

AtlanticRhodo

www.AtlanticRhodo.org

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Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society

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Director - Communications	Mary Helleiner	429-0213	May - Public Plant Sale	Duff & Donna Evers	835-2586

Membership

Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society.

Fees are \$ 15.00 per year, due January 1, 2006. 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

American Rhododendron Society

Fees are \$50.00 Canadian per year and include ARHS membership. Make cheques payable to American Rhododendron Society District 12. For benefits see 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).

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: *R. bureavii*. [Photo Jens Birck]



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.

Tuesday September 6 7:00 p.m. Annual General Meeting of ARHS

Tuesday September 6 Harry Jans: Harry's Garden, Plants and Growing Techniques. Harry Jans of Al Loenen, near Apeldoorn, Holland, is the undisputed best grower of alpine in the world today. He will show us his revolutionary alpine house and propagation techniques in this lecture, on his first eastern North American tour.

Tuesday October 4 19th Annual Steele Lecture: Dick Jaynes: Kalmias and other Interesting Plants. Dick Jaynes has worked on improving kalmias for more than thirty years. He has written several books summing up his lifetime's work on this genus. He will discuss kalmias and other unusual trees and shrubs at his nursery in Hamden, Connecticut.

Cutting exchange with demonstration.

Tuesday November 1 Audrey Fralic: Demystifying Tissue Culture. Audrey will explain the tissue culture reproduction process and show us how to grow tissue culture plants successfully.

Tuesday December 6 Christmas Party with members' slides. This is our **annual wine and cheese party**. There will not be a speaker. Come and enjoy an evening of food, wine and conversation. Please bring five to ten slides of your garden, other gardens or plants of interest, and also finger food or sweets. Wine will be provided by the Society. There will also be a sale of surplus library books.

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 2005 Newsletter:

**Neil Bennett
Marilyn & Dave Latter
Timothy Mackay**

**Canning
Halifax
Halifax**

Special Notices

ARHS Fall Cutting Exchange

There will be a Rhododendron and Azalea cutting exchange at the **Tuesday, October 4** meeting. Many of the members have now acquired rare and unusual plants from ARHS Tissue Culture, ARHS 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 to grow. 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 rhododendrons 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.

The 2006 Seed Exchange

The 2005 Seed Exchange was most successful, with the highest numbers of both donations and purchases so far. 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 shrubs, trees and perennials. Members are encouraged to take part, even if they only contribute or request one variety. Seed should be fresh, clean and labelled.

Send seed by **December 15, 2005**, to:

Sharon Bryson, #407 Old Maryvale Road, RR#3 Antigonish NS B2G2L1.

IN MEMORIAM

Paul Wendt, 9 July 1917 - 13 May 2005

Members will be saddened to learn that ARHS member Paul Wendt passed away on 13 May 2005. Paul was one of the first members to enthusiastically join the newly formed Atlantic Chapter of the Rhododendron Society of Canada back in the late 1970's. Paul and his wife Ursula efficiently ran our Seed Exchange from the beginning until the 1980's and their home 'Ellershous' was always open to visitors. Few visitors left without a sampling of desserts and a gift of a plant. Paul was always one we could depend on and gracious to the end. The Wendts supported all the Society's activities in those formative years and it is doubtful whether the Society would be as vibrant as it is now without such dedication and commitment. We will miss Paul and our sincere condolences go out to his wife Ursula and family.

- **John Weagle**

ARHS 2006 Tissue Culture – Advance Sale

It's time again to order your tissue culture plants for spring 2006. This year again we have some new varieties and also some older ones that our newer members may not have. The cost to you for these plants will be approximately \$5.00 each. We try to keep the price as low as possible.

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 pick-up in early April. The 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 date. In addition to your order you may be able to purchase leftover plants if any are available the day of pick-up.

An order form is included with this newsletter. Please make sure your phone number and if possible your e-mail address is included on the form. If your order cannot be picked up in Halifax please indicate this on the order form. Sorry, this sale is only available to our members in the Atlantic region.

Orders that are not picked up in Halifax on the pick-up date will be sent collect by the method indicated on the order form. Where shipping options are limited, the parcel will be shipped by Canada Post at your cost. **Please remember to make a copy of your order.**

Please send your orders to:

**RSCAR
c/o Audrey Fralic
R R # 1
Port Mouton, N.S. B0T 1T0
Phone 1-902-683-2711**

Remember that these plants have NOT been hardened off. We recommend that you give them a good watering and pot them up in 3 inch pots. You can use a mixture of one part commercial mix, one part peat and one part perlite. DO NOT OVERWATER. Keep them inside under lights in a cool place until all risk of frost is past (at least late May). In June, gradually place them outdoors. Do not leave them in their pots. Plant them in the ground in a coldframe or some other well protected area. Mulch to keep the moisture and soil temperature stable and make sure they are watered as needed.

For the first winter provide some protection. Use a coldframe, burlap or conifer boughs and make sure you use some mulch. Do not use clear plastic as it will cause burning and may even kill them.

Good luck with your plants and make some notes on how they do. We would appreciate some feedback on their performance.

