

## VINELAND HISTORY & VINELAND INTRODUCTIONS

**Founding of the Niagara Region Chapter, Rhododendron Society of Canada.** Al Smith is considered to be the founder of the Rhododendron Society of Canada, Niagara Region. Together with then growers Sophia and Irvine Maitland, Lyall Fretz, Wayne Funk, Lyall Crober, Arthur Oslach, and other likeminded individuals, Al Smith



*L to R. Weldon Delp, David Leach, Al Smith  
At Leach Research Station, Madison, Ohio*

provided the leadership to organize the local chapter of the Rhododendron Society of Canada. He did this at a meeting of some 25 people, held in the fall of 1974, at the Horticultural Research Institute of Ontario (HRIO) in Vineland Ontario, then a horticultural research station operated under the aegis of the Ontario Ministry of Ontario.

Work on hybridizing rhododendrons and azaleas was started at Vineland some twenty-five years before Al Smith arrived on the scene at Vineland. In 1974 Al Smith was employed at the HRIO as an rhododendron and azalea hybridizer and as an expert in the propagation and growing conditions of rhododendrons. He continued the fine work of Roy Forster, Bob Fleming and Ken Begg. Al Smith maintained contacts with hybridizers throughout North American, Europe and Asia and was significantly influenced

in his thinking about hybridizing and growing rhododendrons by David Leach and Weldon Delp. The result was that many new and interesting selections found their place in the Horticultural Research Institute landscape.

The gain in popularity of rhododendrons and azaleas in the Niagara Peninsula can be attributed substantially to the efforts of Forster, Begg and Smith. The Niagara Rhododendron Chapter was founded at The Vineland Research Station and has been its home since 1974.

The Horticultural Research Institute of Ontario (HRIO) in Vineland, Ontario, on the shores of Lake Ontario, and 12 miles from Niagara Falls, has been growing deciduous azaleas since approximately 1950. The date of the first planting of Knaphill or Exbury types is faded in history. What is clear, however, is that interest in hybridizing azaleas and rhododendrons started in the late 1950's with Roy Forster and the encouragement of, the then Institute Director, Dr. E. Frank Palmer. Prior to that time, in the early 1950's, Bob Fleming, a newly minted Ontario Agricultural College graduate, established several new beds of broad leaved rhododendrons and attempted to grow plants from seed obtained from this planting. A number of Catawbiense seedlings were grown and ultimately planted in strategic locations along a creek bank and in front of the Administration building. A few are still to be seen. None was named and introduced though one or two had definite merit. This was the beginning of the "Rhododendron Project".

Vineland Azalea Test Bed



In the late 1950's Roy Forster came on staff to work with Bob Fleming in the ornamental field. A Kew graduate, Roy sparked the project and an extensive planting was planned along the creek bank and a program of plant breeding was begun using hardy named varieties and selections from outside sources. A group of seedlings from an Oregon nursery formed the nucleus of the Exbury azalea breeding which has resulted in the introduction of several "Vinecourt" selections.

During Roy Forster's time the woodlot garden, the principal test grounds for hybridizing program, was developed from what previously had been the station dump. The soil is a sandy loam, well drained, and the woodlot is composed of a mix of hardwoods but predominantly red oak. Little

preparation, apart from clearing underbrush, was needed to establish a good collection of evergreen rhododendrons. From breeding, to the late 1950's, two selections were introduced including "Vinstar" a

deciduous rhododendron, early blooming with pale yellow flowers and hardy to -20C. A rich, red, evergreen rhododendron named "Vivacious" was also introduced and while not as hardy (H3), was exceptional in colour and was offered by several American nurseries.

Ken Begg, a Niagara Parks graduate, succeeded Roy Forster in 1969 and continued the breeding project with, primarily, the ever-green, broadleaf forms. "Vinecrest", a rich yellow evergreen rhododendron, was discovered among a group of seedlings in the nursery and was subsequently introduced to the trade.



