

Niagara Rhodo



Newsletter of the Niagara Region Chapter

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



September 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
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Lil Haworth..... Membership
Christina Woodward..... Secretary, Newsletter, Social Media
Kevin Kavanagh..... Advisor, Cultivar Selection & Plant Sales
Tom Laviolette..... Advisor, Chapter Organization & Strategy
Nick Yarmoshuk..... Special Advisor / Director Emeritus

Dear Chapter Members,

It was my pleasure to undertake the interim Editorship of *Niagara Rhodo* two and a half years ago. Taking on this task from Nick Yarmoshuk who developed the newsletter into an informative and visually rich publication, well over two decades ago, was quite a challenge. It was also enjoyable, though lacking in Nick's mastery. I learned a good deal, met many people, and discovered new plants, events, places while soliciting for content. Thank you to all those who assisted in those endeavours. Importantly, my appreciation and thanks to you, the readership.

At this time I want to share that in the next months I will be retiring from the Niagara Chapter Board of Directors, and this includes my role in social media functions and as Newsletter Editor. The September 2022 edition will be the last under my charge.

I will continue as an active Chapter member and very much look forward to seeing everyone.
With warmest regards,

Christina Woodward

Chapter members Rosemary and Paul Fraser attended the ARS 75th Anniversary Convention in Portland Oregon. Rosemary graciously agreed to write a brief report for our Newsletter. While this edition of Niagara Rhodo is quite delayed, and the Convention now months behind us, I think you will enjoy some of the highlights of the Fraser's rich Convention experience and their marvelous photos!

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After a trip to Uzbekistan was cancelled because of the war in Ukraine, we made a spur of the moment decision to attend the 75th ARS Convention in Vancouver Oregon. We had never attended an ARS convention before. However we thought this convention with its pre-tour, tours and post tour would give ample opportunity to visit gardens that we did not even know about, and inspire us in our gardening endeavours.

We live about forty minutes north of Toronto and garden in a zone 5-6 depending on the severity of the winter. This past winter was a hard one with temperatures as low as - 30 degrees Celsius, unusually cold. We were asked to bring rhododendron pictures, my rhododendrons were currently pretty discouraging with an unusually high amount of winter burn. Imagine our delight arriving in Vancouver, WA to see rhododendrons in bloom, beautiful pink dogwoods - which we have no hope of growing, and many other plants in bloom.

The entire trip was a cornucopia of colours, fragrances, ideas and new friends. There were many wonderful things to see, all of which are worthy of mention, however I will only touch on highlights.

Several days before the convention we had discovered the Sebright Gardens in Salem, near Portland OR. Its beautiful four acre garden around a house, on a beautiful sunny afternoon, was an inspiration to create garden interest using hosta, which is their specialty. They have a list of 945 varieties of hosta, some of which were their own selections, and were displayed intermingled with flowering crabapples, magnolias, dogwoods, epimediums, phormiums (similar to flax), rhododendrons and peonies. (They Ship to Canada)

The Convention Pre-Tour, *Around the Sound*, commenced on May 2, with a luxury bus departing from the Convention location at the Heathman Lodge. Our first major stop was at Whitney Gardens at the foot of the Olympic mountains featuring rhododendrons, azaleas, Japanese maples and camellias, a delight to the eyes and worthy of many photos, two of which are shown below.





*Whitney Gardens, Brinnon, WA*





Years ago I had purchased a book on plant hunters, the 19th and 20th century people scouring the Himalayas and China for plants. It was therefore very interesting to meet and listen to several of these modern day plant hunters who gave talks and presentations during the convention, or who offered information during the tour sites.

