



"Niagara Rhodo"

Newsletter of the Niagara Chapter,
Rhododendron Society of Canada,
District 12, American Rhododendron Society
September 20, 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'

Content

1. Program: October 2019 to April 2020
2. Harold Greer: October 6, 2019. Topic
3. Harold Greer: Life with rhododendrons.
4. Greer Gardens and Nursery.

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



2019-2020 Program Meetings & Plant Sale



Sunday, October 6, 2019. 2 P.M. Harold Greer. North America's rhododendron guru: Teacher, Mentor, Rhodo Breeder, Grower, Promoter. Topic: *Rhododendron Diversity. What is included in the genus Rhododendron? How do they differ?*



Sunday, November 10, 2019. 2 P.M. Tom Laviolette. Director, (retired) Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens, Niagara Parks Landscape Design, School of Horticulture, Butterfly Conservatory. Topic: *The Northwest Passage: A horticulturalist's perspective*



Sunday, February 2, 2020. 2 P.M. Julie-Ann Côté, Senior student, Niagara Parks School of Horticulture, Member NRC, RSC. Topic: *An Intern's 2019 experience at Harvard University's, Arnold Arboretum*



Sunday, March 8, 2020. 2 P.M. Kevin Kavanagh & Nick Yarmoshuk. *What's in the Plant Sale? Describe for each cultivar: its strengths, weaknesses & appropriate growing conditions.*

Annual Members' General Plant Sale. Repeat of last year's pre-order opens on March 8 with deadline for orders TBA.

Pick-up date TBA

Vineland Research & Innovation Centre.
Victoria Ave. Vineland Station, ON

Harold Greer's Topic

for

Sunday, October 6, 2019 at 2 P.M.

Many of us who have been involved with rhododendrons over many years, will privately agree that they have little systematic knowledge of the species rhododendron. Many would also, privately, welcome hearing of such information, if it would be provided in straightforward, non-technical language by a friendly, trusted authority. We have known of such a person by reputation, reported to us by others. When your editor first met Harold Greer, Nick knew that he had met such a person. But he also learned that the demand for this person's presence at special events far exceeded the time available for him to travel to distant locations. Events over the last 5 years have come together to allow Harold Greer to accept our invitation to talk to Niagara rhododendron enthusiasts.

Harold Greer will answer our members further questions after he has discussed, (1) Why it is important for growers to be aware of the existence of many forms of rhododendrons organized in five categories. (2) What are those categories? (3) How do rhododendrons within these categories differ from each other? (4) What are the practical differences that will affect how they should be tended. (5) Where and how can the tropical rhododendrons be grown in eastern North America.





















Some of Harold Greer's favourite hardy rhododendrons



Photos courtesy
of Harold Greer.

Top to bottom, In each row from left to right: (1) In Greer Garden - names not provided. (2) *R. degronianum* ssp *yakushmanum* Ken Janeck (3) *R. degronianum* ssp *yakushmanum* Yaku Angel (4) *R. Hallelujah* (5) *R. R. Hallelujah* Shrub (6) *R. IMGP1143 fortunei* ssp *fortunei* RSF 76-029 (7) *R. Olin O. Dobbs* (8) *R. Rabatz* (9) *R. True Blood* (10) *R. Kimberly* 4-79

Five Major Groups

Subgenus Hymenanthus	Subgenus Rhododendron	Subgenus Tsutsusi	Subgenus Pentanthera	Subgenus Rhododendron Section Vireya
				
				
				
				
Larger leaf rhododendrons elepidote	Small leaf scaly rhododendrons lepidote	Evergreen azaleas elepidote	Deciduous azaleas elepidote	Vireyas tropical lepidote

Two types of Rhododendrons

Lepidote
with scales

Elepidote

**E = non or
without scales**

**Often small leaved,
but not always**

**What the average
person would
consider a
"typical"
rhododendron**

How is an azalea different from a rhododendron? They are always in the Subgenus Tsustusi & Pentanthera



1. Remember all azaleas are in the Genus *Rhododendron*, so they are rhododendrons.



2. Azaleas are *elepidotes* and **NEVER** have scales.

3. The plants we think of as azaleas generally have five lobes to the flower unless they are double, but there are exceptions.

