



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 2002 Officers

Pres.- Dr. Mike Bale
604 853 8839
Vice Pres.- Colleen Forster
604 534 1840
Sec. - Wendy Sellars
604 535 0763
Treas. - Trev Badminton
604 856 0046
Directors - Dalen Bayes
Norma Senn
Wenonah March
Newsletter - Mike Trembath
Phone & fax 604 856 7261
e mail: empty@shaw.ca
Fraser South Rhododendron Society Mailing Address
P.O. Box 93042
Willowbrook Post Office,
Suite 135, 19705 Fraser Highway,
Langley, BC
V3A 7E0

Bill Dale is requesting large rhodos for the Ucluelet garden. If you can help - let Mike Bale know.

October 16, 2002, 7.30 p.m.
Jennifer Ryan
former manager of the GVRD compost demonstration garden
“Good Composting Techniques for the Home Garden”
and
“Vermiculture”
Companion Plants - Colleen Forster
Plant Sale - selected species - Harold Fearing
Show and Tell - Vern Finley



Yakalendar



SITES OF INTEREST

- ☸ October 16, 2002
Regular meeting FSRS
Speaker: Jennifer Ryan
special plants for sale - species rhodos, companion plants
Twoonie table
- ☸ November 20, 2002
Regular meeting
Speaker: Paige Woodward of Pacific Rim Native Plant Nursery
- * November 8, 2002
Burns Bog Conservation Society
14th Anniversary celebration
Firehall Centre for the Arts,
11489 - 84th Ave., Delta.
Tickets \$12 in advance, \$14 at the door
- ☸ December 18, 2002
Christmas Party
Langley United Church Hall

- 1. ARS Home Page:**
<http://www.rhododendron.org>
- 2. RandA Newsletter:**
<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 information on both species and hybrids.
- 3. Fraser South Web Site**
<http://www.flounder.ca/frasersouth>

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September Meeting

Does every window sill, or refrigerator top now have its quota of miniature 'hot houses' - full of hopeful cuttings, or even more hopeful sprouting seed? You realize, of course that FSRS is counting on your surplus plants for sales or prizes 'down the road'. I am sorry to have missed all this good information.

* * * * *

The time has come - for me to say farewell (hoo boy - doesn't that sound smaltzy!) This will be the last Yak I will put together for you - tho' I am sure you will continue to hear me yak at meetings! I have enjoyed the challenge of the newsletter, but it is time for a change. I have had a ball finding illustrations, arm twisting reluctant writers, battling with computer programmes and printers. It has been a very interesting seven years. I am enormously indebted to faithful contributors, - it is your input that has given the Yak its character. Your new editor will be looking for, and am sure will find, continued support.

I wish to acknowledge a very special debt of gratitude to Wendy Sellars who has, on more than one occasion, rescued me from total meltdown over my lack of computer-publishing knowhow.

I have every confidence in your new editor, Brenda Macdonald, who comes on board as a very enthusiastic and knowledgeable rhodo lover.

NOW READ THIS!



It is now that time of year again. Yes---time to renew your membership. I know some of you whimper -"but membership is based on the calendar year and it's only Oct" - you are quite correct. Membership IS based on the calendar year BUT our parent organization - The American Rhododendron Society (long may she sail) - requires our membership dollars in advance of year end. If you think of the length of processing time:

1. you to our membership secretary - 2.to our treasurer - 3.to the 'money changers' 4.to the ARS Office and on 5.to the mailing list for the ARS Journal - you can see why we need to get to it. It is not economical to process each membership individually, so the more of you that are snappy payers, the sooner we can square the ARS, and you won't miss an issue of the Journal. This year, as your president will explain in his notes - your dues are being subsidized by this chapter!!!! - so the deal is better than ever. In fact, it is so good that we urge those of you who remain as Local Members to become full blown members and receive all the benefits of ARS membership.

From the President

October Plant Sales:

Harold Fearing - first time offerings of rare and hard to find seed grown species. Each plant will be unique and has the potential for greatness. These plants cannot be found anywhere else Make sure you come early for best selections.

Colleen Forster - companion plants



The Executive is extremely pleased to announce that Brenda Macdonald has volunteered to assume the onerous responsibility of Newsletter Editor. Brenda has been a keen supporter of the Chapter's activities and has participated in the garden tour to Victoria and to the Species Study Days. She is keen, conscientious and willing to do her utmost to provide the membership with an interesting and informative newsletter. Please extend a warm welcome and your gratitude to her at the next meeting.

