Rhododendron Society of Canada

Société Canadienne du Rhododendron

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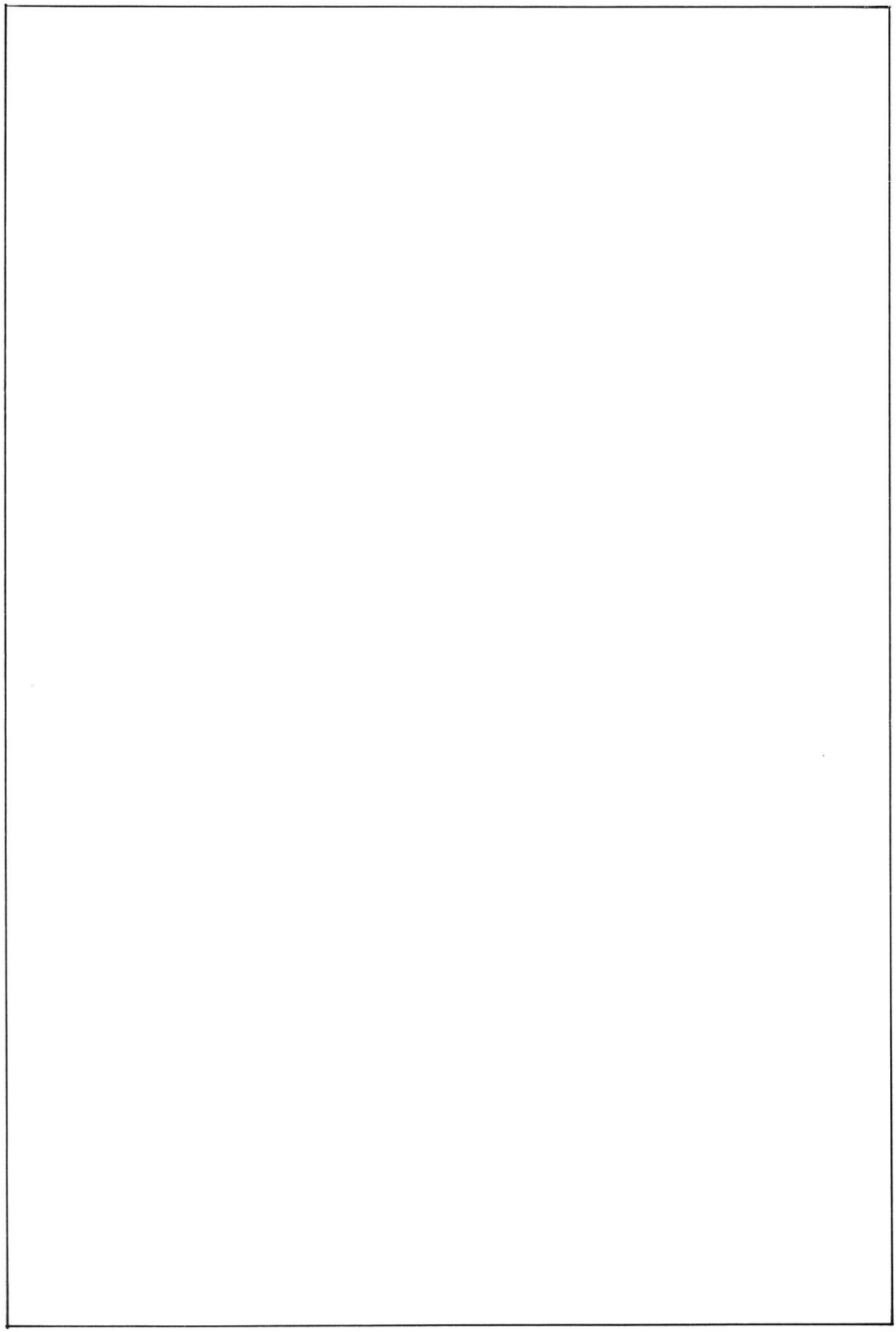

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4271 Lakeshore Road, Burington, Ontario L7L 1A7

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COVER

The new Sino-Himalayan Garden at VanDusen Botanical Display Gardens, winter 1982. See Roy Forster's article, beginning on page 4.

1982 ANNUAL MEETING AND SHOW, MAY 29-30

All roads lead to the Niagara Peninsula at the end of May for our Annual Meeting and Show, hosted by the Niagara Region at the Beacon Motor Inn, Jordan Station. Members of the Region have been planning and working for months to make this an outstanding weekend. Clinics on rhododendron planting and care, displays, guided garden tours and plant sales all await you. The Saturday night banquet will have a guest speaker of great prestige, Dr. August E. Kehr, past president of the American Rhododendron Society and a hybridizer of note, with several introductions already registered.

A highlight of the Annual Meeting weekend is always the Flower Show, and this year there are two new classes to add colour and interest - Decorative Arrangements and a Children's Competition, open to entrants up to the age of eighteen. Choose your best blossoms and join in the fun, Saturday, May 29 and Sunday, May 30.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

In view of the late mailing of membership renewal notices and the 'Bulletin', the Executive and Board have extended for this year the final date for renewal to May 31, 1982. If you have not already done so, please send your fees ($10.00, single or family) to our Treasurer, Dr. H.G. Hedges, 4271 Lakeshore Road, Burlington, Ontario L7L 1A7, specifying the Region with which you wish to be affiliated.

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY TICKET AVAILABLE

Are you planning to go to Britain this spring or summer? We would be happy to make our Royal Horticultural Society ticket available to as many visitors to Britain as can be arranged. The ticket is good for the Chelsea Flower Show, May 18-21, and also admits three persons per day to Wisley Gardens. In addition, it is good for a dozen major flower shows in London from April through November.

If you would like to apply to use the ticket (free), please write promptly to Dr. H.G. Hedges (address above), who will work out plans for exchanging the ticket so that as many persons as possible may use it. Indicate the number in your party, your dates in Britain, and your dates in or around London.

RHODODENDRONS IN PARADISE

R. Roy Forster Vancouver, British Columbia

During the course of one working life, it is a rare privilege to be granted the opportunity of making two rhododendron gardens, each with its own unique purpose and challenges from the surrounding environment. The first of these was at the Horticultural Research Institute,Vineland, Ontario, and was intended to be primarily a gene pool for breeding purposes. Such a collection did not need to be laid out in a prosaic manner, when a gardenesque, asthetically-pleasing planting would be equally effective. The result of this combination of needs was the first sustained attempt to build a public rhododendron display and test garden in Ontario.

Compared with the difficulties of growing rhododendrons in less-favoured regions of Ontario (Hamilton for example), Vineland is 'Paradisical'. The relatively benign lakeside climate and the mildly-acid sandy soil, must be the envy of rhododendron growers in the more rigorous environment of other parts of Ontario. The site was almost ideal - picturesque landscape sheltered by mature trees, culminating in high oak woodland. Some twinges of conscience are felt even now, in remembering the felling of sugar maples to make space for the foreign rhododendron interlopers.

