



Fraser South Rhododendron Society 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.

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### FSRS 2002 Officers

Pres.- Mike Bale  
604 853 8839  
Vice Pres. - Colleen Forster  
604 534 1840  
Past Pres. & Treas. - Trev Badminton  
604 856 0046  
Sec. - Wendy Sellars  
604 535 0763  
Memb.Sect. - Wenonah March  
604 532 9062  
Newsletter - Mike Trembath  
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e-mail:empty@shaw.ca

### FSRS Committees for 2002

Library - Joan Bengough  
Membership - Wenonah March  
Programme - committee Colleen Forster, Dave Sellars, Norma Senn  
Publicity - Wenonah and Alan March  
Raffles - Dave Crabb  
Reception - Phil Anderson  
Refreshments - Diane Scott  
Ways and Means - Sue Klapwijk, Diane Scott

May 15, 2002

## Fraser South's Justifiably (In)Famous Beer Bottle Truss Show and Competition

For show rules and Classes see page 4  
Set up takes time, so come early



Yakalendar



### Wednesday May 16, 2002

5.30 maintenance at Ella's Garden - see note page 3

#### The Show

For those who:

- a) don't read their Yak
- b.) don't keep their Yak
- c.) wear out their Yak from xs reading - see page 4

**Will last year's trophy winners, please bring our marvelous awards for re-deployment to lucky new winners.**

Plants will be for sale from the Clay Nursery

### May 18-19, 2002

Bus trip - to South Vancouver Island.

### May 18, 2002

Second Annual Fraser Day

Ucluelet

### Visits to members' Gardens

#### Monday May 13, 2002

Dalen & Lori Bayes after 5 pm\*

#### Monday May 20, 2002

John and Gael Dodd "anytime after 2pm"\*

#### Monday May 27, 2002

Chris Ballyn after 5 pm\*  
\* directions in April Yak

#### Saturday May 25, 2002

Last Species Study Day  
Rhododendron Species Foundation Garden

### Sunday, June 23, 2002

#### Fraser South Picnic

3.00 p.m. at The Rhodo Ranch. Details in June Yak.

### September 18, 2002

Mark it on your calendar - FSRS's first meeting after the summer break

Programme - a "hands-on-all-you-need-or-want-to-know-about-propagating" (rhodos that is) by our resident experts.

### conventions 2002

#### May 17 - 19

Rhododendron Conference  
Edinburgh, Royal Botanic Garden

#### Sept. 20-22

Western Regional Conference  
Bellingham

**This close - we should ALL be able to go - every day**

Registration details in JARS

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### April Meeting

Pretty busy night wasn't it !! - but enjoyed by all I believe.

We were fortunate to have Nancy Moore as guest speaker. I personally found this humiliating - but then I don't have a garden - I have a collection of plants - and Nancy's caustic comments re "drifts of one" might have been directed at me personally. But I did learn quite a few things and should be able to appreciate garden design (in other gardens that is). In fact - I find myself looking with fresh eyes at houses and gardens as I drive by, trying to spot the intent and the means of achieving it.

I hope Bobby's discussion of "How to Produce Winning Trusses" hasn't scared you - you know his methods work since he wins lots and lots of classes. If you decide after all the *caveats* that you might really try hybridizing this year - good luck to you!

As usual the flowers from Vern's garden were many and beautiful. Our Toonie Table may have been small, but select. It will close until the autumn. Colleen had a parade of pieris - for all occasions.

The May meeting will have Les Clay selling plants, but we will be too busy with the BIG SHOW to do much else

#### **NB**

#### ELLA'S GARDEN

A work party will assemble at St. Andrew's Church at 5:30 prior to our monthly meeting to weed and upgrade the area dedicated to the memory of Ella Crabb. Garbage bags and tools will be provided.

