

Rhododendron Basics (part 1)

Source: *Rhododendrons: A Care Manual* by K. Cox.

In future newsletters, we are going to discuss rhododendron basics such as planting aspects, maintenance, propagation, pest and diseases. If you have any questions or would like to share your pictures, experience, and/or knowledge, please send them to info@brags.ca, bring them to future meetings, or contact the editor.

Shade and shelter

- provides protection from damaging winds, heat from the sun and frost

- maintains a humid atmosphere around plants

Do not plant under or near 'water-greedy' trees such as beech and sycamore. Oak, larch, pines, spruce, and fir are less greedy and let in more light.

Heavy shade causes plant weaknesses, less flowering, and diseases such as powdery mildew.

Companion planting

Avoid choosing plants that would compete for moisture with rhododendrons. As rhododendrons are shallow-rooted, they will tend to lose the battle. Some good companion plants are *Sorbus*, *Euchryphia* (hardiest forms are *E. x intermedia* "Rostrevor", *E. glutinosa*, and *E. x nimanensis*), Japanese maples, *Mahonia*, winter jasmine, *Viburnum*, *Hamamelis mollis*, hellebores, snowdrops, and hardy cyclamens.

Rhododendrons have several basic requirements:

1. Acid soil.
2. A loose/coarse organic planting medium which allows air circulation around the roots. Compacted and heavy clay soils are very poor for rhododendron culture
3. Sufficient moisture at the roots during the growing season
4. Many early-flowering, larger leaved tender varieties benefit from some shade.

Types of soil

Rhododendrons grow best in acidic soil with ideal pH between 4.5 and 5.5. pH test kits are available at garden centres.

- To acidify alkaline soil, use peat moss, sulphur powder, iron sulphate, or fertilizer with high concentration of nitrogen (to be used sparingly).
- If there is a possibility of the soil returning to alkaline, use a raised bed (at least 12-inch deep) and fill it with acidic topsoil and organic matter.
- To improve clay soil, add sand, perlite, and/or organic matter.
- To improve moisture retention in sandy soil, add organic matter, peat moss, and thick mulch.
- Conifer needles, composted bark, and rotted leaves provide the ideal combination of organic matter to mix with garden soil for rhododendrons.

Planting

Rhododendrons can be planted in either spring or fall. They are shallow-rooted and must not be planted too deeply. The top of the root ball should be just below the soil surface since the roots near the top, or rarely more than a foot below the surface, feed the plant (thus, it is not very useful to put fertilizer under the root ball). In heavier soils, loosen the soil up to a considerable depth below to allow drainage. Loosen the surrounding soil to ease the root growth. Keep the surface free from weeds to avoid moisture competition. Unless the soil is very wet, water the plant thoroughly soon after planting to help the soil settle around the root ball.

Moving Rhododendrons

Moving established plants is not recommended unless the plants are moved from containers to the ground. Larger leaved species more readily adapt to a new environment, provided that the new environment fulfills the basic requirements. Dwarf rhododendrons are less adaptable to a new environment. The best time to move them is either spring or fall, as long as the plants have time to re-establish before winter.



BC Council of Garden Clubs

Annual General Meeting

Saturday, March 14, 9:30am at Our Lady of Sorrows Church, 555 Slocan St, Vancouver. Let Judy Wellington know at the next BRAGS meeting if you're interested.

There will be two speakers on that day.

Dr. Richard Hebda on "Ethnobotany"

which is the scientific study of relationships between cultures and plants, focusing on how plants are used as foods, medicines, cosmetics, textiles, and tools as well as in other ways".

Dr. Hebda has a PhD. in Botany from UBC. He has been a Curator (Botany and Earth History) at the Royal British Columbia Museum for more than 28 years, and an adjunct faculty member (Biology, Earth and Ocean Sciences, Environmental Studies) at the University of Victoria for more than 20 years.

Pests and Pest Management by Ingrid Hoff.