The second garden I am now making in VanDusen Gardens with my friends and colleagues is totally different - on an abandoned hilltop reservoir site devoid of shade trees save for two small remnant copses. There is very little in the way of natural soil, but great, good fortune came our way in unlimited quantities of fill and sandy material that passes for topsoil in Vancouver! Enormous quantities of leafmould and peat, at slight cost, were obtained in fortuitous circumstances. The result was a completely manufactured soil profile shaped into a landscape of small hills and valleys. Later, a waterfall, pond, and stream were added. From the summit of the new garden are views of the local mountains that evoke the Himalayas, and since the garden is composed of Chinese plus Himalayan plants, no better name could be given than the Sino-Himalayan Garden.

The berms and valleys are aligned north-south, for protection from cold east winds. There is scarcely a level spot in the entire garden of five acres but this guarantees good drainage - which is often a problem on level sites in Vancouver. In the deep, well-prepared sandy soil, we expect good growth. An irrigation system was installed and the entire soil mass allowed to settle and fallowed for one year before planting began. The trees that ultimately will become the overhead canopy were planted first, in a carefully-conceived pattern. These included *Pinus wallichiana, Castanea mollissima,* magnolias aplenty, including *M. sargentiana robusta, M. dawsoniana, Liriodendron chinensis,* Chinese oaks, beeches, tilias, sorbus, maples, and a host of other species. We attempted to visualize the wooded canopy in twenty-five years and planted accordingly to cast the shade in the desired places. Rare plants such as *Davidia involucrata* and *Acer griseum* are given pride of place between the sheltering flanks of the hillsides. Most of the trees planted in the garden are quite small, and for several years there will be no shade. We are relying heavily on Vancouver's "rain-forest" climate and the irrigation system to nurse the

rhododendron collection through these difficult years. The cool, misty weather that prevails in Vancouver for much of the year provides the perfect conditions for a large number of rhododendron species from the mountains of S.W. China and the Himalayan region. At our latitutde, the winter sun is somewhat ',watery" to say the least, and constitutes little trouble to the wintering of broadleaved evergreens. The winters are mild, with scarcely any penetration of frost into the ground. The average January temperaure is 2.4°C (36°F) and the lowest temperature recorded (1968) was −17.8°C (0°F).

The rhododendron species collection, which is now in excess of 200 kinds, has been acquired from two main sources. The Rhododendron Species Foundation in Federal Way, Washington, has made available, at reasonable cost to members, young plants of a truly dazzling arrange of rhododendron species. Our other source of plants is the Greig collection. This is a private collection acquired by the Greig family of Royston Nurseries, Royston, B.C. This collection was purchased by the Vancouver Park Board in the late 1960's, and has been quietly growing in size and numbers under the able curatorship of Alleyne Cooke. Several hundred plants of various sizes, some 5m in height, have been moved to the new garden.

The Greig collection is a valuable historic resource, and it is appropriate that the botanical garden should be its permanent home. The Greig family had contacts with major rhododendron gardens around the world, and also received many of the original collections of plant hunters from Asia. Because of this historical importance and the rarity of many of the species, the assemblage of plants can truly be called a Heritage collection.

No rhododendron hybrids (at least advertently!) are planted in the Sino-Himalayan Garden. After some weeks spent wrestling with the problem of how best to organize the collection in terms of educational and aesthetic considerations, it was decided to lay out the plants "somewhat loosely" in their respective sections and subsections according to the new Edinburgh taxonomic revision. This layout, as well as having meaning botanically, will tend to favour mass groupings of harmonizing colour and texture. The various species can be fitted to different ecological niches within the design. However, we will not allow a rigid system to rule entirely and if there is an over-riding aesthetic or cultural reason to break the system - then the rules are "bent". Considerations such as this are always a problem in the layout of botanical gardens, in which the majority of visitors respond to the aesthetic quality of the design rather than the botanical integrity of the organization of the collections.

The theme of the new garden tends to exclude the very hardy species familiar to growers in Eastern and Central Canada, because most of these species are American (e.g. *R. catawbiense),* European (e.g. *R.smirnowii)* or Japanese (e.g. *R. keiski).* However, such well-known and divergent species such as *R. fortunei* and *R. impeditum,* are represented in considerable numbers. Larger-leaved species, such

GROWING SEEDLINGS

Sterling Levy Windsor Junction, Nova Scotia

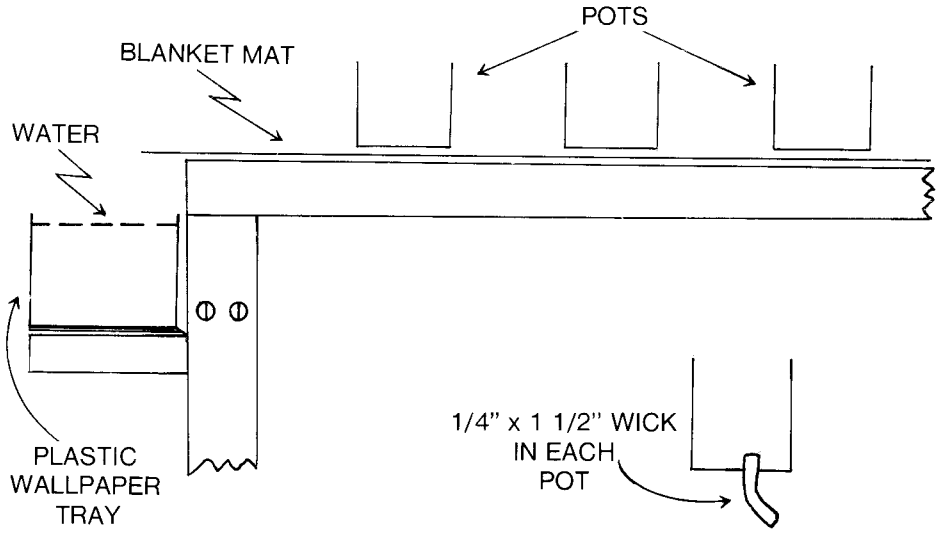
In early 1979, as a result of over-enthusiastic purchasing and generous donations of seed, I suddenly found myself with five hundred rhododendron and azalea seedlings in my basement.

These tiny seedlings were no trouble while they were in their community pots. As they grew and needed individual pots or flats, I realized that I could not care for them in the limited spare time available. Not wanting to risk discarding "The Best" seedling, I decided to try a programme of mass feeding and watering. The results of these efforts have been excellent.

My plants are grown in the basement under fluorescent lights. I use mostly cool white tubes and usually burn them for fourteen hours per day. The benches are 4' x 8' aspenite, supported by 2" x 4" framing. Each bench is covered with two layers of six mil plastic, to keep the wood dry, and then with a mat made from 100% acrylic blankets. The end of the mat is draped into a plastic wallpaper tray mounted on a shelf at the end of the bench (see sketch). The tray top should be slightly higher than the surface of the bench.

I make the mat slightly moist before I put it on the bench, then I fill the end tray with water, which travels by capillary action across the entire surface of the bench. This gives a slightly wet covering where the plants are grown.

Each pot or flat used on the bench has a small wick inserted from the bottom. I use a piece of the blanket, one-quarter inch by one and a half inches, with about a quarter inch protruding (see sketch). When the pot sits on the bench, moisture flows up the wick into the potting mix, keeping it constantly moist.



as *R. hemsleyanum* and *R. calophytum* are placed in protected locations, with conifer-clothed berms to the windward side. The upper slopes and the summit of the garden are planted with dwarf lepidotes including, *R. hippophaeoides, R. fastigiatum* and *R. saluenense.* These are arranged in quite large drifts interspersed with the conifers - *Picea liliangensis* and *P. brachytyla.* This combination of plants is intended to intended to suggest the sub-alpine regions of Western China. Slightly lower on the hillsides are other, larger-growing lepidotes of the Triflora sub-section, such as *R. yunnanense, R. augustinii* and *R. lutescens.* The latter species, with yellow flowers, and the hardier *R. ambiguum* give a nice touch of contrasting colour to the predominantly blue or purple-flowered lepidote species.

