

The Yak

Newsletter of **Fraser South
Rhododendron Society**



Volume 15

Number 3

March, 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 held in the **United Church Hall, Langley, 5673 200th St.**

7.30 p.m.

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Yakalendar



March 20, 2002

Note - we are reviving our 'pre speaker' informational chats: Colleen on companion plantings Vern for "Show and Tell" There will be plants - both rhodos and pertinent companions plants for sale. This month plants from Colleen Forster and Don Martyn **Speaker:** Dalen Bayes says he is handier with a shovel or a paddle than with words - but pictures will help !!

Saturday, March 23 Second Species Study Day (see page 2 for information)

Sunday, April 14, 2002 Mount Lehman Garden Club is sponsoring a bus tour to LaConnor WA for the Tulip Days - cost \$35, lunch and tour guide included - first come for further information Yvonne Holden 604 856 6994

April 17, 2002 FSRS regular meeting Speaker - Nancy Moore Landscape Design

March 20, 2002

Langley United Church

5673 - 200th

7:15 come early enough to check out the plants for sale
please support our growers who go to great effort to select and bring
suitable plants. This month: Don Martyn & Colleen

1. Colleen Forster - some companion plants
2. Vern Finley - what's in bloom in our garden

Speaker

Dalen Bayes

Arctic Adventures

Searching for the wild lapponicum

Sat. April 20, 2002

FSRS Parking Lot Truss Display & Plant Sale- United Church,
5673 200St., Langley
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sat. April 20, 2002

Langley Garden Club Sale
Fort Langley Community Centre
NB Diane Scott will be manning a table and selling plants for FSRS

Sat. & Sun. May 4&5, 2002

Vancouver R.S. Show
Vandusen Gardens
Sat. 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Sunday 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m.

May 9, 10, & 11, 2002 Milner Gardens Rhododendron Festival

Wed. May 15, 2002 Our Own Infamous Beer Bottle Truss Show with all the bells and whistles

Sat. May 18, 2002 Second Annual George Fraser Day 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Ucluelet

May 18, & 19, 2002 *FSRS Bus trip to Vancouver Island Gardens *see inside for further information

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
* see inside for further information

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February Meeting

Wasn't that a special meeting - lots of friendly and (talkative) people, lots of interesting plants, rhodos and others, the beginning of garden blooms from the Finley's garden, AND a most interesting presentation by Bill Dale. It was very fine indeed to see the Abkhazi Garden as made, and maintained by its creators; to see pictures of Peggy, Princess Abkhazi in her garden, and to have the pleasant background of piano music - so very appropriate to Peggy's life. Many, many thanks Bill.

* * * * *

Any of you who went on any of the Fraser South Garden Tours will remember the lovely garden of Fred and Ann Banford - with its 'dell' where 'big leaf' rhodos grow, and its BIG (for our part of the country !) *R. fulvum* near the house. This property is now being offered for sale - and you have the early opportunity to buy - prior to listing.

FOR SALE:

Beautiful private two acre retreat in Langley with many mature and old established rhododendrons including many fine species. 2,800 sq ft rancher. Ideally located

Contact Fred Banford
604 534 1783.

* * * * *

NB - Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden Newsletter (Jan.) and Seed List will be in the library. (if I can remember to take it there !-Ed)

Please Welcome

and add to your member-ship list: New member:

Yvonne Landry

108 20453 53 Ave.

Langley, BC

V4A 7A6

604 533 8282

also add

Rose Garlinski whose name I

managed to leave off the list -

(sorry Rose) -

6130 Glengarry Dr.

Sardis, BC

V2R 2H9

604 858 0402

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New for March (++)

THE NEW, THE TERRIFIC, TREMENDOUS "TOONIE TABLE"

(Yes - the ever popular dollar table has succumbed to the pressure of cost of living increases and has grown from a loony to a tooney) The "rules" remain the same - you are responsible for taking home again any of your offerings that fail to disappear into some one else's shopping basket. Any garden XTRAS are welcome - perennial divisions, xs bulbs or rhizomes, xs seedlings or cuttings, house plants, eggs, bacon, marmalade, cookies, bread, jewelry, under appreciated Xmas ties - we draw the line at used clothing (altho' a gardeners knee pads, or apron might be allowed)

Understood ?

