

# University Finnerty Garden Friends

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NEWSLETTER ' JANUARY 2005



Dear Friends,

As I rake leaves and do garden cleanup at Galiano, it doesn't seem possible that Christmas is only 9 days away. There has, as yet, been no frost and an amazing number of plants are in bloom. The combination of the August rain and the very warm fall has thrown the plants into a state of confusion. The rhododendrons have been blooming off and on for several months, the daphne odora is coming into bloom and will shortly be filling the back garden with its scent. The sasanqua camellias are in full bloom and the daffodils are up about 4 inches. I picked a bouquet of roses on Tuesday, and the lavender is trying to bloom again! The rain has filled all the tanks to capacity and the pond is full of muddy water. I hope the fish and various pond dwellers will survive. The pond was dug in clay and a heavy rain brings small waterfalls which wash the bank into the pond. The pond

The Garden Sale this year will be held on the second Sunday in May—the American Rhododendron Society's meeting in Victoria makes the usual date impossible. So—save Sunday, May 8, 2005 for your visit to the gymnasium. I look forward to seeing many of

also is fed by a spring in the bottom rock. Carmen and the Advisory Committee have been planning and working for a superb showing in late April and early May when the American Rhododendron Society holds its annual meeting here. The Gardens have a good bit of interest now with the grasses showing their fall colours. The early cyclamens are over but a number of rhododendrons are coming into bloom. The Oak Tree restoration area has caused quite a bit of interest and it is fascinating to try to figure out what they are doing.

The Finnerty Gardens calendar is available at the Bookstore. Do buy some for your friends. Daphne has done an especially fine job this year. Her photographs are superb. She loves the Gardens and certainly knows them well—catching them in all their moods. It was difficult choosing which of her excellent photographs should be selected for this year's calendar. you there.

Best wishes for a happy New Year to you all—and may your gardens prosper and give you great joy!

Betty Kennedy

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**Montbretia**

**Victoria in 2005—a Silver Salute:  
A Guide to the American Rhododendron  
Society’s Annual Convention Coming Here  
April 28 to May 1, 2005**

**Norman Todd**

The rubric chosen for the 2005 convention is “A Silver Salute”. This has been chosen to mark the 25th year of the existence of the Victoria Rhododendron Society as a chapter of

couple from Tasmania, Joy Stones and Ted Cutlan. Having traveled halfway around the world to be present, they will be eager to tell us of the "Tasmanian Experience". The third morning talk will be by Judy Walker, an Island resident, on the history of the pioneering rhododendron nurseries of Vancouver Island.

There will be two tours on Friday afternoon for which a choice must be made. They range a little further afield than the Thursday tours. One heads west; the other north and both pass through and over some fine scenery. The western tour will visit three of four gardens on display. The Blackmore garden is a carefully planned hillside jewel, enthusiastically cultivated by Lois and Roy. The Hopper Garden was featured in the spring 2204 edition of the *Journal*. Robin Hopper is a world famous potter, whose artistic talents extend to many areas, including horticulture. Dora Kreiss's garden features many species, particularly the big leaf ones. Dora had an article on her garden in the summer 2004 *Journal*. The fourth garden by Moe and Hanna Massa is eclectic, whimsical and labour-intensive with well-grown specimens.

The second choice for Friday heads up to the Malahat. Again only three gardens can be visited. Dave and Laurana Dougan's garden commands a spectacular view of Saanich Inlet.. The Murray garden has one of the largest collections of magnolias in BC. Liz and Alan have developed an organic fertilizer for their rhododendrons. The luxuriance and abundance of bloom demonstrates its effectiveness. The Cooks' garden, tended by mother and daughter, Etta and Ruth, is a pastoral gem. The Campbell garden contains

Tour goers will have to make another choice on Saturday afternoon. The world famous Butchart Gardens will be the destination for some of the buses. The other group will go to three famous Saanich Peninsula gardens. The Weesjes' garden, Towner Crest, is nine acres of mature specimens of the rarest and best rhododendrons, under-planted with great swathes of primula, erythronium, ferns and many other native and exotic plants. The

a fine collection of daphne. Alan and Sandy have taken a special interest in Vancouver Island hybrids..

We are to be truly honoured in having Keshab Pradan from Sikkim as a speaker. This gentleman, who formerly was the principal public servant in his country, has taken a special interest in its native flora. In recognition of his work with rhododendrons he was awarded the Society's Gold Medal in 2003. Keshab will do double duty. He will give a talk on Friday night on "Trees of the Himalayas". He will also be the Saturday after-banquet speaker, when his topic will be "Sustaining Sikkim's Rhodo Legacy for the World's Temperate Gardens."

Saturday's first talk will be by Dr. Eric Allen. Eric is a plant pathologist with the federal Forestry Department; his topic is "Alien Invasion: The Threat to Global Forests and Gardens". Eric possesses the wonderful skill of talking about morbid matters in a manner that captivates his audience. He will include a discussion on the contemporary thinking on Sudden Oak Death. Peter Wharton of the University of British Columbia, will enthrall us with accounts of his travels and discoveries in southern China. Many of Peter's introductions are proving to be very fine additions to our gardens and are quickly becoming highly sought-after plants.. The third talk will be by another antipodean, Lynn Bublitz, from New Plymouth, New Zealand. Lynn is a man of great experience in the study of the habitat and culture of rhododendrons—particularly the *Maddenia*, on which he will talk.

