



"Niagara Rhodo"

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



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.

October 18, 2017

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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

2017: A Brief Review of the Past Year.

The winter session (2016-2017) of the Niagara Chapter again featured a series of interesting speakers: Todd Boland spoke about Rhododendrons in Newfoundland, Tom Laviolette described reconstruction of his original garden and the new development of his daughter's garden, and Dr. Steve Krebs spoke again of his continuing research on phytophthora and expected introduction of his new hybrids to the commercial market.

The year ended successfully with a meeting in early April devoted entirely to discussion of cultivars to be available on the last weekend of April. Approximately 250 lepidotes, elepidotes, and evergreen azaleas were sold. The highlight of this year's sale was the introduction and promotion of Stanton's evergreen azaleas. These plants, made available through WW Nurseries in Indiana Pennsylvania, proved to be popular. We look forward to members' reports of experiences with these cultivars during this summer's relatively cool wet period and this coming winter's yet to be experience visit..

The period May to September is usually a quiet one for the Chapter with members actively involved in their own gardens, some providing assistance and advice to others with less experience with rhododendrons.

The executive of the Brueckner Test Garden Committee was actively involved in developing the program and organizing the meeting for the Symposium that was held on September 23. Principals of the 5 arboreta and members of both the Niagara Region Chapter and of the Société du Rhododendron de Quebec participating in the test project were included in discussions of data to be collected, and how these data are to be stored. Detailed attention was devoted to the design parameters of the digital storing system and subsequent data analysis.

The Chapter's fall / winter program has the theme "Social and Botanical Adaptation to Climate Change". We are fortunate to have 3 speakers who have detailed experience with this topic in three different regions, Iceland, North West Yunnan, China and Canada's Haida Gwaii formerly (The Queen Charlotte Islands of the Pacific Northwest), China. These talks will be held on November 5, 2017, February 4, 2018 and March 4, 2018. Our Speakers will be Liz Malicki, Dr. Robbie Hart of the William L. Brown Center of the Missouri Botanical Garden, and Tom Laviolette formerly of the Niagara Parks Commission, Niagara Falls Canada. April's meetings will be devoted to rhododendron culture and to plants to be available at the annual plant sale. Tom Laviolette's recent work

on his own rhododendron collection and that of his daughter will be the subject of a much awaited guided tour in May at peak flowering time. The date for that event will depend upon the vagaries of the weather in May.

Finally, Earl Somerville reports success in tissue culture of the entire collection of Vineland Research Station's Deciduous Azalea introduction of hybrids based on Chelsea Reach, reputed to be highly resistant to powdery mildew. This project supported in part by the Chair of the ARS Test and Display Garden Committee. Some cultivars may be available for commercial distribution in 2 years.

A Typical Chapter Meeting



Todd Boland Speaks in November



Focused attention from members



Kevin Kavanagh thanks Todd



Prize winner gets information from Kevin

Other Initiatives of the Niagara Region

In addition to the Speaker's Program and the Chapter's Annual Plant Sale, the Chapter, with the assistance of the ARS Test and Display Garden Committee is continuing with the second phase of the Brueckner Hybrid Test Project. In addition, Chapter members who are members of the ARS Test Garden Committee have initiated a project with the goal of safeguarding the unique collection of Deciduous Azaleas introduced throughout the 1970's and 1980's by hybridizers at the former Horticultural Research Institute of Ontario, now known as the Vineland Innovation and Research Centre. Local commercial purveyors of rhododendrons and azaleas have shown an interest in their unique quality of being highly tolerant to powdery mildew. Since these azalea cultivars have been at the Vineland station for more than 25 years and have lived through heat, drought, polar vortices without much care or attention, they have been well tested through various conditions and will be attractive to gardeners. Provided below is the most recent report of the Chair of the ARS Test and Display Garden Committee to the governing Board of Directors of the American Rhododendron Society.

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Test & Display Garden (TDG) Committee Report October 5, 2017

The spring 2017 Report provided a brief outline of the planned implementation of Phase 2 of the Brueckner Hybrids Test Project.