NB New March issue of Rhododendron and Azalea Newsletter - lots of news, articles, and links.

RandA Newsletter:

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

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

SPECIES STUDY DAYS:

The next session in the Species Study Days will be held on March 23rd at the Rhododendron Species Foundation. Non registered participants are welcome to attend any of the remaining three sessions for the nominal cost of \$35.00 per session. Contact Mike Bale. (604 853 4100)

COACH TOUR VICTORIA May 18-19th.

This year the Vancouver and lower mainland rhodo tour will be to Victoria on the weekend of May 18th and 19th. The group will leave Vancouver early Saturday a.m. and travel to Sydney and will then visit four magnificent gardens. In the early evening the group will be hosted by the Victoria Chapter. On Sunday, the group will travel the Malahat highway and visit another four or five exquisite gardens and will be hosted by the Cowichan Chapter. The group will leave from Nanaimo returning to Vancouver late Sunday evening. The cost for the tour will be approximately \$145.00.

Please reserve as soon as possible and contact Mike Bale at 604 - 853-4100.

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NB Consider volunteering to help at one or other of the two sales we are involved in on Sat. April 20

1. Our own truss display and sale at Langley United Church - speak to Sue Klapwijk 604 888 0920
2. Langley Garden Club's Sale at Fort Langley old city hall - speak to Diane Scott 604 857 9116

Western Regional Conference

When - September 20-22, 2002

Where - New convention facility adjacent to Bellingham Hampton Inn, Bellingham WA.

Who - Hosts - District 2 Chapters - Cascade, Komo Kulshan, Pilchuck, Seattle, and Whidbey Island.

What - dessert social Friday evening,

- a full bevy of speakers Saturday
- banquet Saturday night
- hybridizers get - together Sunday.
- plant and book sales
- door prizes and
- raffles.
- garden and general interest tours possible, pre, during and post convention

Speakers include: Steve Hootman of the R.S.F., Don Wallace of Singing Tree Nursery who specializes in fragrant rhododendrons, Frank Fujioka, enthusiasts on Native Plants, Ferns, Ornamental Grasses, Pest Management - etc. etc. Obviously something of interest for everyone, and close enough for us to take it all in.

* * * * *



From the President

Every month since the Chapter's establishment twelve years ago our growers have generously supported the evening by bringing in plants for the raffle and for new members. We are deeply indebted, in particular, to Les Clay, Gordon and Vern Finley, Trevor Badminton and Colleen Forster. These generous members not only bring in plants but also buy raffle tickets and are sometimes in the absurd position of picking up their own plant! Please express your gratitude to these members by bringing in other items for the raffle, such as home baking or home canning which might benefit our growers.

On Wednesday, March 20th, Don Martyn will bring in some of his own carefully nurtured and critically reviewed seedlings for sale. Come early - 7:15 p.m. for preferred selection of plants. Plants for sale will include species grown from seed supplied by Peter Wharton following his plant exploration trip to China several years ago. Don will also bring some of his seedlings from his own hybridization efforts. Every plant will be unique and therefore of great sentimental value.

Please bring your friends!

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EXECUTIVE MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

Full details will be available at the March general meeting

1. The executive agreed to the concept of using surplus funds from the Chapter's activity to help reduce and subsidize annual fees

2. The executive discussed and were supportive of the possibility of hosting a Western Regional Conference in the Fraser Valley.

3. For the first time, two plant sales will occur on the same day. - April 20th. Sue Klapwijk will coordinate a plant sale at the United Church in Langley and Diane Scott will be hosting a plant sale at the community centre in Fort Langley. Please lend your support and help make these fund raising activities a success.

