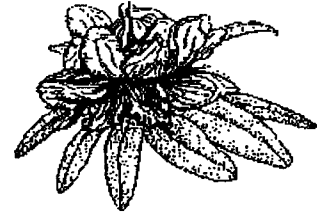


The Yak

Newsletter of **Fraser South
Rhododendron Society** a
Chapter of the American
Rhododendron Society



Volume 15

Number 1

January, 2002

**Fraser South Rhododendron
Society is a chapter of the
American Rhododendron
Society. It meets on the third
Wednesday of each month
(except July and August)
Meetings now held in the
United Church Hall, Langley,
5673 200th St.
7.30 p.m.**

FSRS 2001 Officers

Pres.- Trev Badminton
604 856 0046
Sec. - Wendy Sellars
604 535 0763
Treas. - Les Clay
604 530 5188
Memb. - Wenonah March
3759 201A St.
Langley, BC, V3A 1R1
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Phone & fax 604 856 7261
e mail trem@quik.com or:
empty@shaw.ca



1. ARS Home Page:

<http://www.rhododendron.org>

2.RandA Newsletter:

[http://members.aol.com/
RandANews/news.html](http://members.aol.com/RandANews/news.html)

Lots of excellent Links to other
Rhodo sites in both of the above.
The ARS Home Page is developing
a data base which includes informa-
tion on both species and hybrids.

January 16, 2002

Langley United Church
5673 - 200th
7:30 pm

FSRS Annual General Meeting and
election of officers for 2002

Speaker:

David Sellars

"Landscaping With Rhododendrons"

****NB****

**The new mailing list will be in
place for the Feb. Yak - if your
renewal has not been received
- your name will not be on the
mailing list. Too bad, so sad.**



Yakalendar



❁ February 20,2002
FSRS regular meeting

❁ March 20, 2002
FSRS regular meeting

CONVENTIONS 2002

❁ **April 17 - 21**
ARS Annual Convention
Georgia
held jointly with Azalea Society of
America Convention

❁ **May 17 - 19**
Rhododendron Conference
Edinburgh, Royal Botanic
Garden

❁ **Sept. 20-22**
Western Regional Conference
Bellingham

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(Any of you planning a trip to
the UK or Europe this year ??
If you don't want the hassle of
renting a car and driving your-
self, or of organizing hotels etc
- take a look at:
www.lionhearttours.com
I can wholeheartedly recom-
mend Paul. Ed.)

SPECIES STUDY DAYS

What features would you look for to distinguish *R. macabeamum* from *R. sinogrande* or *R. rex*? What do the terms "gymnocarpum" and "campylogynum" refer to? What do they look like? What features distinguish between tomentum and indumentum? Find out the answers to these questions and much, much more by attending the Species Study Days to be held at the Rhododendron Species Foundation In Seattle one Saturday during the months of February, March, April and May with instruction from 10:00 am through till 4:00 pm.

Steve Hootman has recently returned from his plant collecting expedition to China and has enthusiastically agreed to provide instruction and to illustrate his presentation with examples in the garden.

Precise details will be established as soon as the minimum number at 20 participants has been confirmed. Arrangements for transportation, food and beverage will be organized once the final number is known. If there is sufficient interest transportation by coach will be arranged but otherwise we can car-pool.

Please note that the Species Foundation can accommodate only a limited number of participants and therefore confirmation will be on a "first come" basis.

Please forward the fee of \$140.00 to the undersigned as soon as possible to cover instructional expenses for the four day programme.

Mike Bale

33623 Wildwood Drive
Abbotsford BC
V23 1S2

Phone: 604 853 8839



Partly because I have not found any books of particular interest to members, and partly because of the demise of Cavendish Press, very little has been added to our library shelves this year.

However, a very useful reference book has been donated to us by its compiler, Harry Wright, owner of Haida Gold Gardens in Courtenay, and a long-time member of the ARS. Rhododendron Varieties and Locations within British Columbia has been updated to September 2000, and lists rhododendrons and azaleas growing well in gardens of members and others throughout District 1, (Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland).

