



# “Niagara Rhodo” *Newsletter of the* *The Niagara Chapter, Rhododendron Society of Canada* April 2011

**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.

## Inside This Issue:

1. Annual Plant Sale, Saturday, April 30, 2011
2. Garden Tours: Saturday, May 14, 2011; Sunday May 22, 2011.
3. Summary of April 10 meeting
4. Brueckner Hybrid Test Program Starts

## 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

## Annual Plant Sale

**Saturday, April 30, 2011, 9 A.M.**

**Location:** Implement garage Vineland Research & Innovation Centre, Victoria Avenue. Vineland Station

**What's in the Annual Plant Sale?**



Photographs and descriptions of all the cultivars that will be available at the upcoming Annual Rhododendron Sale on April 30, please click on the following link . . . . .

[http://www.rhodoniagara.org/2011Sale/2011description\\_photos.pdf](http://www.rhodoniagara.org/2011Sale/2011description_photos.pdf)

In addition to the cultivars discussed at the meeting on April 10, additional plants of various kinds will be available. Because of the late spring, it has been impossible to judge whether these additional plants are ready to be made available to members. For this reason a last minute decision will be made as to which additional cultivars will be made available at the sale. This includes additional cultivars of rhododendrons and azaleas as well as companion plants.

**Pre-sale Pickup :** This year's pre-sale program has been more popular than ever. We have been able to provide most of the pre-sale requests and also can reassure those who have not participated in the pre-sale that most cultivars will be available but in limited quantities.

**Distribution of Pre-Sale purchases starts at 9 A.M. and will be supervised by Lil Haworth. Please follow directions to the pick-up area. Lil will direct you to your selections.**

**Please pick up your Pre-Sale order before 11 A.M.**

## Garden Tours in Mississauga Open to Niagara & ARS Members Only

**Saturday, May 14, 2011. 10 A.M. to Noon.**

**Tour 1: Brueckner Garden in Mississauga.** A 2 acre garden containing mature samples of Dr. Brueckner's hybrids which will be subjects of the Brueckner Project in which all members are invited to participate. (*Pages 4 to 7 inclusive provide details about the Brueckner Evaluation Project.*) Shown are images from the Brueckner Gardens.



This tour of the Brueckner's private garden will be a self-guided tour; individuals will be present to help with information. This is open to all members of the Niagara Region Chapter as well as any members of the American Rhododendron Society. **(Address & directions are on Page 8.)**

### **On your own Tour 2: The Public Brueckner Garden.**

A public garden part of the Mississauga garden system, this 17 acre lakeside garden park that claims to be the largest collection of rhododendrons in a public garden . . . . probably with reference to public gardens in Ontario, is located at 660 Lakeshore Road West close to the Brueckner family garden. It is a totally independent public garden to which Dr. Joseph Brueckner donated over 800 azaleas and rhododendrons from his private collection.



Chapter members who visit the Brueckner family gardens in the morning, may wish to have lunch in one of the restaurants in the area and spend a little time independently viewing the wonderful collection of plants in Mississauga's Brueckner Public Garden.

**Maps and driving directions to the Brueckner Family Garden and to the Mississauga Brueckner Public Garden are provided on Page 8.**

***Sunday, May 22, 2011. 11 A.M to 4 P.M. Rain or Shine.***

**Tour 3: Bob Ramik invites members of the Niagara and Toronto Chapters to visit his Mississauga garden. This is a very large ravine garden. A Picnic with wine is planned.**

Photos of the garden may be viewed at these two web sites.

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=164181&id=726778214&l=53c39412fe>

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=68442&id=726778214&l=73e5851d8d>



This picnic and garden tour presents a wonderful opportunity for members of the Toronto Chapter and Niagara Region Chapter to meet and to talk about their common interests and experiences.

**Maps and driving directions to Bob Ramik's home are shown on Page 8 of this Newsletter .**

***Saturday, May 28, 2011. 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.***

**P4Ms Plant Sale.** Members only. This P4M meeting will be held at Nettle Creek Nursery. Further details will be available in May, 2011.