Ingrid Hoff graduated from UBC in Plant Sciences. She worked as a Horticultural Assistant at VanDusen Botanical Garden and conducted plant pathology studies for the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands while earning her degree. Shortly after graduation, she conducted surveys on forest health and regeneration, and plant-based reclamation for the forestry industry. She has been Horticultural Editor of Gardens West Magazine for four years and she currently contributes regular articles in a column called "Bug Bites". Ingrid is also the Horticultural Manager of the UBC Botanical Garden where she is in charge of field space and a variety of controlled and partially controlled environments including the glass house and poly-structures which are available for plant research activities.

Many Thanks

For volunteering

Lindsey McCann, Publicity Chair

Lanny Hui, Plant Sale Chair



Plant Sale

The date of the plant sale is drawing near; it's going to be on April 19, from 9 am to 1pm. Volunteers and donations of plants are needed for the event.

Please let me know in the March meeting if you:

1. have plants, in good condition, to donate (if so, please tell me if you need volunteers to dig the plants and pot them).
2. can help with:
 - a. set up (please come at 8am or 7am if you can)
 - b. selling plants
 - c. pricing/sorting
 - d. cashier
 - e. assisting customers
 - f. cleaning up

A list of popular Plant Sale plants is attached. Additional copies will be available at the next meeting.

Thank you.
Lanny Hui

March Meeting

Wednesday, March 4, 7pm



Gwen Odermatt will be speaking about "**Great Plant Picks**" which is an educational awards program committed to building a comprehensive palette of outstanding plants for Pacific Northwest gardens. Awards are based on the combined expertise of over forty horticulturists from Washington, Oregon and British Columbia. Great Plant Picks originates at the Elisabeth Carey Miller Botanical Garden in Seattle, Washington, and provides a forum for sharing horticultural information with the wider gardening community.

Great Plant Picks lists have been produced each year from 2004 to 2008 and are available on the website. Also available is a Plant List which provides useful recommendations for plant choices according to growing conditions. More information is available at www.greatplantpicks.org

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Anne & David Forsyth
298-6350

Raffle & Greeting

Sheila Chowdhury
298-1196

Refreshments

Helen Vaughan
299-2014

Speakers

Heather MacKay
438-1342

Website

David Forsyth

ATTENTION ALL PICNICERS!



Dust off the mosquito nets! After a short hiatus, the BRAGS picnic is making a comeback! The plan is to have a picnic on a Sunday in August, locally, preferably at a members garden, and in the 'pot-luck' format.

At this point we are looking for a member with a large, 'crowd friendly' garden, who is willing to open up their garden for an afternoon of visiting with club members and their significant others. As we are in the planning stage, options and suggestions are welcome.

If you think you have the garden suitable for this function, and would be willing to 'host' the picnic, please contact Cheryl Fiddis to discuss further. Please note the 'garden host' will not be expected to feed the group! As in the past, everyone will bring a dish to share, and a chair to sit on. Let me know what you think and if you are interested in attending this gala event!

Cheryl Fiddis

Out and About

Mar 3 (Tue), 7:30pm. South Burnaby Garden Club monthly meeting. Bonsor Recreation Centre. Speaker TBA.

Mar 7 (Sat), 10am-3pm. Annual Manure Sale. VanDusen Parking Lot.

Mar 8 (Sun), 9am-3pm. Master Gardeners' Update, "The Ever Changing Garden" at Michael J. Fox Theatre, 7373 MacPherson Ave., Burnaby. Speakers : Dr. Richard Hebda, Lindsay Coulter, Crystal Klym and John Gibeau. Everyone welcome. Cost: \$35/\$45. More info: www.bcmastergardeners.org

Mar 8 (Sun), 1-5pm. Farmer's Market in 2009 Port Moody Social Recreation Centre, 100 loco Road, Port Moody. Janice Bobic will be at the Farmers Market to sell jams, jellies, chutneys, pickles, fruit vinegars, fruits and berries, herbs, unpasteurized honey, dried flowers and potpourris. Baked goods are available by special order. (Her apple crumble is sooo yummy!). Contact info: 604-298-6164 or 604-317-4946 or myfathersgarden@telus.net.