The book starts with identity codes and addresses of all the growers submitting information. Although I noticed some of the addresses are out-of-date. This is not really a handicap as most people are easily traced through other local members. The following pages list, in alphabetical order, all the rhododendron and azalea hybrids and species claimed to be growing well in people's gardens, with a code identifying what variety (R-S, R-H etc.) plus codes for the various locations. I note that no more than three locations are given for any one plant, and this was probably an arbitrary cutting off of the information to keep it compilable, rather than an indication that only three people have the plant.

I think the information would be very useful for several reasons. Perhaps the most useful would be to have a source of help and advice if one is having trouble growing any particular variety. I know I have lost three *R. aberconwayii* 'His Lordship', and I might have saved myself some money if I had been able to ask someone who is growing it successfully. (Yes, I know we have knowledgeable people in our own Chapter, but knowing there are others out there with, different growing conditions, might enable us to sort out what works and what doesn't)

Another use might be to track a source of cuttings or pollen or even a primary source for purchase of an already propagated plant.

While this is a reference book, and not exactly bedside reading, I recommend it. The District owes a hearty vote of thanks to Harry Wright for his time and effort in attempting this monumental task and for his constant updating. This third edition contains 3763 items.

Joan Bengough
Librarian

UP THE GARDEN PATH

WITH NORMA SENN

Attracting Birds to the Garden

According to surveys about leisure time activities, two great hobbies, gardening and bird watching, are increasing in popularity. These activities go hand in hand, and like most gardeners, I find tremendous enjoyment watching the antics of our native birds. To attract birds to the garden, they need to be provided with shelter, protection from predators, water, and food.



Shelter for birds can take many forms, but groups of conifers planted together offer excellent natural shelter throughout the year. Conifers offer protection from winds, and especially during cold windy weather in winter, I find the spruce, red cedars, and pine trees planted around the edge of my garden give sanctuary to many species of birds.

There are hardy conifers available for all areas of British Columbia. In addition to the evergreens mentioned above, others to consider using include hemlocks, firs, yews, Douglas firs and junipers. Consult your local garden centre staff if you need help in selecting suitable species for your area. Some conifer species have the added benefit of offering good seed sources to birds at certain times of the year. Occasionally, birds also find small insects along the tree boughs to eat.

In addition to shelter, birds need protection from predators. While I love cats, it is very difficult to convince them that the local bird feeders are not fast food outlets. Try to place bird feeders in open areas that do not offer predators cover to sneak up on feeding birds. I have also had good results by growing a thorny climbing rose wound up and around the main trunk of a large pine tree where I hang a feeder. The spiny rose stems

prevent cats from climbing this particular tree, and birds are able to feed in relative peace. Before I planted the rose, I would occasionally find my neighbour's cat perched on the tree branch directly overhanging the feeder. The other advantage to this is that the rose has grown up

and throughout the pine tree, so when it is in bloom, I have scarlet roses, and later red hips, intertwined with the pine boughs.

In the summer, water for birds is as easy as providing a bird bath, and keeping it partially filled. Of course, if you are lucky enough to have some sort of water feature in the garden like a stream, pool or pond, you can also provide "landing spots" along the edge. Flat rocks that provide ledges along the sides of ponds or streams and just protrude into the water features can make good spots for bathing and drinking. Small birds need very shallow water for bathing, no more than about two inches deep. They can drown in water that is any deeper.

A winter time water supply is harder to provide. While this may not be an option for everyone, there are electric water heaters available for bird baths from specialty garden supply firms that can be used to keep water from freezing.

Another enticing item for birds is gravel. If you have a gravel driveway, you may find small birds regularly pecking at the gravel for fine pieces of grit. I find leaving out a clay saucer filled with a couple of inches of commercially available budgie grit near the bird feeder attracts many birds.

Food sources can be as simple as a bird feeder routinely filled with various commercial seed sources. Or, a more varied diet can be provided by careful selection of garden plants. Depending

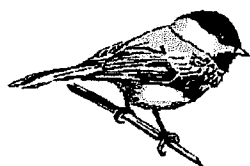
(cont. overleaf)

(cont. from Page 3)

on the kind of bird and the time of year, food sources could include seeds, berries, insects, and flower nectar.

