

The Yak

Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Volume 17 Number 4 April 2003



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

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

www.flounder.ca/frasersouth

2003 Officers

President: Mike Bale
604-853-8839

Vice Pres: Colleen Forster
604-534-1840

Secretary: Wendy Sellars
604-535-0763

Treasurer: Trev Badminton
604-856-0046

Directors: Dalen Bayes
Norma Senn
Harold Fearing

Membership: Wenonah March

Newsletter: Brenda Macdonald
604-990-5353
macdobr@shaw.ca

This Month's Meeting: Wednesday, April 16, 2003, 7:30pm

Topic: "What Looks Good in the Garden"

Speaker: Arnold and Brenda Falk of Tanglebank
Country Gardens

Tanglebank Country Gardens is a cottage style family run
nursery situated in rural west Abbotsford, B.C. The nursery
specializes in growing a wide selection of perennials, herbs
and ornamental grasses

Companion Plants: Colleen Forster

Show & Tell: Vern Finley

Plant Sale: Trevor Badminton

Quick Hits



Plant Sale!

Don't forget our Plant Sale.
This year, the big day is
Saturday May 17th, 10:00am to 4:0pm
at our usual meeting place -
the Langley United Church. Be there for
some wonderful opportunities.



Errors and Updates:

The publication of newsletters and other
documentation for any dynamic group
such as the FSRS is fraught with the
dangers not only of typos, but also of
obsolescence. Please note the following
corrections to the Member Listing sent
out with last month's newsletter:

Martie Irwin
Sue and Chris Klapwijk
Susan Murray

mirwin@telus.net
chrisk@flounder.ca
susan.murray@telus.net



From the President

- 1) I suspect that we were all spell bound by the wonderful presentation of Dr. Mary Hodgson Rose at the March meeting and by her wonderful photographs. We can only hope and encourage her to make copies of her slides available in a book or on a CD so that they can be reviewed more leisurely. Many of the plants that were shown will be available for sale at her open house for garden club members on April 26th and May 24th. Phone (360) 293-2176 to make arrangements and receive a map.
- 2) Again, many thanks to Mary-Anne Berg, Phyllis Anderson, Karen Linton, Patti Bale, Mrs. Fearing and Wendy Sellars who assisted in the kitchen and brought “goodies”. The raffle table and coffee time donations continue to be a source of significant income for the Chapter which helps to defray our ongoing expenses.
- 3) Plans are in hand to hold the annual “Beer Bottle Truss Show” again in May. It has been suggested that after the show perhaps one of our members would like to take the trusses home with them and make them available for a nursing home or other facility of their choice. This would be an excellent cause, and if anyone is willing to do this, please let me know.
- 4) Species Study Days: Our session last Saturday, March 29th proved again to be very stimulating, with many examples of the studied group in full bloom in the garden. Many participants had digital cameras with them and these images should be available at www.rhodos.ca. Sean Rafferty made the most appropriate remark of the day when he likened a day in the Species Garden with Steve Hootman to a novice golfer spending a day with Tiger Woods!
- 5) The Portland trip is fast approaching and there are still a few spaces left for anyone, including friends and members of other garden clubs, who might be interested in the visit.
- 6) Mothers’ Day Garden Tour: Arrangements for the bus tour to members’ gardens and local wineries are proceeding. There has been widespread advertising and this will continue. Hopefully we will have several full buses visiting the local area, and this will provide not only a much needed source of revenue for the Chapter, but also an ideal opportunity to recruit new members.
- 7) Members Garden Visits: We will be arranging garden visits to members’ gardens. There are many members whose gardens we haven’t seen and it would be of great interest to everyone to see new gardens, even if the garden is in the early stages of development. Every visit to a garden brings a new experience and, invariably, fresh ideas and new information.
- 8) UBC Garden is now in full bloom with magnificent examples of *R. calophytum*, *falconerii*, *arizelum*, *pachytrichum*, *bainbridgeum* and many specimens of magnolia. If you have a couple of hours to spare the garden is open early in the morning until dusk.
- 9) The Rose Society has invited ARS members to a lecture to be given by Dan Hinkley of Heronswood Nursery in Washington on the topic “Plant Marriages – Exceptional Combinations of Flower, Foliage and Structure”. Dan Hinkley is a well known plant explorer and the originator of many new introductions. The lecture is on Monday, May 5, 2003 at 7:30pm at the Canadian Memorial Church, 15th and Burrard. Tickets are available at Gardenworks, Southlands Nursery and Avant Gardener. The cost is \$15.00 for members and \$20.00 for non-members. For more information contact Pauline at 604-985-6383 or Lesley at 604-261-6417.
- 10) The City of Victoria has invited the Fraser South and other ARS members to attend a ceremony in Beacon Hill Park to celebrate the installation of the George Fraser Hybrid collection. The date is Friday April 25th at 11:00 am, and the location is near the George Fraser commemorative stone adjacent to Fountain Lake.

