



“Niagara Rhodo” Newsletter of the

The Niagara Chapter, Rhododendron Society of Canada

February 2011

Our Purpose: We are a non-profit organization whose aim is to promote, encourage and support interest in the genus *rhododendron*. Our goal is to encourage gardeners to grow and appreciate these plants, by providing educational meetings with knowledgeable speakers, access to topical publications and hosting joint meetings with other chapters.

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Word of Caution

By becoming a successful grower, the reader will be exposed to a contagion for which there is no cure. Once infected with an appreciation of rhododendrons and azaleas most gardeners spend a lifetime collecting these most beautiful of all plants.

H. Edward Reiley

Program Reminder

Sunday, March 6, 2011, 2 P.M.

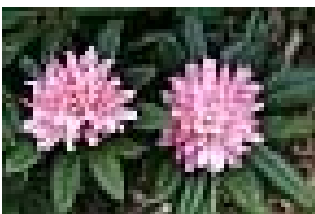
New Directions in Rhododendron Development.

Dr. Stephen Krebs, Director, David G. Leach Research Station, Holden Arboretum, will speak on his interest in increasing the popular appeal of new introductions of rhododendrons and azaleas by adding disease resistance and heat tolerance to them. These traits may improve their performance under challenging conditions and broaden their marketability to regions where rhododendrons currently have a limited presence.

Stephen Krebs is a plant breeder who explores how and why things are as they are in the plant world and at the same time provides valuable practical information as a byproduct of his



research. His [most recent research](#) focuses on developing new hybrids that are tolerant of heat in summer and resistant to root rot. As a plant geneticist, he has studied, in collaboration with others, basic issues in cold hardiness that help hybridizers make improved decisions in selecting parent plants to further their goals for beauty, new colours, hardiness, heat tolerance and disease resistance.



Links to reports of Dr. Krebs’s recent work follow. He will provide details and explore implications of this work. The importance of the photographs shown here will be interesting and useful to all gardeners and will be

discussed in the talk.

http://www.rhodoniagara.org/pdf/Krebs_new.pdf

http://www.rhodoniagara.org/pdf/Krebs_2002_Res_Phyt.pdf

The Spring Program

Sunday, April 10, 2011, 2:00 P.M.

Slide Show, Description, Coffee, Sweets & Discussion

Description of varieties to be available at the Annual Plant Sale, April 30, 2011. Also, discussion and review of members’ interests and questions. Review of critical factors in caring for rhododendron and azaleas during summer heat.

Saturday, April 30, 2011, 9:00 A.M. to Noon

Annual Plant Sale

Location: Vineland Innovation & Research Centre, Garage & Implement area, at the former (HRIO), Victoria Avenue, Vineland Station.

Note: Plant Sale closes before Noon when all plants are sold out.

Saturday, May 14, 2011. 10 A.M. to Noon.

Garden Tours, Rhododendron Gardens in Mississauga.

Members Only:

Tour 1: Mrs. Marta Brueckner’s Garden in Mississauga. A

2 acre garden containing Dr. Brueckner’s hybrids and rhododendron specie from which the hybrids were developed. *(Program details to follow in April 2011)*

Saturday, May 28, 2011. 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.

P4Ms Plant Sale. Members only. Venue TBA

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Please note: All meetings, unless otherwise stated, will be held at Rittenhouse Hall, Vineland Research & Innovation Centre (VRIC), Vineland Station, Ontario, starting at 2 PM.

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March 10, 2011
A Date to Remember

To participate in the members-only programs which follow in the spring please complete membership subscriptions before March 10, 2011.

Membership Benefits:

- * 10 % Discount on Annual Plant Sale.
- * Advance orders for plants at General Plant sale.
- * Access to Plants for Members (P4M) rare plant program.
- * Participation in test & display projects.
- * Participation in Committees of the Niagara Chapter.
- * Contact with knowledgeable growers.
- * Receive interesting Newsletter.
- * Participate in Members-Only Garden tours.