Happy Gardening! -- Audrey Fralic

RHODODENDRONS (all rhododendrons are elepidotes unless otherwise stated)

Variety	Hybridizer	Description
April Mist	Mehlquist	A superb early bloomer with beautiful double flowers of soft pink, edged with deeper pink. Its foliage is attractive, its habit compact. Lepidote. 3 ft. by 3 ft. Hardy to -25F.
Arctic Pearl		This dauricum hybrid is very hardy. It has small glossy leaves and its white flowers are carried in trusses of 5 or more. Early bloomer. Lepidote. Hardy to -25F. Grows to about 4 ft.
Eleanor Moody	Sanders	The midseason flowers are white with a purple blotch and are shown to advantage by the handsome deep green foliage. Grows to 5 ft by 6 ft. Hardy to -15F.

Variety	Hybridizer	Description
Eruption	Hachmann	Stunning deep rose flowers with a prominent ivory center are presented in trusses of 14 to 16. This award hybrid from Germany has a compact habit. Grows to 4 ft. by 5 ft. Hardy to –15F.
Fantastica	Hachmann	The wavy-edged midseason flowers are a shiny light red at the edges and creamy pink in center. Dense compact habit. Some feel this is the best of the Hachmann hybrids. AGM winner. 3 ft by 4 ft. Hardy to –15F.
Ginny Gee	Berg	A beautiful little shrub that's vigorous, tough and blooms like there's no tomorrow. Its early midseason flowers are pink and white, turning all white with age. Leaves are dark green turning reddish in winter. Low dense habit. AGM winner. 2'x 3'.
Helsinki University		This may be the hardiest hybrid from the University of Helsinki breeding program; it has endured –39F. Flowers are bright pink with orangey-red flecks and appear late season. New growth is reddish, maturing glossy green. Upright habit. Grows to 6'x 4'.
Mikkeli		Rich pink buds open to lovely white flowers that are flushed pink. The new growth is covered with silvery down; the mature leaves have yellow indumentum. Another hardy plant from the University of Helsinki breeding program, it has endured –35F. Upright, well branched habit. 6'x 6'.
Purple Gem	Hardgrove	Masses of purple-violet flowers cover this hardy dwarf in early midseason. The new growth is a bright blue green and the foliage turns bronze in winter. Excellent in a rock garden. Lepidote. 2 ft. x 3 ft. Hardy to –25F.
Skookum	Minch	This is a compact, very hardy rhododendron. Flowers are a Striking bright red, the foliage is an attractive dark green. Skookum buds freely at a young age. Late midseason bloom. Mounding habit. 4'x 4'. Hardy to –20F.
Tiana	Brack	Large trusses comprising as many as 20 sparkling white flowers, each splashed with deep burgundy stand out against the dark green leaves. Vigorous, mounding habit when young. Eventually grows to 3 ft x 4 ft. Hardy to –15F.

Deciduous Azaleas

Gibraltar	Exbury	This is the most popular and reliable Exbury azalea. It puts on a great show of vivid orange blooms in midseason. Mildew resistant foliage. AGM winner. 4 ft x 4 ft. Zone 5.
Golden Lights		Fragrant yellow flowers in late midseason and mildew resistant foliage. Rounded habit. Exceptionally cold hardy. 4 ft x 4 ft.
Rosy Lights		Fragrant dark pink flowers with rose red shading cover a large bushy shrub in late spring. Very hardy. 8 ft x 8 ft.

Companion Plants

Daphne transatlantica 'Summer Ice'

A choice evergreen daphne with variegated foliage that can bloom from spring to fall. The leaves have a creamy white edge and the white flowers appear in clusters. Rounded, shrubby habit. 3 ft x 3 ft. Zone 6.

Enkianthus 'Showy Lantern'

One of the finest red flowering selections to date, yielding a lavish display of cherry red flowers in late spring. Fall color can be very impressive, usually in stunning red and orange tones. Grows to 8 ft. Zone 5.

Japanese Painted Fern
(*Athyrium Nipponicum Pictum*)

The fronds of this deciduous fern have intricate patterns of silvery white on deep green accented with reddish stems. Nice for a shady corner. Grows slowly as a young plant. Grows to 20" x 24". Zone 4.

Phylliopsis 'Pinocchio'

This hybrid in the heath family blankets itself with deep pink bell-shaped flowers in mid-spring. It forms a spreading mound of fine, dark green foliage. Needs well-drained, acid soil. A good choice for an alpine garden. 12" x 18" Zone 6.

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ARHS Annual Pot-Luck - 2005



ARHS Members and Friends at the 2005 Annual Pot-Luck Dinner. [Photo Betty MacDonald]

Plant Portraits

Corydalis elata



Corydalis elata. [Photo Roslyn Duffus]

Many of us lust after true blue flowers and one of the most beautiful is found in the genus *Corydalis*. I have for some time grown *C. flexuosa* and enjoyed it very much but it tends to go dormant in dry weather and may not always persist in the garden. Last year I found *C. elata* in Wolfville and brought it home to try out. The label said it had cobalt blue flowers in July and did not go dormant and was hardy to Zone 4. It required moist humus rich soil in part or full shade.

