



"Niagara Rhodo"

Newsletter of the Niagara Chapter,
Rhododendron Society of Canada,
District 12, American Rhododendron Society



February, 2015

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

1. "Riverwood: the past, present and future of a living laboratory along the Credit River". Douglas Markoff, Executive Director. Sunday March 8, 2015, 2 P.M. EDT. Rittenhouse Hall. Vineland Research & Innovation Centre. Victoria Avenue, Vineland Station. **(Note: Eastern Daylight Saving Time starts today)**

Sunday, 2 P.M. March 8, 2015
Douglas Markoff, Executive Director.

**The Riverwood Conservancy,
A living laboratory along the banks
of the Credit River:
Its Past, Present & Future**



Located in central Mississauga and nestled along the banks of the historic Credit River, the 60-hectare (150-acre) Riverwood property is a special place where history, nature, beauty and peace blend together to create an enjoyable and lasting outdoor experience.

Visitors to this unique all-season destination enjoy the freshness and new beginnings of wildflowers, bulbs and grasses in the spring; the cooling shade of 200- to 350-year-old trees and mixed old growth forests during the summer; the spawning salmon and breathtaking artist's palette of vibrant yellows, oranges and reds in the fall; and the tranquility and beauty of the trees and ground blanketed in white snow during the winter. With woodland trails, splendid wildlife and glorious views, Riverwood is the ideal site to observe and enjoy the best of what Mother Nature has to offer!

In this unique environment, the Riverwood Conservancy offers a wide selection of education programs for the public and the Region's schools. Douglas will describe the development of Riverwood to its current state, plans for future activities and the role that rhododendrons are likely to play in its future.

Douglas Markoff lives, works and gardens in Mississauga. A sample of his activities is shown below.

Douglas has a wide range of academic and professional experiences. After concluding his graduate studies in Botany at Clemson University in South Carolina and in Botany at the University of Toronto, his professional career includes hands on experiences as a greenhouse manager, nursery management and landscaping supervision, horticulturalist for a television reality show, *Room to Grow*, and Professor of Horticulture and Arboriculture at Seneca College. He was Executive Director of the Civic Garden Centre for 4 years as it grew to become the Toronto Botanical Garden, and has been Director of the Riverwood Conservancy for 4 years. Some scenes of Douglas at work.



2. Agenda for Meeting. Sunday March 8, 2015 2 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time.

- a. 2:00 P.M. to 2:30 P.M. Annual Business Meeting.
 - i. Financial report & Discussion.
 - ii. Election to Board of Directors
- b. Douglas Markoff. "Riverwood: the past, present and future of a living laboratory along the Credit River"

Nominations for Election

Members are invited to submit the name of any Niagara Chapter member in good standing for election to the Board of Directors at the Annual Business Meeting. The following persons have agreed to stand for election or re-election on March 8, 2015. Unless additional nominees are presented at the General Meeting these candidates will be elected by acclamation to the Board of Directors.