### **Review of April 10 Meeting**

Thirty-seven people braved inclement weather to participate in a 3 part multifaceted program. The meeting started with a description of cultivars to be offered at the Annual Plant Sale. These may be seen at the following link :

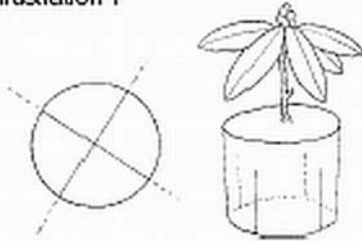
<http://rhodoniagara.org/2011PlantSale.pdf>

In the second part of the meeting a slide show described the natural growing conditions of species (from which our cultivars are developed) in their home environment. This led to a comparison between local growing conditions in southern Ontario and those in the mountainous environments of the species home. Several important factors distinguish the Niagara growing conditions from those of the mountainous areas: excellent drainage; soil that is moist but does not retain pools of moisture; and a humid, cool, environment.

Two videos described how to tease out the compact roots of pot grown plants and how to plant these pot-grown rhododendrons. Pam Little's and Hank Schannen's- Ron Rabideau's descriptions were well appreciated by many members who reported that they finally appreciated the importance of good drainage and careful non-compacted planting techniques. See the videos: Shannen-Rabideau <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2KxkPQdDd0> and Pam Little [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdt3hnLH\\_8M&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdt3hnLH_8M&feature=related)

Techniques shown in the videos are summarized below:

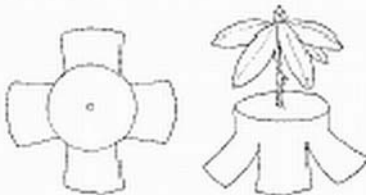
Illustration 1



To "butterfly" the root balls of a potbound rhododendron or azalea, remove from pot; lay plant on its side; and make a deep "X" cut through the roots. Don't be timid. The illustration of upright plant at the right shows how deep the cuts should go.

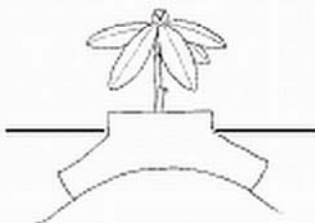
(refers to figure below)

Illustration 2



After cutting into the root ball, spread the four quarters apart to loosen them.

Illustration 3



Once you've roughed up and scratched apart any potbound roots, you're ready to plant. Build a mound in the center of the planting hole and spread the roots over it, as shown above. Depth of planting depends on soil type. For well-drained soil, the top of the root ball should be slightly higher than the surrounding soil.

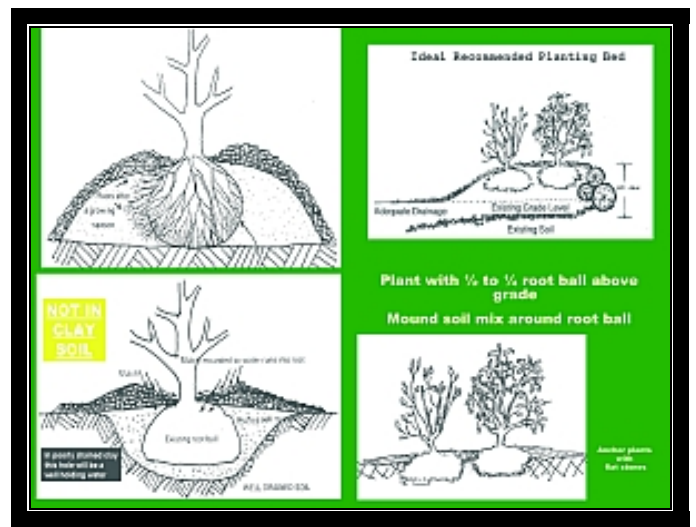
Source: Rarefind Nurseries

The importance of excellent drainage was emphasized. Planting techniques suggested for clay and sandy loam soils are demonstrated below.