In the relatively meagre shelter afforded by the few mature trees that we have, the large leaved species of the Falconera Subsection are being introduced. These tree-like species, with their magnificent stature and large ponderous leaves epitomize the warm temperate Himalayas. It is yet too early to judge if they will be successful garden plants in this particular garden. We are well endowed with yellow-flowered species of the Campylocarpa Subsection such as *R. wardii.* Less well-know are rhododendrons of the Taliensia subsection. Some of these, such as *R. lacteum,* have yellow flowers, but the group is perhaps most highly valued on account of the gorgeous indumentum of many species. *R. bureavii* and *R. wiltoni* are two notable examples.

The foregoing does not begin to scratch the surface of this great store of rhododendron species. In a few years, it will form a unique display garden, as well as being a valuable corollary of the even larger species collection at the U.B.C. Botanical Garden.

Truly, west coast rhododendron collectors find themselves in a garden 'Paradise', because by definition, in Paradise there is no work. The climate, and most of the soil, is so close to being ideal, that rhododendrons will thrive with little attention. The pH is seldom cause for concern; the natural rainfall is (usually) adequate save for a few weeks in the summer, and the moderate temperature throughout the year is ideal.

Our rhododendrons are mulched with leaf mould, which can best be described as "57 varieties", since it is gleaned from the city streets. Iron deficiency is seldom a problem, due to low average pH, but the leaching caused by heavy rains often causes nitrogen and magnesium deficiency. These are treated with the sulphate compounds of the two elements.

The Sino-Himalayan Garden will be opened officially on a date yet to be decided in the spring of 1983. This will be cause for celebration, and we hope that there will be a good representation from the Rhododendron Society of Canada.

Roy Forster is Curator of the VanDusen Botanical Garden.

A weed is a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Sterling Levy Windsor Junction, Nova Scotia

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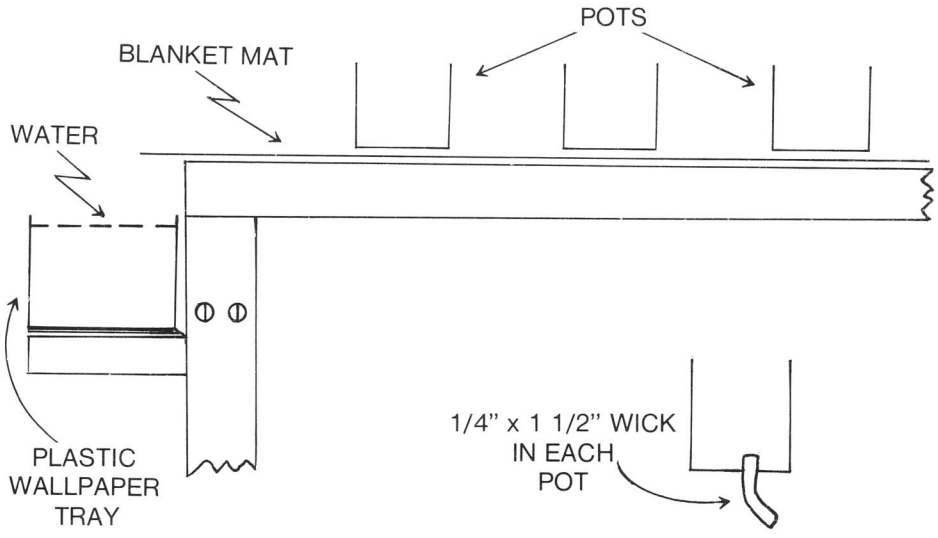


With the constant watering system, special care has to be taken with the growing mix. It must be able to hold moisture, but be well-draining and porous at the same time. I use a Cornell-type mix of peat moss, perlite and coarse vermiculite in a 1-1-1 ratio. (Insulation vermiculite such as mica-fil or eonolite is good). I mix the ingredients dry and then pour hot water over the mixture, let it cool and use it as required.

There *are* problems with this system. Some plants like drier roots, and if the mix stays too wet they grow poorly, become chlorotic and die. This can occur if the planting container is too shallow. I have found that 3 1/2 inches of soil is usually deep enough to keep the roots from being too wet. Extra holes punched in the sides of the container also help by allowing more air to the roots.

In the bright light and high nutrient levels, algae grow on the matting and can be unsightly. The mats can be soaked in chlorine bleach and then put through a normal wash/rinse cycle. While the washer does its thing, the bench can be wiped down with a mild chlorine solution. The mat is replaced while still damp and the plants put back on it.

Pests may move from plant to plant on the matting. Fungal diseases can be harder to control in the humid conditions. An occasional spraying will help control any problems encountered.

Feedings and watering the plants is just a simple matter of filling the trays with fertilizer solution or plain water. For constant feeding I use one quarter of the recommended dosage of plant food. This will help prevent root-burning and salt build-up in the pots. Occasionally plain water is flushed from the top of the pot to prevent salt build-up on the soil surface.

I have had excellent results with this system – strong, well branched plants eight to fifteen inches high in one year from seed. These plants were planted in the cold frames and made good growth during the summer. I presently have *R. vaseyi, R. dauricum* and *R. canescens* ten inches high in nine months from seed. (Rooted cuttings grow very well on this system also). *R. carolinianum* and its hybrids, hybrids of *R. fortunei, R. smirnowii* and *R. catawbiense* have reached eight to ten inches and are now wintering in the cold frames. It remains to be seen if this accelerated growth will affect the hardiness of the plants. The deciduous azaleas seem to adapt to the garden, but this spring should tell the tale on evergreen rhododendrons.

If you decide to try a system like this, use only a few plants at first to study the results. It is very easy to damage or destroy valuable plants - go slowly!

Editor's Note. Sterling Levy would like to hear from anyone who has tried similar methods, or can suggest improvements. Write to him at Box 70, Site 14, R.R. 2, Windsor Junction, Nova Scotia B0N 2V0.

THE JOYS OF A COUNTRY GARDEN

Barrie Porteous Toronto, Ontario

Perhaps gardening in the country, or in this case at the cottage, conjures up visions of lazy summer afternoons, of birds singing and warm, gentle breezes stirring in the trees. An accurate picture no doubt, unless you happen to raise rhododendrons, in which case the year turns out to be one long battle with Mother Nature.