Further Notes from Your President

Membership Fees: it is time to renew our membership fees. Your cooperation in forwarding payment as soon as possible will greatly assist Wenonah, Membership Chair. This year, the full membership has been reduced by \$5.00 to reflect the Club's success in raising funds. With continued effort and enthusiasm it should be possible to reduce the cost of membership further and who knows, in a perfect situation, we might all become members free of charge!

Visits: As everyone recalls, the Victoria & Cowichan Chapter were especially helpful in arranging a tour to the Island this past spring and next year the Victoria Chapter is hoping to visit gardens in Vancouver and the lower mainland. Dates and details are to be confirmed, but at the present time the Victoria group will be reviewing the possibility of visiting on the weekend of May 10th and 11th, 2003.

Cloverdale Rodeo and Exhibition Organization has invited registered garden clubs in the lower mainland and Fraser Valley to participate in a garden display competition on May 16th, 2003 at the exhibition site. Prizes will be awarded for the best displays in the amount of \$500 first prize, \$300 second prize and \$200 third prize. The site allocated for each garden will be approximately 10ft x 15ft. Approximately 70,000 people are expected to attend the event. Participating in this venture would afford the Chapter a wonderful opportunity for recruitment and for displaying the objects of our passion. If you have an interest in participating please let me know.

Fraser South Rhododendron Society – "A History – The First Ten Years" A copy of this delightful bulletin prepared by Mike Trembath will be available at the next meeting. The document details many of the Chapter's activities during the past ten years and makes delightful reading. It is hoped that new members will find the document of great interest and provide some background to the Chapter's earlier activities and some of the characters who helped to establish the Chapter.

Plans for the Species Study Days and Portland Trip are going ahead as there seems to be sufficient support. At this time, seven additional members from Victoria have indicated an interest in participating in the Species Study Days. Please remember that the maximum number the RSF can accommodate is 30. If you are interested, please let Mike Bale know as soon as possible.

Many thanks are due to Diane Scott for looking after our taste buds and comforting our stomachs at the last meeting!



On September 20 my daughter Ellen Rothwell drove me to Bellingham where we attended the Western Regional Conference of the ARS. We picked up our registration folder with goodies enclosed, and found our way to the 'dessert social'. On entering the room our first glance spotted a table of smiling faces from our own club. Our President Dr. Mike Bale and wife Patty, then Janet and John Warner, Mary Anne Berg, and Norma Senn. The speaker for the evening was Victoria's Bill Dale with slides of Princess Abkhazi's garden. Next day we met Les Clay and Sandy Paul wandering through the plant sale which was set up around the swimming pool.

Saturday morning we attended three lectures in a very crowded room. "Rhododendron Species in the Garden", "Fragrant Rhododendrons in the Garden", and "Rhododendron Blooms Through the Year". Each talk was illustrated with beautiful pictures. The banquet Saturday night was well attended. We sat at a table with a very friendly couple, Jack and Ann Root, who invited us to visit their garden in the east end of Bellingham. The speaker for the evening was Brian Minter who, as usual, gave a very interesting talk.

Sunday morning we found our way to the Sylvan Gardens of Ann and Jack Root who showed us around their newly planted .05 acres of mostly azaleas. They were very interested in our club and showed an interest in visiting us.

Sunday we made our way home feeling very happy with our weekend visit, having met new friends and seeing again friends from previous conferences.

Lillian Emerson

DOGWOODS

UP THE GARDEN PATH

WITH NORMA SENN

Dogwoods are among my favorite trees and shrubs. They are especially versatile in gardens because they offer more than one season of interest. They have lovely flowers, interesting bark, beautiful fruit, and good fall color. As well, dogwoods tend to be well-behaved in the landscape, and if well-situated, do not require large amounts of maintenance.



In British Columbia, the dogwood that immediately comes to mind is our provincial floral emblem and native tree, the Western Flowering Dogwood, *Cornus nuttallii*. In the wild, *C. nuttallii* is usually found growing along the edges of woodland openings where they get dappled shade for much of the day. Trees can be grown in more open sites, but the tender bark on the trunk needs to be shaded from direct sun, so in open, sunny garden areas, leave lower branches on trees to protect the bark. *C. nuttallii* is native to mild coastal regions from British Columbia to California. It is only hardy to Zone 7, so it is not found growing inland. They can grow to a height of 15 metres, and tend to have a tall, spire-like habit in the wild. When grown in more open areas, like gardens or parks, the tree's habit is denser and more rounded.

