



# Membership News

April 2011

Vol 2, No 4

## President's Corner

We are only a few weeks away from the **VRS Show and Sale, Sunday, May 1, at the Park & Tilford Gardens**. Despite the initial hiccups around the date, a possible change in location, and the plethora of competing horticultural events scheduled for the same weekend, I remain optimistic that we will get a good turnout to the Show and Sale.

There has been a good response to the appeal for volunteers for the Show and Sale, but there is always room for more participants, so I encourage anyone who is hesitant to become involved; it will help the VRS, and I am sure that you will find it a rewarding experience.

For many decades the Floral Hall at VanDusen Botanical Gardens has been the meeting place for the VRS and many other horticultural clubs. In the fall of this year, with the completion of the new facilities at VanDusen, and the ensuing demolition of the Floral Hall, we will move into the Great Room. Although the new facility will, no doubt, be a pleasant meeting space, it is accompanied by the prospect of an increase in room rental fees, in the order of 7%. At close to \$250 per night, or \$1750 for the programme year, the rental fee will become the largest line item in the VRS operating budget, and account for 18% of expenses. The VRS executive is not resigned to this scenario, and we will try and negotiate an affordable rent that will allow VRS to continue to meet at VanDusen. However, faced with the possibility of the increase, we have to be responsible and proactive in exploring affordable alternative locations that will meet VRS needs, and we have begun that process. I welcome, for consideration by the executive, any suggestions or insights on this topic that you may care to submit.

.....Tony Clayton, President



*R pingianum* ... RSBG, April 2010

## Upcoming VRS Meeting

The next meeting will be on **Thursday**, April 21, 2011, when **Malcolm Pharaoh** will speak on  
**Rhododendrons, Camellias, and Magnolias at Marwood Hill Gardens**

Malcolm Pharaoh, Head Gardener at Marwood Hill Gardens in County Devon, England, began his horticultural work pretty much at the ground level - sorry about that! After he left school he 'worked at the local parks for three years doing day release at the local horticultural college'. He then went back to school, to a horticultural college in Scotland for two years, and then spent two years at Wisley (the RHS garden in Surrey) doing the Diploma course.

His career from this point was pretty direct. He came to work at Marwood Hill gardens in 1972, and has been there ever since. Marwood Hills is 'a 20-acre garden with a wide range of plants including a good collection of Rhododendrons', both species and hybrids, I believe. Malcolm has been an RHS judge for 14 years, judging Camellias at the London shows, and has been on the RHS Rhododendron and Camellia Committee for 12 years. He has also judged Camellias and Rhododendrons at several other shows including the Cornwall Garden Society show.



For more information ... <http://www.marwoodhillgarden.co.uk/index.php>



### ARS Convention ... Vancouver, Washington ... May 11-15, 2011

*The following note was received from Harold Greer, co-chairman of the spring convention. If you waited too long to book at the Heathman, nearby alternatives are now available ...*

Greetings ARS Friends ... Good News! The Spring Convention is a great success. Even though our host hotel has just sold out all of their rooms to ARS members, we have just been able to contract for lots more great rooms at the [Residence Inn](#) [phone (360) 253-4800] and the [Staybridge Suites](#) [phone (360) 449-4669]. The price is great too, \$109 for rooms with full kitchens, complimentary breakfast and complimentary airport shuttle at both hotels. **Mention ARS contract rates.** Reserve now! Any questions or problems call us at 800 548-0111. We are here to help make your convention experience great!

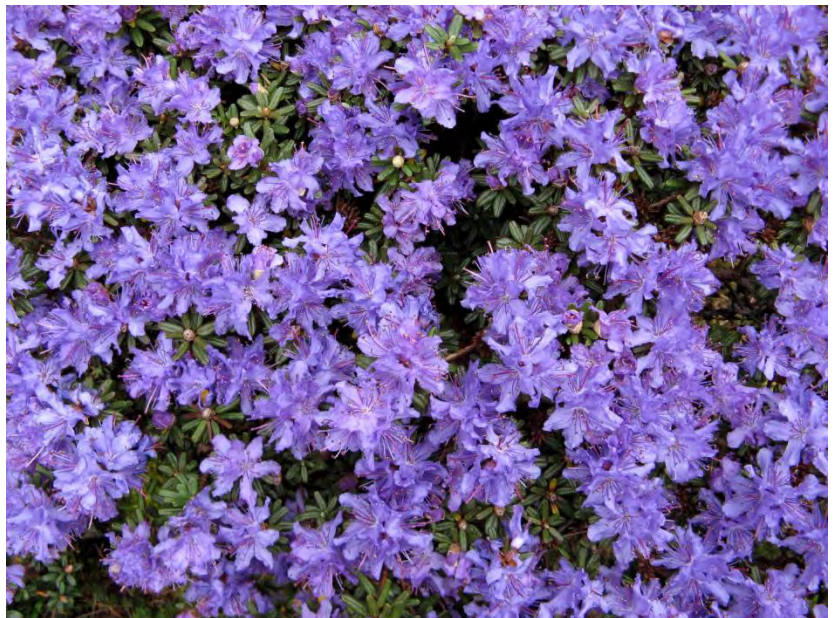
... Harold Greer ... [HGreer@greergardens.com](mailto:HGreer@greergardens.com)