One of the things I like about attracting birds is that the garden should not be too neat. For example, - instead of deadheading everything, I leave many flower heads to ripen into seeds, and even some of our common weed species provide seeds for birds. At any rate, it makes a good excuse to not be too compulsive about tidiness. Red and black-coloured fruits, in particular, are very attractive to many birds, but a word of caution in regards to fruit crops: birds can strip a crop of berries very quickly. If you want to protect some fruit for yourself, cover the fruit carefully with good bird netting well before the fruit ripens.

Here is a list of some commonly available garden plants recommended for attracting birds. Check to make sure trees, shrubs and perennial plants are hardy for your area.



Deciduous trees that provide fruit:

Alnus (alders); **Amelanchiers** (Saskatoons); **Arbutus** (Vancouver Island only); **Betula** (birches); **Carpinus** (hornbeams); **Cornus** (dogwood trees); **Crataegus** (hawthorns) all types; **Diospyros** (persimmons); **Fagus** (beech); **Malus** (crabapples) select small fruited varieties for birds; **Morus** (mulberries) (a word of caution - don't park your car or hang laundry in the general vicinity - birds love these berries and the after effects are very messy and colourful); **Prunus**; **Sambucus** (elderberries same problem as with Morus); **Sorbus** (mountain ash).

Shrubs that provide fruit:

Arctostaphylos (kinnikinnick); **Aronia** (chokeberry); **Callicarpa** (beauty berry); **Cornus** (dogwood shrubs) all types; **Cotoneaster** - these vary in their appeal to birds, with the deciduous Cotoneaster species the best in attracting birds;

Elacagnus (Russian olive); **Euonymus**, all types, but these may take several years to reach fruiting size, and several plants may be needed to ensure pollination; **Gaultheria**, all types; **Ilex** (holly); **Ligustrum** (privet); **Lonicera** (honeysuckle); **Mahonia** (Oregon grape); **Pyracantha** (firethorn); **Rhamnus** (buckthorn); **Ribes** (currants) all types; **Rubus** (blackberries and their relatives);



Rosa (anything);

Vaccinium, all types - cover blueberries if you want some too; **Viburnum**, many species. Vines:

Ampelopsis (porcelain berry); **Clematis**; **Lonicera** (honeysuckle); **Parthenocissus** (Virginia creeper and Boston ivy); **Vitis** (grape).

Flowers for seed:

Ageratum, **Coreopsis**, **Cosmos**, **Helianthus** (sunflower); **Solidago** (goldenrod); **Tagetes** (marigold); **Sedums**.

And, plants providing flowers attractive to hummingbirds:

Buddleia, **Chaenomeles**, **Fuchsia** (single forms), **Holodiscus**, **Lonicera**, **Ribes**, **Weigela**; **Delphinium**, **Digitalis**, **Heuchera**, **Impatiens** (single forms); **Lobelia cardinalis**; **Monarda**; **Nicotiana**; **Pentstemon**; **Phlox**.

Companion Plants

Parrotia

Family: Hamamelidaceae



For those of us with the luxury of large expanses of lawn or deep borders, there is a truly spectacular small tree that deserves our attention - the Persian Ironwood. Spidery crimson blooms appear on bare branches in early spring, with the flaking bark showing off a wonderful mosaic of tan and grey. Shiny mid-green leaves dazzle to a Joseph's coat of gold and orange and burgundy in fall. In it's native Caucasus Mountains it grows to a stately 60 ft, but in gardens it chooses to be multi-stemmed and broad spreading, slowly attaining 30x30 feet. Due to the lovely shape, it's perfect for underplanting with perennials, bulbs and small shrubs that will revel in it's dappled shade. The tree itself prefers a moist deep fertile soil, but can also tolerate the occasional liming of a surrounding lawn. A weeping form has been selected, but consider yourself very lucky if you come across it, as it is rarely available.



Parrotia persica

So stand back a ways and visualize a place in your yard with a brilliant 'vase' of color in fall, or delightful spreading branches over a carpet of colorful bulbs in spring. You may just like.....