I deeply regret having to inform you of the loss of two of our stalwart members

#### **Melba E. Johnson**

Melba E. Johnson, widow of Harold Johnson died April 16, 2002. In the years following Harold's death, Melba had remained an active member of Fraser South Rhododendron Society, and we all have cause to remember her regular production of 'goodies' to accompany the tea and coffee she helped to serve. In 1998 Fraser South Chapter awarded Melba the Memorial Award named for Harold, in recognition of her contributions to the chapter. As her health deteriorated, Melba gave up the chore of looking after "coffee and calories" but she continued to take part in meetings and social gatherings. In fact, Melba was present at our February meeting to hear Bill Dale's story of the Abkhazi Garden. We shall miss the warmth and friendliness she always displayed.

#### **Leonard C. Bengough**

After a long and difficult period of failing health, Len Bengough died April 19, 2002

I must express my admiration for the bravery and grace with which Len and Joan faced these past years, accepting the inevitable outcome, but determined to continue as full a life as possible. Active in the American Rhododendron Society in the Vancouver Chapter as well as Peace Arch Chapter and Fraser South Chapter, Len's presence was much appreciated. He acted as Book Chairman for Vancouver Chapter for several years, producing a consistently large and well organized display of books to tempt members into reading, or buying.

As for Fraser South - we somewhat facetiously said - "Hey Len - you're a consulting engineer, how about you design (and build) a book-case-cum-library for us - portable, but secure"

Well, Len did just that, and we are the fortunate possessors of not only a strong and servicable library 'cart' but a most attractive one as well.

We will miss many aspects of Len's membership in our chapter, not the least of which is the manner in which an entire room could light up with the warmth of his wonderful smile.

## The President's Page

### **VOLUNTEER NEEDED!**

Diane will be away for the June picnic this year and is unable to coordinate solicitation of items for the auction. This is perhaps one of our major fund-raisers and the day is a great source of fun and social activity. We are in desperate need for someone to volunteer to coordinate the requests for donations to the auction. Your contribution is much needed and will be much appreciated

### **VAN DUSEN GARDENS:**

The executive at Van Dusen's have written to advise that they have canceled their plans to organize a marching band contest due to a lack of facilities and, instead, plan to host a folk festival. Volunteers are still needed

### **HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE MEETING**

A motion to financially support the Peter Wharton expedition, the RSF internship and the (BC Council of Garden Club's) scholarship programme for local Colleges to the tune of \$500.00 each was moved and accepted unanimously. This motion will be presented to the Chapter for approval.

An unanimous vote of support was given to Chris Klapwijk to establish a Chapter website. Much work has already been done and the site is now operational.

Plant sales organized for April 20, 2002 by Sue Klapwijk and Diane Scott realized a substantial profit.

**WANTED:** videotape of garden show  
"Waterloo Garden - Hostas"

The garden show had a wonderful presentation of a garden in Waterloo totally devoted to hostas. The program was extremely well presented with much practical and detailed information regarding the growing of hostas both in the ground and in containers. Please advise Mike Bale if any one has managed to record this programme as it was truly exceptional and we would all benefit from reviewing the material.

### **VANCOUVER ISLAND BUS TRIP**

Do you still have a hankering to go? - IF you act immediately - there might be room for a couple. These trips are becoming a yearly event anticipated with delight by those previous travellers. Phone Mike Bale 604 853 4100

\* \* \* \* \*

### **GIFT**

Fraser South Rhododendron Society is deeply grateful to the family of Melba and Harold Johnson who have donated to our Library the entire collection of Harold's gardening library. This includes, as you may well imagine, most of the best treatises on rhododendrons, their taxonomy, their culture and care. In addition there are a number of other gardening books of considerable interest. These will be placed in our Library with a special book plate to mark them as from Harold's Library. By September you will be able to make use of this very generous gift from the Johnson family.

\* \* \* \* \*

Watch for the appearance of a new title in the library - this is a book written by Susan Murray, one of our members, about Heritage Trees in the Fraser Valley.

**FSRS WEB SITE**

<http://www.flounder.ca/frasersouth/index.asp>

Do go visit the site. Sign in and add your comments and suggestions



## Ninth Annual



### Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show

The world famous Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show will be held at our May meeting.

This is a fun event and the key is member participation. We will be making a number of changes to the rules to encourage everyone to join in.

