

The Life & Death of Hirsutum Now its Resurrection as Rhododendra

Many of us couldn't believe the wealth of information and photos that became available on Hirsutum. It was too good to be true. It required a continuing web presence and constant maintenance. In 2021, it lost its web presence and had lost maintenance in 2015. It was just announced that Canadian web-guru John Verwolf has created [Rhododendra](http://www.rhododendra.com/) which is a functional replacement for Hirsutum. The new website is at <http://www.rhododendra.com/>



John Verwolf

On June 4, 2009, a website, Hirsutum.info, was created by Herman van Ree in the Netherlands. The goal of the Hirsutum project was to collect as much information and as many photos as possible concerning rhododendrons. This included species, hybrids, azaleas, vireyas and azaleodendrons. It was amazing how quickly this website grew. The actual ambitious goal of posting photos and information was being carried out by one person, Marjo Schlenter, Herman's wife.

It eventually grew to over 20,000 entries. I was skeptical at first that such a site would last for very long. However, it grew and grew and became the go-to site for rhododendron information. Finally, on July 19, 2012, after seeing Hirsutum grow, I made available to Herman and Marjo, 2,000 of my photos at <http://rhodyman.net/hirsutum.html>. Hirsutum listed over a 1,200 hybridizers and had over 10,000 photos contributed by over 150 photographers from around the world. The major contributors were Garth Wedemire from Canada, Everard Daniel from England, Herman van Ree, and Tijs Huisman from Holland. Valley Forge Chapter's Jim Willhite was also contributing photos and was the major contributor from the US.

Then in 2015, Herman van Ree announced he was discontinuing his involvement with the Hirsutum website. The website continued to be available, but with no new information. Then, in 2021, the website stopped working altogether. There were some archives of the Hirsutum site that saved some pages, but since Hirsutum was database driven, only a portion of the information was available in the archives.

Recently, on November 13, 2023, Ken Webb announced "they have a guy on Vancouver Island who is working on rebuilding the Hirsutum Website." His name is John Verwolf. Rhododendra is the name of his new website, <http://www.rhododendra.com/>. He still has to add information about hybridizers and botanists from the old Hirsutum website and he is going to build a public input system so that users can add information as they collect it. However, for all intents and purposes, Rhododendra is up and running and has most of the functionalities that Hirsutum had.

Thank you John Verwolf!

Steve Henning
ARS Dist. 8 Dir.