Al Smith succeeded Ken Begg in 1974 and brought an amateur plants-man's perspective with an extensive knowledge of Rhododendrons to the project. The project moved ahead in leaps and bounds. A Ministry publication was produced and has been revised to update the information. Propagation received increased attention and many rooted cuttings were distributed for trial and to further the interest in Ericaceous plants. During this time in the early 1970's the Niagara Branch of Rhododendron Society of Canada was founded with the encouragement of Al Smith and the leadership of HRIO. This coalesced interest in Rhododendron in a united group of enthusiasts who started to share their private growing interests and experiences with a wider community.

Al Smith made contacts across the country and in the United States and was significantly influenced in this thinking about hybridizing and growing rhododendrons by David Leach and Weldon Delp. The result was that many new and interesting selections found their place into the Horticultural Research Institute landscape. The woodlot remained primarily a seedling trial area and in a sunny portion of the woods the deciduous azalea plantings resulted in several of the "Vinecourt" series of azaleas.

The popularity of such an extensive collection attracted much attention locally and internationally and received HRIO's support for its development through to the second half of the 1980's. The Rhododendron Project ended in 1987 with Al Smith's retirement, subsequent untimely death, transfer of the HRIO facilities to the university of Guelph and removal of Ontario government funding for horticultural research and extension services. The woodlot and the azalea plantings are an important site for those interested in the history of development of interest in rhododendrons in Niagara. The gain in popularity of Rhododendrons and Azaleas can be attributed substantially to the efforts of Forster, Begg and Smith. Examples of their work is shown below.

### **Vineland Introductions:**

Photos shown below were made available to the Chapter by Dr. Frank C. Eady, Director, University of Guelph Horticultural Institute of Ontario (1998), and Judy Warner, HRIO librarian (1998). They represent the 26 rhododendrons and azaleas hybridized at the Vineland based Horticultural Institute of Ontario and formally introduced. When the Institute was privatized and partly administered by Guelph University, the contents of the Institute's library were transferred to Guelph University. In 2016, the existence of these records is uncertain. Information concerning each cultivar provided here is the only known record of those introductions.

**Click on a thumbnail image to open a new page with a full description and larger photograph.**

**Continues on next Page**



VINEBLUSH



VINECOURT  
TROUBADOR



VINELAND CAROUSEL



VINELAND DREAM



VINECOURT DUCHESS



VINECOURT DUKE



VINELAND FLAME



VINELAND FLARE



VINELAND  
FRAGRANCE



VINELAND GLOW



VINELAND GOLD



VINEBELLE



VINECREST



VINEDALE



VINEMARK



VINEMOUNT



VINESTAR



VINEWOOD



VIVACIOUS



VINECOURT JESTER



VINECOURT  
MOONLIGHT



VINECOURT QUEEN



VINEROUGE



VINELAND SENSATION



VEESPRITE



VINEBROOK

### **Guide to the Woodlot**

Shown below is a series of photographs and diagrams which describe the state of the rhododendron and azalea collection in 1998. This material was prepared by Carol Warkentin as a guide for delegates to the 1998 ARS Convention held in Niagara Falls, Ontario in May, 1998.

Of special note in this Guide is the photograph on Page 6, Vineland Azalea Test Bed. Deciduous Azaleas depicted here include Vineland Pimpernel, Vineland Carousel, Vineland Jester, Vineland Gold, Vineland Queen, Vineland Dream, Vineland Moonlight, Vineland Troubadour and Vineland Duchess, each reputed to be highly tolerant to powdery mildew. In 2016, a program is being initiated by the Chapter to propagate these cultivars through tissue culture. The intent is to expand the planting of these cultivars at the current Vineland Innovation and research Centre site and to make these cultivars more widely available to the general public.