1. Entry to the hall will be by bringing at least one truss. This doesn't have to be a rhododendron.
2. There will be three areas for displaying trusses:
  - a. the competitive area as before
  - b. non-competitive rhododendron trusses
  - c. companion plant displays.
3. For the competitive event, participants will be allowed to **enter only one truss in each class** (see description of classes below).  
Additional trusses can be displayed on the non-competitive table.
4. To assist in deciding which class to enter, an Advisory Panel will provide guidance and make any final decisions necessary.
5. All trusses must be in **glass** beer bottles. Cans (and plastic pop bottles) are too unstable.
6. Judging will be by member votes as before.

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### CLASSES

#### Division I Species

- Class 1. Rhododendron ( lepidotes )
- Class 2. Azalea ( includes pentathera & tsutsui )
- Class 3. Hymenantha ( elepidotes )

#### Division II Hybrids

##### Lepidote Hybrids

- Class 4. Any lepidote hybrid

##### Azalea Hybrids

- Class 5. Deciduous Azalea
- Class 6. Evergreen Azalea

### lepidote Hybrids

\* NB - Small - 6" or under. Large - 6" - 10". really, really BIG - over 10"

#### Colour Classes

- Class 7a: Red - (small)
- 7b: Red - (large)
- Class 8a: White - (small)
- 8b: White - (large)
- Class 9a: Pink - (small)
- 9b: Pink - (large)
- 9c: Pink - (really really big )
- Class 10a: Yellow & Cream (small)
- 10b: Yellow & Cream (large)
- Class 11: Mauves & Purple
- Class 12: Orange
- Class 13: Bi-colour

### Division III

#### Special Classes

- Class 14: What's it Called - best new non-registered hybrid - a special class for the hybridizer
- Class 15: Best Truss with the best Fuzzy Foliage
- Class 16: Best Blotched \*
- Class 17: Best Speckled \*
- Class 18: Most lurid \*
- Class 19: Best last year's truss
- Class 20: Most Elegantly Weevil-Notched
- Class 21: Best Hammerhead \*
- Class 22: Most Flaccid
- Class 23: Best Miniature Truss - any colour (under 6")
- Class 24: Most Fragrant ( Az. or Rh )

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#### \* Definitions :

- 1 'Blotch' - each individual flower to show on dorsal lobe ( or three lobes) a solid colour mark distinctly differing from the base colour of the flower.
2. 'Lurid' - most vividly garish
3. 'Hammerhead' an inflorescence which arises from more than a single flower bud
4. 'Speckled' distinguished from blotches by non-solid colour sprinkles and spots either around entire flower, or at least on upper lobe(s) - eg. 'Paprika Spiced'

## TAXUS versus THUJA

# Companion Plants



The age-old question "What should I plant for a hedge?" has never been more important than in today's world of increasing population and need for privacy. If obnoxious neighbors, high traffic noise or shelter from weather are your concerns, then a hedge is certainly an option and properly planned, can be a useful and integral part of your garden. However, if you think you must rush out and buy up a wagonload of Emerald Cedars (*Thuja occidentalis Smaragd*), and that will fix everything, then think again!

First off, they're BORING, and grossly overused. Why would you want something that 50,000 other homes in your town have already planted? Sure they're cheap and easy to grow – so is English Ivy, but do we all have to have some? "But I have no time for trimming" you say. Well guess what – Life takes time, so do it.



Thuja vs Taxus



A hedge is supposed to be a frame for your garden 'picture', not a blank canvas. Use it to set off or expand other plantings. It should not jeopardize the security of your home. Look at some other plant options, the Yews (*Taxus baccata cvs.*) for example. They have a lot of character, come in various shapes, and shades of green and gold, are slow growing and not prone to pests. They adapt well to sun or part shade, and are easily trimmed, as the gardens in many European cities can attest. Sure they're a bit more expensive, but certainly well worth it.

Consider other varieties of cedars (*Thuja occidentalis cvs* and *Thuja plicata cvs*) that come in different colors and sizes. "But I only have a small yard" you say. So a 6ft wall of dark green

around is going to make it seem bigger? I think not – maybe you don't want a hedge all – a mixed border with color and texture and varying heights will achieve the same screening effect and be far more appealing.

