

2021 Virtual ARS Fall Conference - October 23-24

(Hosted by the Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society and the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society in partnership with the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association)

Glen Jamieson, Parksville, BC



Traditionally, when a Spring ARS Convention is held in eastern North America, there is a fall ARS Conference in western North America. This year's 2021 fall conference, planned in Florence, OR, as an in-person conference, was cancelled as this is not yet practical. District 1 (BC) was then asked to organize a virtual conference. We agreed, and because of the very short notice (two weeks, as we needed to get details into the summer JARS issue),



we have planned the following which we believe will make for an interesting, albeit virtual, event.

In 2018, the Mount Arrowsmith (MARS) and Nanaimo (NRS) chapters organized a very successful day-long, in-person, October "Fall into Gardening" conference style event to build collaboration and bring together Vancouver Island gardeners and ARS members at a time of year when spring and summer gardening events had quieted down (Southwick and Deniseger, 2019, J. American Rhodo. Soc. 73: 21-22). Our meeting was "sold out", with 100 participants (the capacity of the room we had booked) paying \$25 each to cover our meeting room and speaker honoraria expenses. In 2019, this meeting was replaced by the Mount Arrowsmith Chapter hosting the successful, well-attended

Parksville ARS Fall Conference, and because of COVID-19, an in-person 2020 "Fall into Gardening" meeting was organized and postponed to 2021. Organisers of the 2020 meeting had been expanded to include the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association (VIGMA) to further strengthen ties across the island gardening community. The 2021 Fall ARS Conference being presented here was thus organized around the "foundation" of this planned 2021 "Fall into Gardening" meeting, being expanded to include international speakers and broadening both the number and nature of speaker topics. This 2021 Fall ARS Conference meeting is thus being organized by three Vancouver Island groups: MARS, NRS and VIMGA.



To make it as accessible as possible, and because our costs are greatly reduced (no venue, travel costs or food), we are making attendance at this conference **FREE**.

Everyone will have access to all talks. However, we are asking that individuals register so that we can use email to send participants relevant background information. **Register at <https://mailchi.mp/9151e79e2a98/fall-conference-2021>**. Because of the global range of ARS members, and to make this meeting accessible time-wise to as many as possible, the conference has been structured to just be four hours long on each of two consecutive days, from 9 AM to 1 PM Pacific Time, 12 PM-4 PM Eastern Time, and 5-6 PM to 9-10 PM in much of Europe. Unfortunately, NZ, Australian and Asian members will have



to get up early or watch the recorded presentations, which will be available a few days after the conference!

Being a virtual meeting, **we are also inviting participation by members of any other gardening society, whether local or distant**, as the intent of our "Fall into Gardening" meeting is to

bring together as many interested gardeners as possible, with the hope that some might then decide to join their local chapter of the ARS. All ARS chapters should feel free to pass these Conference details to other gardeners in their community, but again, **please ask them to register at <https://mailchi.mp/9151e79e2a98/fall-conference-2021>** so they can be informed of background information.

Meeting Agenda (All times are Pacific Daylight Time.)

Day 1 - Saturday, October 23

- 9-9:10 AM: Introduction and Welcome Addresses (Conference organisers, ARS President)
- 9:10-10:00 AM: Hartwig Schepker, Germany: **Sichuan: A Plantsman's Paradise**
- 10:05-10:50 AM: Shannon Berch, BC: **Your Living Soil**
- 11:00-11:50 AM: David Sellars, BC: **From Rhododendrons to Rock Gardening**
- 12:00 PM-12:50 PM: Don Hyatt, VA: **A Walk in the Woods**
- 12:50 PM-1:00 PM: Invitation presentation by the Spring 2022 ARS Conference organisers

Day 2 - Sunday, October 24

- 9:10-10:00 AM: David Millais, UK: **Conservation of Heritage Rhododendrons**
- 10:05-10:50 AM: Linda Chalker-Scott, WA: **Landscape Mulches - The Good, The Bad, and The Just Plain Ugly**
- 11:00-11:50 AM: Richard Dionne, QC: **Growing Rhododendrons in Québec's Harsh Winters**
- 12:00 PM-12:50 PM: Don Wallace, CA: **Fragrant Rhododendrons**
- 12:50-1:00 PM: Promote 2022 Regional "Fall into Gardening" event, Conference organisers; ARS President Conference Closing