Our native dogwood is especially beautiful in the spring when it flowers. The true flowers are really the dark floral centers which contain the stamens and pistils. They are surrounded by four to eight petal-like bracts. We call each center plus the surrounding bracts a flower. In April, just as the leaves are beginning to expand, the small, pale green bracts begin opening, gradually expanding and changing to clear white by mid-May. At full flowering, the white flowers make a lovely display against the new green foliage. The main flower display is in spring, but plants will often produce some flowers again in September. Attractive dark red fruits, about the size of a strawberry are also produced in September. The fruits are edible, although they are not what I would call palatable, and are best left for the local birds. As well, *C. nuttallii* has good fall leaf color.

The second, well-known flowering dogwood native to North America is the Eastern Flowering Dogwood, *Cornus florida*. This, along with the Redbud Tree, *Cercis canadensis*, makes the mountains of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina famous for their spring-time beauty. *C. florida* is a very popu-

lar garden tree in many areas of BC because the spectacular white to dark pink flower displays makes this truly a choice specimen tree. *C. florida* can ultimately grow to about 10 metres in height, although it is usually much smaller. It has good fall colour and can have attractive red fruits in the fall.

I particularly like the branching pattern of *C. florida* as it is layered in habit, and in the winter, the distinctive, smooth grey bark is very noticeable. It is considerably hardier than *C. nuttallii*, and in sheltered areas, can be grown into Zone 5, and possibly Zone 4. Like *C. nuttallii*, *C. florida* needs well-drained, acid soils rich in humus. There are many named cultivars available of *C. florida*.

There is a famous hybrid between *C. nuttallii* and *C. florida* that was created by BC nurseryman, Mr. Eddie. The hybrid, 'Eddie's White Wonder' combines the best attributes of both of its parents. It has exceptionally large, rounded white bracts in May, excellent fall color and nice plant habit. It does not form fruit though. The story goes that Mr Eddie had just moved one plant, the one that became the source of all of the 'Eddie's White Wonders' from his nursery fields located adjacent to the Fraser River in the Valley to his retail nursery yard in Vancouver. That spring, the Fraser River flooded, and Mr. Eddie lost all of his stock at the nursery growing site. However, since he had the one tree in Vancouver, he was able to propagate it by grafting scion wood onto seedling rootstocks. It is now readily available in the south coastal area.

Another lovely, large flowering dogwood tree is *Cornus kousa*, the Japanese Dogwood. This species is the last to bloom, with flowers appearing in mid to late June. Like *C. nuttallii* and *C. florida*, it is the large, petal-like bracts that make this such a showy plant. The bracts are long and distinctly pointed in shape. As well, depending on the soil, the bracts may also develop a decidedly pinkish cast as they age. *C. kousa* has bright green foliage during the summer which changes to a lovely scarlet red in the fall. The branching habit is layered horizontally so that even though it is deciduous, it makes an attractive landscape plant in the winter. In the fall, it can have the rounded dark-red fruit typical of the large-flowering dogwoods. It can reach about 7 metres in height.

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VIBURNUM

Companion Plants

Family: Caprifoliaceae



A large and varied genus, the viburnums play an important role in landscaping in most of the temperate world, adding pizzazz with fragrance, colorful berries and fabulous fall colors. They come in sizes from low thicket-y shrubs to small trees, and leaf forms from simple to lobed, glossy evergreen to roughly tomentose. The blooms, in shades of pink and white, range from intoxicating sweetness to ‘old gym shoe’ fragrance, in shapes of snowball, lacecaps, and flat topped clusters. The fall colors come in yellows to golds, thru orange and scarlet to crimson and burgundy. Berries appear in large clusters of yellows or reds, even black, blue and turquoise! Is it any wonder with this much diversity, that I feel no garden should be without at least one? Any time of year there is something of interest.

Impossible to pick a favorite, but there are a few I think that deserve more attention. For nose appeal, I choose *V. juddii*, a *V. carlesii* hybrid from the Arnold Arboretum. A delightful fragrance from pinky white pompoms of blooms fills the air in April and May, and it is not as prone to aphid disfigurement as many others of this parentage. A tidy shrub, growing to about 4ftx5ft, with dark green foliage that colors to red tones in fall.