**The Guide is shown in the pages that follow.**

# Explore Rhododendros & Azaleas

at

Vineland Research  
& Innovation Centre

Formerly HRIO Vineland



## What's Inside

A brief History

Overview Map

Display Garden 1 Map & Content

Display Garden 2 Map & Content

Woodlot (Woodland) Map &  
Content



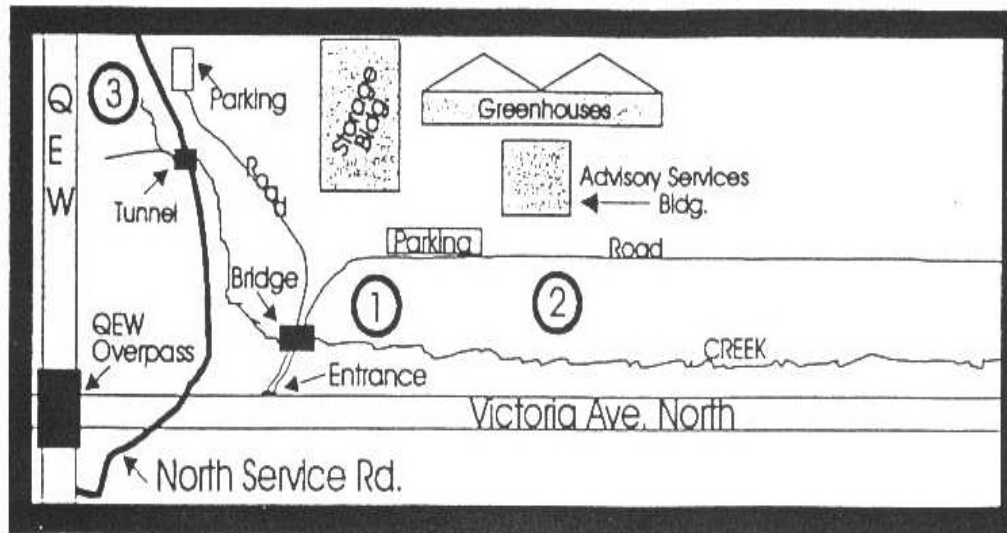
## HISTORY OF RHODODENDRON & AZALEA PROGRAM AT HRIO

- Early 1950s - Robert A. Fleming established rhododendron plantings, took seed from the plants and grew new selections.
- Late 1950s - Rhododendron plant breeding program became more focused; Roy Forster joined the HRIO staff and the Woodland Gardens were designated as the main hybridizing test grounds.
- 1969 - Ken Begg succeeded Roy Forster to continue the plant breeding efforts.
- 1974 - Al Smith became head of the rhododendron program, succeeding Ken Begg; hybridizing efforts were expanded greatly and several Vineland introductions took place.
- 1987 - Rhododendron project ended with Al Smith's retirement; Ontario government policy changes prevented continuation of funding for the HRIO rhododendron program.

**PLEASE ENJOY THE RHODODENDRON & AZALEA GARDENS AT HRIO,  
A TRIBUTE TO THE PIONEERING WORK OF THE AFOREMENTIONED  
DEDICATED INDIVIDUALS.**