Mike Bale



From the Editor

Last Month:

Last month we were treated to a fascinating glimpse of the incredible beauty and diversity of the plant material native to the Pacific Coast biome. Our speaker, Dr. Mary Hodgson Rose, has made this area both the focus of her life-long interest and the source of the plants she grows and sells at her nursery “Skagit Rose Farm/Botanical Garden” located just south of Anacortes on Fidalgo Island in Washington State. Dr. Rose showed slides of plants whose native

habitats are located anywhere from Alaska all the way down to Mexico. Although her particular focus is on bulbous plants and irises she showed us images of an enormous variety of beautiful plant material.

This Month:

This month we are pleased to welcome Arnold and Brenda Falk of Tanglebank Country Gardens nursery in Abbotsford, who will be bringing us a wealth of information on “What Looks Good in the Garden”. Their web site, located at <http://www.tanglebank.perennials.com/>, is extensive, with newsletters, hardiness zones, the ability to search through the perennial plant database using any number of criteria such as colour or blooming time, and other useful material.

The Business Stuff:

Highlights from the Directors’ Meeting, March 26, 2003.

- Colleen reported on the City of Langley’s beautification meeting. She advised the City of Langley has a website and would be interested in announcing our meetings. Brenda Macdonald will start to advise the City of Langley of our regular meeting schedule and upcoming speakers.
- Mike Bale, will try to contact former members of Fraser South to see why they chose not to renew their memberships.
- Trevor Badminton received a letter from VanDusen Gardens advertising their flower show.
- Upcoming Events: May - Beer Bottle Truss Show June - picnic on Saturday, June 21,
- Wendy Sellars will place an ad in the Langley, South Surrey and Abbotsford papers advertising our plant sale, and Alan March will contact some other local publications to announce the plant sale in the Community Events section.
- Mike Bale reported that all Chapters of District 1 were represented at the District 1 President’s meeting held on March 29th, and that there was much discussion about the proposed ARS fee increase, as well as discussion about differing fees charged by different Chapters within District 1.
- Western Regional Conference 2006: Mike Bale reported that he had looked into hosting the conference at Harrison Hot Springs. The costs were \$179/night for guest rooms and \$1,000/day for banquet and conference rooms. It was agreed the costs seemed too high and we should explore other facilities.
- The Victoria chapter is planning a Mothers’ Day Garden Tour to the Vancouver and Fraser Valley areas.
- Mike advised there were 12 seats available for the Portland trip.



(from last month)
Olsynium douglasii inflatum
(formerly *Sisyrinchium douglasii*)
native to the Pacific Coast biome
photo courtesy Dave Powell
USDA Forest Service

Brenda Macdonald



COMPANION PLANTS

B is for BERBERIS, the Barberry family

Family: Berberidaceae

A dichotomy of beast and beauty, the barberries should be an indispensable part of any well-furnished garden. Among the 600 or so species in the world, there is a huge range of sizes and leaf forms, but the flowers are always yellows or oranges. (Okay, so Dave S. won't plant one!) Leaves come in colors of sea green, black green, pink and white marbled, gold-edged, white-reversed or red-burgundy, to name some, and deciduous forms often have spectacular fall color. Stem spines are persistent and often conspicuous, making these plants excellent barrier material and impenetrable hedges when established. Woe to anyone who dares to try and slip through for a clandestine look about your property! The berries are also a dominant feature, and rival the rainbow for colors – black, indigo, purple, blue, shiny red and coral, often large and showy. But however yummy they look, leave them on the plant, as they can cause mild stomach upset, and some (most?!) people are sensitive to the bite of the thorns.

The barberries succeed on nearly all soils except the very wet, tolerate sun or part shade, and can be trimmed mercilessly or left to thrive au naturel. Over the years, some species have gotten a bad reputation as carriers of wheat rust disease, but recently the Dept. of Agriculture has relaxed the restrictions to allow the production of some selections that have added greatly to the gene pool. Many species grow readily from seed and freely cross-pollinate, so the occurrence of natural hybrids is quite common

These are a few, but by no means all, that I recommend trying, some being easier to locate than others.

B. thunbergi 'Golden Nugget' – a deciduous form, very compact and mounding, attaining only 2ft x 3ft, with lovely lemon yellow foliage and shiny red berries like little glass beads in winter. It associates well with purple or very dark green plants, but needs sun to keep the gold color.

B. stenophylla 'Claret Cascade' – an evergreen type to 4ft x 4ft, with small narrow leaves that are bronzy purple when emerging on red shoots. It bears clusters of rich orange-red blooms in April

B. wilsoniae – a very spiny little spreading shrub that is semi-evergreen, with green and grey leaves that turn rich oranges and reds in fall, then showing off large clusters of coral pink to light red berries.