Viburnum x juddii

For bloom appeal, I choose *V. plicatum tomentosum Mariesii*, the Double File Viburnum, named for the knock-out display of white lacecap blooms that grace the length of tiered horizontal branches in May and June. Give this girl some space, as she can spread to 8 ft or more with a 6ft height, and the effect in flower is outstanding even from a distance, like snow in sum-

mer! Fall colors will be flame shades if given enough exposure

V. "Mariesii" in fall colour



For berries, I choose *V. opulus Compactum*, The European Cranberry Bush, with its white lacecap blooms and maple-like leaves. When the large clusters of berries ripen to a shiny scarlet red, it's almost



V. opulus Compactum

as if the plant blooms again. They last well into the winter, long after the excellent display of yellow to orange-red leaves falls. A note though – this plant needs a supply of even moisture to thrive, unlike others that can tolerate a wide range of conditions.

There are many others of great merit, but some I feel are overused to the neglect of others. As a general rule, they are quite adaptable, requiring only average soil and moisture. Some, such as *V. rhytidophyllum* and *V. Pragensis*, can brave full exposure to wind and sun: others make marvelous winter flowering hedges, as in selections of *V. tinus*. The foliage of evergreen types lasts well in winter floral arrangements, and berry clusters are very attractive also.

Pay close attention on garden tours, check plant centers, arboretums and show gardens, and I guarantee you will find one or possibly quite a few to suit your garden and your lifestyle.

Happy planting,

Colleen

A Rhododendron Primer

Book 2



is for yunnanense

SUB SECTION TRIFLORA
YUNNANENSE ALLIANCE



Rhododendron yunnanense is native to a large area of Asia, from Burma and Tibet through Yunnan and Szechwan in China. As you might expect of a plant with such a large range, there can be a lot of variation within this species.

The plant typically has a willowy habit that is excellent for massed plantings. It grows best in partial shade, so is a good choice for woodland gardens. Plants are described as being fully evergreen to semi-deciduous, meaning there can be pronounced leaf abscission in the fall, although plants retain some foliage in the winter.



R. yunnanense "Tower Court"
form (in my garden Ed.)

In bloom, *R. yunnanense* is a cloud-like mass of flowers from early to mid-May. The entire plant is literally covered with open, funnel-shaped flowers that can be white through various shades of pinks to pale lavenders. White flowers are frequently spotted with red. Leaves can reach up to 10 cm in length and have scales on both the upper and lower leaf surfaces. *R. yunnanense* commonly reaches a height of up to 2 metres in our gardens, but in the wild it can be twice that height. It is reliably hardy to -17°C making it an excellent choice for local gardens.

Norma Senn



is for "Yeti"

('Fawn' X 'Crest') X sibling

Seeds of this hybrid were distributed
by Carl Phetteplace in 1972

An exceptionally beautiful rhododendron. When in bloom, the dark green leaves are nearly obscured by somewhat round trusses of large, rather flat faced, snowy white flowers. Every branch tip seems to carry a flower truss. To date, the prolific bud set has occurred every year.



"Yeti"
(in my garden Ed.)

Vern Finley

Cornus mas, the Cornelian Cherry Dogwood, is the last of the four species of dogwood trees that are commonly grown in B.C. However, this species differs from the preceding trees because rather than having large, showy flowers, it has masses of small, yellowish-green flowers that envelop the tree in March. It is a true harbinger of spring. Beautiful ruby-red, elongated fruits appear in August. Birds adore the fruit, but if you can save enough to harvest, they make a gorgeous and tasty clear, red jelly. During the summer, *C. mas* has a dense crown of bright green leaves. It will develop yellow fall color, and the bark is attractive during the winter. It is hardy to Zone 4, and can reach a height of about 7 metres. It is native from central Europe into Eurasia, and is tolerant of a wide range of soils. For best growth, however, plant it in well-drained soil that contains good organic matter content and add mulch.

