



"Niagara Rhodo" Newsletter of the The Niagara Chapter, Rhododendron Society of Canada January 2012

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.

Inside This Issue:

1. Further to President's Note of November 2012: Invitation to participate in directing the Chapter
2. Program 2012
3. Sunday February 5, 2012 – Harvey Wrightman, Wrightman Alpines Nursery. Kerwood, Ontario
4. The November 2011 Meeting
5. Members' Programs 6. From the Chat Line

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

Happy New Year



***Winter, 2012, finally came to Niagara
on Friday, January 13***

1. Further to the President's Note of October 2011

In our last Newsletter our president, Sondra Meis, in addition to reviewing the healthy state of the Chapter and introducing the 2012 program she also invited members to explore areas in which they might actively participate in the Chapter's operations. Sondra stated, "The current Board of Directors of the Niagara Chapter is composed of 6 people who have been in place for more than 5 years. The time has come for renewal, change and additions to the current structure". She noted, "This is an ideal time for individuals to volunteer to join our Board of Directors. By joining our Board, as a member at large, one can learn details of various roles, and participate in decisions." Doing this will help incorporate fresh talent and new ideas to direct the

future of the Niagara Region Chapter. In order to help members identify where their interests may best be directed, and to stimulate discussion, we thought it would be constructive to Identify current positions and activities of the Board of Directors.

When reviewing this description of roles, please know that there is not an urgent need to fill positions. But, we do need help, and we hope to develop a succession plan.

Our intent is to describe the roles that currently exist, explain what is entailed in these roles and to suggest that assistance in working in each of these roles would be very welcome, starting as soon as is convenient to a member.

The roles, as currently expressed, are not independent entities. Individuals in a role consult with others before finally arriving at a course of action. Every decision is made with thoughts of how well the decision will address members' interests and how any action may contribute to community enhancement within resources of the group.

This speaks to the tone of the group which may be characterized as individualistically collegial. Individuals speak their minds freely, new ideas are debated vigorously yet final decisions are arrived by consensus. Roles overlap so that individuals are never left on their own to deal with demands of planned events. Commitments, once made are followed through reliably. A sense of goodwill and jovial well-being permeates this group which meets, as required, about 5 times from November to May. When appropriate, some decisions are made by telephone and e-mail contact. The role descriptions follow.

Finance Director

Keeps records of Chapter's resources, conducts all financial transactions for the Chapter and provides assessments of viability of financial commitments.

- a. Keeps records and reports on Chapter's financial status; Issues cheques.
- b. Sends membership dues to ARS Executive Director
- c. Makes sales projections.
- d. Reviews Chapter's financial trends.

Membership Director

Keeps membership records on electronic database.

- a. Coordinates records with ARS Executive Director .
- b. Informs Newsletter Editor of members' coordinates.
- c. Collects dues and transmits dues to Finance Director.

Secretary

Prepares minutes of Director's meetings. Maintains records of correspondence and minutes.

Director Plant Procurement

Identifies sources of cultivars and provides advice on suitability of cultivars to include at various sales.

- a. Identifies suppliers.
- b. Determines cultivar /species mix for Board approval.
- c. Identifies photographs to use in promotion.
- d. Prepares cultivars' descriptions.
- e. Prepares facilities for plant sales.

Director Speakers & Meetings

Organizes and promotes Speaker's program.

- a. Identifies appropriate topics.
- b. Recommends appropriate sequence of topics.
- c. Identifies potential speakers.
- d. Negotiates speakers' timetable.
- e. Arranges for speaker's stay in Niagara.
- f. Prepares meeting facilities.

Newsletter Editor

Designs, prepares and dispatches Newsletter at timely intervals throughout the year.

- a. Identifies Newsletter topics.
- b. Researches topic information.
- c. Writes articles.
- d. Mails Newsletters to Chapter's members & friends.

Website Manager <http://www.rhodoniagara.org>

Maintains the website with current Chapter information.

President

Chairs Board meetings. Oversees the requirements and outcomes of each functional area. Provides leadership (advice, assistance, direction) as required. Acts as the designated representative of the Chapter to any external organization.