Puschkinia

Family: Liliaceae

Closely related to Scilla and Chionodoxa, the striped squill are charming little bulbs that natural-

ize well under trees, fill small spaces in rockeries and perk up pots. The sturdy but dainty spikes of pale blue star flowers peek up from pairs of strap shaped leaves. A darker stripe down the center of each petal adds a little zing that makes the white ones seem almost drab.



Puschkinia scilloides

Being fairly short, only 6 to 8 inches or so, they can be badly splashed with mud in open soil areas, so you could either mulch with fine gravel or bark, or overplant with a very low groundcover like Vinca minor.

Only one species is available, *P. scilloides*, with only the white form, *P.s. libanotica* (Alba) as



Puschkinia scilloides libanotica 'Alba'

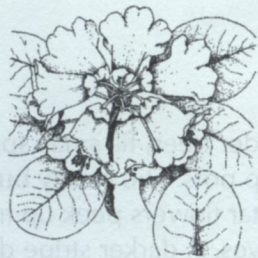
a selection. An open space, however small, is all they need, in sun or dappled sun with good drainage. You can't help being cheered up by these little beauties, even when the sky is so very dull for so-o-o very long.

Happy Planting

Colleen Forster

A Rhododendron Primer

Book 2



s is for *strigillosum*

Subsection Maculifera

Rhododendron strigillosum is an easily recognized plant because the new growth is covered in hairs long enough to be classed as bristles. Both the leaf stalks and new woody shoots will have these bristles. The leaves are long and narrow with the leaf margins being noticeably recurved, and there is lots of indumentum on the lower midrib. The plant reaches about 1.2 to 5 meters in height, and when well grown has an attractive rounded habit.

Cultivated plants have blood red flowers, but P. Cox writes that there are other colour forms of *R. strigillosum* in the wild (The Larger Species of Rhododendrons). *R. strigillosum* can flower fairly early and may suffer from late frost damage, so it is best grown in a sheltered site with some overhead protection. The plant is reliably hardy to -14C (5F). *R. strigillosum* is native to Szechwan China.



R. strigillosum in my garden
May 10, 1992 (Ed.)

Norma Senn



is for 'Senator Henry Jackson'

yakushmanum (Larson #6) x 'Mrs. Horace Fogg'

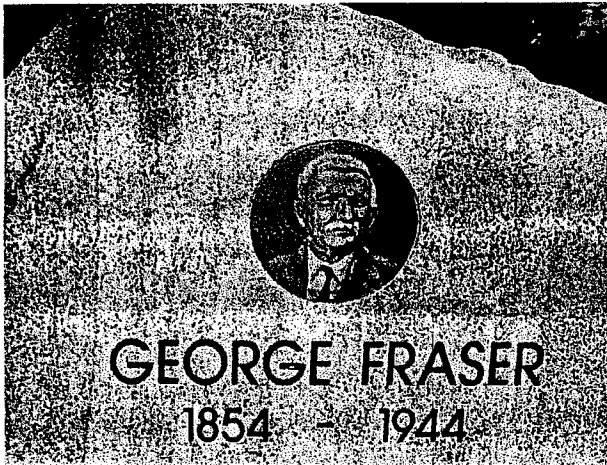
Larson cross; Fisher intro in 1985 3', -5F, M, 4/5/5

A hardy, rounded, slow growing (especially in full sun) shrub. Handsome dark green leaves with a moderately heavy indumentum are resistant to weavils and diseases. The beautiful, snow-white flowers are more open than other 'yak' hybrids. Lucious rounded trusses cover the plant each spring.



R. 'Senator Henry Jackson'
at Meerkerk May, 2001

Vern Finley



R. 'George Fraser'

There may be some doubt as to the parentage of R. 'George Fraser', but there is no questioning the origin of this plant. It came to Victoria via a circuitous route.