## A Piece of VRS History ... corrections & additions



Two months ago, we ran this picture of a group of VRS 'pioneers', at the demonstration garden in Musqueam Park in March 1963. We have consulted with Clive Justice, Barbara & Alleyne Cook, Vern Finley, Mary Comber Miles, Mary Parker [District 1 director, from Nanaimo], and Val & Norbert Wuensche, and have come up with the following names, from left to right:

- #1 Estelle Chave (?)
- #2 Edith Lofthouse (?) ... no, according to Edith's daughter
- #3 ?
- #4 **Ellen Hailey**, our very first ARS/VRS Chapter Secretary for much of the Chapter's early years [not Harley, as previously reported]
- #5 **Winn Trayling**, from Surrey [former neighbours of the Finleys]
- #6 ? [not Vern Finley, according to Vern]
- #7 **Bea Davidson**, flower seller from Mission
- #8 ?
- #9 **Veronica Milner**, of Qualicum Beach [Milner Gardens]
- #10 **Beulah Freeman**, from UBC Endowment Lands



*R impeditum*  
Rhododendron Species Botanical  
Garden ... April 2010

## Nanaimo Rhododendron Society - Nanaimo garden tour ... 22 May 2011

*The following note, and attached poster were sent to us by John Deniseger, president of the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society ...*

Hi Everyone ... I've attached a poster advertising a special event that our club is putting on. We are hosting a self-guided tour of 9 local gardens on May 22nd. The tour highlights spring gardens and, of course, Rhododendrons, in Nanaimo. The gardens in the tour showcase a real range of sizes, maturity, and styles. In other words, there's something for everyone. The tour is also a fundraiser in support of the **2012 ARS Fall Western Regional Conference** which we will be hosting, from **Sept 21-23, 2012**.

Whether you're on the mainland or on the Island, your members may wish to visit Nanaimo on the May long weekend. The tickets will be available at the local vendors in early April. If you'd like to purchase tickets and can't make it here to get them, please give me a call, or send an e-mail, so that we can arrange something for you.

Thank you,

John Deniseger, President, NRS ...  
(250) 390-3605 ... [juneandjohn@shaw.ca](mailto:juneandjohn@shaw.ca)



**Nanaimo Rhododendron Society**  
presents

A Self Guided Tour of Nine Nanaimo Gardens

**Sunday, May 22nd, 2011**  
**10am to 4pm**

Tickets \$15



Available at: **Turley's, Buckerfields, Art Knapp, Dig This, Diana's Garden Center**

For more info see our website at [Nanaimo.rhodos.ca](http://Nanaimo.rhodos.ca)

## New Members

**W**e are pleased to introduce **Ronda Tuyp**, who joined us at the March meeting. Ronda is an experienced gardener, belonging to several garden groups, and is also a Friend of the UBC Botanic Garden. She has a beautiful mature garden in the UBC Endowment Lands, which currently has a colourful display of hellebores, and other plants, as companions to an impressive assortment of species and hybrid rhodos. The club has given her a 'Hotei', as a welcoming gift ... it should feel right at home!

**P**lease take the time, at upcoming events, to introduce yourselves to Ronda ... if anyone wishes to contact her, just drop us an email.

## Joe & Joanne's Enhanced Woodland ... Part 6 ... by Joe Ronsley

Then, there is the creek itself - **Rundle Creek**, though nobody seems to know quite who Rundle was. In fact, even the word 'creek' is evidently not a word commonly used in Britain, though it seems to have come into use first in the early days of the British colonization of North America, so to some people 'creek' may be as much a mystery as is Rundle. I'm not sure if any of the apparent synonyms—stream, brook, torrent, rivulet, arroyo, run, etc - matches exactly. For us, it is water running down the mountain in a meandering gully, sometimes in a roaring torrent, sometimes in a trickle. Regarding Rundle, there is, in fact, a Mount Rundle among the mountains near Banff, Alberta, named after The Reverend Robert Rundle, a Methodist missionary to the native peoples in the 1840s, but whether or not this is the same Rundle as the namesake of Rundle Creek appears to be all but impossible to determine. I have tried. Perhaps I don't really want to know. This, of course, is not to cast any aspersions on Mr Rundle himself, especially if he is the same respected Reverend Rundle that belongs to Alberta history. It's just that we don't know anything about him.