Trelawny garden sweeps down to Saanich Inlet and is packed with the choicest plant material. John is known for never having harboured a dislike for any plant. The third garden has been featured in many gardening publications and television productions. The Whitehead garden is the epitome of knowledgeable, sensitive and artistic design.

The Saturday night banquet will be held in the Convention Hall. This will be emceed by Wilson Grahame. Wilson, a

retired doctor, is guaranteed to defeat any post-prandial drowsiness with his keen Celtic humour and he will also ensure that the Society's business matters are dealt with efficiently and expeditiously. As previously noted, the feature talk will be by Keshab Pradhan.

We will have an extra half hour's sleep on Sunday as the first session will not start until 0900. For many who attended the 1989 Victoria convention, the most memorable talk was Ted Irving's and Richard Hebda's "On the Origin and Distribution of Rhododendrons". This paper was subsequently published in the *Journal*, and has received acclaim worldwide by botanists, climatologists, ecologists and many other scientific authorities. Ted and Richard have brought their combined skills to extend that study to magnolias. Their talk will add the next chapter in their research into plant evolution and distribution.

The final session for the 2005 convention will be the traditional Breeders' Round Table. This is an open forum led by a group of experts from all over the world. You are encouraged to bring your questions and observations to this session—a session that always provides encouragement and stimulation to all rhododendron growers.

The Victoria Rhododendron Society is confident that we have devised a good program; indeed, we hope, a sterling one. Come and join us in the Silver Salute to our 25 years of rewarding growth—a growth of friendships and of plants.

Please visit our website  
<http://Victoria.tc.ca/Recreation/Ars2005/> .  
There, you will find many more details particularly on other local gardens of interest

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**Mitsumata**

**Margaret**

Spring, an attractive tree caught my eye. It was a tree I believed I had not seen before. The tiny flowerets were a deep orange and yellow and the leaves had not yet emerged. On questioning the daughter of Art vanderZalm, I learned it was Edgeworthia chrysantha “Ruby Glow.”

Edgeworthia chrysantha is a golden yellow daphne relative with small fragrant flowers. In summer the plant looks tropical with its large, dark green leaves. And I was told it is used in Japan for making quality paper. I learned there was another variety available called “Gold Rush” whose flowerets were yellow. I thought to have them both although these two deciduous trees have branches which



### **Figs as Companions?—Go figure!**

**Alec McCarter**

When I first came to Victoria, in 1980, I was stunned to learn from one of the ladies at the lab, that she had a fig tree that actually produced ripe figs. She brought me a few and I thought I had never before tasted anything so good. Later, she introduced me to her preserved unripe figs, done in a spiced, sugary syrup. They were also delicious.

In my wanderings through the Finnerty Gardens, while walking our little dog (on a leash, of course), I found a large fig tree that had big green, ripe fruits which I sampled (in order not to let the birds peck holes in and waste them). The figs were soft and sweet with crunchy bits inside..

So, when John Trelawny kindly offered my wife a cutting from his tree, we were only too happy to plant it immediately behind a rock wall where its roots would be confined and it would receive some warmth from the sun-heated rock. This was not long before the severe frost of November 11, 1985. The small tree, for that is what it was then, suffered damage that required hard pruning, but it survived and the next year produced a few

fork into three branches so I believe they will grow to be rather large specimens! Burns and Karen Morrison have Edgeworthia chrysantha 'Gold Rush' growing in their lovely garden. A Japanese friend tells me they are called Mitsumata.

Now in October the leaves are exotic and the Ruby Glow is covered in floweret heads again but this time the tree sports long shiny leaves.

One of the great joys of gardening is to have plants which have their own stories and are reminders of exciting and educational events.

latent swellings to overwinter and provide fruit in the following summer. Then, we had our first fig from that small tree. What a delight! We waited until the fruit had drooped and was squishy to the touch, then shared it between the two of us. What a treat!

From that time on, the fig grew into a large tree, much larger than we had anticipated, but very decorative with its large multi-lobed leaves. From their shape (and size), we could see why the fig leaf was used by Adam—as well as nearly every sculptor of the male nude since his time with the exception of Michelangelo's David—as a prudish shield to cover parts not normally depicted.

The tree readily put up shoots, one of which we moved to the sunny side of a high wall between us and our neighbour to the north. It outgrew the space that we had allotted, and its roots threatened to break the concrete patio on its north side. Once established, the fig was determined to grow again, despite repeatedly being cut to the ground. At last, a spray of “Roundup” completed its removal.

In the meantime, a “Brown Turkey” was acquired. It was placed close to a brick wall lining our own patio and it prospered. Not so large as the white-fig, it has required only the removal of dead-wood that occurs through the winters.