Now, one year may not be considered enough time to test this plant fully, but I think it will be a favourite with me. It has grown well but not rampantly in the year and flowered well in both 2004 and 2005. It flowers in mid to late July and the flowers are a true blue with a white lip. Sometimes there is a shading of lavender, perhaps as it fades. It has not set seed so far but perhaps will when it gets a little more mature. I have mine planted where it gets good light but no direct sun. The soil could perhaps use a little more humus and a few fewer tree roots but I water this area when needed and have mulched it with chopped oak leaves. It is in company with assorted rhododendrons, meconopsis, primulas and digitalis. I think this might be a much easier plant to get going in most gardens than *C. flexuosa*.

– Roslyn Duffus

Clematis integrifolia

Many of us grow clematis vines in our gardens and enjoy the wide range of colours, flower forms and flowering seasons that the genus can provide. For those where space is an issue I would like to recommend *Clematis integrifolia*, a herbaceous perennial form of this group. There is no need for a trellis or for knowledge about when to prune and you get a good display of flowers for a month or more.

This is a plant that originates in Europe and Asia and grows in grassland and steppes. Mine originated from a seed package from the Ontario Rock Garden Society seed exchange in the mid 1990's. It dies back to the ground in the fall and has been totally hardy for me for at least ten years. It grows about 24 inches, 60 cm. for me and has done much better since I moved it from a fairly shady location into full sun in the spring of 2004. The nodding solitary bell shaped flowers have slightly twisted sepals and continue to come over a period of several weeks from late June into August. The species is usually a purple blue but there are some hybrids in pinks and whites as well.

I don't know if this plant is available locally but if you come across it give it a try. Give it good light and good humus rich but well drained soil and good moisture. It may take its time to get settled in but is well worth the space.

– Roslyn Duffus

Trillium undulatum

Trillium undulatum, the Painted Trillium, which grows in Nova Scotia and as far west as Ontario and into the Appalachians, is a delightful woodlander which I saw for the first time when I was on a visit to Kejimikujic National Park several years ago. I was enchanted by its neat habit, the crisp, vermillion-centred flowers and symmetrical leaves, and immediately felt that this would be an amazing plant for a woodland garden. The plant is a much different one from the taller, more abundant White Trillium, *T. grandiflorum*, with which I was familiar from my previous home in southern Ontario, and which is readily available in variety from many nurseries. The "painted" species is much less common there, and seems to be less easy to grow or propagate even here where it is native.

Much to my surprise and delight, I later found a clump blooming in a treed corner of my property in Dartmouth, along with several other natives – *Trientalis borealis* (Star Flower), *Maianthemum* (False Lily of the Valley), *Cornus canadensis* (Bunchberry) and others. As you may well guess, these treasures are a real pride and joy for us, and their well-being and survival is of constant concern. Our lot lies on the eastern slope of one of the drumlins in the city.

The plant is found in a wedge-shaped, wooded area at the top of the property, separated from one neighbour by a sturdy fence but open to the yard on either side. The trees in the area are quite mature and provide fairly open shade from mid-day on and there is a fairly adequate leaf and twig litter.

The trillium's survival is something we fret about, since it has not appeared in some seasons, especially after some of our recent dry summers and winters without good snow-cover. My initial line of defence has been propagation, and to this end I have tried seed from seed exchanges; this has been without success so far. This has been daunting for me, as dried seed, planted immediately (in pots) and put through the ritual of warmth and chill prescribed in all manuals is so far successful in keeping seed which looks alive, but still ungerminated, for a couple of cycles. I plan to try this summer planting fresh seed in the ground where the original is located and waiting the two or three years for them to germinate and grow, conversely, perhaps the original may relent and show itself again! I have decided that my best bet is to enhance the site as a habitat for these wildlings and to hope that my trillium is still there waiting for another chance to grow forth and amaze us with its cheery bloom.

– Nelson Watson

Cardiocrinum giganteum

Gertrude Jekyll, the famous English gardener, was justifiably proud of her giant lilies. In *Wood and Garden*, published in 1899, she says “The blooming of *Lilium giganteum* is one of the great flower events of the year.” Her accompanying photograph shows a clump of six plants, the tallest over eleven feet high, with a hooded admirer in full monk habit gazing at the lilies providing scale and enhancing the exotic effect. She goes on to say “The great growth of these lilies could not be expected to come to perfection in our very poor, shallow soil, for doubtless in their mountain home in the Eastern Himalayas they grow in deep beds of cool vegetable earth. Here, therefore, their beds are deeply excavated ... holes twelve feet across and three feet deep [are filled with vegetable matter].”

This description of the lily's requirements would discourage anyone who gardens in Halifax. Nevertheless, four years ago we bought a bulb of what is now known as *Cardiocrinum giganteum*. This was our third try: two previous bulbs had been devoured by an unknown predator before they had a chance to grow. Our excavation was barely one foot deep before we hit rocks, and certainly was no twelve feet wide. The bulb was coated with diatomaceous earth (yes, permitted in HRM), hoping to ward off pests. We covered it with our best mixture of compost, peat and soil and hoped for the best.