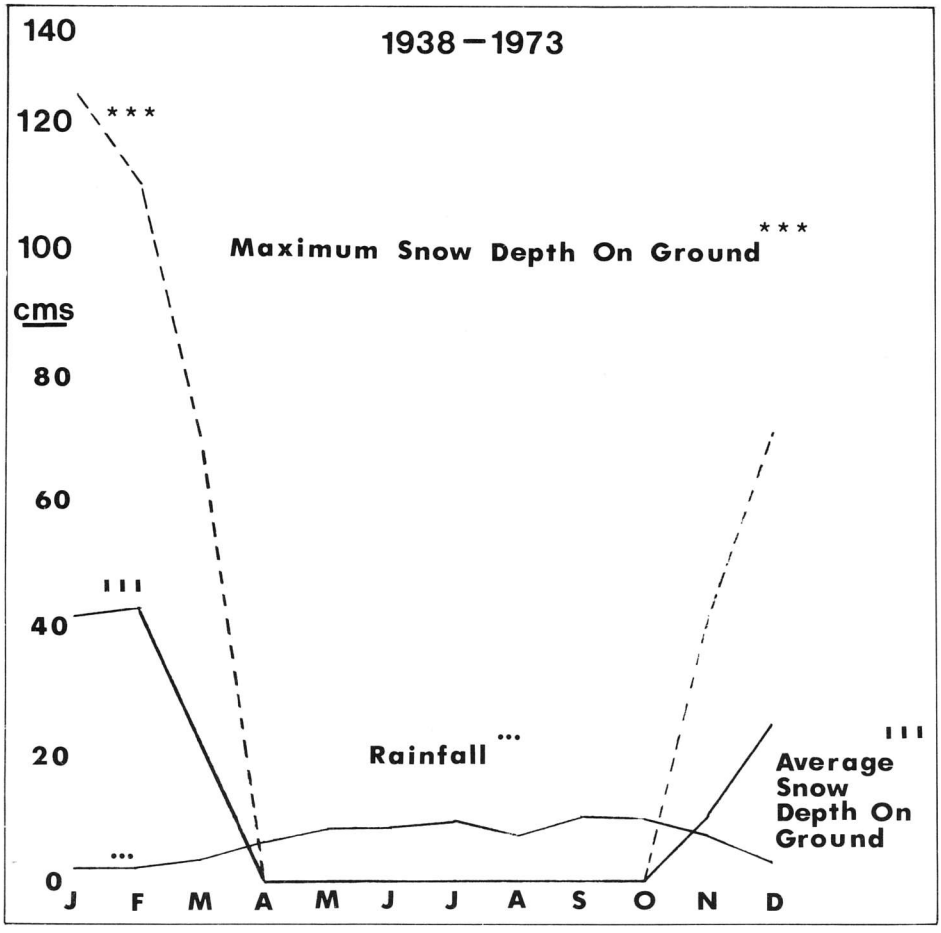
To get a better understanding of the problems which beset the country gardener, it is best to start by examining the Monthly Climatological reports issued by Environment Canada. The information is summarized in graph form following.

1) The cottage is located in a Zone 4A Region. With very few exceptions there are no rhodos capable of withstanding temperatures which can fall below −40°C (*40°F).*
2) While it might be expected that minimum temperatures would occur in January or February, examination of data collected between 1983 and 1973 shows that the lowest temperatures occur in December. Clearly additional protection is called for, as the average snow accumulation for the month is only 25 cm. (10"), while temperatures can drop to -40°C (-40°F).
3) March has more hours of sunshine than any other month. As a result, care must be taken to insure that plants receive adequate shade, as the ground can remain frozen until early May.
4) The greatest rainfall occurs in September and October. While this is beneficial, it can also cause late spurts of growth that weaken the plants due to winterkill.
5) While December may boast the lowest readings, temperatures in January and February are constantly below -20°C (-4°F), and may often go below -30°C (-22°F) for days at a time. This prolonged exposure to cold requires that even greater plant protection be practiced.

Protection takes two forms:

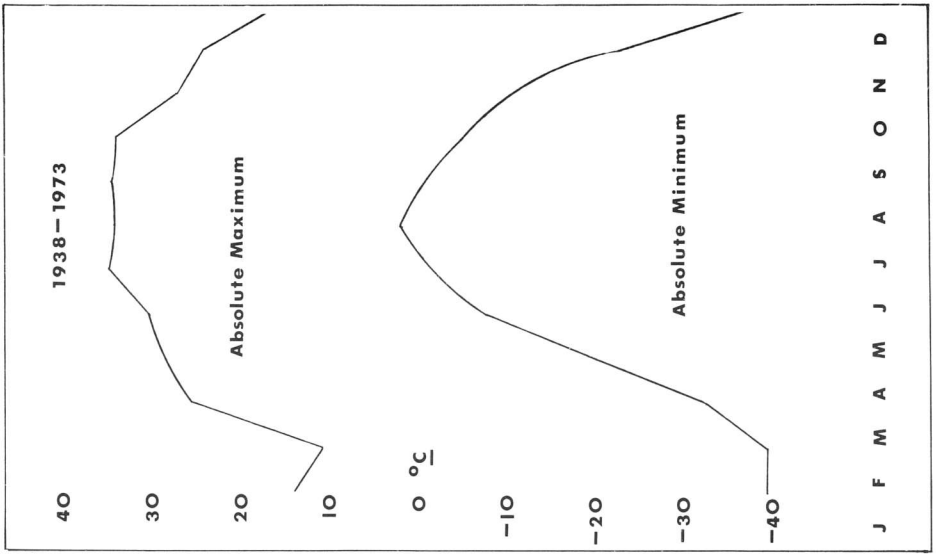
a) A pine needle mulch two to three feet deep is applied in mid October, before the ground freezes. Although Leach advocates removing the summer mulch in the fall to protect plants from late frosts, this procedure has little value in the frozen north. Instead, an early application of a deep mulch may, with luck, stop the ground freezing all winter, depending on whether or not there is an early permanent snow fall. By this means *R. williamsianum,* with a hardiness of only -5°F, has been grown for four years.
b) Although a winter mulch is crucial to the success of growing all rhodos, some plants are obviously too large to be protected in this manner. The problem is solved by the construction of insulated sheds over the rhodos. However the cost, both in terms of time and raw materials, generates a tendency to favour the smaller hybrids.

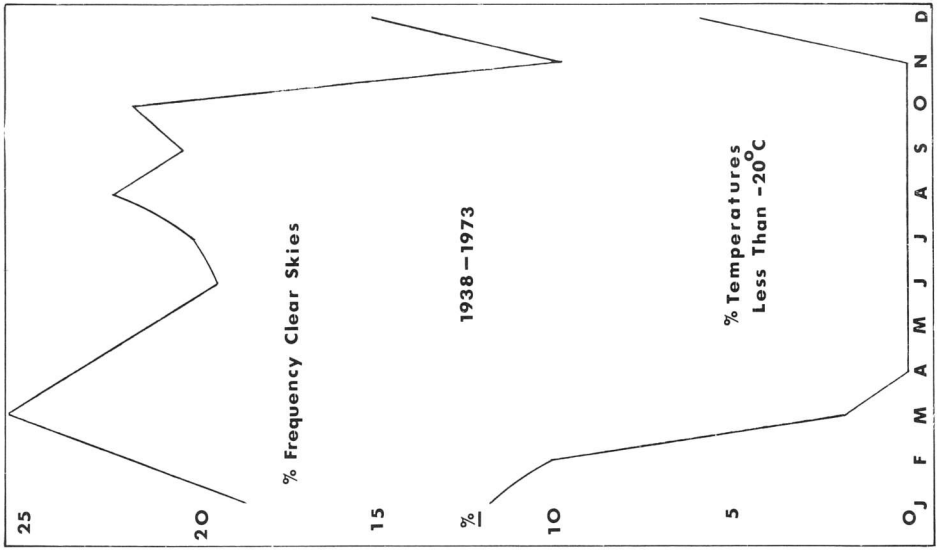
As previously mentioned the cottage is located in a zone 4A region where winter temperatures can exceed -40°C (-40°F). It is logical, however, to assume that by using sufficient mulch and by relying on some snowfall in early December, temperatures around the plants are unlikely to fall below -18°C (0°F). Greer's catalogue lists over a hundred species and hybrids that grow under three feet tall with a hardiness rating of -20°C (-4°F).