District Director

A long established position which provides representation of District 12 (of which Niagara is but one Chapter among three) on the Board of Directors of the American Rhododendron Society. This position rotates in a three year cycle among the 3 Chapters of District 12, Atlantic, Niagara and Toronto. Currently, Niagara Chapter provides the District Director with effect from the Fall 2011 meeting of the ARS Board and ending with the ARS Board's Spring 2014 meeting. Niagara Chapter will next elect a District Director with effect in Fall 2020.

- a. Attends semi-annual meetings of the ARS Board of Directors at Spring and Fall Conventions.
- b. Identifies District 12's concerns prior to attending meetings.
- c. Represents District 12's interests at ARS Board Meetings.
- d. Reports to District 12 Chapter Presidents on significant decisions taken at ARS Meetings.

Our meeting on February 5 will be in two parts. We will open in our usual fashion with an introduction of the featured speaker, and approximately a one hour talk and slideshow and additional time for Questions & Answers with Harvey Wrightman of Wrightman Alpines Gardens.

Following selection of raffle winners, and an intermission, the meeting will continue with an open discussion of how the Niagara Region Chapter is organized, how its affairs are conducted and how well it meets member's needs. We look forward to your questions, comments, advice and participation.

Any organization must be aware of the need for continuity and change. Obviously, individuals currently engaged in the roles described here, at some point, will no longer wish to continue or be able to continue. Ideally, they should be replaced by individuals with acquired expertise. Your participation is critical to the continuation of what we believe is a strong and interesting horticultural group.

Volunteer to work with current Board members.

2. Program 2012

The 2012 program follows. All meetings, unless otherwise stated, will be held at Rittenhouse Hall, Vineland Research & Innovation Centre (VRIC), Vineland Station.

Sunday Feb. 5, 2012, 2 P.M. Harvey Wrightman.
Wrightman Alpines Nursery. Kerwood Ontario. *"Alpines, Rock Gardens and Tufa Troughs"*.

Sunday Mar. 4, 2012, 2 P.M. Dan Meier.
Horticulturalist. ARS District Director Olympia Chapter, *"Brigg's Plant Propagators: Who they are. How they operate. How they decide to select the plants they propagate."*

Sunday, Apr. 22, 2012, 2P.M. Description of cultivars in Annual Plant Sale and discussion of cultivars in P4M program.

Saturday Apr. 28, 2012, 9 A.M. Annual Plant Sale. Vineland Research & Innovation Centre.

Sunday, May 13, 2012. Mother's Day

Saturday May 2012. Plants for Members Special Plant Sale & Distribution. Date & Location TBA.

3. Harvey Wrightman, Wrightman's Alpines Nursery. Kerwood, Ontario

Harvey Wrightman will talk about alpine flowers and how to grow them with various methods. Harvey and his wife Irene have developed an exquisite Nursery that displays the 600 interesting and rare alpines and perennials suitable for rock gardens and Tufa Troughs. They ship plants to enthusiasts throughout Canada and the United States from their location in Southwestern Ontario, a short distance west of Strathroy, Ontario, just off Hwy 402.

The display gardens demonstrate a variety of landscaping techniques using stone as the main building material. Dry-laid stone walls and flagstone pathways along the foundation of the house, hold tufa crevice gardens.

Hand-chiseled stone troughs are displayed as examples of container gardening. Crevice gardens constructed of tufa and limestone and a backyard scree garden, form the backdrop for a myriad of colours, texture and forms of our favorite alpine plants. Ponds and bogs add a naturalized look throughout alpine gardens. It is a delightful setting in which to exhibit and experience the plants.

The Wrightman web site provides further descriptions of the property, links to their catalogue of plants, an order

form and additional links to unique descriptions of plants in Algonquin Park, The Pinery Provincial Park and The Maitland River at Goderich. Additional links to videos about planting techniques and other materials about plants composed by Harvey and members of his family are included.