**Note:**

- (1). Be certain drainage is excellent.
- (2). When filling-in soil around the roots of rhododendron, fill in by hand and DO NOT stomp the soil into the hole with your feet. Water-in the soil well around the root ball with a gentle stream of water.

A pdf file describing recommended planting techniques is available on the Chapter's web site; click here to open it.



[http://www.rhodoniagara.org/pdf/Planting\\_in\\_Clay\\_or\\_in\\_Sandy\\_Loam\\_Soil.pdf](http://www.rhodoniagara.org/pdf/Planting_in_Clay_or_in_Sandy_Loam_Soil.pdf)

**Source of Chunky Peat Moss:** We have been informed by Niagara Nurseries that the Black Bale ,Chunky Peat Moss is not available this spring. We are attempting to identify an alternate supplier. In the meantime growers are advised to double the volume of composted Pine Bark mulch (Gro-Bark), available at such purveyors as St.Amand's on Bunting Road in St. Catharines and use garden compost plus small volumes of regular peat moss or Pro-mix.

**How is fertilizer available to rhododendrons in the wild? :**

Clearly there is no artificial fertilizer available to rhododendrons in the wild. Rhododendron is a plant that requires very little fertilizer. Whatever nutrients are necessary are available from decomposing organic material in the vicinity of the roots, whatever is leached from elements in the soil and helped by the symbiotic relationships that exist between the rhodo roots and the fungi in the soil. Typically, home gardeners tend to over-fertilize rhododendrons, thereby contributing to the phytophthora problem for rhodos growing in environments characterized poor drainage, by hot summer day and hot summer night temperatures. This leads to some reminders on **Fertilizing Rhododendron & Azaleas**. We recommend Peter Hannam's techniques described in the **Niagara Rhodo** Newsletter, Page 4, March 2009. See the methods in the following link.

[http://www.rhodoniagara.org/2009\\_03\\_March\\_Newsletter.pdf](http://www.rhodoniagara.org/2009_03_March_Newsletter.pdf)

**Brueckner Evaluation Project:** The final element of the April 10 meeting was a summary of the Steering Committee's discussions and conclusions. These are summarized on Pages 5, 6 and 7 of this newsletter. The immediate requirement is to identify those members of the Chapter who wish to participate in the project. Then it is necessary to distribute the available cultivars in a systematic, thoughtful way so that a good distribution of plants is achieved across the growing areas of Ontario.

Fortunately, our membership extends from Windsor to Kingston. Such a representation will permit assessment of these hybrids over a wide range of conditions in Ontario.

### Member Participation Form (MPF)

To participate in this hybrid evaluation program please provide information requested on the MPF form provided below. Send it to the Steering Committee as soon as you can. Do not hesitate to call 905-684-4703 if you wish to have further clarification of the form or associated information.

In a test program it is critical to know the conditions under which the plants are growing. The requested information is important for research because it will provide the basis upon which the plants will be distributed and later evaluated.

## Brueckner Hybrid Evaluation Project

### Form 1 - Member Participation Form

*Please Provide as much information as you can and send this form to*

Nick Yarmoshuk at [rhodosrus@gmail.com](mailto:rhodosrus@gmail.com) or  
57 Highland Avenue, St. Catharines ON., L2R4H9

First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Family Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home or Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

#### Please provide an answer to each question in the space provided beside the question.

1. How many rhododendrons – azaleas are you growing currently? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years have you been growing rhodos? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Please think of where you plan to locate the plants.

1. How many hrs of direct sun does the location receive? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How much space can you allocate to the test project? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Usually, we should allocate a space about 2 feet x 2 feet for each new rhodo we start. How many such locations do you have? \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Based on your answer to 3 above, how many plants would you ideally wish to test? \_\_\_\_\_ We will attempt to meet each request to the best of our abilities.
5. A test project requires information to be collected over a significant period of time.

