

Niagara Rhodo



Newsletter of the Niagara Region Chapter

*Rhododendron Society of Eastern Canada
American Rhododendron Society | District 12*



April 2022 Edition

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.

NRC Board of Directors

Sondra Meis..... President
Angela Calixto..... Treasurer
Lil Haworth..... Membership
Christina Woodward..... Secretary, Newsletter, Social Media
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Tom Laviolette..... Advisor, Chapter Organization & Strategy
Nick Yarmoshuk..... Special Advisor / Director Emeritus



FYI Your Board will be facing some retirements within a year.

Are you interested in helping out and having fun at the same time? Contact : canadacaw@yahoo.ca



The ARS Convention is top of mind for many at this time of year. For others, it is a bit out of reach. But you can participate in different ways.

Convention Co-Chair Steve McCormick sends this message:

“Do you have an archive of photos from past conventions in your files? We’re putting together a slide loop of convention photos to run during luncheons, ahead of official functions at banquets, etc. Please send a few of your favorite shots to info@ars75.org .We’d especially appreciate photos of conventions before 2014.”

President's Message

We are all eagerly waiting for a resumption of our normal Chapter events and an opportunity to socialize in person.

Your Board is pleased to offer the following events which will assist in the transition. They are summarized here for your quick reference.

ARS Spring Convention

May 4th to May 8th

The Association's 75th Anniversary, is of course top of mind for early May events. Hopefully some of our members will be able to attend the tours, the talks and the tastes of Oregon and Washington States that have laid dormant for two years.

If that proves to be too much of a challenge, here are some dates that will give you a measure of our "return to normal" as we arrange for a few events locally.

Speaker Meeting - ZOOM format

Wednesday, May 25th, 7:30 pm

Taya Kehler, *Small Scale Rhodo Rockery*. Taya is Gardens Co-ordinator at The Riverwood Conservancy. She will speak to the planning and construction of a small rock garden for dwarf Rhododendrons and a selection of companion plants. See the article on page 3-4. Of particular interest will be the discussion she hopes to generate with members on the range of companion plants for acidic soils, and their availability. A rare opportunity to explore possibilities for your own garden. (Our meeting hall remains unavailable)

Self-Guided Tour of the Laviolette Garden

Saturday, May 28th, 11 am to 12 pm

Where - 1567 Gregory Rd, St. Catharines, ON L2R 6P9

Parking - Park only on Second Ave Louth (1-2 minute walk to Tom's garden)

NO Parking on Gregory Rd or in Laviolette driveway!

NOTE: Guests of members welcome if accompanying a current paid-up member.

Welcome Back Social

Sunday, July 10th, 1:30 am to 4:00 pm

Light refreshments, and a live AUCTION of select azaleas, rhododendrons, companion plants.

Where: Lil Haworth's lovely summer garden in Grimsby, ON

What: Kevin Kavanagh will auction some very collectible species and cultivars from a variety of Chapter sources, most of which are only rarely, if ever, available commercially here in Ontario. There will also be a limited number of plants for sale at economical prices to consider for your own garden. A list of plants for auction and sale will be provided later this spring.

You'll be receiving reminders. Looking forward to seeing everyone at one or more events,

Sondra Meis
President

Public Gardens & Conservation

Youth Engagement

The Riverwood Conservancy in Mississauga, ON, is one of the seven institutions participating in the Brueckner Hybrids Test Project. 65 plants have been under observation at Riverwood since 2016. As the five year evaluation is drawing to a close, it opens opportunities to now add these plants as enhancements to the landscape, rather than remain in the rows where they were originally planted to be routinely observed and measured. At Riverwood, this was a particularly timely opportunity.



