



# "Niagara Rhodo"



Newsletter of the Niagara Chapter,  
Rhododendron Society of Canada,  
District 12, American Rhododendron Society  
March 26, 2019

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

Sunday, April 7, 2019  
Starts at 1:45 p.m.



***SILENT AUCTION-Scarce Rhododendrons: Opens 1:45 p.m. Details Page 3.***

***SPEAKER: Richard Bauer. President, Azalea Society of America.***

***TOPIC: Modern Azaleas – The ASA Legacy Project***



Rick Bauer has been a member of the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Azalea Society of America (ASA) since 2002. He spent 20 years in the US Army and, later, 17 years at SAIC. He and his wife Susan live in York County, Virginia. Rick first became interested in azaleas in high school and now propagates and grows them.

# The Legacy Project: Context

Richard Bauer

The Azalea Society of America counts among its members, a large number of hybridizers. Some of their hybrids have entered the commercial market such as the Encore® line developed by Buddy Lee. Most, however, are not widely known.

The Northern Virginia Chapter of ASA counts a number of hybridizers among its members. They have produced a large number of beautiful cultivars. The members of the chapter realized that without action being taken, information on and copies of the plants themselves could be lost over time.

The chapter initiated the “Legacy Project,” as a formal means of maintaining the legacy of these hybridizers and their cultivars. The project originally started with four hybrid groups. It began to expand in the chapter and other chapters of the ASA as word of the project got out. In 2017 the Azalea Society adopted it as a society project. It currently encompasses 16 hybrid groups, including the Vineland azaleas.

Rick will cover the history of the project, the various aspects and outputs and introduce us to some of the beautiful hybrids developed and included in the project.

**Editor’s Note:** The Niagara Region Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society has, since it’s founding in 1976, been a purveyor of evergreen and deciduous azaleas at its annual rhododendron and azalea sales. Evergreen Azaleas were first introduced to our members by the late Leslie Hancock of Woodland Nurseries who offered *R. kaempferi* and *R. poukhanense* (since renamed as *R. yedoense* var. *poukhanense*) to enthusiasts in southern and southwestern Ontario. These two species were found to perform well in the north-eastern American climate, as did various hybrids when one of these species was a parent. During the late 1970s and 1980’s, hybrids developed by early evergreen azalea hybridizers Joe Gable, Tony Shammarello, Orlando (Lanny) Pride and Ernest Stanton were known to growers in southern and southwestern Ontario, but did not appear to develop the popularity accorded to the large flowered, broadleaf, rhododendrons.

It seems that in the 1970’s deciduous azaleas were somewhat more popular among Niagara Chapter growers than the evergreen azaleas. The then Horticultural Research Institute of Ontario had an active breeding program for deciduous azaleas led by Al Smith. He bred Chelsea Reach with *R. Cecile* and *R. Gold Dust* and others to produce a series of deciduous azaleas that, after several years, proved to be resistant to powdery mildew.

This collection of Al Smith’s hybrids is growing today in a bed in front of Rittenhouse Hall on the grounds of the former HRIO, now known as the Vineland Research and Innovation Center. Stimulated by an offer from Earl Sommerville to micro-propagate the Vineland Azaleas by tissue culture, the Niagara Region Chapter accepted the offer and has worked with Plan View Nursery in Rhode Island and Blue Sky Nursery in Beamsville, Ontario in a program to make a significant number of plants available for the 2021 ARS Convention and to make these plants commercially available at the same time. The Vineland Azaleas are included in the Legacy Project



# SILENT AUCTION - APRIL 7, 2019

WOW !

These plants could be in your garden.



**Brown Eyes**



**Brown Eyes**



**Calsap**



**Front House Yellow**



**Golden Horseshoe**



**Golfer**

All are Elepidote Rhododendrons in 2 gallon pots  
(2 each of *Brown Eyes*, *Calsap*, *Golden Horseshoe* & *Golfer* and 1 of *Front House Yellow*)

To be sold to Members **only** by Silent Auction  
at the April 7th meeting

The auction sheets will be out at 1:45 pm  
Auction will run from 1:45pm to 2:15pm  
You may bid on one or all and as many times as you like !

Payment by cash or cheque at close of sale

A 5-minute final bid after 2:15pm will be allowed, the time for which will be  
determined by President Sondra Meis

Auction winners will be announced at the end of the meeting !



A total of 9 plants are available in this silent auction. The Niagara Chapter's Plant Sales Committee believed that the only fair way to distribute these 6 cultivars to the many members who would be interested in them is to auction them in a silent auction. These cultivars were described in detail at the general meeting on March 3, 2019. Members will recall that the inconsistency in the colour of the images of Brown Eyes was discussed at the general meeting. Providing two images may assist in better understanding the true colours.