Mar 10 (Tue), 7:30pm. New Westminster Horticultural Society meeting. , Panel.Discussion: "What Does the Future Hold for Horticulture" Centennial Lodge, Queens Park.

Mar 14 (Sat), 9:30am. BC Council of Garden Club AGM. Our Lady of Sorrows Church, 555 Slocan Street, Vancouver. Speakers: Dr. Richard Hebda & Ingrid Hoff. If you are interested in attending, please inform Judy Wellington at the next BRAGS meeting.



We still need volunteers for fund raising and garden contest. If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact one of the executive members.

Shrubs, Trees and Vines

_____ Berberis, Barberry
_____ Buddleia, Butterfly Bush
_____ Campsis, Trumpet Vine
_____ Clematis
_____ Cotinus, Smoke Bush
_____ Corylopsis, Winter Hazel
_____ Daphne
_____ Deutzia
_____ Euonymous
_____ Fuschia
_____ Heather
_____ Hebe
_____ Hedera, Ivy
_____ Hibiscus, Rose of Sharon
_____ Hydrangea

_____ Lavandula, Lavender
_____ Lonicera, Honeysuckle
_____ Parthenocissus, Virginia Creeper
_____ Penstemon
_____ Pieris
_____ Phygellius, Cape Fuschia
_____ Potentilla
_____ Rhododendron
_____ Rosemarinum, Rosemary
_____ Ribes, Currant
_____ Rosa, Rose
_____ Spirea
_____ Syringa, Lilac
_____ Viburnum
_____ Weigela

BRAGS Plant Sale Guidelines – A few things to keep in mind as you pot up plants for our Sale:

- 1) **Every Plant Counts! ~**
 - Most of us do not have specimens of Hyperphonia friedescrantz-rare and pricey. Don't let that discourage you from contributing whatever you can!
- 2) **Choose plants that are healthy and clean ~**
 - Clean, healthy plants sell faster and for a better price than tattered looking ones.
 - BRAGS' good reputation is jeopardized if we sell diseased, weed or pest-ridden plants.
 - Wait until early spring to pot 'borderline' hardy plants. For established rooting; allow 6 weeks or more.
- 3) **Shake or wash off soil and plant in purchased potting soil ~**
 - If you know or even suspect you have European Chafer in your area, you need to take every precaution to ensure no larvae linger in the roots of the plants you donate.
 - Check also for other critters that may hide among the roots-weevils, earwigs, slugs, cutworms...you get the idea.
- 4) **Use clean pots ~**
 - Pots that have recently had plants you personally bought from a reputable nursery or garden centre should not need to be washed (unless they're from Monrovia).
 - All other pots should be washed and rinsed with a 10% bleach solution.
- 5) **Water newly potted plants with Transplant fertilizer ~**
 - It virtually eliminates transplant shock by stimulating the roots.
 - A little goes a long way; ie: 45 ml to 4 litres of water or approx. 3 tablespoons to 4 quarts.
- 6) **Pot in sterile, purchased potting soil ~**
 - You can buy a bag and BRAGS can reimburse you for the portion you've used.
- 7) **Label each plant ~**
 - You can use whatever is convenient to make labels: cut up old mini blinds, plastic containers or plastic knives.
 - Give as complete a plant name as possible. Include colour of bloom if applicable.
 - Be sure to identify any plant you know to have 'invasive' tendencies.
- 8) **Preparing for Sale Day ~**
 - Water your plants 2-3 days prior to sale, and then keep out of rain.
 - If necessary, wipe outside of pots to look clean.
 - Make sure all are labelled.
 - Bring your plants to the BVM parking lot at least 1 hour before sale opening.

Now, sit back ~ ~ ~

Stick your green thumbs in your lapels & feel proud of your generous contribution!