Speakers Abstracts and BIOS:

1. Dr. Hartwig Schepker: Sichuan: A Plantsman's Paradise, 2019.

Abstract: Many of our our garden plants were originally introduced from the Western Chinese province of Sichuan. Ernest "Chinese" Wilson is claimed to having introduced more than 1000 garden worthy plants—many of them rhododendrons. Sichuan's landscape and flora is overwhelming—especially in the spring when rhododendrons and many perennials like yellow and blue poppies or primulas turn the mountain sides into a botanical paradise. Six Germans, a Scotsman and a Chinese companion followed in June 2019 the routes taken by Ernest Wilson and the Austrian plant hunter Handel-Mazetti and were blessed with good weather, great plants and lots of stories.



Bio: Dr. Hartwig Schepker obtained his PhD in plant ecology at the University of Hannover. Since 2006, he has been the Scientific Director of the Botanic Garden and Rhododendron-Park, Bremen, Germany, which has world's second largest rhododendron collection. In addition, he is a board member of the German Rhododendron Society and as an intrepid rhododendron explorer, has made numerous trips over 30 years to in North America, Europe and especially Asia.

2. Dr. Shannon Berch: Your living soil.

Abstract: Roots of garden plants grow in association with a vast diversity of other organisms such as bacteria, fungi and fauna, some of which are detrimental (e.g., root diseases) and others beneficial (e.g., mycorrhizas). In this talk, I will discuss this huge array of soil biota, how they interact with garden plants, and how garden management affects them.



Bio: Shannon Berch retired in 2019 and is now Emerita Researcher with the BC Ministry of Environment and Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems, UBC. She is a founding member of the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society and the Truffle Association of BC. Shannon was born and raised in southern Ontario, did graduate work at the University of Waterloo and Laval University in Quebec City, and a post-doc in Corvallis, Oregon.

3. David Sellars: From Rhododendrons to Rock Gardening: A Rewarding Journey

Abstract: David and his wife Wendy have been developing an extensive alpine and woodland garden in coastal British Columbia. This talk describes their initial focus on rhododendrons and later interest in other woodland plants and rock gardening. Their garden won the 2012 Millstream Garden Award from the North American Rock Garden Society.



Bio: David Sellars is an award winning photographer and is a past-president of the Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia. He is an avid mountain hiker and maintains the website www.mountainflora.ca. David's particular interests are rock garden design and construction, alpine plant photography and using video to illustrate mountain landscapes and alpine plant habitats. David has given talks on rock gardening and alpine plants across North America and in the UK. He has written articles on rock garden design and alpine plant explorations and a selection of his photographs were published in the recent book "Alpine Plants of British Columbia, Alberta and Northwest North America" and a new edition of Arthur Kruckeberg's "Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest".

4. Don Hyatt: A Walk in the Woods

Abstract: Don has spoken frequently on the Southern Appalachians but this will be an update on some of his favorite native azalea and rhododendron populations that he visits frequently. Expect to see some stunning photography and as well as humorous anecdotes about recent treks along the Appalachian Trail and hikes to other locations. He will update progress on trying to preserve rare plants such as the 'Red Max', a solitary red form of *R. maximum* he discussed in the Summer 2020 ARS Journal. He will also provide background on a new lepidote species found in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Rhododendron smokianum*, that was just described in March of 2021.



Bio: Don Hyatt is a retired public school teacher who had a very successful 33-year career teaching mathematics and computer science at the secondary school level in Northern Virginia. Retiring in 2002, he has spent most of his time since then pursuing his life-long interests in horticulture. Don's favorite areas of study have been the American native azaleas, rhododendrons, and wildflowers of the Southern Appalachians. A popular speaker at local, national, and international conferences, Don can entertain the novice as well as the expert as he combines his humorous storytelling ability with beautiful photographs in a multimedia presentation. Don has received a number of honors for his work including both the ARS Gold and Silver Medals.

