



# Niagara Rhodo



Newsletter of the Niagara Chapter, Rhododendron Society of Canada  
District 12, American Rhododendron Society  
Our website: [www.rhodoniagara.org](http://www.rhodoniagara.org)

## December 20, 2017

**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.

**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*



## *Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for 2018*

### President's Christmas Message

#### *Season's Greetings!*

*The Niagara Chapter of the Rhododendron Society has completed another successful year for our membership, providing access to exciting plants at affordable prices; a series of outstanding educational and entertaining talks, featuring international as well as local speakers, with unique perspectives; and an opportunity for fellowship and camaraderie among fellow gardeners.*

*We continue to innovate through initiatives such as the Brueckner Test project (involving an international group of institutions) and the new Vineland Azalea Tissue Culture initiative. These projects extend our international network of relationships, within the ARS and beyond. This is a form of currency for a not-for-profit entity such as ours. The developed goodwill often leads to new plant exchanges, unexpected unique initiatives valuable to our members and outright gifts from generous donors. This process continues to enrich our group and engages our entire membership.*

*We never lose sight of the contribution and support of our members, and are ever mindful that our achievements are the result of a dedicated and enthusiastic group of volunteers.*

*On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend warm greetings to you and your families for the Christmas Season and the year 2018. May you enjoy good health and prosperity, and may your gardens flourish, bringing you satisfaction, pleasure, and joy.*

*Sondra Meis, President*

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## 2018 Meetings and Plant Sale

*Niagara Region Chapter  
Rhododendron Society of Canada  
District 12, American Rhododendron Society*

**All Gardeners are Welcome  
to Meetings and Plant Sale**

Meetings are held  
on Sundays at 2 PM

Rittenhouse Hall at the  
Vineland Research  
and Innovation Centre

Victoria Ave., Vineland Station, ON



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



**March 4, 2018:** Tom Laviolette, Director (Retired), Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens. **TOPIC: *Plants and animals of the land and sea of Haida Gwaii: Haida culture and their Natural Environment.***



**April 8, 2018:** What's in the plant sale?, Kevin Kavanagh and Nick Yarmoshuk. ***Will describe for each cultivar, its strength, weaknesses and appropriate growing conditions.***

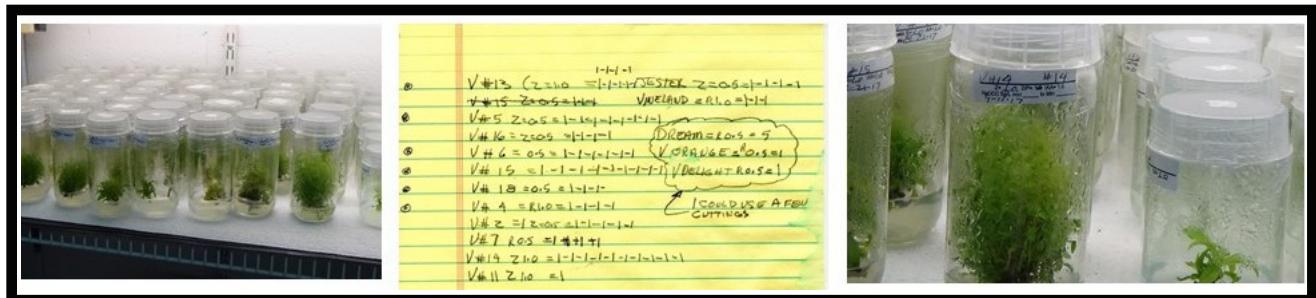
**April 28, 2018: Annual General Plant Sale. This is held in the Utilities Garage at the Vineland Research & Innovaton Centre.**

## The Year in Review

Events of the past year have been described in detail in the October issue of the Niagara Rhodo. In November 2016, Todd Boland described the collection of rhododendrons at Memorial University in Newfoundland; in the cold of February, Tom Laviolette shared his experiences with creating rhododendron gardens in St. Catharines; and, at the beginning of the planting season, Steve Krebs explored his research on Phytophthora and hybridizing experiences to produce Phytophthora-resistance hybrids. The Chapter's offering at the annual plant sale were described by Kevin and Nick, with Kevin providing expert insights into each cultivar's characteristics and role in a garden.

In September, participants in the Brueckner Hybrids Test project met at the Riverwood Conservancy to discuss the design of project and the variables that will be used in assessing the various cultivars in the test project.

In November, the hoped for ability to generate copies of the various Azaleas introduced by Vineland's late HRIO institute took a major step forward when Earl Somerville announced that the Vineland azaleas cuttings



(taken by Kevin Kavanagh, Peter Phelps and Nick Yarmoshuk) and put into propagation media in the last week of April, 2017 now have good cultures (more than one) on about 15 Vineland cultivars. They will be available as liners starting in spring 2019 to a local Nursery for development into 2 gallon plants for spring 2021 -- and possibly ready to offer to members at that time. Plans are afoot to identify gardens with Vineland elepidote and lepidote introductions so that these plants may be similarly propagated and offered to growers.

# Weather Impact on Plant Performance

**Fall 2017:** In our Region, this past summer was characterized by a lack of persistent or extreme heat. For most areas rain was more plentiful and in some cases excessive. Of course, in the US Gulf Coast, tropical moisture provided ample fuel for heavy downpours, and devastating hurricanes Harvey and Irma shattered records. In general this pattern would benefit rhododendron and azalea growth; the lack of sunshine, of course, would inhibit bud set. Compared to the wonderful show of colour we experienced this last spring from well budded plants of



the previous summer, and a mild previous winter, this year's poor bud set portends a lower blaze of colour in spring 2018.