Rhododendron Brown Eyes is reputed to have a showy pink flower with a golden brown flare. The two different colours of this cultivar shown on the previous page results from the difficulty to obtain accurate colours due to variations in light conditions. We believe the second photo is an accurate rendition of the flower's petal, but the first photo reveals a more accurate rendition of the brown blotch. This cultivar is a vigorous, heat tolerant, hardy grower.

## *Let's Talk About These Plants*



**Catawbiense Album (Ele.)**



**Haaga  
(Univ. of Helsinki)**



**Helsinki University**



**Kalinka (Yak.)**



**Landmark (Lep.)**



**Olga Mezitt (Lep.)**

**Add Uniqueness, Great Colour, Hardiness.**

**Great Plants still Available for your Garden**

This year's innovation, the Pre-Order Annual Plant Sale, for members only, has progressed very well. Most of the rhododendrons and azaleas have been well received, substitutions have been appreciated yet those excellent cultivars displayed above are still available.

**'Catawbiense Album'** is an Ironclad rhododendron identified for cold hardiness by Anthony Waterer of Knap Hill, Surrey, England in the late 1800's. Its pale lavender buds open into campanulate, white flowers that have a greenish-yellow blotch.

**'Haaga'** is an extremely hardy, mid-sized rhododendron hybrid. The pink flowers, with a darkly spotted upper petal, cover the shrub in mid-June. 'Haaga' is a hybrid of **R. brachycarpum** var. **tigerstedtii**, known as the Mustila Rhododendron, with pollen from 'Dr. H. C. Dresselhuys'. It has a regular round shape, growing about 1.5m in 10 years. The specimens planted in Alppiruusulaakso (Rhododendron Valley) in the early years of this century have already reached 2m.

**'Helsinki University'** is an extremely hardy mid-sized hybrid; the first of the Finnish hybrids, introduced in 1990, the University's 350th anniversary. The female parent is **R. brachycarpum** var. **tigerstedtii**, but the pollinator is not known. Beautiful flowers

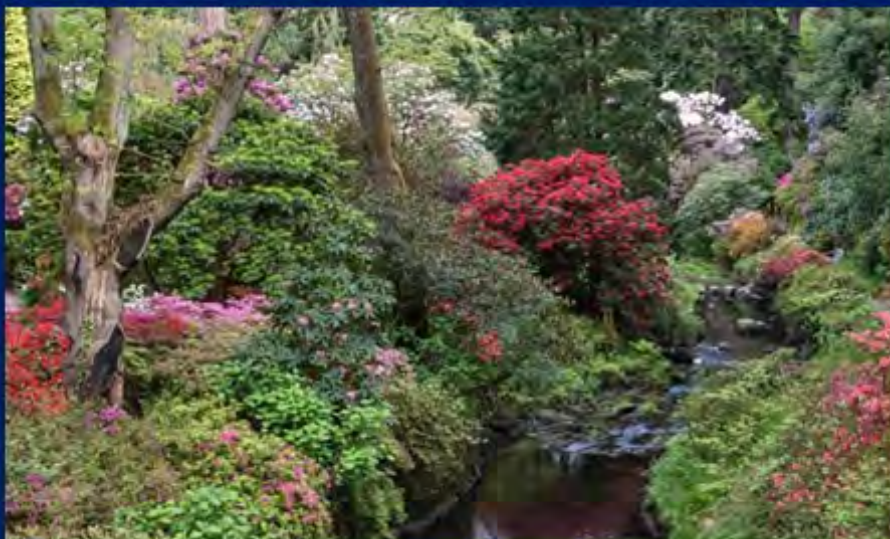
**Kalinka** is a yakushimanum rhododendron bred by Hans Hachmann in 1983. Its flowers are a unique combination of light pink, deeper lilac pink at frilled margins, and orange markings in the throat. It flowers are a unique combination of light pink, deeper lilac pink at frilled margins, and orange markings in the throat. Brown indumentum.

**'Landmark'**, a (small leafed) lepidote makes an amazing impression in early May with an explosion of nearly red flowers that demands one to take notice. Some describe Landmark as "The red flowering PJM" and enjoy its pleasing mahogany-bronze foliage color in the winter. Has withstood Polar Vortices in recent years.

**Olga Mezitt'**, a lepidote, is a vigorous grower with a spreading, upright habit and bears an abundance of showy, vivid, peach-pink flowers.. The 'P.J.M.' group of rhododendrons (developed by Peter Mezitt) are of a similar size, growing to a height of 4 feet tall. As with all Mezitt introductions, it is super hardy and very showy. Blooms in early mid-season.