Now if you're still sure you need a conifer hedge – here are a few simple guidelines. It won't materialize overnight, so give the plants ample room to develop. Prepare the soil well (you want this to be there a good while), and trim lightly and regularly, even from an early age. Badly overgrown plants can rarely if ever be rejuvenated. Feed carefully – you want good color but not rank growth. Plan other plantings to compliment it, but not squashed up against it – conifer foliage goes brown easily if crowded.

With a bit of thought and planning, a hedge can be a lovely thing, even a conifer one if you must, but above all, don't be boring and predictable. (Thanks for allowing me this bit of a tirade – and this is just my opinion!)

And on a lighter note, during a recent garden tour, I was surprised to notice, as if for the first time, a clump of *Trollius* (Family: Ranunculaceae). The Globeflowers, in shades of primrose, yellow, gold and tangerine, are clump forming herbaceous perennials for cool temperate gardens – perfect for us. What struck me as so interesting was the way the blooms were



*Trollius 'Cheddar'* emerging – like curious little yellow antennae from tidy mounds of intricately divided leaves. They come with single or double blooms, can naturalize nicely beside water features or in mixed borders, but are not invasive. Clumps can be divided in spring, are generally free of pests, and prefer soil not to dry out. Many named varieties exist and range from 15 inches to 3ft tall. Cheery flowers in April and May, and if deadheaded, could be coaxed to bloom again.

Happy Planting

Colleen

# A Rhododendron Primer

## Book 2



is for williamsianum

### SUBSECTION WILLIAMSIANA

*Rhododendron williamsianum* is a lovely choice for any garden. It has a neat, compact, rounded habit, beautiful bronze-coloured new foliage and bell-shaped flowers. Flowers appear between late April through early May. The flowers usually have deep pink buds that open to pale pink flowers, but there are white flowered forms too.



*R. williamsianum*

*R. williamsianum* has distinctive leaves that are rounded and usually heart-shaped (cordate) at the base. Mature foliage is medium green above, pale underneath and as mentioned above, new leaves are a lovely deep bronze colour.. This species is best grown in an open site to encourage the neat mounded habit and good flower production. However, avoid planting in frost pockets as the flowers open early enough to be vulnerable to late frosts.

in the RSFG, Apr. '02

*R. williamsianum* has been used extensively in hybridizing, and locally, two of its most popular offspring, are 'Bow Bells' and 'Moonstone'. It is native to high elevations (2500 to 3000 m) in Szechuwan, China. In time, it can reach a height of up to 1.5 meters. According to P. Cox, in Dwarf Rhododendrons, *R. williamsianum* has some tolerance to soils with higher pHs than we normally recommend for Rhododendrons.

Norma Senn



is for 'Winsome'

'Hummingbird' x *griersonianum*

Lord Aberconway - introduced 1939

A.M. 1950

-18c

EM - M

Low -Medium

3/4



R. 'Winsome'  
photo courtesy  
W. Spohn

A rounded dwarf plant with dark green, oblanceolate leaves with a light green midrib and light tan indumentum on the lower surface. The new growth is bronze. Buds are red in colour.

In sunny locations this plant is very floriferous, covering itself with masses of rosy-cerise funnel-shaped flowers in loose trusses.

A very pretty plant in borders, and easy to maintain.

Vern Finley

Report on the changed 'design' of the Rhododendron Primer Page: Having used, quite incorrectly, the lovely line drawings from H.H. Davidian's books on the Species Rhododendron, I have been trying to right the wrong. Last month I received reluctant permission from Timber Press to use these illustrations, but on a 'one time' basis. Since then I have received a letter from Mr. Davidian giving his permission to use these illustrations, but asking that I also ask Timber Press. I have been unsuccessful in recent attempts to communicate with Timber Press, and so felt that I must withdraw the illustrations.