It appeared the following spring, with large shiny bright green leaves, was diligently watered and fertilized, and covered deeply in November with fir branches. The same thing happened each year, the plant growing bigger and bigger, until the spring of 2005, when the bulb, which had now worked its way up to the surface, sprouted a different kind of growth. It soon became apparent that it was putting up a bloom spike. We did not fertilize it this year, having read that this could cause collapse. Finally in mid July it opened thirteen large heavily perfumed lily flowers on a stalk eight feet six inches high. This was a cause for great rejoicing and many admiring friends came to visit it.

That is the end of that bulb, or will be when the huge stalk with its seed pods dies, since the plant is monocarpic. However, it has numerous offsets clustering around it and we have high hopes for future years. Possibly we can create a group of six as Miss Jekyll did, although eleven feet in height seems too much to ask for.

– Mary Helleiner



Cardiocrinum giganteum. [Photo Chris Helleiner]

The Pleasures and Perils of Moving a Rhododendron Garden

By John Brett

When my wife Mern and I moved from central Halifax to Halls Road in Boulderwood, there was no question that my precious plants would be moving too. But as I was to discover, re-establishing 50 or 60 rhododendrons – some up to a meter high and wide – and nearly as many perennials, requires a lot more thought and effort than moving your four legged pets. The process is like starting a garden from scratch plus the added work of digging up and transporting plants that are much larger and heavier than they were when you bought them at the nursery years before. A consolation is that all the experience gained at the old garden can be put to work in the faint hope that the second time around you will finally get it right. So here are some observations and advice based on my own experience.

Design

In the best of all worlds the new garden site will be ready to accept the inhabitants of the old garden when they arrive. I was fortunate in this respect because we rented our house in central Halifax for several years after moving out to Halls Road, so my rhododendrons could stay put while I considered the merits and limitations of the new site. It wasn't a blank slate – far from it! – so I did not think deeply about garden design. As many of you know, Halls Road is home to some of the finest mature rhododendron plantings in Nova Scotia. However it evolved, the studied informality of the planting arrangements is impressive, evoking both European Romantic and Japanese gardening traditions. So I simply had to take my design cues from the existing gardens and harmonize with them. This was made even easier because I was mainly transplanting rhododendrons. No worry about clashing plant themes.

Assessing the site

It seems to me that a lot of future trouble can be avoided by preparing the new site to favour the kind of plants you wish to grow. In central Halifax I had been growing lepidotes, elepidotes and azaleas – rhododendrons with large, medium and small leaves, some evergreen and some deciduous. During those years I had learned some hard lessons about their various preferences and in the process killed off more than a few. So when laying out the planting beds at Halls Road I tried to orient them to accommodate rhododendrons with differing requirements. Parts of a bed would get more or less sun, and more or less shelter from the worst winter winds blowing out of the northwest. It was possible to do this because the central area of the yard is an open clearing, surrounded by deciduous and evergreen trees of varying sizes.

The general feeling these days is that you will get healthier, more floriferous rhododendrons in areas like Halifax by erring on the side of more light rather than less. So I also did some selective pruning and removal of trees to lighten

up the shade in places. The only tough choice was between a forty foot *Magnolia acuminata* and an even larger white pine that were crowding each other. In the end I kept the pine with its high canopy over the magnolia with its dense, ground sweeping mantle of greenery. I don't think Dick Steele has forgiven me to this day. Such difficult choices are better made early when limbing and falling pose no threat to the garden. Nothing ruins a rhododendron faster than a direct hit from a large branch approaching terminal velocity.

Preparing the planting areas

Native soils on our Halls Road property range from thin to nonexistent. Introduced soils brought in by previous owners to augment existing beds tend towards heavy, impermeable clay. I always felt that the vigour of our central Halifax garden was due in large part to the many cubic yards of high organic soil mix we brought in. So I decided to do the same on Halls Road. I started by renting a rototiller and thoroughly turning over the sod where I wanted to place my first bed, an area about 20 meters long and 5 meters wide along the front of the house. Then I calculated how much soil mix I would need to bring in to create a gently sloping berm with a maximum depth of about 45 centimeters.

The next and arguably most critical step was to locate a source of decent soil to create the berm. This requires research. I'll never forget the first load I received many years ago at our first garden in central Halifax. It wasn't until after the truck had departed that I realized I had ten tonnes of fine silt bottom land filling my driveway, impermeable as clay, with no organic content and of unknown pH. It required so much amendment to be usable that even a decade later when we moved to Halls Road there were still bags of it stored around the backyard.

The best soil mixes I've used are created from highly composted organic materials, bark and peat – 60% to 80% of the total – with the remainder being mineral soil and sand. They are light, absorbent, well drained, with a pH close to neutral coming off the truck, although in our area the pH will drop quite quickly. These soil mixes do have one disadvantage. They break down quickly, exposing the surface of the rhododendron root mat to the drying air. So diligent and regular mulching is necessary. Around Halifax, there are various suppliers who create suitable soil mixes but my experience is that quality is not consistent from year to year. If you're not careful you can end up with your high organic content in the form of pig manure that smells as if it might have been delivered directly from the barn. Besides the perfume, green manures can also carry cutworm eggs and other undesirable pests. I highly recommend examining any soil at the depot before you order it, even if it comes from a supplier you have used before. If this is not possible be very precise with the supplier about what you are looking

for and examine the soil mix on the truck before it is dumped. Don't accept delivery if you don't like it.