Berberis valdiviana, a tree form from Chile

..... and finally, *B. valdiviana* – a tree form from Chile that is absolutely spectacular when mature.

I saw this in Holehird Gardens in the Lake District of England, and literally stood in silent awe! The large shiny leaves, something like a holly, were almost obliterated by the magnificent clusters of blue-black fruits that weighed down the branches that September. Spiny, yes; not a tree for climbing or tree forts, but tidy and round headed, standing well over the perennial beds without casting too much shade. Loved it!

So poke around in plant centers. Check out other gardens and parks - especially in April when many of them are in blooms and then again in fall for leaves and berries - and you will find a barberry to suit you. Most gardeners would happily part with a few berries for you to grow your own unique hybrids.



Berberis vulgaris

The "common" barberry has been used for hundreds of years as a source of medicinal extracts, usually from the root bark.

Happy Planting

Colleen Forster

Up the Garden Path with Norma Senn

GROWING SHRUB ROSES APRIL 2003

In last month's article I wrote about why shrub roses are such nice additions to the landscape. In addition to their gorgeous, frequently intensely fragrant flowers and fall colour, they are usually easy to grow, and remarkably trouble-free.



Rosa 'Jacqueline du Pré'
a modern shrub rose

In most of British Columbia, shrub roses are best planted in the early spring as soon as the soil can be worked safely. If possible, it is preferable to plant before the new growth appears, but since many shrub roses are available as container grown plants, they can be planted later in the spring and even into early summer if they are kept well watered while in the container and during their first summer of growth.

All roses need good light for blooming, although there are some shrub roses that are able to tolerate partial shade. Ideally, shrub roses should be located where they receive at least 4 to 6 hours of sun per day. Average garden soils are suitable for shrub roses, but the planting site should be well drained. If you have an acid soil, it is beneficial to work in some ground limestone or dolomite lime at planting.

To actually transplant roses, make sure they are well-watered before planting. Container plants should



be watered so that the entire volume of soil in the container has been well-moistened and the excess water has drained away. If you are planting bare root plants, make sure the roots are protected from drying at all times. Bare root plants should be allowed to soak in tepid water for about 4 to 6 hours (or overnight) before actually being transplanted. Shrub roses can become large plants, so they need to be spaced out in the garden. Check with local garden centre staff or garden encyclopedias for recommendations as to the ultimate size of a given plant, and then select a spot in the garden that will accommodate the rose at maturity.

The planting hole should be dug so that it is at least twice as wide as the root ball and about half again as deep as the root ball. For example, if the rose comes out of a pot which measures 8 inches wide and 10 inches tall, the planting hole should be at least 16 inches wide and 15 inches deep. Once the plant is eased out of the pot, the root ball should be teased or massaged gently to break up the root ball slightly which will encourage new roots to grow out into the garden soil as the plant becomes established. Plants that are very pot bound, where the roots completely fill the container and grow round and round, may even need root pruning to get the roots to grow out into the soil.

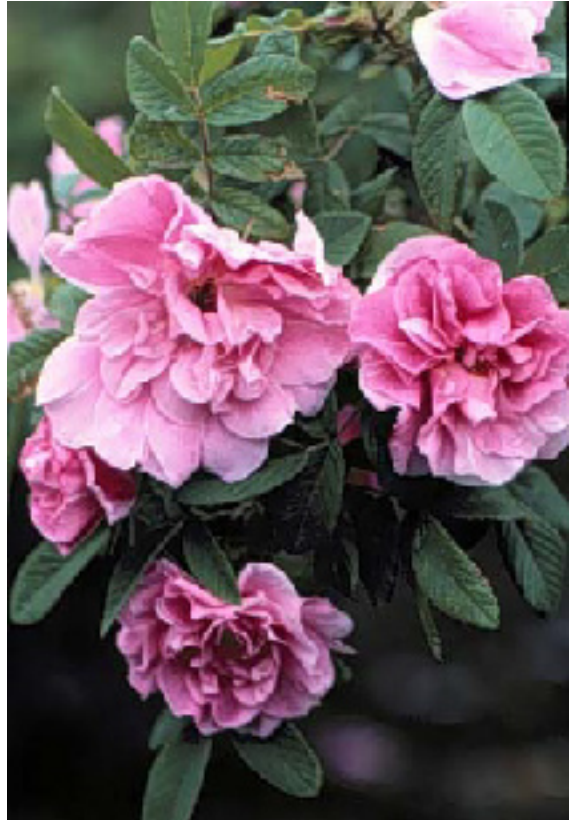
The plants should be set so that they are planted at the same depth in the soil as they were in the pot, that is, they are set neither too deeply nor shallowly. Use the soil dug while preparing the hole to back fill around the plant, gently tamping it down so there are no large air pockets left in the planting site. Finish by thoroughly watering the newly planted rose. The water will help settle the plant and provide it with water to support new growth. The addition of a mulch over the planting site is extremely beneficial to conserve water and to help control weeds.