For each plant that you receive would you be willing to collect 6 items of information for each plant, once per month? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to continue recording this information for each plant for 36 months? Yes\_\_ No \_\_\_

**In the space below and on the opposite side of this page . . . . Please tell us as much as you can about the soil where you grow your rhododendrons and azaleas. Please briefly . . . . .**

1. Describe basic soil:
  2. Describe & List Soil amendments you use:
  3. Describe fertilizer practices you employ:
  4. Describe drainage of the area:
  5. Describe the shade if any provided by trees.
  6. What % of shade is available between 11 AM and 4 PM ?
- May we visit your location during the growing season once the plants are distributed? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your interest in participating in the project.**

# Evaluating The Brueckner Hybrids

## A Project of the Membership of the Niagara Region Chapter, Rhododendron Society of Canada

The Niagara Region Chapter, Rhododendron Society of Canada, and the Brueckner Family have agreed to collaborate in developing a program within which a wide selection of rhododendron hybrids, developed by the late Dr. Joseph Brueckner, would be tested for their suitability as ornamental shrubs for gardens of southern Ontario.

This note describes the goals of the program and methods to be employed to achieve these goals.

### Involvement of Members

The project was introduced to members of the Niagara Region Chapter, Rhododendron Society of Canada, at a meeting on November 7, 2010. Christina Woodward, Dr. Brueckner's daughter, described Dr. Brueckner's hybridizing work. The secretary of the Niagara Chapter then explained that the intent was to involve, as many (of the Chapter's members) as possible, in the work of the project; he called for volunteers to serve on a steering committee that would define the methods to be employed in the project.

The response of the 40 members present at the meeting was positive in support of the idea of the project and a number volunteered to serve on the steering committee. The committee was struck and held its first meeting on February 13, 2011. The members of this committee are:

<b>Paul Chafe</b>	Kingston	Botanist, hybridizer
<b>Peter Hannam</b>	Guelph	President Woodrill Farms, Rhododendron grower
<b>Marie Johns</b>	Jordan	Master Gardener
<b>Kevin Kavanagh</b>	Norfolk County	Landscaper, South Coast Gardens, Native & Subtropical Nursery
<b>Ron Sutton</b>	Burlington	Plant Collector, Grower, Chemist
<b>Christina Woodward</b>	Mississauga	Committee Secretary. Knows the Brueckner Hybrids, Program & Content; Maintains Brueckner Archives, Maintains Brueckner Family garden.
<b>Nick Yarmoshuk</b>	St.Catharines	Committee Chair; Rhododendron Grower; Secretary, Niagara Region Chapter, RSC; Chair, ARS Test & Demonstration Garden Committee

This group, known as the Brueckner Project Steering Committee (BPSC), is a sub-committee of the Board of Directors of the Niagara Region Chapter.

### Unregistered Brueckner Hybrids



xiv 21



xi 24



ix 67



viii83

## Project Goals

In its first meeting, the Brueckner Project Steering committee (BPSC) unanimously agreed to the following goals:

1. To test and evaluate selected Brueckner rhododendron hybrids for their ability to survive and bloom reliably in different local climates in southern Ontario.
2. To develop the process, the methodology, and the model for evaluating the Brueckner hybrids. The work of BPSC will fall under this procedure as will other evaluation projects that may follow.
3. To develop a basis for standardizing evaluation protocols for Rhodos. Ideally this could lead to a protocol that could apply, not only to Rhododendron, but to plants of other genera as well. [*We note that, previously, rhododendrons have been evaluated only by their creators, referenced in 'Breeding Rhododendron' section of Leach's book, or by a very small group of individuals. We could canvas other breeders for opinion to determine evaluation procedures used in commerce and further research the topic.* ]
4. To include Brueckner plant selections for the Project as follows:
  - i. registered hybrids, not currently commercially available on a wide market
  - ii. non-registered hybrids with known parentage
  - iii. non-registered hybrids with unknown parentage.
5. To consider this project as a pilot until its development can be evaluated in terms of the extent to which its goals are being met and procedures are adequate.
6. To publish performance and evaluation results of the Brueckner Project in the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society.