At the time I was building that first bed on Halls Road the best soil I could find came from Davis Specialty Soils. It was made of composted wood fiber and pressure cooked, sterilized, composted human sewerage courtesy of the town of Truro, if my memory is correct. As awful as it sounds it turned out to be a terrific product, with a wonderful fresh soil smell and free of plastics and other trash. According to the manufacturer the coliform bacterial level was lower than the surface of the average door knob. Unfortunately I don't believe the product is any longer available to the public.

On a Saturday morning a large dump truck buried our driveway under eighteen cubic yards of Fundy Gold (the euphemism under which the stuff was sold). I remember peering up at this mountain and thinking I must have miscalculated - that it wasn't possible for a planting bed 20 meters by 5 meters to absorb so much material. It was only then that I glimpsed in a practical way the difference in scale between the old city garden and what I was attempting to do on Halls Road. Which brings us to another important point. Before attempting such labours the amateur landscaper should consider that moving large wheel barrows of earth and spreading them about (about 90 of them in my case) is heavy physical labour. If you're lucky, as I am, you may have a willing partner, or some other family member who can be cajoled or coerced into service. Or perhaps you know a high school student trying to stay in shape for next season's football program. And one last thing, a lot of time and energy will be saved if you can dump the soil mix as close as possible and preferably level with or slightly downhill of where it has to go.

By the end of that weekend the driveway was empty, my first new planting bed was leveled and, much to my surprise, I was a bit sore but not crippled. Since I had the luxury of time, I let the soil settle for a week or two. If you don't, tamp the surface of the bed firm by walking over it in your rubber boots. Now you are ready to move your plants into their new home.

Moving Day (or days)

Large plants are heavy and hard to handle. A rhododendron a meter wide and tall may weigh a couple of hundred pounds or more. So chances are you will need at least one other person to help out. Useful items to have on hand:

1. A pickup truck (or something larger if all the plants have to be moved in one trip). If it's a big move don't even think of using the family car.
2. Digging spades and a rake. I file the leading edges of the spade sharp to make it easier to cut through roots. A rake is useful for spreading and leveling.
3. Several 8 foot lengths of 2X6 or 2X8 lumber. Useful for prying really large plants up and out of their holes.

4. A heavy plastic tarp 2 meters square or larger. For dragging heavy plants from garden to truck
5. A wheelbarrow for transporting everything to and fro.
6. Lengths of burlap or other absorbent material. To be moistened and placed around root balls to prevent desiccation during transport on hot, sunny days.
7. Sufficient bark mulch at the new location to cover the soil beds once the transplanting is finished.

I was fortunate when moving time came for my central Halifax garden. It was typical cool, damp spring weather. Easy on both the plants and people. Generally this kind of weather in spring or early fall is probably best for transplanting but, having said this, I have moved large rhododendrons in hot August weather and had no problems as long as I kept them well watered.

Rhododendrons and azaleas tend to form broad but shallow root mats that are fibrous rather than woody. I have found some deciduous azaleas to be exceptions to this rule. When extracting a plant I cut through the soil following the outside edge of the leaf canopy or 'dripline' so the root mat I'm keeping, if seen from an overhead view, has about the same footprint as the top growth. Once I've cut right around the plant I insert my spade under the root mat and carefully pry upwards, not using much force. In well prepared beds, the root mat will often separate from the surrounding soil easily, with little or no damage. In rocky soils you have to be much more careful because the root mat tends to spread around stones or grow into their fissures. In some cases it may not be possible to extract a plant without tearing a large part of the root mat. But even so, I have seen rhododendrons survive a move as long as they were well watered until re-established.

Once a plant is out of the ground - especially one that is large and heavy - it is important to support the root so it doesn't tear off under its own weight. To do this, slide it onto a sturdy tarp and drag or carry the tarp to the truck. The rhododendron can then be slid off the tarp and onto the bed of the truck which is hopefully sitting in the shade. Even then the root mat must be kept moist if it is hot and/or sunny.

I'd be fibbing if I didn't admit that even moving a smallish garden like mine was heavy work and a bigger job than I had thought. And should you want to move shrubs a meter and a half or more in height and width, you will need even more labourers and more time. It took four of us an entire morning to dig out a seven foot columnar Yew with a 200 kilogram root ball, and replant it at a new location less than ten kilometers away. And as a general rule, the larger the shrub the more important it is to transplant at optimal seasons such as early spring or fall. So make sure you accurately assess the size and number of plants you are

moving and budget the necessary time, taking into account an estimate of the round trips required and the amount of time required per trip. And don't forget that all the plants have to be removed from the truck at their final destination and placed in a sheltered spot with their roots protected from the sun if it is hot and dry. One easy way to do this is to temporarily cover the root mats with a good bark mulch. If you aren't working under time constraints such as a truck rental, another approach is to transplant as soon as you offload.