4. The possibility of a Chapter web site was discussed

5. A "loonie-twoonie" ("toonie?") table will be re introduced

6. It was agreed that the awards presentation should take place at the January meeting in order to recognize the efforts of volunteers during the preceding year.

7. It was agreed that any discount obtained by the librarian for bulk book purchases would be entirely directed to the purchaser. It was felt that this was a benefit of membership in the Chapter and not a fund raising activity.

8. Dalen Bayes is a member of Fraser South and also of Komokulsan and is actively involved in assisting with the Western Conference meeting to be held in Bellingham. Any assistance that you can give him would be greatly appreciated.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DISTRICT 1 PRESIDENT'S MEETING MARCH 3rd:

1. The Species Study Days received a very favorable report which prompted additional applications for participation.

2. concept of a regional endowment fund was approved

3. concept of a regional district meeting on an annual basis was approved

4. committee was awestruck by the possibility of holding two plant sales on the same day and spellbound with the notice that one of the sales is to begin at 6:00 a.m. (no no - the set up starts at 6.00 a.m. !! - Ed.)

Meeting adjourned and followed by very interesting tour of the Rhododendron Species section at VanDusen conducted by Gerry Gibbons.

UP THE GARDEN PATH

WITH NORMA SENN

When I lived in an apartment in Richmond, I only had a small balcony garden, so I wanted plants that would not take up too much room, but would provide color, fragrance, and if possible, a long season of interest. That's when I first started growing miniature roses. I simply fell in love with these dainty plants. I still grow miniatures, both in the garden and in containers on the patio.



Miniature roses come in white, red, yellow, pink, all the shades in between, even lavender ('Lavender Crystal'), and there are bi-colours and pinstripes. Over the last 25 years, there has been an explosion of interest in this rose class, and considerable breeding work has led to an amazing number of miniature rose varieties. Each year when I visit a couple of speciality nurseries or read their catalogues, I find new varieties that I would just love to grow.

The minis have the same basic growing requirements as all roses. They need full sun, a good garden soil that drains well, and an ample water supply during the growing season. However, in some ways, the minis are easier than hybrid teas and grandifloras because the miniatures are grown on their own root systems, so there is no need to worry about how to position the graft union at planting time. As well, because of their small size, for those of you living in colder parts of B.C., the minis can be mulched for winter protection. Or, if you have a cold frame or greenhouse, they are easily over-wintered.

As to hardiness, the minis have about the same range of winter hardiness as the hybrid teas. However, mini roses grow quickly and flower on new growth, so even for those of you who live in very cold parts of the province, you could buy a mini rose in the spring or early summer, enjoy a great summer-long display of blooms, and then replace it the following year. Most are reasonably priced, often under \$5.00 each.

When purchasing a mini rose, look for one with good healthy foliage and several shoots. Flowers are borne at the tips of new growth, so more shoots means more flowers. Most minis are sold in 10 cm pots, but they should be potted on to larger containers, or planted directly into the garden. For those I want to leave in pots, I usually pot into one gallon containers. The plants quickly increase in size, but can be maintained easily. With the larger container size, there is a bit of grace in watering since they do not dry out as fast as small ones.

For container roses, I use an outdoor potting mix, but I find most of the commercial preparations don't drain as well as I like, so I add coarse sand and/or perlite to the prepared mix. Depending on the mix I buy (or make), I may add a slow-release fertilizer like Osmocote when I make up the potting media each spring. However, some prepared potting mixes contain fertilizer, so check the label carefully to see if the

mix already contains some fertilizer or not. It is easy to inadvertently add too much fertilizer, and miniature roses are susceptible to fertilizer burn. Also, do not fertilize mini roses after about the first of August (you may need to adjust this time for various areas in the province). Fertilizing with nitrogen late in the summer can lead to a lot of new, soft succulent growth that may not harden off properly for winter. Since we want good flower production as well as vegetative growth, select a fertilizer suitable for roses, one that has some nitrogen, but also a good supply of phosphorous and potassium.