## Methods to be Employed

1. Currently there are 4 batches of young plants in process:
  - i. 2005 (currently at Peter Hannam's) 17 plants from 15 hybrids
  - ii. 2008 (at Blue Sky Nursery) **152 plants from 39 hybrids**
  - iii. 2009 (at Brueckner's) 66 plants from 11 registered hybrids
  - iv. 2010 (at WW Nursery, PA) 123 plants from 45 different hybrids

These plants were selected (before the project was underway under direction of BPSC) with reference to a loose set of criteria including: performance, heat and cold tolerance, flower and leaf characteristics, unique features and parentage.

The intent is to evaluate each of these cultivars over a representative area of Southern Ontario where Niagara Chapter members are resident.

2. It is necessary to identify the range of conditions throughout the southern part of the Province under which plants could be tested.
3. A test program, by definition, must identify, for any evaluations to be valid, the conditions under which the plants (that are being evaluated) are being grown. This imposes certain requirements on the participants in the evaluation process to provide information to the evaluating committee of these conditions. Therefore, it is imperative for the organizing committee to have basic information about growing conditions.
4. It is important to note that knowledge of these growing conditions before-hand are not intended as a means to exclude a member from participation, but simply, to know before-hand, the conditions under which the plant is to be grown. For this reason it is important to obtain, before-hand, information about the location(s) where the plant is to be grown - and evaluated.

Accordingly, a “Member Participation Form” has been developed to (a) inform participants of some of the information required for research purposes; (b) to enable members participating in the project to recognize that success of the project depends upon adherence to these research requirements, and (c) allow the committee to adequately distribute available cultivars in a wide range of growing conditions in the Province. This will serve as an “application” and “registration” form for members to enroll in the project.

5. In the first few years, participation in the project will be open only to all members of the Niagara Region Chapter and members of the American Rhododendron Society who are Associate members of the Niagara Chapter.
6. Developing rooted cuttings of each of the cultivars is not without cost to the Niagara Region Chapter. Each cultivar to be planted will be offered to participants at “cost”. This cost currently is evaluated at \$12 per 2 year old plant. The only guarantee that the Chapter can offer is that the plant is healthy at the time it is given to the participating member and that the cutting has been taken from a mature plant that has grown successfully in the Brueckner family enclave in Mississauga. **Neither the Niagara Region Chapter nor the Brueckner Family wish to make a financial return on this endeavour.**
7. The 218 plants, that may currently be available for distribution, are located in growing areas in Beamsville and Mississauga. Before distribution can be organized, their condition must be evaluated. Due to the 2011 late spring, this will not be completed until approximately the end of the first or second week of May.
8. Once the 218 potted plants have been evaluated by Committee members, they will assess how the distribution will be conducted. The criteria employed will be publicly available to all members. In general we may say at this time that plants will be distributed so that as wide a representation of localities as possible will be achieved.

The form which you are invited to complete as soon as possible and to send to the address supplied is shown as Form 1 on Page 4 of this Newsletter. Please complete the form or send the information requested on the form to

Nick Yarmoshuk e-mail at [rhodosrus@gmail.com](mailto:rhodosrus@gmail.com) or by Canada Post to . . . . .

57 Highland Avenue

St. Catharines ON

L2R4H9

Nick may be contacted at 905-684-4703

### **Evaluating Cultivar’s Performance**

An evaluation form is now being developed. This second form will enable tracking of required plant development information for any hobby gardener. **We intend to make it as complete yet as simple as possible so that it does not impose excessive time demands on participants.**

The purpose of the form and collection of information would be to determine through trials in different volunteer gardens, the strengths and weaknesses of selected Brueckner hybrids.