Angela Calixto	Angela has been a devoted volunteer in various community garden enterprises. Recently she served as Program Chair of the Lincoln Garden Club and Horticultural Society where, earlier on, she was President and Advisor. With John Calixto, Angela has been an active volunteer in the Niagara Chapter. She brings a dynamic style to the organization and a wide knowledge of organizations and procedures. They participate in organizing the plant sale and Angela has an interest in the Chapter's Newsletter.
Wendy Fletcher	Wendy is currently treasurer of the Niagara Chapter and Chair of the Chapter's Brueckner Evaluation Program. She is active in a wide range of community horticultural associations: Coordinator of the Master Gardeners of Niagara, Past President of the Grimsby Garden Club, Program Chair of the Lincoln Garden Club and, Secretary with Grimsby Active Transportation. She has recently been asked to oversee a community vegetable garden and also give workshops.
Kevin Kavanagh	Kevin is owner of South Coast Gardens located near St. Williams, Norfolk County, Ontario. His skills as a landscape designer and speaker are much in demand and his knowledge about a wide range of genera and their performance under stressful environment conditions are valued by horticultural and conservation organizations. He has been a guest speaker at several meetings of the Niagara Chapter and recently has worked at plant selection for the April sale.
Lillie Haworth	Lillie is an avid gardener, an International Judge in flower arranging, and a volunteer in various community organizations. She was co-Chair of the 1998 ARS Convention held in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Currently, she is Membership Chair and manager of the Niagara Chapter's April pre-order program.
Sondra Meis	Sondra is President of the Niagara Chapter, a post she has held for several years having previously served as Finance Chair. She is an active consultant to local industry through the Ontario Ministry of Industry and demonstrates her gardening prowess with an extensive collection of interesting plants at Point Abino near Fort Erie, Ontario.
Peter Phelps	Peter is a retired engineer and past principal at Phelps Home Builders. He has served in various capacities in the Niagara Chapter; he was a well-recognized organizer of tours associated with the 1998 ARS Convention and earlier as Finance Chair. He is Board Member-at-Large whose work at the annual plant sale and general financial acumen are greatly valued.
Christina Woodward	Christina has been a key member of the Brueckner Evaluation Program and was a founding member of the Brueckner Rhododendron Garden Stewardship Committee in Mississauga. Currently she is serving on the Mississauga Cloverleaf Garden Club Executive Board, is Co-Chair of its Garden Tour Committee, and is active as a new volunteer at the Riverwood Conservancy. She is the keeper of over 500 rhododendrons and the records of their hybridizer, her late father Joe Brueckner. Her efficiency in keeping accurate horticultural records is a welcome addition to the Chapter.
Nicholas Yarmoshuk	Since joining the Chapter as a founding member in 1976, Nick has served as President of the Chapter (1982-83); President of the Rhododendron Society of Canada (1983-84); Co-chair of the 1998 ARS Convention held in Niagara Falls, Ontario; from 2011 to 2013 he was District Director for District 12 of the American Rhododendron Society. Currently he is Chapter Secretary, Newsletter editor, custodian of the Chapter's web site, and Chair of the American Rhododendron Society Test and Demonstration Garden Committee. He enjoys the challenge of growing rhododendrons in a hostile environment and especially values the challenge of communicating useful cultural information to the Chapter's members and helping them in their success with rhododendrons.

3. The February 1, 2015 Meeting: by Angela Calixto & Nick Yarmoshuk. Photos by Chris & Liz Malicki

On February 1st, our group was treated to a two-for-one presentation, with Chris Malicki discussing solar eclipse and wife Liz sharing the meticulous planning for the trip to accommodate both of their interests as well as visits to a number of various public and private gardens of note in Australia and New Zealand. They travelled south in mid-November 2014. Both are members of the Niagara Chapter.

Being spring time in those countries, they were successful in seeing magnificent rhododendrons in full bloom. The pictures they shared evidenced the existence of large rhododendron trees, something most of us are challenged to imagine, considering what we have in our gardens in the Niagara Region. The sizes of the huge blooms and the overall healthy state of rhodos in those countries speak of their liking where they are, a sense of them truly belonging to those locales, and in the case of private gardens, the owners proper care for them.

One commonality among the owners of the gardens is their use of mulch (leaves, lawn clippings or sheep manure as available) on top of either amended soil or soil that is already conducive to rhodo growth. Others use pea straw, oat husks, ground pine or processed sheep pellets as available.

Plant protection against insects and disease is simple. In contrast, while we cannot use pesticides, it is common for them to do so. In fact, large gardens, including private ones, take advantage of crop dusters or aerial applications of pesticides.

We enjoyed looking at pictures of blooms with varying colours from a number of cultivars. One unnamed variety, among the many shown, was a local Favourite and most local gardens simply had to have it.

The 41 enthusiasts who braved the threatening snowstorm enjoyed the 2 hour presentation. It was a talk and presentation that was both entertaining and informative.

