

The Yak

Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Volume 15 Number 10 December 2002



Fraser South Rhododendron Society
is a chapter of the
American Rhododendron Society

Meetings are held at 7:30 pm on the
third Wednesday of each month at:
United Church Hall
5673 - 200th Street
Langley BC

2002 Officers

President: Mike Bale
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This Month's Meeting: Wednesday December 18

EARLY - at 6:00pm

THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

... complete with gifts!

Dave Sellars to present a new and enhanced
revision of his soon-to-be-franchised game:

"Hybrids and Species"

Sue Klapwijk to coordinate and referee.

Quick Hits



CHRISTMAS PARTY Bring something to

contribute to the potluck dinner, and some eating
utensils and dishes so you can try everyone else's
contributions. Also, a gift valued around \$10.00 to exchange.

Don't forget the meeting starts earlier than usual - at 6:00pm .



NEWSLETTERS Colour copies of both our own

Yak and the newsletters of other chapters who
forward copies to us will be placed in the library
for all those without ready access to the copies posted on the web
sites. Feel free to look them over before and after the meetings.



From the President

✧ The January meeting will be the inaugural occasion for our new
ANNUAL AGM AND DESSERT MEETING

Festivities will include :

- *AGM and election of executive
- *Presentation of awards
- *Talks and Slide Presentation by Norma Senn & Dave Sellars, both of whom are excellent photographers and speakers
- *Meeting will be interrupted at intervals to sample the creative genius of our members in providing their favorite desserts for all of us to sample.

(My own particular “Wish Dish” would be for a further sampling of the magnificent trifle and home baked apple pie that we all enjoyed so much at the June picnic.)

In order to encourage members to participate in the AGM and to entice people to attend, the evening activities will be interrupted at regular intervals throughout the evening by an opportunity to taste and experience the culinary expertise of our members. In addition, the executive decided that it would be a more opportune to make our annual awards presentation at this meeting. It should be a fun evening and even if the weather conditions are poor we hope that you will make the attempt to participate.

The Chapter is saddened to announce the loss of three friends who, in one way or another, have been generous in their support of the FSRS.

Tom Brown A long time member of the Vancouver Chapter and supporter of the Fraser South Chapter, Tom died on Oct 10th, 2002 after a prolonged illness which he endured with much courage and fortitude. Tom was an associate professor of Geology at UBC and donated his time and energy to many different activities in the Vancouver Chapter. Both he and his wife Meg were participants in various garden tours and generously shared their knowledge and expertise. Our sincerest condolences to Meg

Peter Stone Those members who participated in the Vancouver Island Tour in May will recall that we were received most generously by Peter at his magnificent home and garden on Maple Bay. Despite his ill health and a slight drizzle Peter clearly enjoyed meeting our group and sharing his garden. We are indebted to Peter for his kind hospitality and extend our condolences to the family.

Betty Spady Our condolences are extended to the family of Mrs. Betty Spady, who has been a friend of Fraser South for many years. She was the editor of the Rhododendron and Azalea newsletter and in this capacity maintained regular contact with our Chapter through our previous editor Mike Trembath. She received our newsletter on a regular basis for many years.

Our Chapter has been enriched by our association with these distinct and exceptional individuals who have shared their passion and expertise with our members.

✧ During the past twelve months the Executive has kept the business content of our monthly meetings to a minimum in order to maximize the educational component. In order to keep member abreast of matters of general interest, copies of the executive minutes have been provided at each of the Chapter meetings. I hope you take the opportunity to review them and provide us with feed back. In addition, highlights have been reported in the Yak, and indeed, you will find edited copies of the October and November meetings further on in this issue.

✧ One of our members forwarded to me correspondence in the “Rhodo Group” messages which outlined the writer’s experience when he joined a Tropical Hibiscus Society. He mentions that within a week of joining he received a personalized letter welcoming him into the society and advising him of all the various national and local activities. This member suggested that perhaps a similar format should be used in the ARS to welcome new members. This matter was reviewed by the Executive and we are hoping that our Chapter will adopt a similar procedure, as well as developing a special “Welcoming Committee” who will help chaperon new members at the monthly Chapter meetings and introduce them to other Chapter members. This may result in some of our earnest discussions with one another being interrupted so that we can take the time to involve new members. We hope that this kind of activity will help to continue to let this Chapter be known as “the friendly Chapter”.