## **Rhododendrons: forget the flowers, check out the leaves.** *Robbie Blackhall-Miles. Thu 23 Feb 2017. The Guardian:International Edition.*

Gardeners love rhododendrons for the kaleidoscopic glare of their spring flowers, but their leaves are what captivates rare plant expert Robbie Blackhall-Miles.



**Rhododendrons light up the dell garden at Bodnant in a 'brazen show of the battle for pollination'.**  
**Photograph: Alamy Stock Photo**



I am very lucky. I have one of the greatest and grandest gardens in the world right on my door step. The National Trust's [Bodnant Garden](#) is just a short drive from where I live in Snowdonia, and right now the garden is getting ready to put on a performance like no other in the world.

Bodnant is famous for many things, but the one that stands out most for me is its amazing collection of rhododendrons. The flower buds of these superlative members of the Ericaceae are swelling and getting ready to burst into flower with technicolour abandon. Red through pink, orange and yellow to white, and with blue and purple to add, they are a show that must not be missed.

However, alongside the rhododendron flowers come the people, upwards of 180,000 of them per year, and I am afraid that I find this a little difficult to bear. I have taken to visiting Bodnant when I am sure of some peace and quiet; midweek, in the evening and during the winter have become the times I haunt these acres of Welsh hillside. It's those winter visits that have become the most charming. To see Bodnant without its kaleidoscopic glare of colour is to see a very different garden indeed. I see the plants themselves and not the brazen show of the battle for pollination.



**The author declares his  
fascination with  
indumentum. . . . .**

***"Forgive the confession,  
but I have become a  
serial leaf turner."***

**Photograph: Ben Ram**

My eyes are drawn out of the garden to the landscape that surrounds without the interference of rich pigment or hue, and the plants themselves are subtle and benign, not clashing or glaring. Most of all, I see the rhododendrons' most incredible leaves.

Forgive the confession, but I have become a serial leaf turner. I walk around Bodnant's 80 acres, inspecting leaf undersides, looking and trying to understand. I have reached a point in this almost obsessive, pursuit where the brash red flowers can be shouting "look at me" and all I want to see is the plant's leaves. I am looking at scales and hairs (or the lack thereof) in a bid to comprehend something that I am not sure I will ever fully grasp. With more than 1,000 different species, rhododendron taxonomy is rather difficult, but I am determined I will get it one day. Rhododendron leaves with scaly undersides are [lepidote](#), and ones without are [elepidote](#); characteristics, alongside a suite of others, that place them into their separate sub-genera and subsequently act as a guide to their species identification. Beyond that, they have a whole range of different indumentums (types of hairs) that distinguish them more accurately than their flowers.

This intricate array of different styles of hair serve many purposes for these plants; shedding water, absorbing water, frost protection and acting as minuscule windbreaks to control the loss of water through transpiration.



### **R. 'Elizabeth Lockhart'**

**A sport of Hummingbird**  
*haematodes (s) X williamsanum*

*Photograph: Ben Ram*

Whatever the purpose of the indumentum, the effort put in by the plants to produce it is not in vain. Rhodos live their life in a constant battle to accumulate nutrients to build their evergreen leaves. In areas of the world that see hot, wet monsoons and cold, dry seasons, these simple adaptations can be the difference between winning and losing.



**The Yakushimanum  
rhododendron's leaves  
are just as interesting in  
summer and winter as  
their flowers are in  
spring.**

*Photograph: Ben Ram*

But, as a gardener, indumentums have taken me from being a mere rhodo appreciator to a rhodo fanatic. They give the plants something beyond the brief flowering period that takes place at some point between now and June, and spread the interest through the year. I will continue to visit Bodnant during the busy summer season, but I shall be doing so off-peak, seeing a very different view to the rest of the crowds. I will be looking a little deeper at the rhododendrons and seeing plants that are far more complex than their relatively simple, yet audacious flowers lead you to believe.

Reprinted from the Gardening Blog .<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/gardening-blog/2017/feb/23/rhododendrons-forget-the-flowers-check-out-the-leaves#img-3>



# The Cookie Brigade

We are all aware that groups such as the Niagara region Chapter of the ARS exist through the efforts of a considerable number of volunteers. One group of volunteers that provides direct pleasure is often taken for granted. . . . those who produce goodies to satisfy the universal sweet tooth. Your editors thought it would be appropriate to recognize this brigade of volunteers who, at our meetings do not encourage us to count calories.

## The Cookie Brigade

March 3, 2019 meeting



Brigade members on March 3, 2019. From top to bottom right: Gwen Simpson, Wanda Yarmoshuk, Jean Wackett, Joan Kooger