Images from the meeting



Total Solar Eclipse



Moon Shadow on earth



Liz



Chris



At Ilam's Garden



Ilam Cream



Moon Orchid



Ilam Orange



Pieris



Some Members



Speaker and Members



Sread's Best (Nutalli x lindlei)

4. Niagara's 2015 Program: Each Sunday meeting starts at 2 P.M.

Sunday, March 8, 2015 **Douglas Markoff**

The Riverwood Conservancy, A living laboratory along the banks of the Credit River: Its Past, present & Future.

Sunday, April 19, 2015 **John Brett, Halifax, N.S.**

Breeding for Hardiness: Niagara's & Atlantic's Experiences with Brueckner Hybrids

Sunday, April 19, 2015 **Nick Yarmoshuk**

Discussion & Description of "What's in this Year's Plant Sale".

Sunday, April 19, 2015

Deadline for Members' pre-Sale orders

Saturday, April 25, 2015

Annual Plant Sale 9 A.M.

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2015

Annual Picnic & P4M sale

Sunday, November, 2015

Date and Speaker TBA

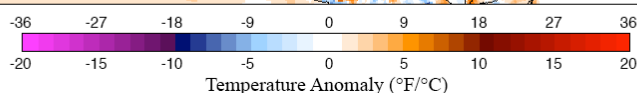
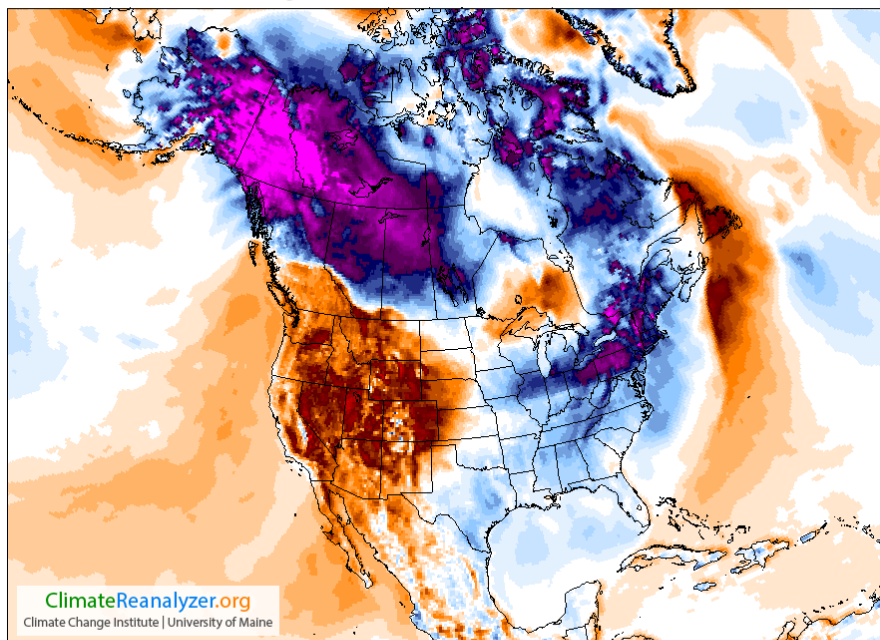
5. Polar Vortex Year II: A repeat of 2014? Perhaps More!

At this time last year many of us were discomfited with the continuing cold and the unexpected low temperatures that seemed to be never ending. A day or two ago I noticed that Kevin Kavanagh had posted the following note on his twitter account, "Morning temp of -34.1C at Delhi (Norfolk county) yesterday appears to be all time coldest temp for any day since records began 151 yrs. ago!" Although December 2014 was milder than the previous year, the last 3 weeks of January 2015 and February 2015 have shown the winter's true viciousness. Today, Kevin writes, "... it has been a brutal February. Delhi broke its all-time (for ANY date) lowest recorded temperature last week with a low of -34.1C. The prior lowest temperature record was set in the 1880s!! A news story noted that many U.S. Great Lakes cities also recorded or tied their coldest ever recorded temperatures. Erie, Pa., for example, tied theirs and Jamestown, New York broke theirs. Many Ontario cities also shattered various records and more record daily lows are expected to be set tomorrow (Feb 23, 2015) morning. This February is expected to be the coldest since records began for most cities in the mid-west and Northeast U.S. with Toronto almost certain to set a record cold month for February. No doubt this will be the case for many places in southern Ontario. ...". Readers who are interested in pursuing this topic in more detail are invited to access the following link.