**Rundle Creek**



At any rate, I digress. Rundle Creek is, like the land on either side of it, in a natural state as it passes through our woodland. As a matter of fact, whatever might be said about its namesake, it would be difficult to improve upon the creek. It enters our property across the east property line about ninety feet from the southeast corner, that is, about a third of the distance across the top, and winds down picturesquely through the property, executing various curves around natural impediments and plunging from one level to the next, exiting across the west property line about ten feet from the northwest corner. It couldn't have been better planned ... though one rather minor concern, aside from the uncertainties about Mr Rundle, does arise.

According to a book on *Fung shui*, lent to me by a neighbour, it is good *Fung shui* to have a creek crossing one's property, but the creek must flow from west to east. Alas, ours flows east to west. Notwithstanding this

apparently fatal flaw, I think, insofar as there is any validity to the whole business at all, it should be remembered that in China the mountains are in the west and the sea in the east, so that rivers and

streams naturally flow west to east. It is just the reverse on the west coast of North America, west of the 'Great Divide' in the Rocky Mountains, and it might be a good idea for devotees of the philosophy to take this geographical fact into consideration and modify the concept accordingly. Whatever the Chinese philosophical application, or the character of Mr. Rundle, our creek is the perfect size for a garden of this sort, being easily spanned in four places along its length through the garden, by three stone bridges and one large stepping stone. It is a small creek, then, but, coming down a mountainside as it does, it is large enough to be quite volatile, and at certain times of the year it creates an exciting tumult. It flows year-round, except for a section about twenty feet long where it goes underground for a month or so in late summer, and not in all summers at that. It is, as I have said, however, quite volatile, having a heavy flow in winter and spring, when it makes quite a roar, and gradually tapering down to a very gentle flow, almost a trickle in some places, as the summer progresses. Its origin is an underground spring about a mile up from where it enters our property, and the quantity of its flow is determined more by rainfall than by spring snow melt, though its main source is the melting snow high up on the mountain.

I do clear sections of the creek of woody debris from time to time, and once in a while move the rocks in the creek bed so that the water flows more rapidly down the middle, thus protecting the banks. There is nothing more fun, and reminiscent of childhood, than playing in the creek. Girls seem to grow out of the impulse for such play, but not boys. This activity does have a practical aspect, however. On a couple of occasions the water flow has been excessive, mainly due to the Village Works Department staff's emptying of water tanks (located some distance above our property) into it when the water was already quite high. This activity did some damage to the banks and washed out plants that were planted too close. Fortunately, there was also damage done at the public marina situated at the mouth of the creek well below us. The practice has consequently been changed, the emptying of tanks now being done only when the creek is very low. The flow is no longer ever excessive, just a little awesome when it is running high. As a result of the damage done previously, however, we have constructed two or three cemented rock retaining walls protecting banks that were most vulnerable. These rock walls blend into the natural scene, and are becoming covered with moss that softens their presence further.



Otherwise, the creek has a natural flow over stones, logs, and rock, in places forming small waterfalls and natural steps, and forming rather deep pools in others. The water is very clear, and, as I have said, its path winds gently and picturesquely through the property from top to bottom. The creek, through sound as well as sight, both contributes to an overall unity and animates the garden. In so doing, it makes a very important contribution that is exciting. At least as important, however, is the fact that the creek, with its attendant ravine, organizes and composes the garden. Paths

through the garden also do this, along with other natural features such as land contours, large rocks, especially significant trees, and so on, but in a much less obvious way. The creek gives the garden a central definition of form without which all 'enhancement', while not being totally arbitrary, would not have so compelling a point of reference, or focus, that it does. Even with its effect of natural chaos, then, the creek contributes to a sense of design. If it isn't a total contradiction of terms, Nature has its own way of being artful.

Nature's artfulness, oxymoron or not - in the end a matter of simple natural beauty, and the elements that comprise it - comes in the form of the mountain slope on which the garden exists. One advantage of a terrain that is not level is that we are able to see shrubs and trees from both above and below, and from various angles in between. Another, and more important, is that the irregular variation and elevation in the terrain gives the property more interest and character, providing more features that contribute to a natural design than are found in a garden of any sort, or any size, that is essentially on a level, no matter how much art has gone into the planning or how impressive the collection of plants.



Doug Harris, English nurseryman and former Director of Exbury Gardens, once suggested I write something about how to garden on a hillside, but I have little to say on the subject, other than that where possible it is a good idea to create little plateaus for the plants. Eventually they will form themselves to suit the terrain naturally anyway, often leaning and sometimes requiring pruning up on the lower side.

All in all, a garden on a mountainside is not so easy for strolling as it would be if it were on the level, and there is some considerable disadvantage to the aged, but it is much more interesting, and, I think, has much more potential for beauty. Simply put, Nature has done the job for us, and has done it much better than we would be able to do it ourselves. In our garden the creek is one of its major contributions.

... to be continued

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Thanks to the following, for contributing to the *Membership News*: Tony Clayton, John Deniseger, Harold Greer, Joe Ronsley

Bob & Jo Wright