

## Big Winds... Big Losses by Fran Benton

Well this has been quite a wild winter season. The heavy wet snowfall must have done some damage in your garden. It certainly did in mine! I always worry about my rhododendrons. They cope with the cold very well but can be badly damaged by a heavy snow load. The weight of snow will pull the branches down. As the snow builds up and compresses it can snap off branches. Wet snow is the worst as it is so heavy and soon turns to ice.

While watching the latest storm from the window, I thought to myself, "Let's nip out with the broom and bash that snow off the rhodos". Then the power lines sagged down so far they arced and caught on fire. That stopped me in my tracks. I can be a bit of a garden bozo but I have a healthy respect for fire. Boy! am I glad I did because a few moments later one of our backyard arbutus split off a massive branch that flattened a garden bed.

When we looked at the scar we realized this branch had been hanging by a thread! The poor arbutus had been damaged in the past and grew around the injury like a diaper. None of the injury was visible from the ground. When the tree split you could see a huge void where the branch should have been solid. Holy moly! If I had been standing there I would not be here to write this article!

Fortunately we have friends who enjoy woodworking and they took some of the arbutus. The rest will keep us toasty warm next winter!