R. 'George Fraser' was a cross of the West Coast native *Rhododendron macrophyllum* and the East Coast native *R. maximum*. Fraser received the pollen of *R. maximum* from his good friend Joseph Gable of Stewartstown, Pennsylvania. When the resulting hybrid bloomed he collected seed and sent it to Gable. He planted the seed and when it bloomed he was quite taken with it. In the book, *Hybrids & Hybridizes* by Philip Livingstone and Dr. Franklin West, Gable is quoted as saying, "But some half dozen years ago in a thicket of 10 - 12 foot *maximums* I noticed a fine pink truss of flowers. Since the flower was so fine I immediately cut and dug and tore all plants and branches of *maximum* away that were touching or close to this plant, since then it has developed amazingly". This hybrid was initially designed 'Maximum #5', but later was named 'George Fraser' by Gable.

At the time there were two truly authentic plants of 'George Fraser' to exist. One of these grew in Gable's original garden in Stewartstown. The other was discovered in the Gable section of the rhododendron collection in the Tyler Arboretum at Lima, Pennsylvania. There Dr. West came across a huge plant of 'George Fraser' that Dr. John Wister had brought from Gable in the 1950's. Dr. West told myself of the plant when he attended the ARS convention in Victoria in 1989. It was arranged that Dr. West would get cuttings of the plant to Lynn Watts of Bellevue, Wash. When Lynn managed to root these he sent one to the Van Dusen garden in Vancouver and another to myself in Victoria. Mine is now about 8 feet tall and has bloomed for me although sparsely.

I have taken cuttings since and will be taking a plant of this to Ucluelet next year to be planted near the "Welcome to Ucluelet" sign.

The hybrid 'George Fraser' has touched the lives of several rhododendron growers who have received awards from the ARS. Both Fraser and Gable received the rarely given Pioneer Achievement Award. Gable was given the A.R.S. gold medal in 1953, Dr. John Wister was given the A.R.S. Gold Medal in 1961, Lynn Watts the A.R.S. Silver Medal in 1997. I received the Bronze Medal in 1989 and Dr. Frank West the Bronze Medal. A picture of this plant was on the front of the A.R.S. Journal, Spring issue, 2000.

Bill Dale

ROOTSTALK

BY INDUMENTUM

Scan through a book on landscaping and you will soon come across photographs of plant detail showing marvellous colour juxtapositions and harmonized foliage combinations. How is this done? At first glance it seems an impossible feat; to create that perfect picture of delicate laceleaf foliage combining so harmoniously with the white flecks of the tree bark in ten years time!

The answer is serendipity. The usual definition is the phenomenon of happy circumstance but it can also be defined as the luck some people have in finding or creating interesting or valuable things by chance. In the words of the self-help book "You Create Your Own Luck".

Applied to landscaping this means paying attention to structure and form rather than the detail of plant combinations. Once you have the bones of the landscaping in place the next step is to develop the "layered look" of tree canopy, shrubs, perennials and groundcover. This will be the basis for the serendipity that will now be happening all around the garden.

About 8 years ago we won a four inch 'Loderi Venus' in a two inch pot at a Fraser South raffle, one of the many plants donated by Les Clay over the years. We stuck it in the ground and forgot about it. Now it is a six foot high elegant plant and occupies a critical location at the junction of four paths in the garden. Another example of serendipity was provided by the rhododendron 'Babylon' that was outgrowing its spot and was moved to the bottom of the garden and placed for shade beneath boughs of a flowering cherry, *Prunus yedoensis* 'Akebono'. As it turned out, the rhodo and the tree flower at the same time and the colour combination is stunning as the flowering tree drapes puffy pink and white branches over the huge pastel pink flowers of the rhodo.

There does not seem to be an antonym for serendipity but you have to watch out for it nevertheless. If one crops up you have to be ruthless and move or remove the offending plant. It may be painful at the time but the rewards will be there for years to come.

Ever since we moved into our house we have struggled with landscaping the beds by the front door. We planted and then ripped out all sorts of plant combinations but nothing seemed to work. The problem, of course was the form and structure and once we got that right a couple of years ago, everything seemed to flow. Looking for places to put some *R. pachysanthum* seedlings, I planted a couple in the new front beds even though there is no shade and the sun is baking hot in front of the house. Thanks to serendipity they have thrived and the striking leaves and low growing form provide an interesting contrast to the other plants. Best of all we can enjoy the beautiful *pachysanthum* foliage year-round right by the front door!