With the help of one other willing worker I managed to move the entire old garden in a day, excepting the aforementioned columnar yew. This included a couple of hours to truck about a cubic yard of additional soil to the old garden to fill in holes and level the beds, ready for the new homeowner to create their own version of Eden. For several days following this move the weather cooperated, remaining cool and damp, while I replanted. This was the easiest part of the operation because gravity is working with you. It's easier to drop a heavy object into a hole than to lift it out. And if you're working with a good deep soil mix in an empty bed, the digging is easy.

I tend to plant the rhododendron root mat slightly lower than the surrounding surface, making sure it lies flat with an even bed of soil beneath it for support. In particular I try to prevent the outside fringe of the root mat from sloping down and getting buried beneath the soil. As noted earlier I did ponder the needs of each rhododendron variety when considering the orientation of the bed but I also realize that no matter how carefully you consider your design, some plants will do better and some worse than you expect so it's inevitable that in a year or so you're going to be moving things again. So I try not to get too obsessive about the placement of every specimen.

Once transplanting was complete I sprinkled a small handful of 6-12-12 or 7-7-7 fertilizer (can't remember which but I've used both) around each plant and mulched the whole bed with a layer of bark about 7 cm thick. The mulch, of course, is there to help retain moisture without inhibiting the soil porosity. If I remember correctly the stuff I used was well aged – more like a potting mix than a mulch – so it didn't last out the summer before it completely decomposed. But since in the long term the quality of the mulch is not so critical as the soil I'm not so careful about

checking it out before I order. Ideally, I prefer the mulch to be fresher – but not absolutely fresh – and chopped up so no pieces are longer than 14 cm X 6 cm. That way it's easy to move around the plants and should last two seasons before more is needed.

The Shock of the New

In the three years since I moved my rhododendrons there have been both successes and failures. Some plants actually improved in this slightly cooler, moister, windier situation while others faded and died. *RR. impeditum*, *fastigiatum*, 'Scarlet Romance', 'Rangoon', *pseudochrysanthum* and *roxieanum oreonastes* look better than they ever did. In some cases satisfying a plant has meant moving it several times. 'Summer Summit' is hardy but has very brittle leaf stalks, so any amount of exposure to wind strips it bare over the winter. After two moves I finally have it in a really sheltered spot and it is once again an evergreen.

Where the move is from a milder to a colder zone I confess to a foolish optimism. Many of the more tender plants brought up from the Yarmouth County garden died during the very cold winters of 02/03 and 03/04. Because Halls Road has a mature rhododendron ecology, it also has a mature rhododendron pest ecology. Black vine weevil and various other leaf eaters do more damage here than they did in central Halifax. And there are deer to contend with, which so far have only done minor damage, mostly to the columnar yew which has been completely stripped of its needles to about a meter and a half and looks like a topiary lollipop. Another unwelcome resident is goutweed which can be controlled but, I fear, never eradicated. My biggest problem at the moment is a lot of chlorotic new growth. I've tried Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate), soluble iron and liquid fertilizers without much effect. Knowledgeable opinion is suggesting that my soil pH may be dropping too low, so I think I'll try some granular, slow acting limestone.

In spite of the challenges however, I can say I have no regrets about the move out to Halls Road. I'm surrounded by a park-like setting of mature rhododendrons, azaleas and other magnificent specimens that inspire me horticulturally and otherwise. And with a little care I'm confident that my rhododendrons will flourish so that twenty years from now casual visitors will assume they have always been here. If they only knew. ☺

The Quiet Golden Age

By Wayne M. Paquette

A dazzling array of conifers exists. From mini to massive on the long and growing scroll they will form-fit every design situation. Whether in conditions wet to dry, blazing sun or full shade: choices abound for every environment, too. With four season interest on their side and low to no maintenance requirements isn't it time to consider this extraordinary group of trees, shrubs and groundcovers in the midst of a quiet golden age?

In this vein I'd like to recommend nine gold-leaf conifers from six genera. With so many gold cultivars I made choices based on ease of care, differing size, shape and availability. These will fill a range of environments and design needs in zone 5 and in some cases colder. May this strike a flame in the cresset of your heart for one of my favorite classes of plants.

Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Fernspray Gold', an outstanding cultivar of the Hinoki Cypress believed long lost to the trade surfaced, fortunately for us, in New Zealand. The arching branches, held nearly horizontal, radiate from the central trunk(s). Each elongated flattened branch mimics a heavily ruffled and gilded fern frond. The golden scale-like foliage shades to a rich dark green at the interior of the shrub. The green darkens in winter as the yellow burnishes to a golden orange. 'Fernspray Gold' develops very bright yellow foliage in full sun, greener-gold in half shade. This lovely shrub grows upright and broad with a perhaps oval outline eventually. Use it as a specimen or at a foundation. Try it in a mixed border with other conifers or grasses such as *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Graziella'.

Classification*: Intermediate

Height x Width: 6 feet x 4 feet in 10 to 12 years

Light: Full sun to half shade

Soil: Good moisture-retentive but draining loam with added humus

Zone: 5

For a wonderful "Ceramic Christmas Tree" plant *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Lynn's Golden'. This memorable mini exhibits small, dense and beautifully articulated scallops of golden foliage. It looks great placed foreground in a foundation planting or as a specimen in a rock garden. It will hold its own in a dwarf conifer border or a heath and heather garden. With small-leaved rhododendrons like 'Midnight Ruby' it would be stunning. This little darlin' will mound upright with an irregular conical outline.