Irene & Harvey Wrightman

Shown below are sample items from the Wrightman Alpines Website. <http://www.wrightmanalpines.com/>



Rhododendron kotschyi



Acantholimon acerosum ssp brachystachum



Rhododendron x 'Chinzan'



A Trough Garden

The 4 rhododendrons shown here are hardy in our area and are slow growing, prostrate plants suitable for rock gardens. They tend to be somewhat more tolerant of dry conditions but, as is true with all rhododendrons, they require ultimate drainage but also require moisture at the roots. Watering in hot summers cannot be ignored.

Rhododendron 'Pink Pancake' is a chinzeyi x nakaharai product, prostrate growing, blooming in late June with large peach/pink wavy flowers, 25cm tall after 10 years and hardy to about -18C.

Rhododendron kiusianum 'Betty Muir' is listed as myrtifolium in the ARS index of cultivars. John & Sally Perkins report the following in the Massachusetts website: "*Rhododendron myrtifolium* is a lepidote (with scales) in subgenus *Rhododendron*, subsection *Rhododendron*. This is a distinct subsection that has been isolated in the central European high mountain ranges. *R. myrtifolium* is found in the Carpathian and Balkan



Rhododendron Pink Pancake



Rhododendron kiusianum 'Betty Muir'

mountains of Bulgaria, Slovenia, Romania, and S. W. Russia at 5,000-8,000 feet (1,500-2,400 meters) in forest floor, pine scrub to open moorland on acid and limestone. It can form large stands in the alpine heaths growing along with *Juniperus nana*. Theodor Kotschy (1813-1866) an Austrian botanist noted for his plant exploration of Turkey and Egypt is attributed with first describing the plant. The species epithet refers to leaves like *Myrtle*. The now obsolete synonym *R. kotschyi* still is commonly used.

Editor' Note: Regardless of name, this is a great plant to have. It is hardy to -23C and can grow to 25-50 cms in 10 years.

Rhododendron x 'Chinzan' is an azalea Osakazuki sport, slow growing to 3 feet in 10 years and hardy to -15C.

Rhododendron kotschyi . Taxonomists will certainly have their day when they compare the name of this plant with that of "Betty Muir" which may well be a variant in colour of this variety. Regardless; this compact shrub grows to 40cm tall in 10 years. In nature it is found in pine scrubland to open boggy pastures in the Balkans in limestone areas. Rosy-pink flowers in terminal clusters. Beautiful !

As for all the beautiful trough and rock garden alpines, have your questions ready for a stimulating presentation and dynamic Question & Answer session on Sunday, Feb 5.

4. Dennis Bottemiller Spoke on November 5, 2011.
“Propagating from Stem Cuttings & Collecting
Plants in the Wild”



Dennis Bottemiller’s visit from the Rhododendron Species Foundation attracted interest from a wide area. We welcomed more than 45 members including those from Toronto, western Ontario and Ohio. They were not disappointed. Denis

provided an interesting, humorous and knowledgeable talk that held members’ interest for more than 2 hours; they carried away valuable insights into factors involved in propagating rhododendrons from cuttings. After an intermission he continued with a delightful exposition of plant explorers’ experiences in their search for new species of rhododendrons and other genera.

Factors in Rooting Rhododendron Cuttings: Dennis described the many non-obvious factors to be considered when attempting to root cuttings of rhododendron by presenting the factors in four groups.

- @ **Time when the cuttings are being taken.**
- @ **Time when the cuttings are being prepared after being taken**
- @ **Time when the cuttings are in the propagating facility;**
- @ **Time when the cuttings are being transplanted.**

An abbreviated transcript of the talk is being prepared, and will be available to members in the next month or two. In the meantime, the slide show presented at the talk is available on our web site.

http://www.rhodoniagara.org/pdf/Rhododendron_Propagation_2011.pdf

Nurseryman’s Nirvana 2011. In the second half of the afternoon, Dennis presented vivid descriptions of experiences of those who go to the Himalayas to collect interesting species that are ultimately made available to growers in North America. The slides and commentary revealed the exotic cuisine, living conditions, travel techniques and scenery experienced by plant collectors. A few of these are provided on this page. A link to the slideshow is shown below. Please note that this is a large file and may take about 60 seconds or more to download, depending on the speed of your internet connection.

http://www.rhodoniagara.org/pdf/Nurseryman's_Nirvana_2011.pdf



Deluxe Transport – Open thru-ways



Solid, well designed bridges



Gourmet Cuisine



Accommodation with a View

Membership Matters



Unique Plants for Members

One program, important for Chapter members is the Plants for Members (P4M) program. This program is designed to provide, rarely available, cultivars and plants at cost. Over the last 4 years more than 200 plants have been distributed to members. All prices at cost.