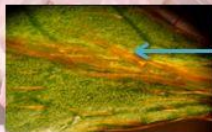


4. Most azaleas have one stamen for each lobe of the flower, while "rhododendrons" have two. Again exceptions exist.



5. Azaleas tend to have appressed hairs (hair that grows parallel to the surface of the leaf).

6. Azaleas have tubular funnel or funnel shaped flowers.



7. The hairs on an azalea never branch.

Harold Greer

by

Steve McCormick

(edited by N.Yarmoshuk)

Harold Greer started his adventures with rhododendrons at the tender age of around 5 years, when his father moved from Colorado to Oregon in 1952. Discovering a climate suitable to growing beautiful plants, Harold's father began collecting roses, fuchsias, chrysanthemums and an obscure plant he had never seen or even heard of, the rhododendron.

According to Harold, he began to hybridize rhododendrons by about age 7. He is reputed to have said, "I chose two rhododendrons that bloomed first in the spring, a *lepidote* and an *elepidote*. Of course, the attempted cross was a colossal failure, the two plants were incompatible". That did not dissuade Harold from further exploration.



By age 15 Harold produced the pink flowered R. Trude Webster which, in 1971, received the American Rhododendron Society's first Superior Plant Award.

(Left: Harold Greer, recently, with R. Trude Webster in summer: courtesy of Harold Greer. Truss photo by Harold Greer.)

Harold studied landscape architecture at the University of Oregon and then launched Greer Gardens in 1972 after the death of his father. The nursery -- an outgrowth of that fortuitous move to Oregon -- became an international seller of rare and unusual plants.



Harold Greer had already been awarded two Bronze medals when, in 1989, he became the youngest person to be awarded the ARS Gold Medal. He also was the youngest member to serve as president of the Society and served on the Board of Directors for over 25 years.

He is recognized internationally for his thorough knowledge of rhododendron cultivars, his expertise in growing rhododendrons, for his books on the subject, for his plants, and for his service and dedication to the international rhododendron community. He is an accomplished photographer whose pictures have been published widely. Harold invariably has the last word when complex discussions are debated on the Rhododendron Chat Line. We look

forward to welcoming Harold and his wife Nancy to the Niagara Region Chapter, RSC, ARS District 12.

Editor's Note: This description of Harold Greer's contribution to the rhododendron World was derived in part from an article by Steve McCormick and gleaned from issues of the Bulletin of the American rhododendron Society now known as the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society



R. Very Berry



Greer Gardens in Eugene, Oregon

The Greer enterprise was founded by Harold Greer's father, Edgar, in the early 1950's. His intent was not to create a business, but to have a retirement project where he could pursue his new-found hobby of collecting, growing and hybridizing rhododendrons. In Edgar's retirement from the Insurance business, the family moved from Colorado into their new home in a small town adjacent to Eugene, Oregon. In a few years, an empty lot adjacent to this home was soon filled with rhododendrons. So, the family moved into a 3-4-acre property where father, and son Harold, pursued their rhododendron interests including hybridizing.



In the early 1950's, Eugene, Oregon and the American Pacific North West was an area in which the American Rhododendron Society was founded. By the 1950's there was a very strong presence of rhododendron horticulture in this area and Harold's father was a significant member of the local rhododendron organization. Harold worked closely with his father studying and tracking the lineage of a vast number of rhododendron hybrids. That information was invaluable to Harold as a hybridizer and a future advisor to others. This work led to his book *Greer's Guide to Available Rhododendrons*. While at

University, Harold became known as expert in identifying cultivars by the characteristics of various parts of a plant's structure. He was hired to identify photographs of plants in a massive slide collection.

After Harold completed his studies in landscape architecture and plant sciences at the University of Oregon, he soon decided to go into the Nursery business specializing in rhododendrons. This was the beginning of an illustrious career during which he became known for the quality of his plants, the reliability of his service, helpfulness to potential rhodoholics and particularly in development of the American Rhododendron Society. For many, Greer Gardens provided the Gold Standard of service.



Greer Gardens Display at a shopping Mall in either Portland or Eugene Oregon promoting rhododendrons and the American Rhododendron Society.

We hope to be able to chat with you on Sunday, October 6, 2019