a good part of his life, Latvia was a part of the Soviet Union. Despite his disdain for the Russian occupiers of his country, he includes some amusing anecdotes of his dealings with Soviet bureaucracy. The bulk of each chapter consists of descriptions of the plants he encounters, and related species or varieties which he has obtained from other growers. Almost always he tells us how well or how poorly the plants did when he tried to grow them in his nursery. The book contains over three hundred photographs. Many of the flowers are illustrated, as well as a few landscapes and people. The pictures are printed in reasonably generous sizes, three or four, or occasionally five or six to a page. The only index is of plant names, so if you want to find out what grows in Kyrgyzstan, for example, you will have to leaf through the book. Rukšāns includes a brief chapter on the ethics of plant collecting, pointing out that while some populations of valuable plants have been extirpated by collectors, many others have been lost through agriculture and grazing; the plants survive only because collectors have brought them into cultivation. Rukšāns himself says he almost always collects only seeds, allowing the plant to survive in the wild.

– Chris Helleiner

## Photo Album



*Jankaemonda x vandemii*. Photo Chris Helleiner]



*Haberlea rhodopensis*. [Photo Chris Helleiner]



R. 'Ken Janeck' [Photo Sterling Levy]



R. 'Percy Wiseman' [Photo Bob Pettipas]



R. 'Peter Behring' [Photo Bob Pettipas]



R. 'Janet Blair' [Photo Sterling Levy]



*R. carolinianum*. [Photo Sterling Levy]



R. 'Brittany'. [Photo Bob Pettipas]