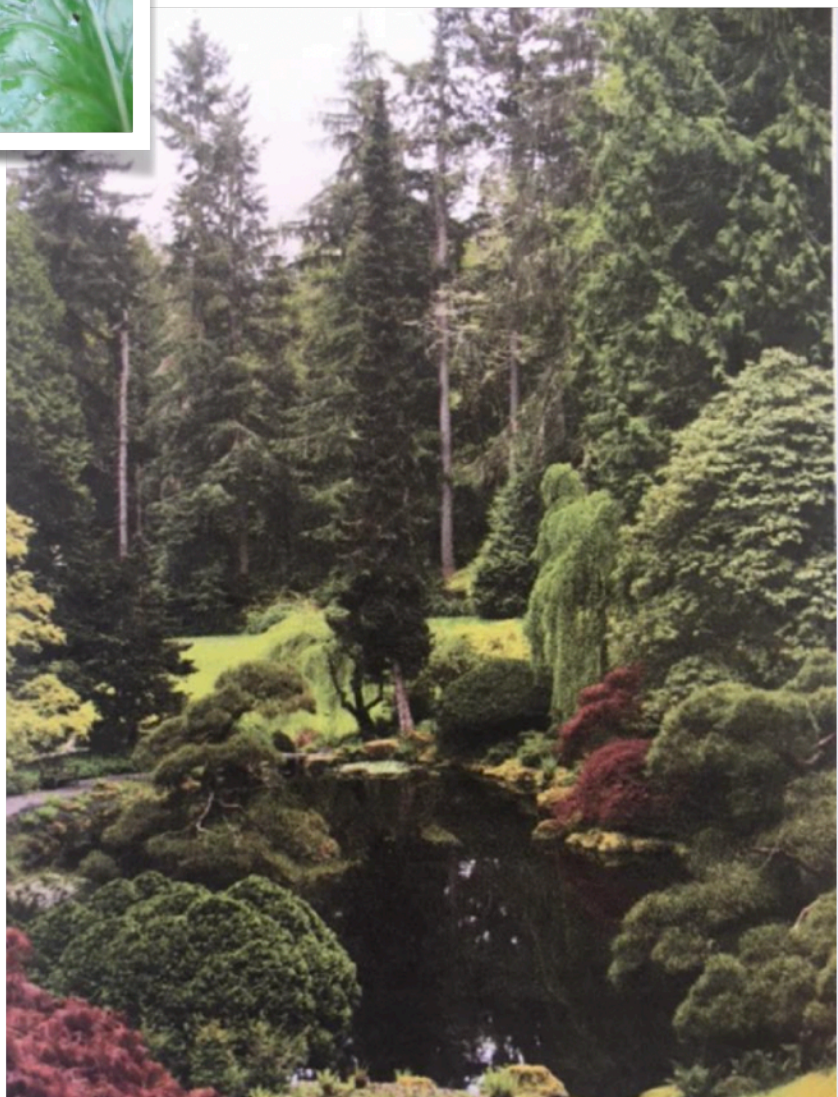
At Heronswood Nursery in Kingston WA, co-founder Dan Hinkley, a renowned plant hunter, was our guide. We saw some of his newer collections from Viet Nam and were cautioned that if we asked questions we needed to be writing the answers on paper, otherwise we were not serious about our plant questions! Dan Hinkley was quite interesting; upon being questioned about the availability of some of the more interesting plants he did say, "I do not share everything." So like all plant hunters he also has his special favourites.



*Perhaps this unusual flower was one of Dan's favourites? - Editor.*

The Bloedel Reserve (photo on right) on Bainbridge Island, 150 acres of land originally owned by the Squamish people, felt like a sanctuary of peace. The cool colours, the reflection pool, the Japanese gardens and the moss garden were very calming.

The Convention tour offered this description of the Nature Reserve: "Internationally recognized for the inspirational beauty of its refined gardens, natural landscapes, and preserved forests, Bloedel excels in the environmental stewardship of its 150 acres."







*The home of Bloedel Reserve founders, Prentice & Virginia Bloedel, is seen in the background on the right.*

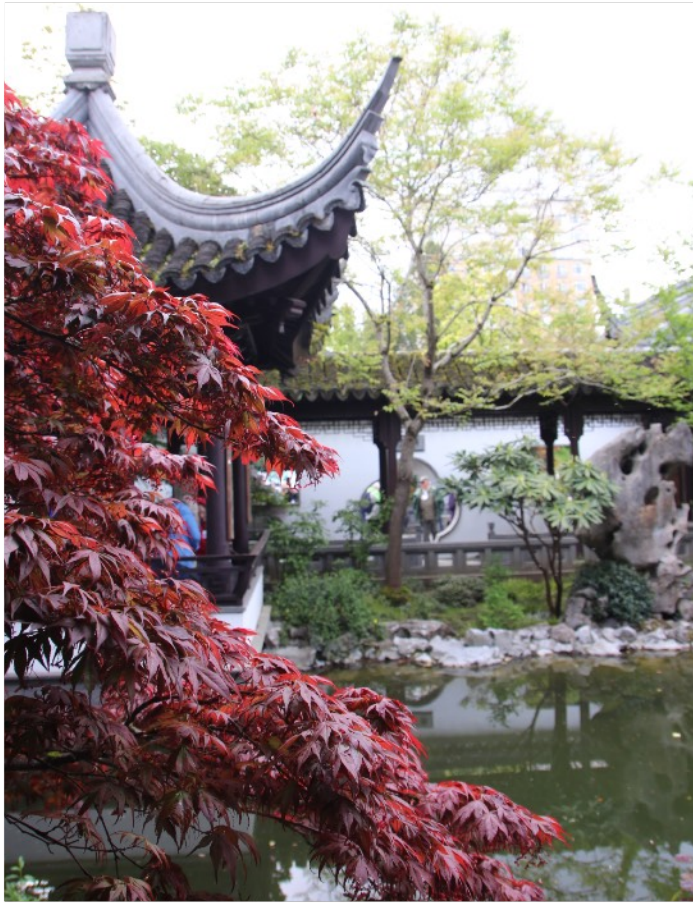
We crossed the Sound on the Washington ferry *Walla Walla* between Bainbridge Island and Seattle, giving a wonderful but windy view of Seattle from the water.