✧ At our last meeting we had some preliminary difficulties as the slide projector screen which we normally use was missing and we needed to retrieve our own screen which had been put away in a secure place - secure even from us apparently, as its new location had not been made known to us. In addition, our extension cord, which had been generously provided by one of our members, has been mislaid. Those of us near to the screen had no problems hearing our speaker, but my understanding is that some of our members had difficulty hearing the entire presentation as a result of ambient background noise. In addition, there were some concerns for the quality of the projected slides. These difficulties were discussed at the last Executive meeting, and the decision was made to investigate the use of a microphone for our speakers, and the provision of a new lens for the projector to improve the picture quality.

✧ Heartfelt thanks to Diane Scott & Mary Berg for keeping the coffee hot, and thanks also to people who contributed the “sweets”.

Mike Bale



From the Editor

I found this when I was bumbling around the web looking for something else. It certainly struck a chord with me, and I thought it might be particularly enjoyed by members who are members of any of the various discussion groups (mail lists), such as Rhododendron Society, in which all of these web-based behavioural foibles show up sooner or later.

Q: How many subscribers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Thousands

1 to change the light bulb and to post to the list that the light bulb has been changed.

14 to share similar experiences of changing light bulbs and how the light bulb could have been changed differently.

7 to caution about the dangers of changing light bulbs.

27 to point out spelling and grammatical errors in posts about changing light bulbs.

53 to flame the spell checkers

156 to write to the list administrator complaining about the light bulb discussion and its inappropriateness to this mail list.

41 to correct spelling in the spelling/grammar flames.

109 to post that this list is not about light bulbs and would they kindly take this email exchange to alt.lite.bulb

203 to demand that cross posting to alt.grammar, alt.spelling and alt.punctuation about changing light bulbs be stopped.

111 to defend the posting to this list saying that we all use light bulbs and therefore the posts ****are**** relevant to this mail list.

306 to debate which method of changing light bulbs is superior, where to buy the best light bulbs, what brand of light bulbs work best for this technique, and what brands are faulty.

27 to post URLs where one can see examples of different light bulbs

14 to post that the URLs were posted incorrectly, and to post corrected URLs.

3 to post about links they found from the URLs that are relevant to this list which makes light bulbs relevant to this list.

33 to summarize all posts to date, then quote them including all headers and footers, and then add "Me Too."

12 to post to the list that they are unsubscribing because they cannot handle the light bulb controversy.

19 to quote the "Me Too's" to say, "Me Three."

4 to suggest that posters request the light bulb FAQ.

1 to propose new alt.change.lite.bulb newsgroup.

47 to say this is just what alt.physic.cold_fusion was meant for, leave it here.

143 votes for alt.lite.bulb.

27 to post in HTML because they are using the IE or Netscape that had it turned on by default and are too clueless to look

48 to complain about the HTML posts

27 to post 'sorry I didn't realize it was on' -- in HTML

96 to complain about more HTML and post detailed instructions on how to change the setting

58 to mumble something about using a web browser to read mail

12 MIME posts with useless colors and bolds saying thanks for the help with the HTML mail

1 to post a GIF/JPG of the light bulb hanging too close to his digital camera.

1 complaint from the guy using /usr/ucb/Mail who wants to know what the *@&(%\$!@ has been going on

58 to complain about the binary post

74 to say they liked the binary and didn't mind it

1 post about how you can MAKE MONEY FAST!!!! by selling light bulbs and this report available for only \$5.

1328 to reply to the list with the full spam attached and then put 'remove' at the end

3 to flame the other morons for replying to the spammer and CCing the list

1 from the list admin notifying that the list is looking for a bigger server to handle the load

Brenda Macdonald

Here are the highlights of the minutes of the last two Directors Meetings, October and November, 2002.



OCTOBER MEETING - Wednesday, October 23, 2002, at the home of Mike Bale.

- ⇒ The Spring Plant Sale will be held on Saturday, May 17, 2002, at the Langley United Church parking lot.
- ⇒ Financial Report: Trevor Badminton reported that the chapter's bank balance was \$2,086.72, as of October 23, 2002.
- ⇒ The December Meeting: Sue Klapwijk will coordinate food contributions, and David Sellars will do a game. Sue will ask Leigh Mikitka to organize the prizes.
- ⇒ The Species Study Tour will go ahead again this year. Volunteers are needed for overnight accommodation for participants from Vancouver Island.