This report of the activities of the Test and Display Garden Committee is an update to our report for the 2017 Spring Meeting of the ARS Board of Directors. It contains descriptions of progress made in two areas of the Committee's endeavours: (a) The Brueckner Hybrid Test Program, and (b) the revitalization of the Displays of the Vineland Deciduous Azalea Introductions and of the Vineland Elepidote Introductions at the Vineland Innovation and Research Centre.

The Brueckner Hybrid Test Project

All plants delivered to participating organizations and individuals in September 2016 were set in test beds or as plants in display gardens at each of the 5 participating arboreta and also in individuals' display gardens; this was accomplished in all test venues before August 1, 2017.

A symposium, attended by all institutions and a majority of individuals participating in the test project, was held on Saturday, September 23, 2017. The Test & Display Garden Committee acknowledges the financial support of the ARS Endowment Fund and that of the Niagara Region Chapter (of ARS District 12) made it possible to hold this Symposium at the Riverwood test site, which also serves as a Display Site for the Test project in Mississauga, Ontario. We note especially that travel, accommodation and other personal costs were individually supported by each participant.

The full agenda for the Symposium and description of associated discussions is available at

<http://www.rhodoniagara.org/events/S-1-Binder.pdf>

Kevin Kavanagh and Christina Woodward acted as co-Chairs of the Symposium. Participants were provided with an opportunity to describe their testing environment; i.e. their soil conditions and planting sites, general zonal qualities and micro climates. Kevin described in detail the geographic range of the test venues and their respective climates and microclimates. These are to be found in an area bounded by Madison Ohio on the south shore of Lake Erie, in Canada at two locations on the north Shore of Lake Erie (St. Williams and Rodney), North of London Ontario (in Ailsa Craig, Near Georgian Bay), Kingston Ontario, Montreal and Fort Erie Ontario. In addition, discussion focused on Project Goals, variables to be measured, reported and stored, relationship of these parameters to the Project Goals and form of the digital media required to effectively store these data. Attached also are 3 montages of the various

Brueckner hybrids currently under test. They constitute a significant part of Dr. Joseph Brueckner's body of hybridizing work. Preparation of a full report of the proceedings and final conclusions is now underway and will be available soon. The allocation of an adequate budget to the Test Display Garden Committee for each phase of the work, received while the work was in progress, is greatly appreciated by all concerned with the Project's success.

Display Garden Restoration: Vineland Deciduous Azalea Introductions

A brief history of the Horticultural Research Institute of Ontario and photos and full descriptions of the Deciduous Azaleas developed and introduced by rhododendron hybridizers at the Institute is available at <http://www.rhodoniagara.org/archives/vineland/vineland.pdf> and <http://www.rhodoniagara.org/archives/vineland/vine1.htm> through to <http://www.rhodoniagara.org/archives/vineland/vine26.htm>

These deciduous azaleas are reputed to be highly resistant to powdery mildew.

The project was initiated in 2016 when Earl Sommerville, of Marietta Georgia offered to propagate the entire collection through Tissue Culture. His note reads . . .

. . . I'm starting to think about tissue culturing of the Vineland materiel; what I do is the tissue culture then forward the plantlets to Plan View Nursery (Lab) in Rhode Island. Whereas he produces and sell liners, the time frame is about a year from the time I send the culture. If I get the cuttings next spring I would be sending plantlets to Rhode Island the fall of 2017 and liners would be available in 2018 in 2.5"x3.5" pots. The nursery in Rhode Island sell the rooted cuttings for something around \$1.40 US, I do not make any thing, I don't even get my cost covered. This is my way to get the native azaleas to people that enjoy them. Do you think that there may be nurseries in your area that may would like to sell these plants? Plane View Nursery has been set up to ship to Canada? ``

Since that time we have shipped 3 sets of cuttings of the deciduous azaleas. His first success was achieved with Carousel. Liners of this cultivar are now available through Plane View Nursery in Rhode Island. Sommerville reports success with all but one of the remaining 25 cultivars. Since the rate of success has been mixed, he requested an additional shipment of cuttings of these somewhat less successful cultivars to be sent this month. Liners will likely be available in spring 2018.