The general categories in which information will be collected through a structured form would include the following ***(these are examples provided to define each category)***:

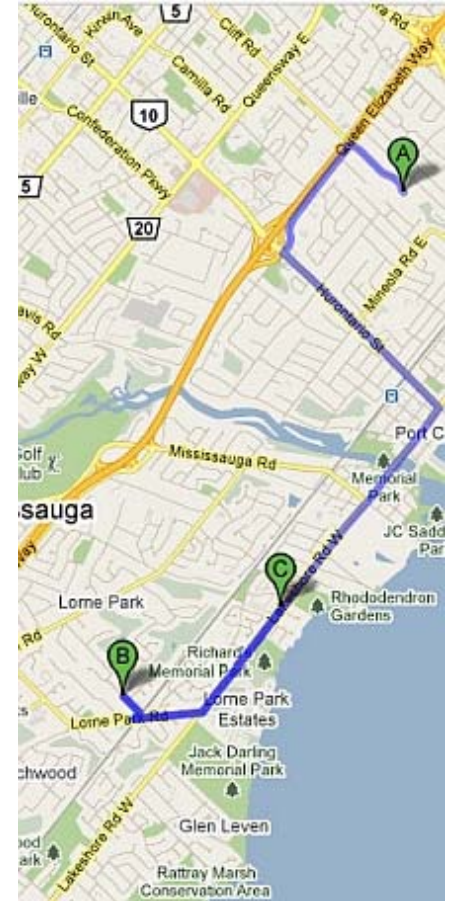
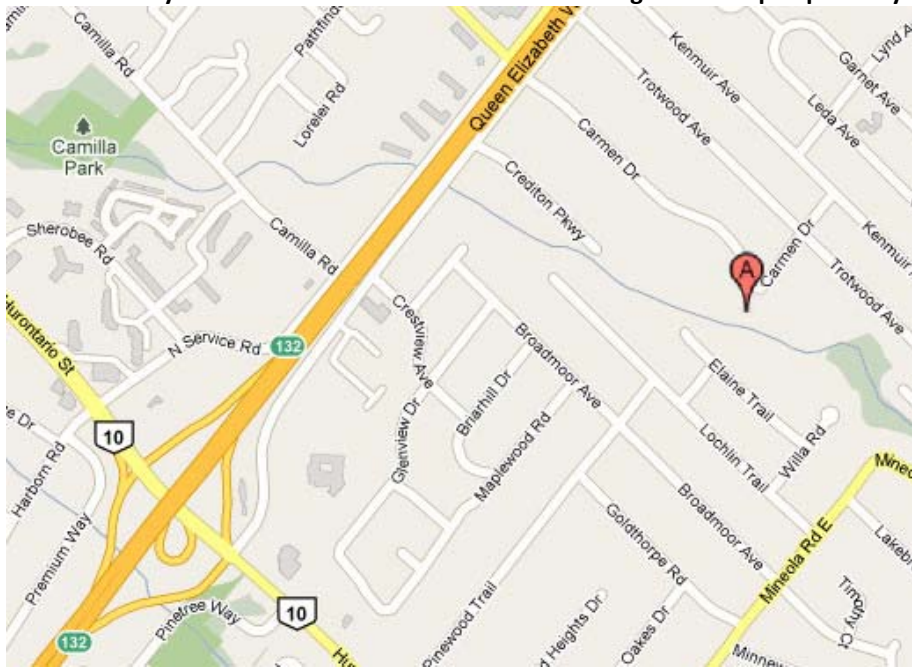
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <b>General Growing Conditions:</b> <i>(Temperature, rainfall)</i>  | 5. <b>Overwintering:</b> <i>(Affect of wind, browning, bud survival)</i>                        |
| 2. <b>Specific planting site conditions:</b> <i>(wind, soil, sunlight)</i>  | 6. <b>General Plant rating at year-end :</b> <i>(grower’s assessment of quality &amp; form)</i> |
| 3. <b>Cultural Practices:</b> <i>(Fertilizer, mulching, pruning, disease)</i>   | 7. <b>Comments</b> <i>(Growers personal opinion about the plant’s performance)</i>              |
| 4. <b>Plant Quality &amp; Flowering Observations:</b> <i>(Budding, flower size, appearance, colour, when in flower)</i> |   |

## Garden Tours in May

**Directions to The Brueckner Family Gardens:** 1436 Carmen Drive, Mississauga, L5G 3Z1

Exit QEW at Hurontario (Hwy 10) toward Lake Ontario. Take the South Service road to Carmen Drive.