The following plants are being grown, although it is too early to state with confidence that this technique is completely successful. The spectre of a bitterly cold, snowless December still conjures up visions of lost plants, as there is no way to provide additional protection for rhodos that are located 150 miles from home.

'Rose Elf'	*R. racemosum x R. pemakoense*		−5°F
'Ramapo'	*R. fastigiatum x R. carolinianum*	2'	−25°F
'Ptarmigan'	*R. leucaspis x R. microleucum*	1'	−5°F
'Maricee'	*R. sargentianum x ?*	2'	−5°F
'Coral Velvet'	*R. yakushimanun hybrid*	30"	−15°F
'Princess Anne'	*R. hanceanum var. nanum x R. keiskei*	2'	−10°F
'Besse Howells'	*Red R. catawbiense x* 'Boule de Neige'	3'	−5°F
R. williamsianum	Species	18"	−5°F
'Hydon Glow'	*R. yakushimanum* hybrid	30"	−5°F
'Debijo'	*R. carolinianum x R. saluenense*	3'	−15°F
'Dora Amateis'	*R. carolinianum x R. ciliatum*	3'	−15°F
'Chikor'	*R. rupicola* var. *chryseum* x *R. ludlowii*	18"	0°F

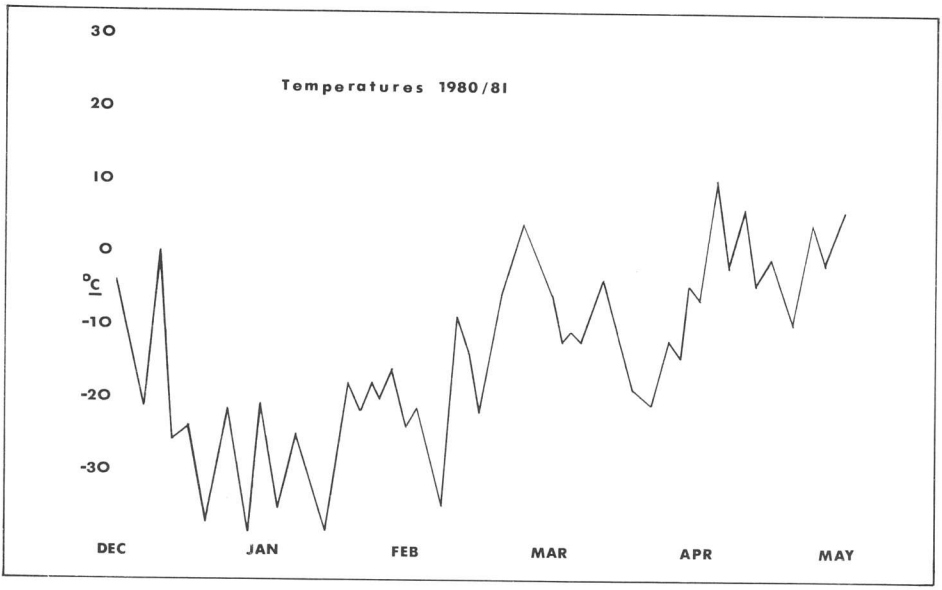




Clearly the intense prolonged cold and unreliable snow cover are problems which must be overcome. There are however some distinct advantages to gardening in the Muskokas.

1) The soil is naturally acidic. While city gardeners struggle with alkaline concrete the cottager is blessed with sandy loam which, when mixed with peat moss and decomposed pine needles, the latter being readily available in the area, yields a growing medium with a pH in the range of 4.5 to 5.0.

2) Summers rarely get very hot. Mean maximum temperatures over a 25-year period have never exceeded 25°C (77°F) for any month. Although highs of 35°C (95°F) have been recorded, these have been exceedingly rare.



3) Spring tends to be cool and lasts longer than it does in the city. As a result, plants tend to hold their blooms better.

4) While beavers, ground hogs and porcupines cause damage to the garden in general, none of the animals seems particularly attracted to rhodos. Squirrels do not tear up seedling beds, as they do in the city; nor do they eat very many buds.

5) Rainfall is generally plentiful throughout the growing season. Fish may not benefit from Muskoka's acid rain, but rhodos thrive. Due to the nature of the soil, drainage is always excellent and there are never any difficulties with water-logged roots.

In summary, for nine months of the year, there are very few problems attached to growing rhodos in the Muskokas. Weather conditions in the remaining three months, however, insure that most of the summer and fall is spent preparing winter protection. While specimens under three to four feet will probably succeed, it is almost certainly futile to attempt to grow larger plants, as even the Iron Clads are only hardy to -31°C (-25°F). There is, after all, a limit to the number of insulated 4' x 4' x 5' wooden sheds that even the most dedicated rhodo enthusiast is prepared to build. The future, therefore, lies in the hands of the hybridizers, and it is to be hoped that super-hardy plants will soon be commercially available, in order that I may once again join the ranks of the cottagers and enjoy the pleasures of Muskoka in the summer!

TROUBLE-FREE HARDGROVE RHODODENDRONS

Doris Royce Remsenburg, New York

I have sixteen of Donald Hardgrove's crosses that have been growing happily in my woodland garden. I started with nine in the spring of 1964, and have never lost one. When possible I add other Hardgroves to my original group, as I know from experience that they will do well if given the simple cultural requirements.

Donald Hardgrove was a Charter Member of the American Rhododendron Society. He was also a Charter Member and the first President of the New York Chapter of the A.R.S., founded in 1951. He had a sizeable garden in Merrick, Long Island, New York, where he grew the species he collected and his own hybrids.

Don Hardgrove started hybridizing in 1945, and by 1964 was well-known for his many fine hybrids. He saw a great deal of Guy Nearing, who was in many ways his teacher. In June, 1964, he decided to move to Cooke City, Montana, even though he knew that Montana was in no way a reasonable area in which to grow rhododendrons. He gave an open invitation to all members of the New York Chapter to come to his garden in Merrick, where they could dig such plants as they might like to take to their gardens for their own pleasure. Many of his plants are now growing in the gardens of members of the New York Chapter.

It was in Merrick that I first met Don Hardgrove, and I collected nine of his plants that I had chosen and dug for myself in manageable small sizes-about eighteen inches

R. 'Amazement'

Above *Al Raustein registering 'Star of Spring' in the Royce's woodland garden.*
Below *R. 'Donna Hardgrove'.*

tall. Some of the young plants had tags naming the parentage in the cross; others had no indication. It took time and study to come to know each one of the nine, which were so green and shapely. Only one had a blossom, of a very pleasing red. I asked Don to tell me what it was called, and his reply was "Call it anything you like". I named it 'Shady Lady', as it bloomed admirably the following spring planted in deep shade.