Our local ``Blue Sky`` Nursery is prepared to be a purveyor of this series of deciduous azaleas to the public once liners are available from Plane View Nursery.

All costs for this resurrection of the Vineland Introductions has, to date, been borne by Sommerville and personally by the chair of Test and Display Garden Committee.



Nicholas Yarmoshuk, Chair,
ARS Test & Display Garden Committee.

Photos of participants in the Symposium, held at the Riverwood Conservancy, is shown on the following page.



Clockwise from top left: Christina Woodward, Program Chair; Kevin Kavanagh, co-Chair addressing ½ of group; Kevin Kavanagh and 2nd ½ of group; Douglas Markoff, Director Riverwood Conservancy and Dr. James Phipps; Addy & Theresa Majewski & Martha Kantorczyk; The Kennedys; L to R: Christina Woodward, Luc Theriault, Richard Dionne, Dr. Steve Krebs, Liz Malicki; Participants viewing Test Beds at the Riverwood Conservancy, Mississauga.

Plans for the coming year




Niagara Region Chapter
Rhododendron Society of Canada
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2017-2018 Program
All Gardeners are Welcome
to
Meetings & Plant Sales


Meetings are held on Sundays at 2 P.M.
Rittenhouse Hall, at the
Vineland Research & Innovation Centre
Victoria Avenue, Vineland Station, ON


2017-2018 Program

Meetings & Plant Sale

 **November 5, 2017. Liz Malicki.** Intrepid Traveller, Artist, Writer, Rhododendron Grower. *Impact of Climate Change on horticulture in Iceland: A personal perspective.*

 **February 4, 2018. Dr. Robbie Hart.** Assistant Curator, High Elevation Ethnobotany, Missouri Botanical Garden. *Climate driven change in Himalayan Rhododendron: Insights from History, ecology and traditional knowledge.*

 **March 4, 2018. Tom Laviolette.** Director, Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens, Niagara Parks Landscape Design, School of Horticulture, Butterfly Conservatory (retired). *Plants and animals of the land and sea of Haida Gwaii: Haida culture and their Natural Environment.*

 **April 8, 2018. Kevin Kavanagh & Nick Yarmoshuk.** *What's in the Plant Sale? Describe for each cultivar: its strengths, weaknesses & appropriate growing conditions.*

Saturday, April 28, 2018. Annual General Plant Sale. Starts at 9 A.M. Closes when plants sold out. Implement shed, Vineland Research & Innovation Centre, Victoria Ave, Vineland Station, ON

Adaptation to Environmental Change

During the past few years most readers would have noticed media accounts of birds appearing outside of their natural environments, of sea life, usually associated with southern venues, appearing in northern waters, with ships traversing polar seas typically associated with wilderness explorers, all with increasing frequency. On another plane, since 2015, there have appeared increasing accounts of declining numbers of bumble bees in North America and Europe, their continuing existence becoming ever limited to a much smaller band of latitude.

Last July, your editor was intrigued by an invitation to attend a talk at the Holden Arboretum where the subject was "Climate driven change in Himalayan Rhododendrons: insights from history, ecology and traditional knowledge". How could I possibly resist such a title? The announcement even introduced me to a word, totally new to my vocabulary, Phenology the seasonal timing of species life-history events. That is the study of noticeable traits by which organisms respond to changes in climate. Then I learned that the methods used by this researcher, employed elements from Social Anthropology, examination of Historical records, and intense personal observation of events in China. The topic was interesting, the content was unique, and, in conversation after the talk, the speaker agreed to be our guest in February 2018, when he returns from China with new information and ideas, for us!

Coincidentally, he also learned that some of his associates, who had travelled to remote areas as tourists, had returned with stories of plants growing in unexpected areas, and stories of how people in remote area had adapted to changing weather and environment conditions. They both agreed to speak of their experience, one in November, 2017 and the other in March, 2018.

And so the program for 2017-2018 was born with the title "**Adaptation to Environmental Change**". More details about each speaker and their content will appear in Newsletters to be published closer to the date of each talk.