Distribution of these plants has usually been scheduled for mid - May usually at Nettle Creek Nursery. The P4M program continues this year.

The Brueckner Hybrids Evaluation program is a recent introduction. A volunteer Steering Committee set policies under which this program operates. In May 2011, 21 members requested a total of 132 plants which are now being evaluated in a wide area; from Kingston to Central Michigan, including Timmins Ontario. Preliminary evaluations of the 2011 summer's growth is now being evaluated. The next group of different cultivars in this program will be distributed in May 2012. Participating members obtained Brueckner hybrids and committed to the program through a contribution of \$5.00 per plant.

This year the Niagara Region Chapter was one of 3 chapters that showed a 10% increase in the number of ARS members. Briggs Propagation Nursery awarded a number of plants to each chapter that met the 10% criterion. When the number of plants to be received by the Niagara Region Chapter is known, a decision will be made as to how these plants will be distributed.

We understand that Briggs will continue to support this initiative in 2012. While there are a number of excellent reasons to be an registered ARS member, availability of these special plants should be an added incentive to sign up for ARS membership.

Significant events over the Past 5 Years

During the past several years many distinguished speakers have discussed their work with Azaleas and Rhododendrons at meetings of the Niagara Region Chapter: *Results of hybridizing research; How to grow Rhodos; Rhodos in Salem, New Hampshire; Native North American Azaleas; How to propagate Rhodos from Stem Cuttings; Challenging Climate Zones.* Also, local, innovative gardeners have described and explained their work. These notable events have been made possible by members' support of programs & plant sales.

Membership in the Rhododendron Society of Canada, Niagara Region Chapter, and the American Rhododendron Society (ARS), are valid for the calendar year.

The 2012 membership fees are now due.

The benefits of a \$5.00 local membership (RSC) are

1. Newsletters/notices sent by email .
2. 10% discount at the spring plant sale .
3. Advance notice of plants available and able to pre-order for the Plant Sale .
4. P4M (Plants for Members) available only to members.
5. Participation in Research Projects such as evaluation of the Brueckner hybrids.
6. Garden Tours Open only to members.

Note: A \$10 Local membership fee applies to Newsletters mailed by Canada Post to those so requesting.

Members of the ARS (\$35.00) have all the above benefits plus:

7. The colourful and informative quarterly *Journal*;
8. Discounts on books;
9. Participation in the seed exchange;
10. Special offers on Briggs's program plants.

Please send your renewal to:

**Lillie Haworth, 4 Deer Park
Court, Grimsby ON. L3M 2R2
OR**

**Plan to renew your ARS or Chapter
membership at the February 5 meeting.**

Composting of Rhododendron and Other Wastes To Contain Spread of Exotic Plant Pathogens *Phytophthora kernoviae* and *Phytophthora ramorum*

A recent study suggested that composting is an effective way to produce disease free organic material, but it also is a potential source of pathogens. Reporting in the journal, **COMPOST SCIENCE & UTILIZATION**, 19 (4):219-225; FALL 2011, R. Noble and his colleagues showed that shredded waste temperatures in the compost in the insulated composting systems were above those needed to reduce *P. ramorum* and *P. kernoviae* to below detectable limits. The exception was in the corners of the systems that contained more than 4 m of waste, and in the outer surfaces at one site where the volume of waste was only 2.9 m. Proper composting techniques assist pathogen destruction, but, be careful about compost from cool edges & corners. This emphasizes the importance of turning the pile.