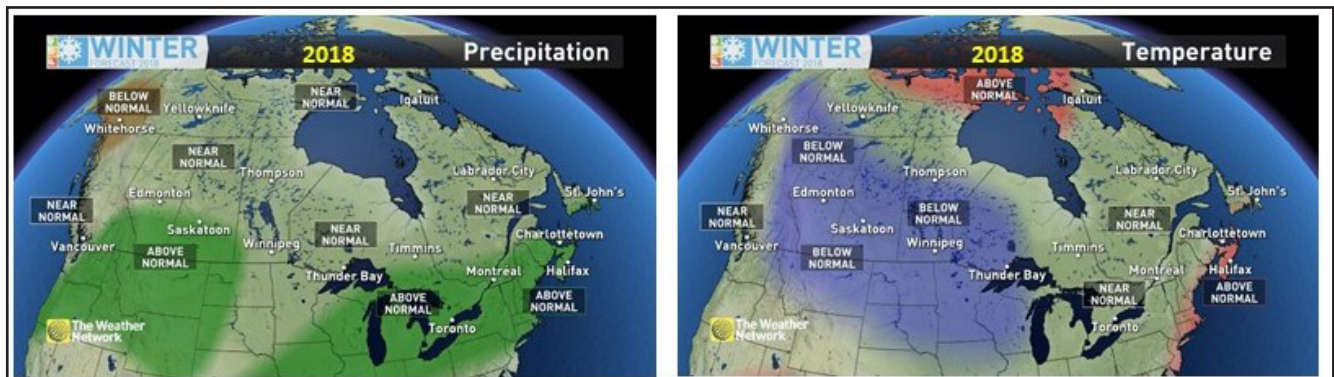
Longer term weather forecasting in September revealed its usual level of accuracy, predicting that good fall weather was expected to dominate mid and late September and to continue well into October, providing more than the typical number of warm sunny days and great opportunities for outdoor activities and enjoying the fall foliage. Of course, shots of cooler air would be inevitable, and it was expected that

November would reveal a late fall pattern with classic fall storms and a few reminders that winter would be just around the corner. The predictions held true.

This mild fall pattern, resembling a cool bright summer, was lovely to experience but what was the impact on rhododendrons and azaleas. In our garden, next to the SCG&CC golf course, the weather allowed many trees and shrubs to remain deep green. Notably, Schlippenbachi, other deciduous azaleas, the Mezitt lepidotes, the Girard evergreen azaleas, Rosebud, Cornus florida and Cornus kousa Chinensis, Scarlet Oak and Pin Oak, which usually provided a bright range of various red colours in October and early November, remained green until November 9, 2017. The following 2 nights, on thermometers at Vineland Station and in our Highland Avenue garden, on November 10 and 11, temperatures fell to lows of -6°C & -8°C respectively. Where leaves had been green the day before they were now a darkish grey.

The question arises, how will this experience impact the rhodos, azaleas and their companions in the spring to come? As leaves turn from green to many hues of red and yellow, various processes take place that prepare the deciduous tree or shrub for the coming winter, but also for initiating growth in the spring. Not only did we lose the beautifully coloured fall colours but our plants may not have experienced these benefits that ensure long term survival.

## Anticipating Winter 2018



## Outlook for winter 2018

“As a whole, Canadians should expect a wild ride from start to finish,” Chris Scott, Chief Meteorologist at The Weather Network, says of Winter 2017/18. “It’s safe to say we’ll all be participating in winter this year. An active storm track will help define the season.”

### Precipitation

The Weather Network expects that most of Canada will have above normal or near normal precipitation with the most active areas stretching from the Great Lakes to the Maritimes and southern Newfoundland, and also from southern B.C. to southern Saskatchewan. Colder than normal temperatures are expected across a large part of central Canada with near normal temperatures expected for most other areas.

### Winter Temperature & an Early Spring?

Overall, The Weather Network expects extended periods of high impact winter weather, but this winter as a whole will be characterized by changeable patterns rather than having a pattern that locks in for the majority of the season. A classic Canadian winter is expected for this region with an active storm track bringing above average snowfall across central and southern regions. There is also a heightened threat for freezing rain at times across the south. The stormy weather pattern could bring our region its snowiest winter in a decade. In fact, The Weather Network notes that there are some similarities in the global weather pattern between this year and the winter of 2007-2008, which brought Pearson airport its snowiest winter on record.

The Weather Network may have some discouraging news for gardeners for March, 2018. While it is too early to have very much confidence in weather patterns for the spring, when they look back at years in the past that had global patterns similar to what they are currently seeing (such as a developing La Niña), there is a remarkable consistency – spring DOES NOT come early.

No two La Niña events are, however, exactly alike, but La Niña has a reputation for focusing the coldest and most active winter weather across Western Canada, with a more variable, but often milder and stormy pattern from the Great Lakes to Atlantic Canada.

Of course a lot can change between now and then, but their preliminary thought is that most of Canada will be near or below seasonal during the month of March, 2018.

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**SOURCE:** Gardening thoughts by N. Yarmoshuk & K. Kavanagh. Weather details and charts from Weather Network on-line, December 6, 2017: [https://www.google.ca/search?q=fall+weather+forecast+weather+network&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b&gfe\\_rd=cr&dcr=0&ei=ZE0sWrqTD-aS8Qfw4azYCQ](https://www.google.ca/search?q=fall+weather+forecast+weather+network&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b&gfe_rd=cr&dcr=0&ei=ZE0sWrqTD-aS8Qfw4azYCQ)