on March 6, 2011

At the meeting, please see Lil Haworth at the Membership desk

OR

Send your cheque (payable to RSC Niagara) to arrive before March 10, 2011

to

Lil Haworth
4 Deer Park Court
Grimsby, Ontario
L3M 2R2

About the Serendipitous Garden

The heavy snow of the night before did not deter 36 people from coming to Rittenhouse Hall at the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre to hear James MacDougall talk about his 7 years of work in building a unique collection of plants into a marvelous composition. We were all entertained and entranced by the good natured and self deprecating way in which he talked about the unforeseen consequences and events that shaped his garden. There were vignettes for everyone's taste. For example: One commonly hears about bonsai rose. These typically are the small roses, just a few inches tall. But how about bonsai technique for hybrid teas, or similar large sized plants. James didn't know it could not be done! One would hardly expect home garden construction to involve a power shovel, steel girders and pile drivers to form a deck. Yes . . . no one told James it could not be done. Rhododendrons growing successfully under a Maple. Yes . . . well . . . with deep holes dug around the Maple and then filled with compost and other organic material. And so the afternoon progressed. All one needs to create one's own little Shangri la is a sense of wonder, imagination and a bit of daring. Those who missed this talk may wish to attend the meeting of the Lincoln Garden Club on March 19, at 10 am, at Rittenhouse Hall, Vineland Research & Innovation Centre, where James MacDougall is scheduled to give this talk again.



Websites for Rhodo Growers

The material in this section is likely to be of interest and value to anyone who grows rhododendrons and wishes to explore matters that are not included in books we usually consider as fundamental sources of information.

American Rhododendron Society (ARS):

<http://www.rhododendron.org/>

The website contains details of the society's organization and services. The Society's chapters are listed with linkages to chapter contacts, chapter information, members' names with their chapter affiliation and contact information. A section provides useful guides to plant care and how to deal with common disease and pest problems. A searchable section of information (with photographs) about rhododendron and azalea species and hybrids includes information on plant parentage, hardiness, and hybridizer information. The very well organized seed exchange which annually lists and administers distribution of rhododendron seeds lists seeds available, hybridizer's name and provides an ordering form.

Niagara Region Chapter, Rhododendron Society of Canada, ARS District 12 :

<http://www.rhododniagara.org/>

The website of the Niagara Chapter provides current, detailed information about the Chapter's program. This includes archived copies of the Chapter's Newsletters, and provides current information about cultural requirements relevant to growing conditions in Ontario. The site contains archived copies of all Bulletins of the Rhododendron Society of Canada in searchable and downloadable pdf format. Details and photographs of plants available at the Annual Plant Sale and in the current P4M offerings are provided. The first 3 pages of the web site appear in sequence as one clicks on the page that is currently displayed. The opening page reveals the chapter's logo. Clicking anywhere on the first page reveals the current year's program of speakers and events. Clicking anywhere on this second page reveals the third page. This third page provides EXPRESS links to details of each event, a list of archived Newsletters and a list of recently posted information for growing rhododendrons and azaleas in Ontario's environment. A menu on the top, right hand leads one to a variety of information.

Henning's Pages on Rhodos & Azaleas

<http://rhodyman.net/rarhodyhop.html>

Without a doubt, this website is a labour of love for the genus rhododendron. These pages are the result of information Henning picked up over 35 years at **American Rhododendron Society** meetings & conventions, in courses at Longwood Gardens, and in the numerous books which he has read. The goal of this site is to share this information with those who share a love for the [Genus Rhododendron](#). And, there is a lot of information to share. If all this material was to be presented in a published book, it would be a massive compendium, offered at an exorbitant cost. On the web, it is available to anyone with a computer and with a Desire to find the information. The **Table of Contents**

found on the left hand side of the first page is easy to follow and leads viewers to as complete a listing of growing topics as is available anywhere. Clicking on the link to [Problems](#) exposes links to every conceivable problem a rhododendron grower may encounter.

An unexpected discovery is a link to the excellent Hirsutum site

<http://www.hirsutum.info>

The site gives an overview (photos and information) of as many rhododendron *species* and cultivars (hybrids) as possible. It is a virtual botanical garden, an online database with information and pictures. It is designed so that anyone can help to build this database. One simply sends pictures of one's rhododendrons. A list of [contributors](#) to the Hirsutum-project is provided. This is a non-commercial site without banners or advertising. The site contains information on and usually excellent photographs of 1,267 rhododendron species, 10,721 rhododendron hybrids and 5,965 azaleas.

Marc Colombel founder of the Société Bretonne du Rhododendron and Président of the Société Bretonne du Rhododendron for 14 years.