Prepared for  
ARS (Niagara '98) Convention Tour Committee

# GUELPH UNIVERSITY HORTICULTURE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (HRIO), Vineland, Ontario



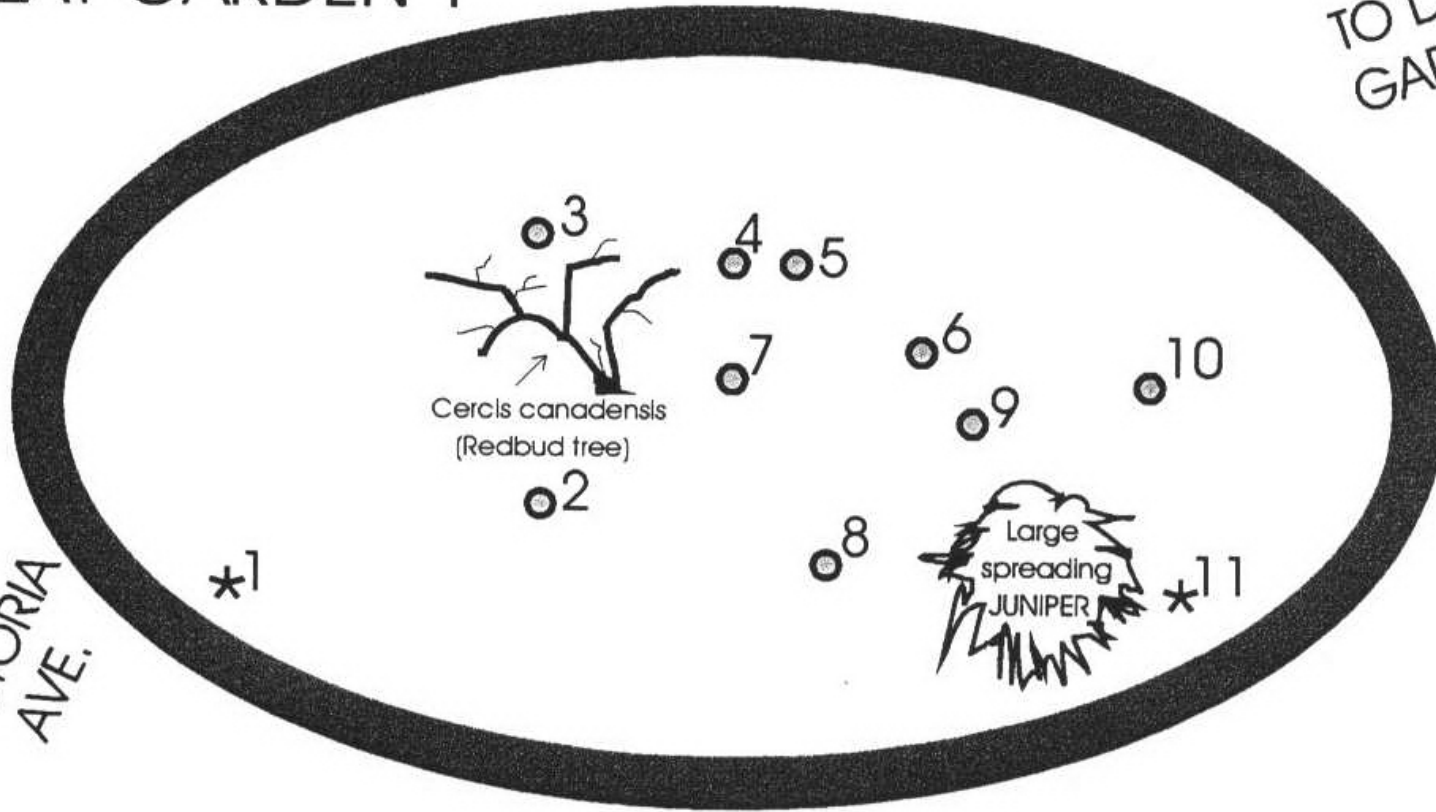
- ① Display Garden
- ② Display Garden
- ③ Woodland Garden

WELCOME TO  
THE RHODODENDRON & AZALEA COLLECTION  
OF VINELAND INTRODUCTIONS

# DISPLAY GARDEN 1

TO DISPLAY GARDEN 2  
→

BRIDGE  
& VICTORIA  
AVE.  
←



## Legend

1. Rock grouping \*
2. Rhododendron
3. Rhododendron
4. Rhododendron
5. Rhododendron
6. Rhododendron
7. Rhododendron
8. Rhododendron
9. Rhododendron
10. Rhododendron
11. Rock ledge \*