Your very disappointed editor

See page 8 - Indumentum's visit to CapeTown's Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden



'Silver Tree'



*Leucadendron argenteum*

## John Blair and George Fraser's Beacon Hill Park's Scottish Heritage

by Bill Dale

Victoria B.C. certainly earns its name of 'Canada's Garden City'. Much of the credit for this must go to two Scottish gardeners. When this stone was dedicated in 1999, Louise Milman, John Blair's great, great, granddaughter placed a wreath of heather by it..

In 1889, John Blair, landscape architect, who had designed many of the first parks in Chicago, Illinois, prior to the American Civil War, and in Colorado Springs, Colorado, won the competition to design and build Beacon Hill Park in Victoria, B.C. There is also a living monument to these two friends in the form of a giant rhododendron plant still thriving after more than a century. It appears to be one plant, but is actually a clump of five individual plants. It grows near the upper end of the stream joining Fountain Lake with Goodacre Lake.

He was paid \$25,000 to do the job, and as it turned out for the City, this was a bargain.

The first thing that Blair did was to hire another Scot, George Fraser, as his Foreman. Followed by a succession of capable park superintendents and dedicated workmen and women, who adhered to Blair's basic plan, we have in Victoria today, one of the most beautiful parks in the world. When Peter Cox, the noted Scottish plant explorer and writer, viewed it a few years ago, he confirmed that it was indeed R. "Cynthia".

Blair ordered 600 shrubs and trees from the firm of Thomas Meehan and Sons of Germantown, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. Fraser supervised the planting of these, and they would be the backbone of this horticultural wonderland. In the 112 years since being planted, most of the name tags have been lost. This rhododendron is believed to be among the first hybrid rhododendrons to have been planted in British Columbia. The lower stems of these R. "Cynthia" are all gnarled and twisted, but each April they put on a display of bright red blooms, as they have done for more than one hundred years.

It is a truly living memorial to two of British Columbia's first landscapers, John Blair and George Fraser.

We do have a few reminders of the Scots, who became life long friends. There is a bronze plaque on the Stone Bridge designed by Blair that says, "this rustic medieval bridge was constructed in 1889 as part of John Blair's landscape design for Beacon Hill Park". There is also a sign on one of the islands in Goodacre Lake naming it "Blair Island."

This article was published by the Victoria Historical Society, and appears here with kind permission of the author.

There is a small stone near the bridge over the stream from Fountain Lake to Goodacre Lake honouring George Fraser.

# ROOTSTALK

BY INDUMENTUM

From Cape Town, South Africa

So what is there to do when you have 24 hours in Cape Town between plane connections? Well you can rent a car pretty cheaply (the Rand is even more depressed than the Canadian dollar) and head out over the slopes of Table Mountain which rises a stunning 1000 m over the city. The coast road towards the Cape of Good Hope is spectacular; so dramatic that parts of it have fallen away and you cannot pass. But if you are looking for a nice place for a walk in an attractive setting there is no place better than Kirstenbosch, one of the world's great botanical gardens.

Set on the east slopes of Table Mountain, this 530 hectare garden was founded in 1913 and is the first botanical garden in the world to be devoted to indigenous plants. The Cape Flora comprise about 6,000 species that are unique to the southern tip of Africa which is outside the Tropics but where the temperature never drops below zero Celsius.

The plants are so unfamiliar that the first impression entering the garden is that you are on another planet. The garden is full of strange exotic foliage and bizarre flowers such as Protea that are just coming into bloom even though fall is well underway in the southern hemisphere. The flowering season in this strange upside down world is in the winter when the majority of the rainfall is received and the plants are stimulated into flower. The summers are too hot and dry for plant growth.

As a photographer one is always conscious of the position of the sun. I postponed one shot because of the glare and decided to wait for the sun to move. Coming back to the same place an hour later I was startled to find the sun position was now worse. It took me a while to work it out. We are so used to the sun moving from left to right that I had not realized that the sun moves from right to left in the southern hemisphere.

Despite the meticulous maintenance, the beautiful setting and the excellent landscape design, the plants did not seem that appealing. Maybe they were too unfamiliar and so different from our northern garden culture that is built around species that need a cold winter. There are no rhododendrons at Kirstenbosch though there are some indigenous Erica. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating place to go for a walk and enter a totally different gardening world.

(Pictures page 6)