Hardgrove rhododendrons are as free of trouble as any other rhododendrons I have grown. I had no knowledge of their hardiness, but have found that severe winters never bother them. They bloom every spring and the leaves always remain a good green. I have never noticed any bud blast. The Hardgroves I have had here for seventeen years all root well as cuttings and grow on throughout the summer heat. 'Shooting Star', if planted out in a sunny spot, may give up if we have a very hot summer in the first year. However, the heat has been high enough to cause collapse in mine only once.

I would like to give you the present sizes of my Hardgrove plants (all rhododendrons), eighteen inches tall when transplanted from Donald Hardgrove's woodland garden in Remsenburg, seventeen years ago. In all the measurements, the first number states how tall, the second number the approximate width (or, if a *big* number, the circumference).

'Spring Song', one of Hardgrove's early selections (1948), is 34 inches by 28 inches, and has the same parents as 'Mary Fleming' *((racemosum x keiskei) x keiskei*). It is compact in growth with small leaves, and better color in the flowers than 'Mary Fleming'.

'Shooting Star' (('Fabia' x 'Glass White') x 'Golden Star'). A compact plant on which all trusses are a clear white, medium-sized and long-lasting. 40 inches by 48 inches.

'Painted Star' ('Anita' x 'Meadowbrook'). Creamy truss, with a reddish touch. 50 inches by 50 inches.

'Copper Cream' (('Fabia' x 'Glass White') x 'Letty Edwards'). A lovely sight when in full bloom, the trusses have cream-colored petals, each one rimmed with a delicate coppery-red. 50 inches by 72 inches.

'Shady Lady' prefers shade. Its truss is an excellent red. 48 inches by 34 inches.

'Deepest Yellow' *(fortunei x (wardii x dicroanthum))* is *not* a truly deep yellow. The many trusses are a gentle yellow. 52 inches by 56 inches.

'Merry May White' has a beautiful shape from ground level to top. White trusses, with a delicate streak of red in the throat. 40 inches by 90 inches.

'Star of Spring' blooms in mid-April. It is covered with large pink buds turning into white trusses glowing with pink. As the days of this beauty go by, the pink glow slowly fades while the white lingers on. The leaves of this big plant, covered with large trusses, are surprisingly small. 56 inches by 72 inches.

'Golden Star'(*fortunei* x *(wardii* x *dicroanthum)*). 34 inches by 24 inches.

'Amazement' has the same parentage as 'Golden Star'; they are sister seedlings, and both are fragrant. 8 feet by 9 feet. The yellow hybrids all have hardy *R. fortunei* as a good parent, accepting the yellow color of the pollen parent, and all the offspring also have a bit of fragrance.

'Royal Star' ('Moser's Maroon' x ?). 44 inches by 50 inches.

'Halolite' (*fortunei* x (*wardii* x *dicroanthum*)). 32 inches by 22 inches.

'Glow Light'. 30 inches by 42 inches.

'Anne Hardgrove' ('C.P. Raffile' x 'Moser's Maroon'). This is a late bloomer with a leggy plant habit. Its red truss is quite spectacular. 14 inches by 10 inches.

'Donna Hardgrove' *(fortunei x (wardii x dicroanthum)).* Don Hardgrove considered this his best hybrid. Beautfiul yellows, oranges and reds merge in the truss. 14 inches by 10 inches.

Editor's Note:

Doris Royce and her husband own Basket Neck Nursery in Remsenburg, Long Island, New York. Although the climate is warmer than that in most parts of Canada, temperatures of −10°F *have been experienced.*

TEN WAYS TO KILL A RHODODENDRON

Marjorie Hancock Mississauga, Ontario

The rhododendron is an exotic plant in this part of the world. That simply means that it originally came from somewhere else. My father likened exotics to animals in a zoo. They are held captive in our gardens, and must be given conditions that resemble their native environment or they do not thrive and share with us their wonderful potential. Rhodos, in particular, are very strange creatures. On occasion I have suspected that each plant has individuality; perhaps you could call it a soul. As with humans, their environment greatly affects their health and serenity. As with humans who are suffering, there are symptoms which tell us that they are miserable. But, as with humans, they seem to have a totally incredible will to survive. How often have you heard someone say, "I have a rhododendron in my garden. It looks just terrible. The leaves are all blotchy and yellow and scabby, and the plant is scraggly, but I cannot bear to dig it up because every June it blooms like mad with the most gorgeous flowers!" ? Just like humans - some of them survive and bloom, even under the most adverse conditions.

But back to my subject. How to kill them. (This is not my favourite hobby, by the way!)

Method No. 1 - Brutal Murder (Planticide) One would think this would be the most expedient method. I've tried it. With almost any other type of plant, this is an easy way. Just dig it up and leave it on top of the ground. With rhodos, however, this does not always work. As a breeder, during the blooming period, I have roughly pulled unattractive hybrids out of the bed and viciously pitched them on the top of

the ground. The flowers faded and the plant wilted, but some were still alive in August because their roots were still touching the ground. In the nursery we must discard ailing and scraggly plants at transplanting time. Often they are still alive when cremated many weeks later. Or some are lifted and set on the ground and perhaps forgotten in the Fall, and those plants are still alive the next Spring, when the snows melt. I have several rhodos in the woods that were positioned for planting, after the Flower Show in March 1978, but never planted. They are still alive and quite healthy looking, with only leaf drop around the burlapped root. Clearly, this is not a foolproof method and must be considered a last resort, combined with chopping it into little pieces!

If you have analysed why Method No. 1 is unsatisfactory, you have a lead. Exposing the roots to the air does not kill them. Ergo - depriving them of air might do the trick. So we have:

Method No. 2 - Suffocation Insert the roots deeply into the ground and tap them in firmly. As an added safeguard, raise the soil level well up the stem. This usually works, although the rhodo will struggle to resist by growing a collar of new roots, just centimetres below the surface, and inches above the crown of the root. Again, not foolproof, but if combined with Method No. 3 following, might be successful.

Method No. 3 - Drowning This is best accomplished by first planting in very dense soil, in a hollow with poor drainage, and holding it down with plenty of dirt. This is virtually guaranteed to work. Drowning *can* be accomplished even in a raised bed, however (if someone misguidedly told you to plant it that way). Just water it a lot, say twice a day, even if it rains. This is slower and may not work too well, unless combined with Method No. 2. Be sure to use heavily chlorinated water, which leads us to:

Method No. 4 - Poisoning Just as there are many subtle ways of disposing of humans with poison, and not getting caught, there are ways to poison a rhododendron. For instance, plant it near the root system of a Black Walnut tree. This lovely tree exudes a toxin in the soil which will do in your rhodo. Or you could feed it generously with Aluminium Sulphate. This is often recommended by ill-informed Garden Centres as a beneficial means of feeding, but the aluminum ions which build up in the soil will insidiously poison your rhodo in time, and no one will ever know what you have done!

Or you can simply plant your rhodo in sticky, alkaline clay without amending the soil. This, of course, combines poisoning with suffocation and drowning and is an ideal solution to your problem. If you happen to have naturally acid soil, increase the pH by adding large quantities of lime. Your rhodo will gobble it up and will not be able to eat its recommended balanced diet and will get very ill and will perish.

This business of diet leads us to several other approaches.