NOVEMBER MEETING - Wednesday, November 27, 2002, at the home of Trevor Badminton

- ⇒ There was detailed discussion of the Plant Sale as the scheduled date, May 17th, clashed with the scheduled garden tour to Portland. The growers present at the meeting felt that they would be able to continue as planned even though assistance from Chapter members might be reduced as a result of participation in the Portland tour.
- ⇒ Financial Report: Trevor Badminton reported that the bank balance was approximately \$1,785.00
- ⇒ Programme: Norma volunteered a number suggestions for speakers in the new year. Sue Klapwijk agreed to coordinate plans for the Christmas Party. Diane Scott has agreed to coordinate the first annual

AGM/Dessert Meeting in January.

- ⇒ Membership: Wenonah March reported that there were still a few outstanding renewals, and agreed to encourage those people to forward their contributions.
- ⇒ Newsletter: Brenda Macdonald has her new computer and software organized. Her primary concern now is for continuing contributions from as many members as possible, and also to establish a pool of photographs which can be utilized without concern for copyright. It was decided that printing colour copies to mail to those members requesting a hard copy by post was beyond the budget of the society. A colour copy will be posted on the web site so well maintained by Chris Klapwijk, available for downloading and printing for those who wish to do so, and another hard copy will be in the library.
- ⇒ Mike Bale agreed to forward a note to the ARS expressing the concerns of the Chapter with regard to fee increases as well as their views on test gardens.
- ⇒ The concept of a Welcome Committee and personal letter of introduction was agreed upon, and individuals will be canvassed to accept this role.
- ⇒ Concerns about the clarity of the slide projection equipment were discussed, and Dalen Bayes agreed to bring his own lens which will hopefully provide increased clarity.
- ⇒ Colleen Forster agreed to inquire of the Langley Chapter with respect to microphone equipment in order to improve sound reception.
- ⇒ The concept of an incentive for early renewal was discussed and agreed upon, and should be further developed by next year's executive.
- ⇒ FSRS is responsible this year for coordinating the Chapter garden tours on behalf of the FVRS and Peace Arch. A proposal that one of the visits be to the Pacific Rim Native Nursery will be pursued.



Last Month's Meeting



Paige Woodward, co-owner of the Pacific Rim Native Plant Nursery located on Chilliwack Mountain, spoke to us last month on her trips to China as well as the continuing development of her nursery. Paige's slides and commentary on the landscaping techniques and practices of China, including the use of massive and instantaneous "carpet" displays of thousands of container grown flowering plants, and the Chinese people's special fascination for particular types of rock and stone displays gave us all a brief but all too tempting idea of what it would be like to travel there ourselves.

Up the Garden Path with Norma Senn

CHRISTMAS NUTS

NOVEMBER 2002

One of the speciality foods we associate with Christmas are nuts: we even have a whole Christmas story built around a nutcracker. We find mixed nuts available in the shell or in cans. The most common mix includes cashews, Brazil nuts, walnuts, pecans and hazelnuts. These delicious nuts represent crops that are produced from all over the world.



Cashews, *Anacardium occidentale*, is native to South America where it is still grown. However, in the 16th century, cashew trees were introduced to India by the Portuguese, and shortly thereafter, into Africa. The trees were really introduced to hold soil in place, rather than as use as an edible crop. The trees are now found growing throughout the tropical world, and it is a major economic crop of several African countries, as well as India and now, Viet Nam. It is grown in large plantations in many areas, but it also is a cash crop for many small growers. In parts of eastern Africa, cashew trees have naturalized and now form large tracts of forests. Cashew trees grow well with heat and drought, but they have no tolerance to cold or poorly drained soils.

The cashew tree is related to poison ivy and poison sumac, and like these plants, parts of the cashew tree cause skin irritations. The actual hard seed coat that surrounds the cashew meat contains the phenolic oils that cause skin rashes. In times past, there were problems in removing the husks to get at the delicious seeds inside, but with modern processing techniques, however, no one has to handle the husks. The cashew apple, the fruit that surrounds the cashew seed, is perfectly edible, and in many parts of the world, the cashew apple is more important than the nut as it is used for fresh eating, juice and syrup. In southern India, the fruit is fermented to create a local liquor called feni. Cashew apples are also used as livestock feed.

Another crop originally native to South America is the Brazil nut, *Bertholletia excelsa*. The trees are native to large areas of the Amazon River basin, and are found growing wild in Brazil, Peru, Bolivia and Colombia. It is a very large tree, easily reaching 50 m in height. The nuts we eat are contained within a very large capsule-like fruit. Each fruit, which has a woody covering much like a coconut, can weigh over a kg and contains between 15 to 20 nuts.