Classification*: Miniature

Height x Width: 3 feet x 2 feet in 15 years

Light: Full sun with some winter shade if possible but not absolutely necessary

Soil: Good moisture-retentive but draining loam with added humus

Zone: 5, perhaps into 4

Chamaecyparis pisifera hosts a number of gold cultivars. Many gardeners are familiar with 'Golden Mop' and for good reason. A mutation of *C. p.* 'Filifera Aurea', it shows-off the brightest yellow of the golden thread-leaf cypresses. Happiest in full sun, this dwarf will also "do" in part shade forming a bushy wild-haired mound with the outline of a flattened gumbdrop. The long, weeping strands of foliage are, indeed, thread-like giving this shrub an unusual soft appearance like an umbrella-shaped fountain of liquid butter erupting from a vigorous spring. Some individuals may develop a leader. If you let it grow the shrub will become pyramidal, otherwise, prune the stem down to maintain a rounded mound. These look great as a short hedge or in the foreground of a mixed shrub/conifer planting. For four season interest in a perennial garden it's hard to beat. One or more would be gorgeous in front of large leaved rhododendrons and any deciduous shrubs with beautiful winter bark colour such as hard-pruned *Salix alba* 'Britzensis'. With its contrasting upright dark purple stems *Salix purpurea* 'Canyon Blue' would make a terrific partner.

Classification*: Dwarf

Height x Width: 2 ½ x 3 feet in 10 to 12 years

Light: Full sun for best foliage colour

Soil: Good moisture-retentive but draining loam

Zone: 5

If you're looking for a tight, symmetrical column with clean lines for full sun then *Juniperus communis* 'Gold Cone' is a great choice. Though a dwarf this form of eastern common juniper can make a great vertical accent wherever it is used, even in a rock garden. The gray/lime-green foliage with a gold cast on countless vertical branches gives this shrub a solid yet soft look. 'Gold Cone' will tolerate xeric conditions once established. I have planted one in a cactus and succulent border where it looks terrific among the stone and boulder. This could make a quite formal, low-maintenance hedge or a vertical specimen wherever a not too big accent might be needed such as a heath and heather garden. Two could act as sentries either side of a walkway leading to the front door of a home or at the entrance of a sunny garden path.

Classification*: Dwarf

Height x Width: 4 to 5 x 1 ½ feet in 10 to 12 years

Light: Full sun

Soil: Well-drained, add sand if soil is heavy

Zone: 5

Some conifers straddle the categories of growth rate. *Thuja occidentalis* 'Yellow Ribbon' revels in the nexus between intermediate and large. It is composed of multitudes of variously arranged flat fans set thickly within the outline of a narrow symmetrical upright cone. Though I am not a strong supporter of arborvitae in that it has been so over used as to be a bad cliché I am struck by the beauty of this

tree. The gilded sprays of fans hold colour well all year in full sun. And though perfectly content in light shade the gold will temper. You can plant a pair as front door sentries. Use one as a distinguished marker at the threshold of a garden path. Use it in a mixed hedgerow as one element among other conifers and deciduous shrubs. Plant one as a vertical accent in a perennial border or at the corner of a large home near a weeping deciduous tree such as *Acer japonicum* 'Orangeola' or *Prunus* 'Snow Fountain'.

Classification*: Intermediate to Large

Height x Width: 8 to 10 feet x 2 to 3 feet

Light: Better foliage colour in full sun, more muted in light shade

Soil: Good moisture-retentive soil

Zone: 5, possibly colder

To gaze upon *Pinus sylvestris* 'Gold Coin' in summer is to think you've been cheated from the gold-needled cultivar you paid good money for. But don't run back to the seller with your golden Scots pine just yet... Come winter this wonderful tree changes from the rich green of the growing season to a remarkable yellow. An upright pyramid, it will form an amazing sentinel in the winter landscape.

Lighthouse,
Golden beacon in
Endless white,
Seas of wind-danced froth and waves
In the wild season of night

Candle,
Burning soldier,
Sentry of my winter's heart
Against black night,
Golden spark...
Light pointing towards light.

Plant it in a large conifer/mixed tree and shrub garden contrasted with other-coloured winter interest plants such as *Salix* x 'Scarlet Curls', *Ilex verticillata* 'Stop Light' or *Viburnum x lobophyllum* 'Oneida'. Mix in different colours and shapes of conifers for a large hedgerow or screen. But best of all: it will make a *fabulous* specimen. Plant it in full blazing sun. Be sure to site it where you can enjoy it in winter perhaps adjacent to a stand of *Cornus stolonifera* 'Cardinal'.