For minis planted in the garden, use a rose fertilizer, once or twice in the early part of the growing season. Again, do not fertilize them too late in the summer. Adjust the amount of fertilizer to the smaller plant size and water the fertilizer in well after each application.

Miniature roses should have spent flowers removed regularly. This will help the plants continue to bloom. When I remove faded flowers, I adjust how hard I cut back each stem based on the diameter of the stem. If the stem is fairly thick, I only cut back the spent flower to where the next strong, young shoot is developing. But, if the stem is thin, I cut it back hard. This follows the usual rule of thumb in cutting roses, the weaker the stem, the harder the cut. By the way, if you are doing some mini rose pruning, you might try rooting some of the stems. Some varieties root easily from softwood cuttings.

While they are all lovely, some mini roses can suffer the same problems as the hybrid teas and the two worst diseases are black spot and powdery mildew. However, this is very much variety dependent, so check label descriptions or with local garden centre staff to see if they can recommend varieties that are less likely to suffer from disease. Some varieties will also get aphids, although these are easily hosed off when watering. The mini moss rose varieties are covered in tiny green hairs which seem to deter aphids.

(continued Page 7)

Companion Plants



RODGERSIA

Family Saxifragaceae

Need a stunning perennial to make an architectural statement in your garden? The tropical looking foliage of the Rodgersia will stand out in any garden, and given rich deep soil, will do so for many years. Boldly pinnate or palmate leaves emerge in spring from rhizomes on strong stalks to 3 feet or so, and the large fluffy panicles of pink or white blooms appear in midsummer well above the foliage. Plant them next to a pond and enjoy the reflection, or mix with hostas and candelabra primulas in a woodland border. Shelter from hot sun and drying winds to keep the large leaves from damage.



**Rodgersia aesculifolia*

Best to do your shopping at specialist perennial growers to find *R. aesculifolia* - with 10 inch bronzed leaves like a horse chestnut, and creamy white blooms; *R. pinnata Superba* - purplish new foliage and bright pink blooms; or a smaller growing one, *R. tabularis* (now *Astilboides tabularis*) - with large green umbrella-like leaves and creamy blooms.

Divide the rhizomes in spring, or let the clumps spread to a magnificent 6 feet across if you dare, and stand back to enjoy this spectacular show of exotic beauty!

* both illustration are from the RHS Gardener's Encyclopedia of Plants & Flowers - with permission of the publisher Dorling Kindersley of London

RUSCUS

Family; Liliaceae

A curious plant, the Butcher's Broom - at first glance it looks like a thickety sort of evergreen shrub with lovely red berries in fall, but look closely - it's a lily! The "branches" are actually shoots arising from the rhizome, with spine tipped leaf-like appendages called cladophylls, which bear the flowers and berries right on the surface. I've seen large colonies of *R. aculeatus* in oak and pine forests in the south of England, the stems growing to about 3 feet, and covering an area of 6x6 feet or more. We cut armloads of them (with permission - Please!) to spray with metallic colors and arrange in large vases for Christmas decoration - stunning, and they last forever.

They are of stout constitution, so it's no stretch to imagine their one-time usefulness. Older stems die out after a few years, but are constantly replaced with fresh ones. The bright red berries appear in late summer after tiny inconspicuous green blooms, and last well into winter. They should not be eaten however, unless of course you like indigestion.

Give them a position in dryish shade, under an overhang or beneath a canopy of tree branches. The seeds can be planted as soon as they're ripe, and the rhizomes can be divided in spring.

An unusual plant, and won't be readily available, but is well worth the hunt. At first sight, even I toyed with the notion that it was a fake - almost plastic feeling, and what goof glued the berries right in the middle of the leaf!?