# Vineland Azalea Test Bed



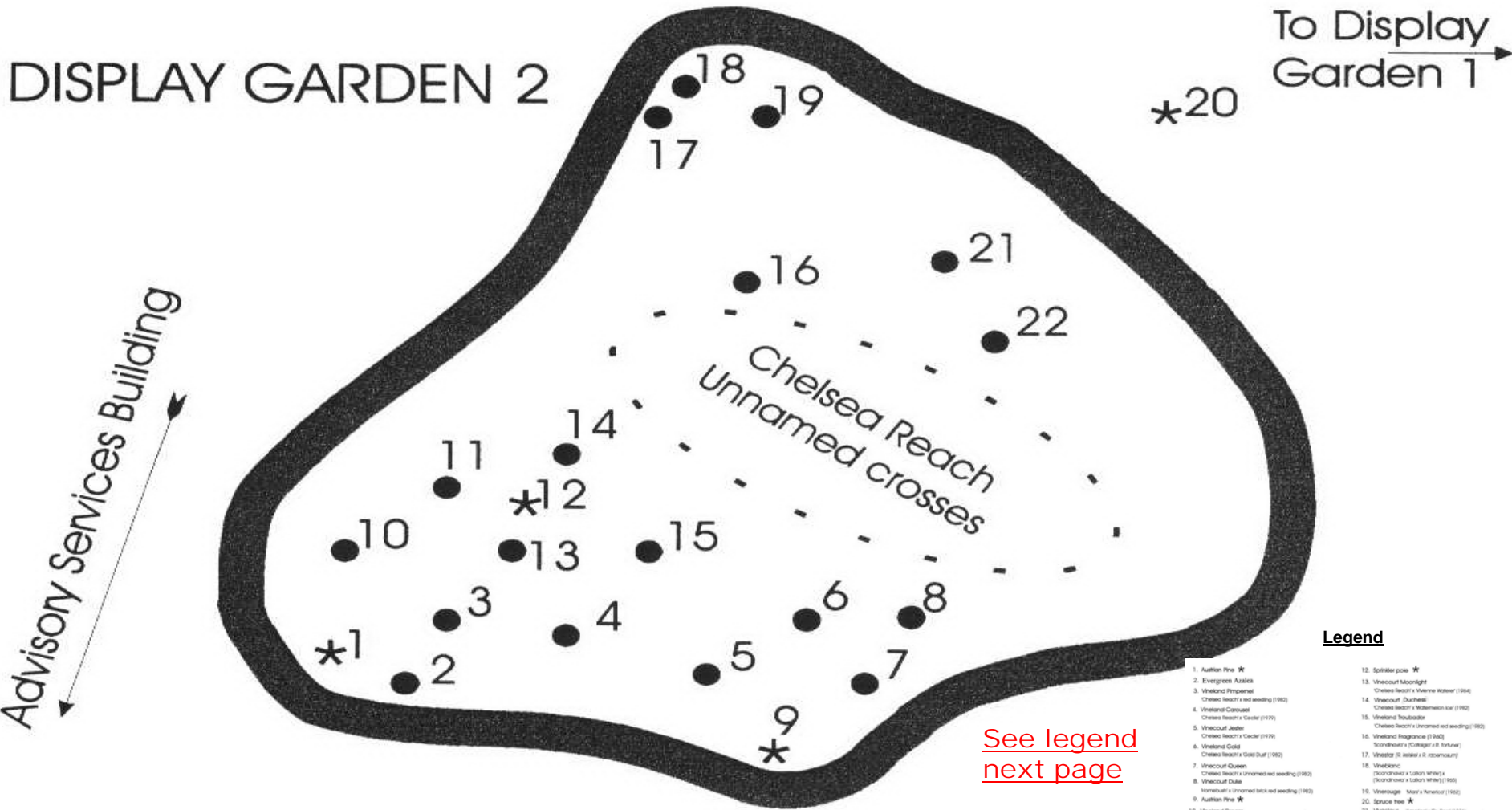
Photo by William Warkentin

# Unnamed Fuchsia Azalea



Photo by William Warkentin

# Display Garden 2 Across from Administration Building



**Legend**

- 1. Aulster Pine ★
- 2. Evergreen Azalea
- 3. Vineland Prospiceal  
Chelsea Reach x red seedling (1982)
- 4. Vineland Capoulet  
Chelsea Reach x Cedar (1976)
- 5. Vineland Jester  
Chelsea Reach x Cedar (1976)
- 6. Vineland Gold  
Chelsea Reach x Gold Oak (1982)
- 7. Vineland Queen  
Chelsea Reach x Unnamed red seedling (1982)
- 8. Vineland Duke  
Hornbeak x unnamed black red seedling (1982)
- 9. Aulster Pine ★
- 10. Vineland Dream  
Chelsea Reach x Unnamed red tree (1982)
- 11. Vineland Delight  
Hornbeak x Unnamed red tree (1982)
- 12. Spruce pine ★
- 13. Vineland Moonlight  
Chelsea Reach x Norway Spruce (1984)
- 14. Vineland Dutchess  
Chelsea Reach x Watermelon Ice (1982)
- 15. Vineland Touchdown  
Chelsea Reach x Unnamed red seedling (1982)
- 16. Vineland Raginocoe (1982)  
Scotchbroom x Cotoneaster (R. Fortune)
- 17. Vineland (R. Fortune) (R. Fortune)
- 18. Vineland  
Scotchbroom x Salix white x  
Doronicus (R. Fortune) (1982)
- 19. Vineland  
Moss x Arbutus (1982)
- 20. Spruce tree ★
- 21. Vineland  
Arbutus x Dr. Star (1976)
- 22. Vineland  
Salix white x Dr. Fortune (R. Fortune) (1982)