The nuts are considered to be very nutritious as they have a

high protein content, as well as several elements and vitamins essential to our diets. The nuts also contain high quality oils that can be used to make cosmetics and soaps.

Traditionally, Brazil nuts have been collected from the wild, but over the past couple of decades, concerted efforts have been made to establish cultivated plantations. The trees make good over-story trees for other crops like cocoa and pepper. The wood is used for lumber, and the hard fruit shells are used to manufacture local crafts. Brazil nuts are very important to the local economies where the trees are grown.

Pecans, *Carya illinoensis*, are native to North America, originally found growing in areas in the southern parts of the American mid-west into the south eastern states. This is a deciduous tree that needs deep, rich soil with an even moisture supply and good drainage. Georgia, Arkansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas and parts of California have a large pecan industry. As well, there is a large industry in Australia. Pecans, like walnuts and hazelnuts, are used extensively in commercial baking, as well as being a Christmas snack. Trees come into bearing between 6 to 10 years of age. In addition to the nuts, pecans are also grown for their beautiful wood. The nuts form slowly in a shell over the summer months. The pecan kernels that we eat are actually a seedling's two cotyledons.

Pecan trees are vegetatively hardy in the mildest areas of B.C., but they do not produce nuts. There are several beautiful trees planted at Butchard Gardens in Victoria. Because they are tap-rooted, pecan trees are a good choice, to plant in a lawn, where a good lawn is wanted underneath the tree canopy.

Commercial walnuts come from the English (or Persian) walnut tree, *Juglans regia*. It is native to a large area from the western Himalayas through central Asia into eastern Europe. It has provided food for thousands of years. English walnuts were introduced into North America by early settlers, including the Spanish who brought the nuts to California in the 1700s. California is the largest producer of commercial English walnuts in the world. English walnuts have been selected for soft shells that can be removed easily and a mild flavour. Walnut oil is extracted from poor grade nuts. Even the hard shells of walnuts are used to make polishing solutions for metals.

There are several other species of walnut trees, including the black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) that is native to parts of southern Ontario into the eastern U.S. seaboard through the mid-west. The nuts, while edible, are not as popular as English walnuts because of their strong flavour and very hard shells. Wood lot production of black walnut trees is common in eastern North America since the trees are prized for their beautiful lumber. Trees grown for lumber are grown from seed while those grown for nuts are produced by grafting. Tree habit for nut bearing trees is a low, wide-spreading canopy while lumber trees are trained to grow tall and have a high canopy. Both English and black walnut trees can be grown in southern British Columbia. However, nut production tends to be variable from year to year. One reason

for the variation is that the flowers are occasionally damaged by late spring frost. However, both make beautiful, large ornamental trees.

Commercially, hazelnuts or filberts, *Corylus avellana*, are grown from northern California into southwestern B.C., with the largest production in Oregon. However, our production pales in comparison with the crops produced in Turkey, Italy and Spain. The nuts are used extensively in baking, added to breakfast cereals and eaten whole. If you're wondering about the terms filbert and hazelnut, they're really the same thing. Traditionally, the nuts from trees introduced from Europe and the middle-east were called filberts and they are characterized by having husks (the covering over the nut) as long as or longer than the nut, while hazelnuts were used for native North American species which typically have a husk that is shorter than the nut. Nowadays though the terms are used interchangeably, and in some areas these even go by a third name, the cobnut.

Hazelnuts can be grown as a single stemmed small tree or as a multi-stemmed large shrubs. They grow best in rich, deep soils that hold moisture while providing good drainage. The contorted hazelnut tree, *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta' (Harry Lauder's Walking Stick) makes an interesting small tree for the garden. It is grown for its winter habit which has branches growing in contorted spirals. It does produce edible nuts, but I find the Stellar Jays and squirrels adore them.

There are several other species of hazelnuts that are important wildlife food sources, including *Corylus cornuta*, our wild hazelnut.





COMPANION PLANTS

The X File of plants is a veritable Mother Hubbard's cupboard, but of the very few that exist, there are some that could be of use.