Turn in to Carmen Drive and drive to the dead-end of the street. **PARKING:** There is room for only 3 vehicles in the driveway. Please leave the space in the driveway for visitors who may have mobility problems. Those who wish to park in the driveway, please back into the driveway. All others, please park your vehicle along Carmen Drive. The property is somewhat hilly and one must exercise care when walking on the sloped pathways.

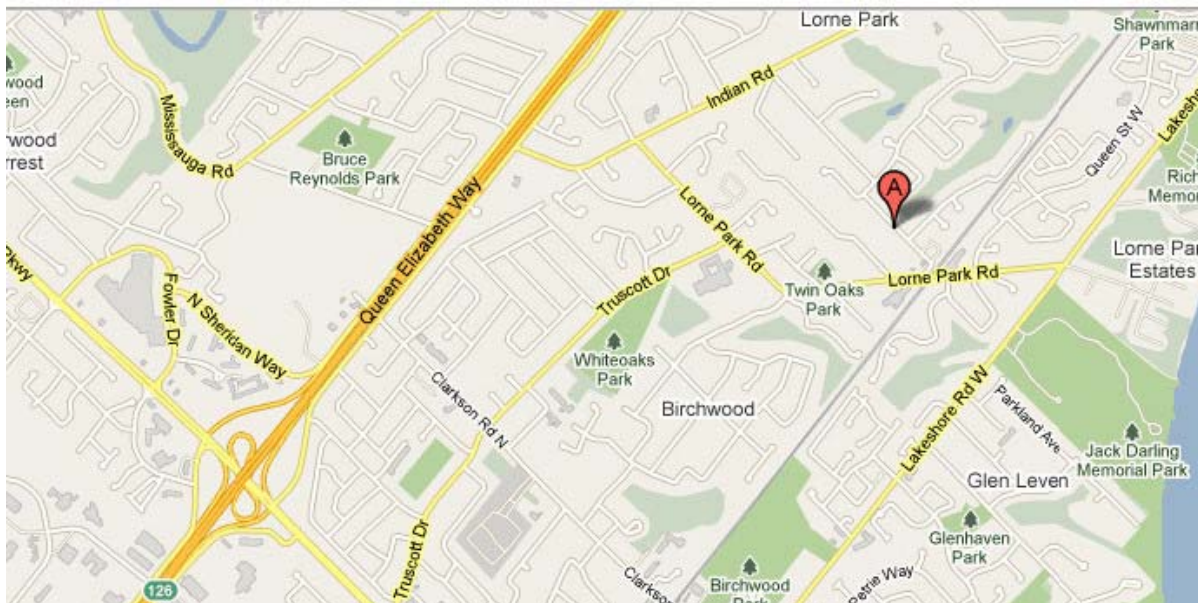


**Directions to Mississauga's Public Brueckner Gardens:** 660 Lakeshore Road West, Mississauga, Ontario. A B C refer to points on vertical map on the RHS of this page. . . . the Mississauga Public Brueckner Rhododendron Garden (C) lies between Bob Ramik's Garden (B) and the Brueckner Family's Garden (A). One may easily reach the Brueckner Public Garden from Ramik's garden (B) or from the Brueckner Family Garden (A). Distances: (A) to (C)= 6 kms (B) to (C) = 2 kms

**Directions to Bob Ramick's Garden:** 1250 Birchview Drive, Mississauga, L5H 3C8

Exit QEW at Erin Mills Parkway toward Lake Ontario. Take Service Road to Indian Road .

Follow Indian road to Birchview Drive. Follow Birchview Drive to 1250.



A in the map on the left marks Bob Ramik's property.