Our final stop of the Pre-Tour was the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden with curator and plant hunter Steve Hootman. The Botanical Garden in Federal Way WA, contains the largest number of rhododendron species in the world. The fragrance of Rhododendron Loderi King George was spectacular with its huge white trusses. I had no idea rhododendrons could be so fragrant. Rhododendrons forty to fifty feet tall in their maturity, blooming profusely, were magnificent.

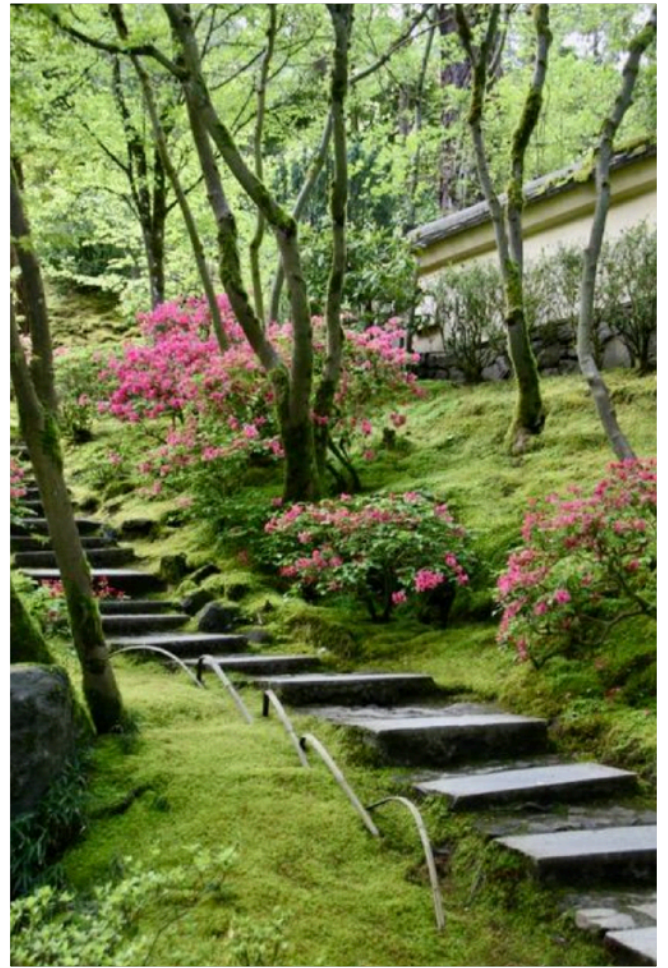




From the various day tours offered during the Convention we chose to visit the Japanese garden of Portland and also the Chinese garden of Portland. I had seen the original Chinese garden in Suzhou in 2006, so this was a great remembrance.



*Lan Su Chinese Garden of Portland*



*Japanese Garden of Portland*



Other stops included:

the Iseli Nursery (on left)  
known for its outstanding  
collection of conifers and  
exotic plants;



the Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas, which specializes in the latest technologies in the industry and boasts several hundred acres in its large-scale rhododendron and azalea production; and

The Stewart Garden (below) with its extensive collection of species and hybrids collected by Mike and Maria Stewart over 40 years, and arranged in what has been called the “ultimate in rhododendron display gardens.”



During the convention the plant hunters and other specialists in the field, challenged us with pictures of new species or what is a species? We were shown interesting colour combinations developed through cross pollination, challenged with lectures on the rhododendron genome, and given practical advice on rooting our own cuttings using either sophisticated plant propagation methods or a simple water bottle in a terrarium with heated water. The bottom line for plant propagation was rooting or rotting!

Tom Clarke, Head Gardener from Exbury Gardens in England, home and garden of the Rothschild family, encouraged us to consider the changes that take place in a garden. Exbury was first developed in the early 1900's and had a staff of almost 200 to maintain it, today it has a staff of 6 and volunteers.

Lionel Rothschild spoke of the challenges they are facing with global warming, a problem widely mentioned, as rainfall decreases and the rhododendron species demand for water does not. Rhododendron growers on the West Coast had very high temperatures last summer which makes climate change a real problem - how do we manage and re-use our water resources effectively?