<http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/imageo/2015/01/07/arctic-streak/>

Temperature Anomaly
NCEP GFS - CFSR 1979-2000 Avg.

Forecast Valid - Fri 0300 UTC, Feb 06, 2015
003h from Fri 0000 UTC, Feb 06, 2015



The image on the left shows the predicted differences in temperatures for February 06, 2015 compared to the 22 years average from 1979 to 2000. Predicted anomalies are shown in shades of brown for warmer than average or shades of purple for colder than average.

Although the cold weather in January and February, 2015 has been brutal, the fact that November and December 2014 were milder than the previous year resulted in plants being able to harden off properly and were able to adapt to the gradually cooling weather. Also, this year, we appear to have much more snow, which should provide great insulation (to plant roots and lower branches) against extreme cold. This should result in less damage to plants in the spring of 2015 than experienced in the spring of 2014.

This past spring we found that some damage had been done to our rhododendrons by the winter cold, but overall it seems that our plants weathered reasonably well and we took the loss of one, or two, or six plants in stride. Some have reported to us that they had to prune their rhodos because some branches did not show new growth, in the spring. At the last meeting, on February 1, some members asked for information on how to deal with rhodos that has been cut back in the spring of 2014. Specifically how to prune them and how to fertilize to assist in growth.

6. Pruning & Feeding Rhododendrons and Azaleas

In February and March 2014, *Niagara Rhodo* provided extensive coverage on effect of pruning on rhododendrons, and, through the work of Kevin Kavanagh, discussed recommendations on how to assist plants to weather the extreme conditions. These recommendations may be found by following this link:

Pruning link http://www.rhodoniagara.org/2009_03_March_Newsletter.pdf

Winter Care http://www.rhodoniagara.org/2014-02-21_%20March_%20Program.pdf



To rejuvenate a plant make cuts much farther back on the shrub. On the primary branches, make your cut just above a latent bud, or even better, a cluster of buds. In severe cases, as we have seen earlier, one can cut a rhododendron to within 6 inches of the ground.

Some thoughts on fertilizing early in the spring.

30-10-10 is usually suggested as a useful fertilizer as it the most commonly available 'higher N' fertilizer available in most garden centres. The **21-7-7 Peters soluble acid, non-aluminum** based, is even better since it is not quite as strong as 30-10-10 and includes an excellent selection of micronutrients.

Use a liquid mix, never a dry fertilizer although we know some larger scale nurseries use a dry slow release mix. It is controversial as to how appropriate a blend it is for acidophiles. As for brands Miracid is frequently used (because it is easy for the average grower to find). It may be widely known that one must never use a Urea based form of nitrogen as it will quickly kill the rhodies...it is more geared for field applications of crops and lawns.

In terms of timing one is wise to wait until just before vegetative bud break (initiation of bud swelling). For most species and cultivars, the ground has warmed up enough at that stage of plant response to the weather, that the roots are also active and can better absorb the fertilizer. In general, just as soon as the snow disappears is too early to be applying liquid fertilizer. The ground in many gardens is too

saturated (and cold!) and the fertilizer will just run off. It is most advisable to wait until the leaf buds start to show development. The Pruning link above, i.e. the **March 2009** issue of *Niagara Rhodo*, also contains an examination of and references to important articles regarding use of fertilizers.

Note: Do Not fertilize Rhododendrons or Azaleas with aluminum based fertilizer