<http://www.rhododendron.fr>

This page opens in a French version. Clicking on the British Flag displays the English version of a very creative site. It contains photos of hybrids with parentage of each and a host of valuable techniques to use in planting and looking after rhododendrons. Clicking on the pull-down menu of the opening page displays a variety of choices. The [Files link](#) leads to 50 items which Marc calls "dossiers". Here there are 50 techniques described including excellent demonstrative photographs on what to do with specific issues such as "Transplanting", dealing with a "Pot Bound Plant" and much more. On the opening page, which happens to be in French, there is a photo of a red rhododendron growing beside a house. The plant is certainly more than 25 feet tall and is labeled to be more than 100 years old. Marc Colombel grows rhododendron in Brittany on the east of France on the shores of Bay of Biscay. The Gulf Stream in the Atlantic Ocean makes it possible for him to grow a wider variety of rhododendrons than we do in Ontario, but the techniques he describes are as applicable to us as they are to Brittany.

Massachusetts Chapter, ARS

<http://www.arsmc.org>

The website of the Massachusetts Chapter serves as the Chapter's communication device. One feature, likely to be attractive to members of the Niagara Chapter, is the extensive collection of beautiful photographs. Clicking on **Portal** on the first page and subsequently on **Tours, Performers or Gateway** displays a cornucopia of "Eye Candy", i.e. of photographs of trusses and plants from members' gardens in various parts of Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Interesting stories often accompany many of the photographs and tours.

Azalea Society of America

<http://www.azaleas.org/>

This site provides details about membership in the Society and contains a comprehensive list of named varieties many with photographs. The seed sale is open to members and may be ordered using information on the site.

Winter's Impact on Rhodo's Leaves

A recent posting on Yahoo's Rhodo chat line got your editor to thinking about questions that are likely to be coming from members about the state of their plants. The message posted by John Perkins, who with Sally Perkins spoke in Vineland a couple of years ago, stated . . . *"Conditions are aligning here in Salem, NH, that almost insures that winter burn in March will be bad. Ground is frozen, snow is still on the ground, cold weather expected for the next 15 days at least, and lots of sun. We have about 18 inches of ice on the lake with no open water. Weeks 2 and 3 in March will tell the story."* I recalled that a number of my plants occasionally suffer from winter burn. In particular, Calsap and one selection from a seed lot group of (Janet Blair x Odee Wright) frequently show winter burn.

One may well ask, what is winter burn? What does it look like? Why does it happen? Can it be prevented? The photo below shows an example of winter burn.



Typical damage of winter burn is leaves turn brown, especially at the edges and near the tips. Notice that in this photo the buds are green which suggests no winter damage.

Why does the combination of conditions mention by John suggest potential problems for rhododendrons? (1) Rhododendrons, as evergreens, transpire moisture when the leaf becomes warm from the sun or air temperatures rise above freezing. (2) The roots are frozen and water is not available to the roots to support the transpiration needs of the leaves. (3) The deep snow will insulate the frozen ground

from the warming air temperatures and sun, delaying the time at which water will be available to the leaves. (4) The warming air, strong winds and bright spring sun will escalate the plant's water demands resulting in browning leaves. The only way to prevent winter burn damage is to water the plants very well in the fall before freeze-up, provide wind breaks, cover the plant with burlap to keep air circulating and the sun's rays off the leaves and to situate the plant so that there is shade from evergreens during the winter.. Wilt-Pruf is a product sold for the claim that it protects broad-leaved evergreens from winter desiccation. Some claim it is effective, others claim that this protective ingredients will be washed off by moisture and snow, requiring frequent re-application. Besides, Wilt -Pruf tends to be very expensive.

The next photograph shows a plant whose leaves resemble those in the first photograph. Although they may appear to be similar the cause of this damage may be quite different.



The upper leaves are brown, burned back from tips and/or edges toward the midribs or middle of the leaf.

Causes other than winter burn are all associated with root damage which inhibits the availability of water to the leaves. Winter damage may be a cause as described above. But other possible reasons are: (1) Drought, especially when the plant is in active growth or the foliage is in soft growth, or on newly established plants. (2) High amounts of salts in the soil caused by excessive use of fertilizer. (3) Root damage due to poor drainage, planting too deep, physical injury to roots, or to root disease. (4) Stem girdling due to weevils eating bark and/or weevil maggots damaging roots. (5) Nutrient deficiency.

It is always important to check the state of the roots when attempting to determine cause of plant failure.

Source:

How to Identify Rhododendron & Azalea problems.

Washington State University Extension Bulletin 1229

Washington State University Extension

WSU Bulletin Office. 1-800-723-1763

<http://www.pubs.wsu.edu>