While the Riverwood Conservancy is blessed with staff and volunteers with horticultural, botanical, landscape, scientific backgrounds, for the first time a professional gardener was added to the staff complement. Having enjoyed her position as Horticultural Assistant for two summers, Taya Kehler was hired as Riverwood's first Gardens Coordinator in the fall of 2021. Her youthful enthusiasm, boundless energy, and intelligent embrace of themes and designs for the Riverwood gardens, matched a unique and exciting opportunity for Taya to learn about rhododendron and how they can feature in the landscape.

After selecting a neglected corner of the Riverwood gardens, Taya and I worked together on the planning and ever-changing design for a small rock garden of dwarf rhododendrons; the preparation of the site was greatly assisted by the eager participation of high school students attending Riverwood outdoor youth programs. One forgets the stamina of youth - the job was done in short-order!

The complete story of this project will be fully told by Taya. She's accepted our invitation to speak to the Niagara Chapter in May.

Of particular interest in Taya's talk will be the selection of companion plants, especially those that are native to Ontario. She's been observing their performance over this past winter in the new rock garden. The significance of their performance is important because Taya's plan is to use them for erosion control on the steep grade where test rhododendrons are planted.




As you see, one opportunity leads to another. Such is the case with the opportune timing of the ARS Convention programs for 2022. The Poster Session, cancelled for the 2021 event, is a new exhibit at the ARS Convention. This was an opportunity not to be missed. Taya was on board from the start. The story of the new Rhododendron Garden is the

subject of an informative and well-crafted poster taking its place alongside the following participating Poster submissions:

- *Small Scale Rhodo Rockery*
- *Rhododendron caucasicum in Armenia: Research and Conservation*
- Lapponica phylogeny, chromosome estimates, preliminary results on polyploid ancestry, and results of morphological analyses
- *How to play by a different set of rules: Rhododendron species with a stress-tolerant ecological strategy along tropical elevational gradients*
- *Ex-situ conservation of highly endangered Vireya species similar to R. brasii*
- Co-variation of leaf and floral traits in the evolution of Rhododendron diversity
- Paradise Meadows, R. albiflorum and the surrounding plant communities
- 50 Years of Rhododendron Breeding the David G. Leach Research Station

We're pleased to share the poster (below) in advance of the Convention.

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Christina Woodward  
Interim Editor



## Small-Scale Rhodo Rockery

The Riverwood Conservancy  
Taya Kehler & Christina Woodward

### MOTIVATION

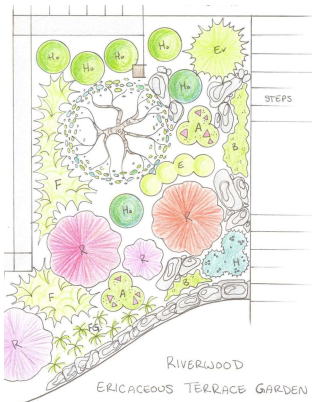
Upon the completion of the Brueckner Hybrids Test Project\* in 2021, The Riverwood Conservancy's (TRC) rhododendron collection was restructured to create permanent locations for the test subjects. Our rhodos congregated on a slope under the shade of towering beech and pine trees, tucked behind a historical stone house. The renovation of an adjacent space, cornered by stone walls, created an opportunity to showcase our dwarf rhododendrons in the form of an ericaceous rockery-style garden.

This site posed challenges of soil quality, erosion, and reflected heat. Our goal was to address these concerns to create a more diverse public learning space about rhododendrons and companion planting.

The following diagram (not to scale) describes our concept plan:

- Amend soil and install decorative rocks
- Build a small retaining wall to prevent erosion
- Companion planting to display ericaceous plants
- A small tree, planted to reduce reflected heat impact from wall

\*Brueckner Project: [rhodonagora.org/projects/](https://rhodonagora.org/projects/)



### PLANTING: RHODODENDRONS

After a long summer of preparing the new garden space, we were finally planting in mid-late autumn 2021. Christina Woodward, TRC volunteer, and Taya Kehler, Gardens Coordinator at TRC, worked together to design the garden. Several alpine rocks with moss were installed to create the rockery and 8 dwarf Brueckner Hybrid rhododendrons were selected. Five are from the Hybrids Test Project and three additional dwarf rhodos were donated to complete this garden:

- R. Fairy's Fairy (R. Yaku Fairy x R. keiskei)
- R. Karin Seleger (R. impeditum x R. dauricum)
- R. Nahanni (R. racemosum x R. lapponicum)
- R. Triple A (R. carolinianum x R. impeditum)
- IX 70 (parentage unknown)
- IV 22 (R. carolinianum x R. impeditum) sibling to Triple A
- XII 14 (parentage unknown)
- XIV 22 (R. nikomontanum x R. Cowslip)

### PLANTING: COMPANION PLANTS

A native serviceberry tree was selected to create a backdrop for our rhodos, while also reducing the reflected heat of the wall. In addition to several hosta, fern, and astilbe varieties, a mixture of ericaceous evergreens and perennials were chosen carefully to suit the rockery-style of the bed and provide blooms and interest throughout the year:

- Multi-stem Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*) \*Native
- Little Heath Pieris (*Pieris japonica* 'Little Heath')
- Dwarf Mugo Pine (*Pinus mugo* 'Slowmound')
- Dwarf Hinoki Falsecypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana Gracilis')
- Hellebore (*Helleborus x hybridus*)
- Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) \*Native
- Blue Ice Bog Rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia* 'Blue Ice')
- White Sea Thrift (*Armeria maritima* 'Alba')
- Springwood White Heath (*Erica carnea* 'Springwood White')
- Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*) \*Native

### PREPARING THE SITE WITH YOUTH


Throughout the Summer of 2021, student volunteers assisted with the preparation of the new rockery garden. Although small at only 150 sq. ft., there was extensive work to be done:

1. Students removed overgrown shrubs, stumps, rocks, patches of poor soil, and turned the soil to 8" depth.
2. Soil was pushed back to build 10" natural stone retaining wall. Stone was found on-site, matching existing aesthetic of the house.
3. Students incorporated 5 wheelbarrows of amended soil, pH range 4.5-6.0: sandy loam, peat, composted pine bark.
4. Students regraded soil up to the new retaining wall, and added a 2" final top dressing of medium pine bark.

With this "blank slate" ready for planting, we revised our original concept plan to accommodate more rhodos and a wider variety of companion plants.

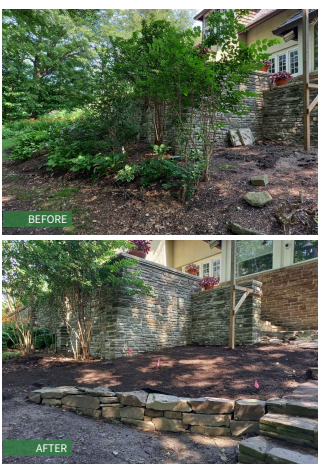


### ABOUT THE RIVERWOOD CONSERVANCY

The Riverwood Conservancy (TRC) is a volunteer and member-based charity that provides programs and services focused on environmental education, conservation, and gardening, located within a 150-acre urban nature preserve in Mississauga, Ontario.




**Contact me!**  
Taya Kehler • Gardens Coordinator  
[taya.kehler@theriverwoodconservancy.org](mailto:taya.kehler@theriverwoodconservancy.org)

If you'd like to learn more about how you can get involved or support us, head to our website or follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube.

[theriverwoodconservancy.org](https://theriverwoodconservancy.org)  
[@yourriverwood](https://yourriverwood)



# 2022 ASA Convention Lafayette, LA

*We thank Rick Bauer, Past President of the Azalea Society of America, for permission to reprint a portion of one article from the recent issue of the Northern Virginia Chapter Monthly Message to Members.*



A number of chapter members joined other society members for the first national ASA convention last month in Lafayette, LA. It was great to get together with old friends after the last two conventions were cancelled due to COVID.