Classification*: Intermediate

Height x Width: 8 feet tall in 10 to 12 years

Light: Full Sun

Soil: Not fussy as long as the drainage is good

Zone: 3

Juniperus horizontalis 'Mother Lode' originated as a sport on *J. h.* 'Wiltonii'. Though a moderate grower this Golden Rug Juniper has proven *extremely* slow here at the nursery having spread less than 2 feet by one inch thick in 5 years. This is testament to the fact that once established 'Mother Lode' can well tolerate adverse conditions for it is planted in sandy scrubland! It will grow quicker in better soil and

modestly layer as it goes. Among stone and boulder this groundcover is like a pool of molten butter that seeped away from the fountain of 'Golden Mop'. Its beautiful yellow foliage burnishes golden bronze in winter. It would be formidable quilted among other mat-forming junipers and creeping phlox on a sandy bank performing the duty of erosion control. And, too, set as an edger facing-up its taller neighbours in a mixed, multi-planed design scheme. What about 'Mother Lode' adjacent to *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' and *Cornus stolonifera* 'Kelsey'?

Classification*: Intermediate

Height x Width: 4 inches high eventually, creeps 6 to 12 inches per year

Light: Full sun

Soil: Not fussy, well-drained

Zone: 3

From evergreen and small we go to deciduous and enormous. *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* 'Ogon', a.k.a. 'Gold Rush', is a beautiful gold-needled Dawn Redwood. This Chinese species was thought to be extinct. This cultivar comes to us from Japan. Though it will rise 13 feet tall by 6 feet wide in 10 years, bear in mind: this fantastic tree over many decades may top-off at 115 feet! In spring the lovely new growth emerges soft yellow and remains all summer 'til late season. In autumn before the needles fall they change colour ranging from golden bronze to rich orange brown. Beautiful in winter, too, the outline of this gentle giant is an upright, statuesque pyramid clothed in rich cinnamon-brown bark supported by a heavily muscled and fluted trunk. Set them paired in rows along a grand allee affording them plenty of room to grow. Use one as a lawn specimen near a body of water with a weeping willow as a cohort. This would make a spectacular addition on a large property, a park or an estate. But for goodness sake: do NOT plant one too close to a building!!

Classification*: Large

Height x Width: 13 feet by 6 feet in 10 years, fast grower

Light: Full sun to partial shade

Moisture: Good loam, constantly moist to wet

Zone: 5

I remember spying *Picea orientalis* 'Skylands' at a nursery many years ago and falling instantly in love. I even fell in love with the name. Short, close-packed soft golden needles coat the stems of this relatively slow grower. In that the needles are finer and shorter than most spruce, the architecture of the plant is plainly evident. The trunk bears main branches from which secondary branches fork and in turn produce branch tips like countless yellow fat fingers. When the brilliant new growth is young and tender the overall look of the branch structures is that of large broad layered weeping fans enhancing this Golden Oriental Spruce's sculptural appeal. Younger plants may burn a bit in full late-season and winter sun but they do outgrow this trait. 'Skylands' also forms stunning rich red cones. They are glorious hanging from the golden arms. Gradually they lengthen and morph to brown. Plant one as a specimen. Use

it in larger mixed planting with deciduous trees and shrubs that produce persistent berries in winter such as *Malus* 'Donald Wyman' or *Viburnum* 'Cardinal Candy'. As a member of a large mixed evergreen screen or hedgerow 'Skylands' would be extravagant.

Classification*: Intermediate

Height x Width: 15 feet tall in 10 years

Light: Full sun to part shade

Moisture: Good moisture-retentive but draining loam with added humus

Zone: 4

Remember, this is but a sampling of all that is available. There are witch's brooms of Hinoki Cypress tiny enough for life in a partly shaded trough and gigantic green ginkgos whose geisha fan-like modified needles transform to bright bullion in the autumn sun. And, of course, yellow-foliaged members are merely one galaxy filled with bright stars in the astral show of green, variegated and blue species, forms and cultivars.

Considering they are largely low-maintenance and so versatile if you have not contemplated golden conifers then let me leave you with something to ponder... Though they are glorious in all seasons these exceptional plants will light

the way when we are most in need: during the dark days. Indeed, they are the torch bearers leading the way from winter to life renewed.

We are in the midst of a silent renaissance resplendent with all brand of green life. May this in some small way ignite your ardour for the gift of golden-wrapped light.

*The American Conifer Society's growth rate categories are as follows:

- **Miniature:** less than 3 inches per year. Estimated size in 10 to 12 years is 2 to 3 feet.
- **Dwarf:** average rate of 3 to 6 inches per year. Estimated size in 10 to 12 years is 3 to 6 feet.
- **Intermediate:** average rate of 6 to 12 inches per year. Estimated size in 10 to 12 years is 6 to 12 feet.
- **Large:** average rate of 12 or more inches per year. Estimated size in 10 to 12 years is 12 feet or more.

Wayne M. Paquette is the owner of Quackin' Grass nursery in Brooklyn, Connecticut. ☼



At the 2005 Pot-Luck John Weagle was presented with a tray by our president Penny Gael in recognition of his years of outstanding service to ARHS. [Photo Betty MacDonald]

Photo Album



'Dora Amateis'. [Photo Jens Birck]



'Ginny Gee'. [Photo Jens Birck]



'Mary Fleming'. [Photo Jens Birck]



R. schlippenbachii. [Photo Jens Birck]



'Nahanni'. [Photo Dr. J. Brueckner]



'Ma Chère'. [Photo Dr. J. Brueckner]



R. occidentale. [Photo Don Craig]



'Gibraltar'. [Photo Don Craig]