5. David Millais: Conservation of Heritage Rhododendrons

Abstract: The talk reviews the *ex situ* conservation of species and hybrid rhododendrons in garden collections. Habitat loss and climate change require many plants to be saved away from their place of origin. Challenges of conservation include plant identification, labelling, record keeping, data protection,

the Nagoya protocol, conservation policies instigated by botanic gardens and collections, and phytosanitary restrictions imposed by plant health authorities on imported plant material. Rhododendron societies around the world have a leading role in coordinating and saving valuable plants from extinction by identifying “at risk” plants, arranging propagation of them, and distributing them to collections and gardens for safe-keeping.



Bio: David studied Commercial Horticulture and then worked for a large hardy plant nursery in Dorset for six years, rising to Nursery Manager, before taking short internships at Briggs Nursery and the RSF. In 1990 he took over as Specialist Rhododendron grower, Millais Nurseries, from his parents. His great uncle was J.G. Millais who wrote the two volume series on Rhododendrons in 1917 and 1924, and David’s parent’s Ted and Romy Millais trekked extensively in the Himalayas and China during the 1980’s and 1990’s, introducing several new rhododendron species. David is Vice Chairman, and past Chairman of the RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group and a member of the RHS Woody Plant Committee. Millais Nurseries is a leading specialist rhododendron nursery, growing about 900 different varieties of rhododendron which are supplied throughout the UK from the specialist plant centre and gardens at Crosswater Farm. <https://www.rhododendrons.co.uk>

6. Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott: Landscape Mulches – The Good, The Bad, and The Just Plain Ugly

Abstract: Mulches are an ideal alternative to chemical weed control. If correctly chosen and applied, mulches can not only reduce weed invasions, but also reduce management costs by improving water and air movement, moderating soil temperatures, improving soil structure and nutrition, and enhancing beneficial microbes and insects. How can

you decide which mulch is best for your landscape? This talk will teach you how to make these decisions.



Bio: Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott has a Ph.D. in Horticulture from Oregon State University and is an ISA certified arborist and an ASCA consulting arborist. She is WSU’s Extension Urban

Horticulturist and a Professor in the Department of Horticulture, and holds two affiliate associate professor positions at University of Washington. She conducts research in applied plant and soil sciences, publishing the results in scientific articles and university Extension fact sheets. In 2020, she was named the new editor for the *Western Arborist* magazine. Linda also is the award-winning author of five books: the horticultural myth-busting *The Informed Gardener* (2008), *The Informed Gardener Blooms Again* (2010), *Sustainable Landscapes and Gardens: Good Science – Practical Application* (2009), *How Plants Work: The Science Behind the Amazing Things Plants Do* (2015) and an update of Art Kruckeberg’s *Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest* from UW Press (2019).

7. Richard Dionne: Growing Rhododendrons in Québec’s Harsh Winters

Abstract: This educational presentation will focus on plant hardiness along with specific cultivation requirements associated with our climate rather than on rarity.



Bio: I was raised in a big family by a loving mother who had a passion for gardening. Living in a small francophone community in New Brunswick, Canada, Mom grew flowers but

mostly vegetables for the locals; but I was totally attracted to the ornamental beds. After completing my education in Ornamental Horticulture and Plant Science at McGill University, I worked at the “Jardin Botanique de Montréal” where I was

the specialized horticulturist appointed to the enchanting “Leslie Hancock Ericaceum” for nearly 30 years and the impressive Shade Garden collection for 20 years. Recently retired, I am now devoted to my garden in Sutton, Québec. I’m also one of the co-founders of the “Société des Rhododendrons du Québec” and since 2019, have been vice-president.

8. Don Wallace: Fragrant & Fancy – Bringing Fragrance into the Showiest Rhododendron Flowers

Abstract: I will discuss what causes fragrance in flowers, and why it is desirable. A discussion of the different fragrant species and who discovered them leads into the idea of producing new hybrids with fragrance and also colorful, showy flowers. Using literature to discover which cultivars will be the best parents for these new hybrids is shown with several examples. Finally, I will list my favorite fragrant rhododendrons that are also available today.



Bio: Don Wallace is the owner of Singing Tree Gardens & Nursery, a small retail nursery located in McKinleyville, California. Over the past 25 years Don has planted, propagated, hybridized, and grown from seed many rhododendrons. He is the past president of the Eureka Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society and participated as one of the Show Chairmen at the Western Regional Conference in Eureka back in 1999. Singing Tree Gardens Nursery features a wide range of plants, including some of Don’s new rhododendron hybrids, that are shipped nationwide.