One of the thoughts presented was leaving a legacy. What does that look like? Is that a garden heavily dependent on water resources or is that a garden where water resources are so re-used and managed effectively that there is little waste of this important commodity?





The Post Tour offered 10 stops at various gardens and conservancies. It included the Deerly Missed garden (left) with art sculptures, many of stained glass and pottery, made by the owners, the Eckhardts.



We stopped at the Sea Lion Caves, a privately owned wildlife preserve and bird sanctuary.



In Dayton OR, Monrovia Nursery was our final visit.

Tour highlights for my husband were visiting the Woodburn nursery and learning about the drone which facilitates pruning, the Iseli display garden of dwarf conifers, and the display garden of Monrovia and its huge container business, as these were companies he was familiar with as a nurseryman.



Before making our way back to the Convention hotel and enjoying the last few garden visits, we spent an overnight at the Best Western Plus Agate Beach Inn. Our accommodation included this unforgettable ocean view.



All in all it was a wonderfully educational trip, in which we brought a few favourite plants home as Van Veen nursery facilitated shipping and phytosanitary certificates.



***Rosemary Fraser***  
***Utopia, ON Canada***



## ***Chapter Meetings***

Going forward, with greater freedom from the Covid restrictions, the Chapter will be moving to re-establish regular programs for our members. Your Board of Directors will be making decisions on the feasibility and the preference for possible hybrid arrangements to future speaker meetings.

Nick Yarmoshuk has generously offered to prepare a slate of potential speakers for the Board to review and consider for our Speaker Program. Despite the tough years during Covid, many Chapters recognize the value of speakers from far and wide through the convenience of Zoom. In addition, many Chapters share their Zoom-recorded speaker sessions. The world has suddenly become smaller, it seems, and the choice of speakers that Nick will have at his disposal, has multiplied. We are grateful for Nick taking on this important role. Stay Tuned!

Future Plant Sales are definitely in the plans, though the regular sources for relevant and appealing plant material for our Members have changed over the past two years.

## ***ARS Conference***

If Rosemary's review of their ARS Convention experience has tickled your fancy, there is still time to register and attend the ARS Fall Conference, taking place in Gettysburg, PA.

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| <b>ARS Fall 2022 Conf.<br/>Gettysburg, PA</b>                                        | <b>Sept. 27-29, 2022, Early<br/>Registration before Aug. 31.</b> |

For full information go to: <http://arsstore.org/Fall2022/>



## *July's Auction & Plant Sale*

As mentioned in a Memo to Chapter members, the Plant Auction and Sale was hugely successful. Kevin Kavanagh, master auctioneer, staged a lively auction with generous bidding. We are indebted to his efforts for the Chapter, securing the plants, which were as huge and healthy as the bids, his energy seemingly inexhaustible. We owe a huge thanks to Lil Haworth for offering her beautiful grounds and hosting the event and to Sondra Meis and Marie Johns for managing the cash. Many others involved are to be thanked as well for their assigned, or spontaneous, assistance!

It was also a memorable outing as the first in-person occasion for members. Our Facebook page posted a number of photos of the event a couple of months ago

( <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=566360211856121&set=pcb.566386428520166> )

Lil's garden has an enviable collection of flowers and other plants, including unusual varieties. I photographed a few that were easily accessible and thought you might enjoy them even without name labels. They populate a garden which is immaculately groomed and arranged.







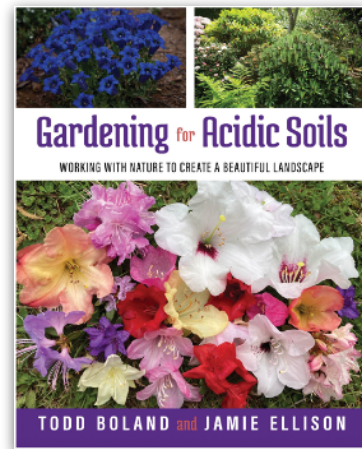


# New Books

You will find this book by Todd Boland and Jamie Ellison an invaluable asset in your gardening activities, not to mention it contains a wealth of encyclopaedic information. Highly recommended.

Boulder Books will mail directly to your address.

<https://boulderbooks.ca/product/gardening-for-acidic-soils/>



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In Memorium



We are sad to inform you on the passing of William (Bill) John Warkentin, on September 13, 2022.

William was an avid photographer whose photos of the Vineland Azaleas have been of great use in the Chapter's work with the Vineland portion of the RA-Metrics Test & Display Garden Project. His wife, Carol, as many of you know, contributes much to the Chapter, including her offering of rare plants for plant sales.

You will find an obituary at

<http://www.hainefuneralhome.com/current.html>

Donations can be made to The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada or Kidney Foundation of Canada.

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*