Method No. 5 - Malnutrition This is not the easiest way to get rid of your rhodo, and can only be accomplished by closely following these rules:

A Plant in pure, sterile sand, in a totally exposed area, away from trees or plants of any kind (especially pines and oaks) and never allow leaves to collect under the branches.
B Never provide additional mulch.
C Never fertilize.
D Never water, even in drought periods.

Method No. 6 - Overeating This is bad for people and can be very bad for the well-being of a rhododendron. It can eventually lead to death. A moderate diet of the proper proportions is necessary for good health. If one provides an over-abundance of food which encourages too much growth at the wrong time of the year, the resistance of the plant is lowered and the rhodo will succumb to such ailments as indigestion, rashes along the edges of the leaves, sunburn and frost-bite.

Method No. 7 - Poor nourishment This is rarely fatal and your plant will linger, unless you are aware of the following fact:

You *must* keep the pH of the soil either *extremely* low or *very* high (at least 6.5pH, preferably much higher.) This will suppress appetite; your rhodo will not feel up to eating what good foods are available, thus encouraging a wide assortment of problems, particulary anaemia (chlorosis), indicating a lack of iron, phosphorus, magnesium, manganese or other nutrients, making it more susceptible to a natural death from attacks of fungi or insects. Of course, you can speed the process by combining this method with other methods already described.

Method No. 8 - Overexposure By this I do not mean showing the plant to all of your friends! I prefer to designate this method Torture I, or Dehydration. This could be a favourite with some gardeners, especially those in brand new subdivisions. Just plant your rhodo by itself in the middle of the yard or an open field where it will receive the full blast of the dry arctic winds which we have in good measure from November to March. Alternatively, you might position it tightly against a white wall, facing due south, and preferably under an overhang away from gentle summer breezes. This will effectively bake it to death in summer. Any temptation to provide windbreak in the winter, or to plant something else in the yard to provide light shade should be assiduously avoided.

Method No. 9 - Torture II - Trauma Physical abuse can be inflicted on your plant. This procedure is not very satisfying, unless you are both a sadist and a masochist. Various avenues are open in this method, such as - have a spouse who hates plants (it happens!); have a very large family of primary and pre-school children (expensive!); have a very large male dog which is totally uncontrollable (a nuisance!) or have a resident gardener who *insists* on hoeing and digging up the beds twice a week instead of weeding (inevitable!). Vandalism by trespassors is occasionally helpful. Maiming falls into this category, i.e., cutting the plant down just above ground level. Most of these do not work well, except in combination with at least one other method.

Method No. 10 - Torture III - Ostracism or Mental Cruelty Deprive your rhodo of compatible companions such as azaleas, other Ericaceae and Micorrizhae fungi, with whom it might develop rapport and come to feel a cherished part of the garden community. Refuse to provide resource and support systems such as Guardian Pines and Mentor oaks. Plant it in a place where it cannot effectively compete with the giant corporations such as huge maples and willows, nor cope with the riff-raff and muggers of the plant world, the wild grape vines, wild cucumber, Creeping Charlie and brambles. Withhold your love and attention when it is really needed, or conversely, provide *smother* love instead of the studied neglect which would allow it to develop its full potential and character in its own sweet time.

These are ten simple, home-gardener ways to do in your rhodo; all time-honoured, but variably reliable under individual conditions. There are of course, more bizarre things you could do: import some whitefly or weevils from a nursery, or perhaps innoculate it with a fatal disease such as *Phytophthora cinnamomi,* a bit like a mad scientist.

I have heard that the best solution to a problem comes, not from the first or second idea but is found somewhere between the third and twenty-seventh suggestion and is usually a combination of several of those ideas. So try the methods I have outlined, or think up some of your own. If nothing works, I suggest that you just give your uncherished plant to another rhodo freak or a public garden and cancel your membership in the Society!

THE RHODODENDRON FOUNDATION

R. M. Steele Rose Bay, Nova Scotia

Our Rhododendron Foundation is intended to be a permanent gene bank of the future for hardy rhododendrons and other ericaceous plants. 1981 was a satisfying year for this project.

We acquired a three and a half acre woodland site which is situated in a shallow, quiet little valley, well back in the country and out of the view of the general public. Grover Jewett is presently arranging the legal transfer of the title of this land to the Foundation.

Our progress to date:

(1) The primary area of about two acres has been partially cleared.

(2) A general conceptual plan has been conceived and agreed upon.

(3) The initital main walks have been staked out.

(4) A number of areas have some of their permanent rhododendrons in place, and John Weagle has donated and planted some companion plants.

(5) Quite a number of plants have been acquired and more are pledged.

(6) Records have been commenced.

All of the work involved in this project has been done by a small group of dedicated, hardworking members who drive more than 150 miles round-trip to this secluded and rather pretty valley for each work session. The group is made up of two sections:

(I) "The ancient and amiable Arthritics", who arrive with their cheese, Blackbread, Strong Ale and a flask of rum. They do their share at their own pace-becoming more amiable and less energetic as the day wears on; and

(ii) "The young, healthy Workhorses", filled with zeal, Temperance and tolerance.

Among the rhododendrons already planted are some quite good-sized plants of *R. maximum, R. catawbiense, R. fauriei, R. fortunei,* three of Walter Ostrom's very fine *R. yakushimanums, R. carolinianum, R. dauricum, R. canadense,* thirty 'P.J.M.s', 'Boursault', Dora Amateis', 'Cadis' and quite a few unamed hybrids, as well as a few azaleas.

A large plant of the lovely new hybrid 'Francesca' was donated and delivered all the way from St. Martins in New Brunswick by the enthusiastic and competent young plantsman, Donald Miller.

There are many interesting native plants on our site. Dr. J. Harvey, one of our most conscientious workers, and also a world-travelled professional botanist, is making a record of these plants.

The trees on and around the site are up to fifty feet in height, and provide fine protection as well as a lovely setting for the plants. There are large open spaces where full sun is available all day for our lepidote rhododendrons and any other plants that need such light.

The Rhododendron Foundation is a non-profit entity which receives excellent financial and physical support from the Atlantic Region of the Rhododendron Society of Canada and others. Full membership, including voting privileges, is acquired annually by three hours of conscientious labor at the site or other designated areas. A financial contribution which will provide labor of an equivalent nature is an acceptable alternative; this is presently $12.00.

Memberships, contributions, plant donations and information may be arranged through **L. Grover Jewitt, R.R. 2, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia B0J 2C0.**

Available pollen, seed, cuttings, etc., may be arranged commencing in September, 1983, through **The Rhododendron Foundation, R.R. 1, Rose Bay, Nova Scotia B0J 2X0.**

BOOK CORNER

H. G. Hedges Burlington, Ontario

We operate the Book Corner as a non-profit service to our members. We're pleased to receive orders from you or to investigate for you our discounted prices on other books on rhododendrons and azaleas.

Normally, we keep a very small stock of each title on hand, and do not re-order until we feel there will be enough sale to justify ordering the minimum number required to receive a handsome discount. The result for you is good value at the possible risk of some delay.

The prices of books seem to rise with every re-printing, thus the prices we quote are approximate, based on previous orders. If you prepay an order, I'll bill you, or remit the surplus. I'll also bill mail orders for postage.