**Ruscus hypoglossum*

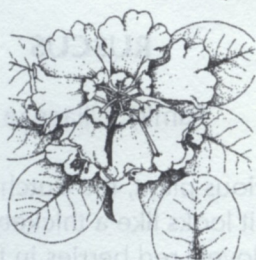
Happy Planting,

Colleen.



A Rhododendron Primer

Book 2



is for *uvarifolium*
Subsection Fulva

Rhododendron uvarifolium is grown, in particular, for its attractive foliage. Plants frequently have good displays of indumentum on the undersides of leaves. It is usually described as being silvery white, but it can range into shades of light brown. Leaf size is variable, ranging from as little as 7 cm to over 10 cm. Overall habit for the plant is also variable, as the height can range from just over 1 metre to over 10 metres in its native habitat. In the wild, the larger plants are definitely tree-like, and their trunks can reach a fair size in diameter. *R. uvarifolium* forms dense thickets as understory plants for pines and firs in its native range (southern Tibet).



R. uvarifolium
(courtesy Cox's Encyclopedia
of Rhododendron Species)

Flowers, which appear early in the spring, are usually described as pale pink, often with a blotch or spotting in the throat, but in its native range, flower colour can vary from almost white to deep rosy pink. Flowers don't appear until the plant is many years old.

The species name means having foliage like the genus *Uvaria*. This is an old-world genus of plants related to the eastern North American Paw paw tree.



is for 'Unique'

Norma Senn

probably a *R. campylocarpum* ssp *campylocarpum* hybrid
W. Slocock A.M.T. 1934, F.C.C. 1935
-5f/ -21c EM Low - Medium 3/4

'Unique' is one of the most widely used rhododendrons in the nursery and landscape trades.

It is a beautifully rounded, compact shrub, densely clad with glossy, dark green oblong leaves. A reliable bloomer, light green buds open into rounded trusses of flowers rosy in the bud, but quickly fading to pink-tinged cream.

This shrub is usually so clean that I was surprised to find powdery mildew on it. (Most other plants affected are also in the yellow shades) I have sprayed mine with fixed copper once, and will report on the results.



R. 'Unique'

Vern Finley

(continued from Page 4)

As for my favorite varieties, well, I just love them all. However, here are a couple of my all time favorites. First is 'Holy Toledo'. This is very easy to grow, and I have it planted in both the garden and in a large container. The flowers are a deep orange, the plant has excellent dark green foliage, and a strong, up-right habit. In the garden, it is about 75 cm tall. The flowers are often on stems long enough to cut for small arrangements, and it has some fragrance. Both 'Hot Tamale' and 'Poker Chip' are similar in habit and flower colour to 'Holy Toledo': all are very nice.

A couple of well-known varieties that have been around for many years are 'Rise and Shine' with lovely yellow flowers, and 'Beauty Secret' with deep red flowers. Both plants produce flowers that are exquisite in bud, then as the flowers open, they look exactly like tiny hybrid teas. 'Rise and Shine' does seem to be susceptible to black spot (typical of many yellow flowered roses). I don't bother to spray for black spot, so even if I have to buy a new plant every couple of years, I still give it room in my garden because the flowers are so bright and cheerful. 'Beauty Secret' seems to go on and on with only a few aphids to wash off now and then.

Among the pink flowered varieties that I like very much are 'Rieko' and 'Waterlily'. 'Rieko' has medium pink flowers, and is a strong growing plant. It is particularly well-adapted to growing in large containers. It has some fragrance and makes an excellent cut flower. 'Waterlily' has a large flower for a mini, and it is an exquisite shade of soft, pale pink. I have a plant of it growing in the garden, and it seems slower to set flowers each summer than the other minis, but it is always worth the wait.