Where they are hardy, all of the above dogwood trees are recommended for gardens, but they do need to be situated carefully in order to grow well. Healthy plants have few problems with disease or insect pests. However, unthrifty plants may suffer from a couple of fungal diseases, dogwood leaf blotch and crown canker. Good soil drainage is particularly important for dogwood trees. As well, except for *C. mas* which can tolerate slightly alkaline soils, dogwood trees need acid soils rich in humus and all should have a surface mulch. However, do not pile mulching materials up against the tree bark as this can promote conditions conducive to crown canker. Also, do not use high nitrogen fertilizers on dogwoods as this can lead to excessive soft, vegetative growth that is susceptible to leaf blotch. It is advisable to rake up the leaves in the fall and dispose of them to lessen any chances of having leaf blotch inoculum overwintering.

Dogwood trees may take two to three years to become established after transplanting, but once they have adjusted, they will have a moderate growth rate until they reach maturity. To help with their establishment, they are best planted in early spring, and they should receive regular applications of water throughout their first summer.

R. "John Blair"

In 1990, I was in Ucluelet interviewing people who had known George Fraser for our research into the life and work of the world renowned rhododendron grower, George Fraser. I visited and talked to Mrs. Mary Baird who had known George Fraser all her life until he died in 1944. Mary Cam, her maiden name, had been born some 80 years before that time and was a good friend of Fraser's. He had given her 3 plants of what he called "John Blair" although he had not registered the name. John Blair is *R. occidentalis* X *R. arborensis*, *orientalis* being the seed parent. *Occidentalis* is the native rhododendron of the Pacific Coast.

George Fraser attended the convention of the Pacific Coast Association of Nurserymen and wrote of "John Blair", the hybrid azalea. The seedlings of the cross show its spring, spicy flowers when the plants are less than 2 feet high. *R. occidentalis* has the habit of retaining the dead leaves through the winter and discarding them in spring and the hybrid retains, to a certain extent, this persistent characteristic.

Mary Baird gave me one of the plants, a 6 ft specimen. I have grown it successfully in my garden, but it has proven difficult to propagate.

This is a hybrid with small leaves, which has white flowers and good red stamens. The outstanding feature is the extremely pleasant fragrance given off by the flowers in bloom. I registered the plant of "John Blair" with the American Rhododendron Society and the Royal Horticultural Society.

Heather Robinson, who was finally able to propagate this plant, will be taking a plant of "John Blair" to Ucluelet. One will also be given to Beacon Hill Park in Victoria as John Blair and George Fraser were the original builders of that beautiful park.

Bill Dale

ROOTSTALK

BY INDUMENTUM

Many of you will be familiar with the rhododendron stages genre often presented in the form of a list. The classic is of course the nine stages of rhodoholism with the last stage resulting in the hapless rhodoholic shaving his head and becoming a Buddhist monk so he can live among his beloved rhodos. No one has yet tackled “How do you know when you have a really mature rhododendron garden?” - so here is Indumentum’s offering.

When you first start growing rhododendrons you are seduced by images of massive colourful plants gracing your estate. The reality is that when you plant out your carefully selected rhodos nothing happens for a long time. They just sit there not doing very much for months on end. Eventually with the passing of a few springs, they do grow and it is with some pride that you realize you have to start thinning them out, rather like carrots. The plants that are pulled can go into a new bed which will eventually need thinning as well. This however is just an interim stage of the development of a mature rhododendron garden.

The first sign of real maturity is when you run out of places to put them. Sometimes the neighbours are only too willing to have a few and there’s always the Fraser South annual auction. Some are too big to move and they start to encroach on the grass paths. There is a real feeling of a mature garden when the wife runs over the lower branches with the mower.

Eventually you realize that you are going to have to start pruning, otherwise you will not be able to get around the garden to even see the plants. At first, it is difficult to take sharp pruning shears to your beloved rhododendrons particularly when slicing off a branch with a flower bud. It seems like sacrilege but at least you can console yourself that it’s one less flower to deadhead next year. Eventually you can really get into rhododendron pruning and have the added satisfaction of believing you have a really mature rhododendron garden.

But you are not there yet. The ultimate measure of rhododendron garden maturity is when the branches you prune are thick enough to be used as firewood. Sawing through a rhododendron branch is a cathartic experience and chopping it up for the woodpile is even more fun. Dave Dougan on Vancouver Island was reputed to take a chainsaw to his on occasion, rootball and all - he called it plant division.

Rather like the Buddhist monk in the ninth stage of rhodoholism you will develop kinship with those who really live among rhododendrons, the Nepalese hill farmers. After all, in Nepal, firewood is what rhododendrons are for.