[See legend next page](#)

# Contents Display Garden 2

1. Austrian Pine ★
2. Evergreen Azalea
3. Vineland Pimpernel  
'Chelsea Reach' x red seedling (1982)
4. Vineland Carousel  
'Chelsea Reach' x 'Cecile' (1979)
5. Vinecourt Jester  
'Chelsea Reach' x 'Cecile' (1979)
6. Vineland Gold  
'Chelsea Reach' x 'Gold Dust' (1982)
7. Vinecourt Queen  
'Chelsea Reach' x Unnamed red seedling (1982)
8. Vinecourt Duke  
'Homebush' x Unnamed brick red seedling (1982)
9. Austrian Pine ★
10. Vineland Dream  
'Chelsea Reach' x Unnamed red Knap Hill seedling (1982)
11. Vineland Delight  
'Homebush' x Unnamed red Knap Hill seedling (1982)
12. Sprinkler pole ★
13. Vinecourt Moonlight  
'Chelsea Reach' x 'Vienne Waterer' (1984)
14. Vinecourt Duchess  
'Chelsea Reach' x 'Watermelon Ice' (1982)
15. Vineland Troubador  
'Chelsea Reach' x Unnamed red seedling (1982)
16. Vineland Fragrance (1960)  
'Scandinavia' x ('Catalpa' x *R. fortunei*)
17. Vinestar (*R. keiskei* x *R. racemosum*)
18. Vineblanc  
(*'Scandinavia'* x *'LaBar's White'*) x  
(*'Scandinavia'* x *'LaBar's White'*) (1965)
19. Vinerouge 'Mars' x 'America' (1962)
20. Spruce tree ★
21. Vivacious 'America' x 'Dr. Ross' (1976)
22. Vinecrest [*'LaBar's White'* x (*R. fortunei* x *R. wardii*)] x *R. litiense*