As with most newly transplanted trees and shrubs, roses will need to be watered regularly during their first summer of growth. Once they are established, however, many of the shrub roses need relatively little care. They will grow faster if given some fertilizer in the spring, and a second application of fertilizer can be applied in early July if there is adequate soil moisture. Maintaining mulch over the planting site is also recommended.

Do not succumb to the temptation to prune young shrub roses. The canes may be spindly during their first couple of years of growth, but leave them alone and they will thicken up as the roses become established. One of the advantages in growing shrub roses is that they are grown from cuttings so that the entire plant has the same genetic make-up and any shoots that arise from the roots will produce the desired top growth and flowers. This means that gardeners do not have to watch for and remove any root suckers as is necessary with grafted hybrid tea roses.

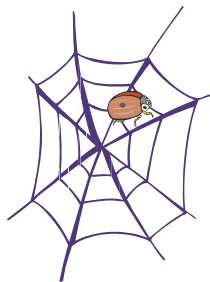
Some limited pruning may be needed with shrub roses once they are established, but the job is not too onerous. Any shoots that get out of bounds can be removed, and if the shrub grows too tall, shoots can be headed back. Pruning can be done in the late dormant season when it is easy to see the overall branching structure of the shrub, but you will be removing shoots that will flower that summer. The best time to prune is right after flowering. The cuts will largely be to head back vigorous shoots, or to thin out older, unproductive canes at the ground. About the only other pruning that might be needed is to remove any shoots that get damaged accidentally. Shrub roses really are at their best when the canes are left to form graceful arches.

Most shrub roses are trouble-free as far as disease and insect pests are concerned. If you should notice a small outbreak of an insect pest like aphids, the easiest control is to wash them off with a good blast from the hose. Mildew and blackspot are not usually a problem.



Rosa 'Thérèse Bugnet'
a modern (ruguosa) shrub rose

Norma Senn



Crawling 'Round the Web:

- Visit the site of our guest speakers at:
www.tanglebank.perennials.com/
- The "R&A News", the quarterly newsletter of the ARS handled for so many years by the late Betty Spady, is now edited by Marty Anderson and is posted on the web at:
www.rhododendron.org/news/home.htm
- Our own District 1 (British Columbia, Canada) of the ARS has its own website, under the capable control of Garth Wedemire. It lists all the chapters and their activities as well as other important links. Visit it at:
www.rhodos.ca

ROOTSTALK

by Indumentum

Regular readers of this column will have noted that the April Rootstalk is always a lighthearted affair. But with the magnificent capacity for self-parody by institutions such as the City of Surrey and VanDusen Botanical Gardens there is not much left for the aspiring satirist. So in keeping with the earnest spirit of conservation and recycling, here is a repeat of the Rootstalk from April 1996.

While browsing through the Cloverdale Public Library archives recently, looking for information on why there are so few rhododendron species native to Surrey, I came across the newsletter of the Ganges North Maple Society. This organisation meets on the third Wednesday of every month in a Temple Hall a few kilometres north of Kathmandu, Nepal. There were newsletter articles on themes such as “Companion Plants for Maples: The Use of Rhododendrons to Fill in the Gaps” and “Avoiding Invasive Rhododendron Roots” and “Why Maple Species are Superior to Hybrids”.

Yes, it seems there are species snobs even in the Maple societies and the most far-out are the lovers of large-leaved species. These obsessives will go to the ends of the earth to seek out specimens of their adored treasures.

It was fascinating to read an elaborate account of a lecture given by Mustapha Notherplant, the famed Nepalese plant explorer who had recently mounted an expedition to western Canada in search of the rare and coveted *Acer macrophyllum*, the maple with the largest leaves in the world. He paddled a small canoe up something called Howe Sound and was astonished to find huge groves of Bigleaf Maples growing between elevations of sea level to 500 metres in mixed woodland. Some of these specimens must have been more than 100 years old and were tens of metres high!

Mustapha explored the woods for several days, collecting seed pods and taking photographs of these ancient giants. He was about to get back into his canoe when he smelled wood smoke and was aghast to discover the local people cutting down the enormous maple tress and using them for firewood!

At this point in the narrative, the newsletter reported that gasps of astonishment rose from the audience for they were horrified to hear of such sacrilege. Although a heated discussion ensued, the night was getting cool and Mustapha threw another log of *R. hodgsonii* onto the open fire. One of the members complained that the society should set a better example as that log would have made a perfectly good yak saddle¹.

¹ Peter Cox in *The Larger Rhododendron Species* reports that *R. hodgsonii* is the favourite firewood of sherpas and porters in east Nepal and that it is also used for making cups, spoons and wooden yak saddles.