Eighty ASA members and guests gathered to tour Lafayette and surrounding areas to view azaleas and other points of interest. Lafayette was named an “Azalea City” in 2016 and continues their beautification efforts using azaleas.

Our base for the convention was the Holiday Inn North in Lafayette. All activities except for the tours were held in this modern facility. We were treated to excellent Louisiana cuisine and interesting speakers. Some of us also expanded our azalea collections from the on-site plant sale. The tours took us along Lafayette’s “Azalea Trail” as well as Jefferson Island, Avery Island (home of McIlhenny tabasco and a massive egret rookery) and the University of Louisiana, Lafayette.







Live Oak at Jefferson Island - photo R.. Bauer

Jefferson Island has a number of salt mines below it. It was in the news in 1980 when a Texaco drilling rig broke through the ceiling of one of the mines, emptying Lake Peigneur and taking another 65 acres to form the largest manmade sinkhole. It also claimed the newly built home of the property owner which was at the shore of the lake. Fortunately no one was killed in this accident. More information is located at the links below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-N2TrcxkOA>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cXnxGIDhOA>

Avery Island is where **Edmund McIlhenny** first started the production of tabasco sauce. After five generations, the company is still in the family. We enjoyed a delicious meal at the family home and were given a talk on the history by one of the family members. Also of great interest is the rookery for egrets. They were being hunted to extinction for their feathers which were used on ladies' hats. **Edmund's** son **Edward Avery McIlhenny** established an egret rookery on Avery Island in 1895 to protect the egrets. The rookery started with a few pairs of egrets. By 1911, it was estimated to have 100,000 egrets.



Egret rookery on Avery Island - photo C. Beck

We also were given interesting talks on the history of the various areas, including Good Hope Hall in the Freetown which is along Lafayette's "Azalea Trail." This historic facility was established by freed slaves and their descendents. Additional information is available at this [link](#).

In the evenings, we also received interesting presentations by **Dr. Heather Kirk-Ballard** on the impact of COVID on the horticulture industry, **Dr. David Creech** on azalea work at Stephen F. Austin gardens and **Buddy Lee**, on azaleas, past, present and future.

Finally, as table favors, **Buddy Lee** provided liners of his next Encore© release, Autumn Moonstruck, a variety with beautiful variegated leaves [no photo available].

*Thank you, Peter Iveson for offering a brief report on the Convention; wish you a quick recovery from an untimely injury.*



P. Iveson and R. Bauer at the Convention

## *Finding Fundy*

Leslie Hancock, famed Nurseryman and the driving force behind the Rhododendron Society of Canada, is the subject of the Next Gen Podcast series as told by Carol Hancock, Leslie's granddaughter. You can listen to this podcast, Episode 11, "We Named the Trees." Simply click here:

[https://www.rhododendron.org/next\\_gen\\_podcast\\_11.htm](https://www.rhododendron.org/next_gen_podcast_11.htm)

In the course of researching for this interview, I returned to the ARS Plant Database where years ago I had found the only Hancock rhododendron hybrid that was registered through the ARS. This was R. Fundy (aka "Evangeline") but at the time, with no photograph. To my disappointment the record was still without a photograph.

Records of Hancock hybrids are scarce, most weren't registered, old RHS records are difficult to come by, all making it difficult to identify parentage and find representative photographs. Recently I reached out to Sheila Stephenson, Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society. She has done significant research on Donald Craig and the history of rhodo breeding in Nova Scotia at the Kentville Research Station. Leslie Hancock collaborated for some years with Dr. Craig and it was known that R. Fundy owes its origins to these connections. Indeed, Sheila was able to share several more recently acquired photographs of R. Fundy, taken by Donald Craig. How Lucky!