# Vineland Carousel



Photo by William Warkentin

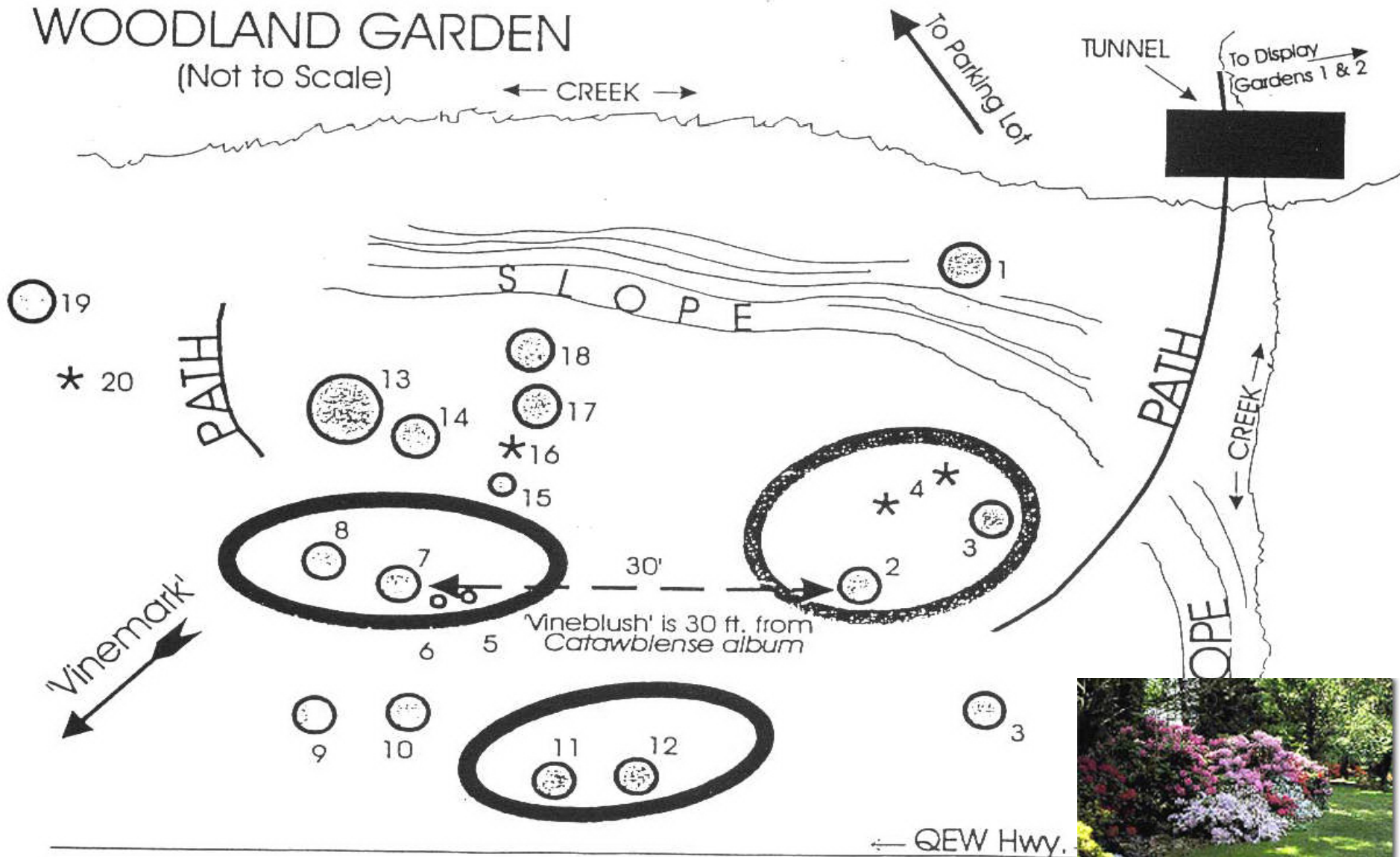
# Vineland Fragrance



Photo by William Warkentin

# Woodlot at Vineland Research & Innovation Centre (ex HRIO Vineland)

## WOODLAND GARDEN (Not to Scale)



# Contents Woodland Garden (Woodlot)

1. 'Vinebrook' Elepidote. (*R. smirnowii* x 'Lady Bessborough')(1961)
2. *Catawbiense album* Species rhododendron
3. V-6000 ('Dr. E. Hjelm' x ['Catalgla' x 'Belle Heller'])
4. Deciduous trees \*
5. 622520 ('America' x *R. yakushimanum*)
6. V-712410
7. 'Vineblush' Elepidote. ('America' x *R. yakushimanum*). Cross (1962)
8. V-6210 (*R. racemosum* x *R. keiskei*)
9. V-712416 (Please note: 7124 series plants have 'Vivacious' x
10. V-712414 'Pinnacle' in the breeding background)
11. 'Vinedale' ('Scandinavia' x ['Catalgla' x *R. fortunei*]). Cross (1960)
12. 'Vineland Fragrance'('Scandinavia' x ['Catalgla' x *R. fortunei*])(1960)
13. 'Vinebelle' ('Robert Allison' x *R. yakushimanum*). Cross (1962)
- 14-V-60291 (unknown parentage)
- 15-V-6008 ('Scandinavia' x 'LaBar's White')
- 16-Sprinkler pole \*
- 17-62399 ('Robert Allison' x *R. yakushimanum*)
- 18-623911('Robert Allison' x *R. yakushimanum*)
- 19-'Vinewood' Elepidote. ('Sham's Ruby' x *R. williamsianum*). (1964)
- 20-*Prunus serotina* Black Cherry tree \*



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