X is for Xerophyllum

Family: Liliaceae - the Lily Family

The Bear Grass, *Xerophyllum tenax*, that some of you have no doubt seen in its late summer glory in eastern Washington and Oregon (maybe very southern B.C. too??) is a perennial that can make a bold statement in a garden. If you possess an open woodland area on a hillside in sun and with moderate moisture and fertility, then you'll have it made! Of course they can also adapt to a sunny mixed border with good winter drainage. The foliage consists of wiry rough-edged leaves about 2 ft long, of a bluey-green color, coming from woody rhizomes, that become shorter the further up the stem they are. The blooms – large dense brush-like racemes of many tiny creamy-white flowers, stand well above the leaves (3-4 ft) in a quite spectacular fashion. The common name probably derives from the somewhat 'ursine' fragrance of the blooms, but if it's not planted too close in, you'll be unaware. It is also known to the native Indians as Basket Grass for the usefulness of the foliage. Not readily available in the plant centers but worth the look. P.S – There is an East Coast native, *X. asphodeloides*, that may adapt to our conditions also.



Bear Grass *Xerophyllum tenax*
xero = dry phyllum = leaf
tenax = strong/tenacious
therefore, a plant whose dry
leaves are strong
Image courtesy of Washington
State Dept. of Transportation

X is for Xanthorhiza



Family: Ranunculaceae - the Buttercup Family

The Yellowroot, *X. simplicissima (apiifolia)*, related to Clematis and Buttercups and resembling neither in any way visible, is a small suckering shrub native to woodlands in eastern U.S.A. It bears fine textured pinnate leaves with deeply cut leaflets that emerge bronze tinted, turn rich green through summer, and then to striking red-purple-yellow in fall. Dangling tiny purple flowers open in spring as the leaves unfold on stems that only reach 2 feet, but may form tidy thickets 5 feet across – seems just perfect for a bank that's too hard to mow!

It was introduced to cultivation at the time of the American Confederation but was not rewarded as garden-worthy 'til 200 years later, with an Award of Merit for foliage effect.

Yellowroot can be increased by seed, summer cuttings, or division, and is not disturbed by any significant pests, probably because the bark is very bitter to the taste. I'm not sure how readily available this plant is, but certainly seems like one I'd like to find for myself.

Happy planting Colleen

Rootstalk by Indumentum

As the years pass it becomes more and more difficult to identify that one special Christmas gift for the gardener in your life. By now he should have everything he really needs and if not, he's probably been out cruising the aisles of Home Depot and Lee Valley checking to see that there are no outstanding gardening gizmos to purchase. So in keeping with our annual tradition, here is Indumentum's suggestion for the Christmas garden-shopper.

For the gardener who seems to have everything, Indumentum has discovered the ultimate gardening toy. Driving past Art Knapp's on King George Highway I noticed that the advertised products are Plants, Ponds, Landscape Material and Trains. Trains? This required further investigation so venturing into the cornucopia that is Art Knapp's I found shelf upon shelf of stuff for trains for the garden. The track gauge is about 2 inches so the trains are much bigger than the indoor variety. The trains are totally weatherproof so can be run all winter and you can even buy an engine with a snow plow to keep the track clear whatever the weather. A minimum set-up will cost about \$1,500 according to the enthusiastic salesperson I spoke to but you can have an "awesome layout" for about \$5,000. Some spend as much as \$50,000. Track is about \$6 a foot and a basic train with an engine and a few cars would cost about \$500. You can spend as much as \$4,600 on a single engine. The track is electrified with 24 volt DC and the trains can be operated by remote control. You can also buy steam powered engines! It is not such an obscure pastime as you might think; the Vancouver Garden Railway Club has 300 members.

I was given a nicely produced pamphlet called *Beginning Garden Railroading*, a supplement from *Garden Railways Magazine* with beautiful photographs showing elaborate and intricate model railways set in specially landscaped home gardens. Garden railway enthusiasts give their layouts names such as the Hard Rock and Dynamite Railroad or Twin Lakes Lumber and Mining Railroad depending on the theme. The supplement has a section on landscaping and scenery including selection of garden railroad plants, which of course have to be dwarf to stay in scale. You will be pleased to know that one rhododendron makes the list, *R. impeditum*.

As a small boy one of my favourite places to go with the family was Beaconscot, a model village on about three acres near Beaconsfield, England. The main attraction was the model trains that wound around the little houses and village greens. Now I can build my own Beaconscot in the backyard. I would call my garden railway the South Surrey Bulb and Bone Meal Railroad and use it to ferry supplies around the garden. I imagine calling up Central Station on a hand-crank phone. "We need a few more *Scilla* at Lower Pond Station. Can you include a load on the 10:25 from Adlestrop?" Toot! Toot!



Indumentum (L) at Beaconscot in 1952.