We thank Bob Weissman, ARS Webmaster, for his quick work on adding the elusive image to the entry in the ARS Plant Database. To view this recent addition click here:

[https://www.rhododendron.org/descriptionH\\_new.asp?ID=1810](https://www.rhododendron.org/descriptionH_new.asp?ID=1810)

Now, R. Fundy, introduced by Leslie Hancock in 1973, parentage R. fortuneii x R. smirnowii, was informally called "Evangeline." Leslie Hancock died in 1976. R. Fundy was registered posthumously by Dr. Craig in 1977. During the course of registering the plant, it was discovered the name "Evangeline" had already been used and so Fundy was chosen as the official name in the ARS registry. The decision was made to use both names, at least at the local level.

Some of our readers will remember a similar cross by several hybridizers, around the time R. Fundy was created including, I believe, Hancock himself. It is the reverse of the original: R. smirnowii x R. fortuneii and locally is commonly called "Smirfort." To my knowledge, Smirfort is not registered.



R. Fundy Photo: Donald Craig



Smirfort Photo: C. Woodward



**Rhododendron Through Your Lens** - Back for a second year, this ARS-Next Gen initiative builds content for our photo image archive and a repeat opportunity to familiarize all age groups with rhododendron. Most entries receive recognition in a number of ways including monetary cash awards for students. Last year's third prize winner was Jessica Wang, since then a graduate of Niagara Parks School of Horticulture. In her note to the Next Gen Committee she wrote "Thank you for...the opportunity to explore the world of Rhododendrons! I didn't realize how varied and amazing they are..."

Here's your chance to snap that winning photo this Spring or dig through YOUR photo archive and find that shot of a rhododendron which you know absolutely suits one of the three themes for this year's Competition.



## Rhododendron Through Your Lens

**ARS-Next Gen  
2022 Photo Competition**

Why not add "Published Photographer" to your resume?  
Rhodos are already blooming, so start snapping photos today!

**Submissions for the photo contest open  
April 4<sup>th</sup> - August 15<sup>th</sup> 2022**

**For details visit**  
[https://www.rhododendron.org/next\\_gen\\_photocontest.htm](https://www.rhododendron.org/next_gen_photocontest.htm)





**The Funkiest Flower**  
unique features of Rhododendron flowers.  
Fluffy fur covers the flower pedicels of this Rhododendron.  
Photo by Christina Woodward.



**Three Themes**

**Loving the Rhodo**  
the power of Rhododendrons to delight people of all ages.  
American Rhododendron Society social media volunteer Moses expressed his amazement at the stunning Satsuki Azaleas during a visit to a private collection outside of Cleveland, Ohio in summer 2021. Photo by Juliana Medeiros.



**Rhododendron in the garden**  
your take on how a rhododendron beautifies a garden.  
Gigantic *Rhododendron calophyllum* leaves and trusses filled my eyes with wonder as I rounded the corner of a walking path at Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington in April 2017. Photo by Juliana Medeiros.



## Of Interest

**South Coast Gardens** will be opening on Mother's Day Weekend, May 7/8th.

### **Podcasts**

Vireyas: the Tropical Rhododendron. Learn more about these exotic plants as options for your indoor gardening with year round blooms. Episode 10 "[Expect Blooms Any Time](#)"

Hancock Woodlands: Carol Hancock recounts her Grandfather's prodigious legacy in the rhododendron world and her memories growing up in a plant nursery. Episode 11 "[We Named the Trees](#)"



### **In Memoriam**

Some of our Chapter Members will remember **Barrie Porteous**, avid plant collector with interests in rhododendron, alpine and rock garden plants. He was a speaker at the 1998 ARS Convention hosted by Niagara Region Chapter. He authored several articles for JARS and the RSC Bulletin. He travelled extensively, played golf, entertained with his Scottish humour. Barrie died peacefully April 9, 2022. His obituary is found at

Kane-Jerrett Funeral Homes

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/en-ca/obituaries/thornhill-on/barrie-porteous-10705488>

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*