This year, I finally splurged and bought two climbing miniature roses that I have admired for some time. 'Laura Ford' has golden yellow flowers, and the other variety I bought is 'Jeanne LaJoie' which has beautiful soft pink flowers. I have never grown any of the mini climbers before, but I understand they can reach several feet in height, and have repeat bloom. I've only had the plants for about a month, but they have already settled down and are growing good, healthy new canes. I will continue to train each of them up a small trellis, and both are planted to receive full sun. For the winter, I will mulch the cane bases for these two plants as I am not sure about their hardiness, and for miniature roses, they were fairly expensive. My expectation is that they will be lovely, but easily managed, climbers. I am looking forward to seeing them bloom.

The following article is part of an e-mail posted to the rhodo group on the net by Bill Spohn. Secretary of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

I spent a very enjoyable Saturday (Mar.2) at the Rhododendron Species Foundation with a group of other Canadians, in a course given by Steve Hootman.

We drove down early and convened at 10 AM for a preliminary lecture on rhodo classification and taxonomy, and then moved on to a very humbling experience indeed, where Steve gave groups of us a piece of a plant and we attempted to key it out using Cullen and Chamberlain.

I was at a table with quite experienced plantsmen (plantswomen?) like Vern Finley and Marty Irwin, who were tempted to leap right to what they thought it might be from experience, but when going step by step through a key, one quickly found that one wrong turn was fatal.

To our credit, one of the plants we attempted did NOT have the characteristic required by the key and Steve had to cheat and move us along to a later stage, from which point we successfully identified *R. dekatanum*, often confused with *sulfureum*.

My thought was that in this computer age, why do we need to rely on a twenty year old journal that makes a good but inherently flawed attempt to communicate in words what pictures could so easily convey? A computerised key with microphotographs of your glabrous style, for instance (why can't botanists just say "smooth"?) would enhance the chance of success no end!

A quick lunch was followed by a talk by Steve in the greenhouses and wandering here and there through the gardens - we were concentrating on *Grandia* and *Barbatum*. The chance to actually see the various species at the same time was wonderfully educational.

There is no better way to learn about species, and I commend it to any club that is inclined to organise such a course.

FSRS members: Many of you have e-mail capability. Please consider saving your chapter the cost of postage by accepting your copy of *The Yak* via pdf e-mail. Notify me at: empty@shaw.ca if you are willing, and confirm your own e-mail address. Thank you. Mike T.

ROOTSTALK

BY INDUMENTUM

They make movies that tell stories about baseball (The Natural), fishing (a River Runs Through It), mountaineering (K2) and cooking (Woman on Top) so why not about gardening? Well they do now. We recently rented the video Greenfingers, which is a dramatization of a supposedly true story about how a group of convicts in a low security prison in England take up gardening with so much enthusiasm and success that they go on to enter the Hampton Court Palace Flower Show.

Unfortunately most of the movie is pretty lame though Helen Mirren plays a wonderful part of Georgina Woodhouse, a horticultural expert in a big hat. Reviews that I have read say she overacted but if you know any of these types of women you will instantly recognize them in Helen Mirren's characterization.

I think the problem with the film is that they needed a real Georgina Woodhouse to advise the director. Most of the gardening scenes are unrealistic and border on the absurd such as when Ms. Woodhouse shouts to those pruning a wisteria to use caution as they might damage the plant. One thing about wisteria is that is impossible to harm it by pruning.

The most uncomfortable thing for a gardener watching this film is that there is a distinct lack of a sense of the passing of the seasons which, as we all know is the biggest influence on the gardener's planning and actions. It looks as if the whole movie was shot over a few hot weeks in August, so the scenes of spring planting take on an arid, anachronistic feel.

The funniest scene, which is probably not meant to be humorous is when the enthusiastic gardening conflicts with the less than enthusiastic but obligatory love interest. The winsome blonde gazes fondly up at the hunky convict-gardener and says "There's more to life than gardening you know." As if.

So in the end the guy gets the girl. The convicts win the top prize at the flower show. Helen Mirren gets to wear at least six different large flowery hats, and the fun of keeping track of them is well worth the price of a video rental.

FSRS 2002 Officers

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