Rhododendrons of China. American Rhododendron Society. An outstanding translated text on hundreds of species from the Orient. A bargain. Illustrated with drawings. $20.00

The Larger Species of Rhododendron. Cox, P. A comprehensive title on the subject. Photos mainly black and white. In our opinion overpriced. $40.00

Dwarf Rhododendrons, Cox, P. The author's earlier work, equally thorough, $20.00

The Peat Garden and its Plants. Evans, A. A good text on acid-loving plants and companions. $20.00

Studies in the Genus Rhododendron. Hedegard, J. We do not stock this rare and expensive two-volume treatise, but readers are reminded that the R.S.C. donated a set to the library, Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, and we encourage you to avail yourself of it.

American Rhododendron Hybrids. Kraxberger, M. A publication of the A.R.S. Up-to-date, accurate, informative. A few illustrations. $9.00.

Rhododendrons of the World. Leach, D. The classic book on the subject; deals with every aspect; attractive and well-illustrated. $47.00

Hybrids and Hybridizers. Livingston, P., and West, F. Very popular with our members. A recent publication. Well illustrated. $30.00.

The Rothschild Rhododendrons. Lucas. We are attempting to get a price on the new printing. Probably about $70.00. Inquire.

Rhododendrons in America. Van Veen, T. A handsome, colorful, large-format book. Superb photos. $25.00.

To place orders or make inquires, write to: H.G. Hedges,
4271 Lakeshore Road,
Burlington, Ontario L7L 1A7

Remember the Annual Meeting and Flower Show, May 29 and 30!

REGIONAL NOTES

Atlantic Region Tom Waters, Halifax, Nova Scotia

There are now ninety members in the Atlantic Region. This represents nearly a doubling of membership in our Region over the past two years. Consequently, we have made new efforts to organize events that will be of service to the membership. Our plant workshops are an important step forward in this respect. We have held two so far, and a third is planned for April. In November, the workshop was given a demonstration by Sterling Levy of a continuous watering system he has developed for growing seedlings.*At the February workshop there was a discussion of rhododendron species in British gardens. The April workshop will be devoted to the topic of rock gardens and rhododendrons. On 8 January, our General Meeting was treated to an excellent slide presentation by Dr. J. Harvey on rhododendrons in New Zealand and Australia.

Our spring calendar of events is being drawn up at this writing. Dates are only tentative now, but in mid-June we will have our Annual Show and Meeting, and at about the same time will be held the traditional Boulderwood and Kentville tours. A special feaure we look forward to in mid-May is the annual Sale and Auction of plants. This year the event is being organized by Sterling Levy. The selection offered will be expanded and augmented by special stock purchases. We have large orders from Van Veen and Bayport nurseries. The Bayport order, for instance, includes some very hard-to-find and desirable rhodos, new *Pieris japonica* selections and companion plants.

In the Atlantic Region we had a perfect summer and fall, with record bud set. Winter hit in mid-January, with a record low in Halifax of -12°F. There was good snow cover with very little frost in the ground. By February there was little snow cover, with high winds. Hopefully, the buds are not damaged; no plant losses are expected to date (February 28).

*See article on page 7

Georgian Bay-Lakelands Region Grant Showers, Orillia, Ontario

The Annual Fall Meeting of our Region was held at the home of Grant Showers on Sunday, December 13. Attendance was small, but those who were there enjoyed an active and educational meeting.

Plans for the spring meeting were discussed, and an order of rhodos for our Spring Auction was placed.

After the formal meeting, a session on raising rhododendrons from seed took place, which proved to be very interesting and educational.

The place and date of the spring meeting will be announced at a later date.

Remember - fees are due, please get them in.

Niagara Peninsula Region Brian Schram, Niagara Falls, Ontario

The Niagara Region spring meeting schedule kicked off on March 17 at the Assembly Hall, H.R.I.O., Vineland, when long-time rhododendron enthusiast Wayne

Funk presented a slide show on gardens in Great Britain and British Columbia. Meetings are also scheduled for April, and of course Niagara is hosting the Society's Annual Meeting and Show on May 29 and 30.

Niagara continues to be active in procuring plants for members. Al Smith and Lyall Crober have provided for an excellent list of rooted cuttings to be procured from Allied Nurseries, Windsor, Ontario, which has been distributed to Regional members. A Plant Sale for the general public is scheduled for Sunday, April 18 at H.R.I.O. Vineland, under the direction of Jim Lounsbury.

Editor Gary Webb has established a Regional newsletter with a fresh new format, informing members of new activities within the Region and the rhododendron world.

Toronto Region Barbara Wilkins, Toronto, Ontario

The Toronto Region chose the day of the worst blizzard in many years for its Annual Meeting - Sunday, January 31. The storm started about noon, too late to cancel the 2:00 p.m. meeting, and much coffee was drunk and cookies eaten before several of our speakers were able to arrive from outlying points. Despite the difficulties, over twenty people were on hand to vote the 1982 Executive and Board into office, and to see Mrs. Lunau of the Ontario Horticultural Association present the Region with its Charter as a Society under the Ontario Horticulural Societies Act. Marj Hancock amused us all with her talk on "Ten Ways to Kill a Rhododendron", and Jack Van Gemeren illustrated his description of the Montreal Botanical Garden with excellent slides. Then all struggled off into the storm, one at least not to arrive home until morning.

Toronto's Officers for 1982 are:

President	Betsy Fee
First Vice-President	Ken Duncan
Second Vice-President	Susan Bertschinger
Secretary	Ellen Marchildon
Treasurer	Rich Birkett

New Directors elected were: John Birnbaum, Michael Brown, Jan Cooper, Alex Fee and Hazel Raymond.

At the end of February, the Region set up a booth for the Society at the Garden, Pool and Landscape Show at Exhibition Place. New member Ron Fuchs designed our display, and eighteen Society members gave out Plant Sale flyers, membership forms and our new folder on "Growing Rhododendrons in Canada'. during the five days of the show.

Great projects are planned for the future, with eight standing committees working on various aspects of the Region's programme. The Toronto Plant Sale and Auction on May 3 will be followed by the annual Regional Flower Show on June 5, Plans for additional display gardens, a test garden, a collection garden, talks to other societies, and children's programmes are all being discussed. A busy year is ahead, to which we look forward with enthusiasm.

NEW MEMBERS

Regional Affiliations: **A** Atlantic **G** Georgian Bay-Lakeland **N** Niagara Peninsula **T** Toronto

Brooks, Dr. A.D.
1012 South Oakes Street
Tacoma, WA 98405, U.S.A.

T Brown, Carl
33 Castle Frank Crescent
Toronto, Ontario M4W 3A2

A Granik, Susanne
Sandy Point Road, R.R. 1
St. John, New Brunswick E2L 3W2

T Jones, Ralph
51B Roosevelt Drive
Thornhill, Ontario L4J 1N3

Mech, Betty Ann
Rice Creek Gardens
1315 66th Avenue N.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55432, U.S.A.

A O'Brien, Heather
6034 Cherry Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 2K3

N Purchase, Irma
728 Memorial Drive
Fenwick, Ontario L0S 1C0

Rachinsky, Michael R.
26 Vanech Drive
Stamford, CT 06905, U.S.A.

T Thompson, T.W.
4 Fairmar Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M8Y 2C8

Van Blyderveen, Case
R.R. 1
Burgessville, Ontario N0J 1C0

T Wright, Gerry
439 Drummond Road
Oakville, Ontario L6J 4L6

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