

The Yak

Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Volume 16 Number 7 September 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

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Norma Senn
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This Month's Meeting: Wednesday, September 17

Topic: Lepidote Rhododendrons

Speaker: Norman Todd

Companion Plants: Unfortunately for us, Colleen Forster, who regularly delights and educates us about companion plantings, will be away from this month's meeting attending a trade show. We look forward to next month's talk with great anticipation.

Show & Tell: Vern Finley

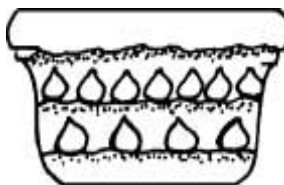
Plant Sale: Les Clay

Quick Hits



We're Back!

Welcome back to all our members. Hopefully your summer break was an enjoyable and productive one, and you had enough water for all your gardening needs.



Techniques

If this is fall, there must be bulbs to be planted. See this month's "Down the Garden Path" for some tips on planting techniques.



From the President

NORMAN TODD

Our speaker for the September 17th meeting will be Norman Todd from the Victoria Chapter, who is an outstanding and amusing presenter. He was recently honored with the prestigious ARS Silver Medal in recognition of his many contributions to the ARS and the genus Rhododendron.

SHOW AND TELL

Vern Finley's "Show and Tell" sessions are always of great interest and timeliness. We are all looking forward to another year of her delightful presentations.

PLANT SALES

Les Clay has again agreed to bring plants for the Plant Sale and generously supply a contribution to the raffle table.

RAFFLE TABLE

Please help start the new season with a great raffle sale and bring anything that might be of interest to others, especially home made deserts or summer canning!

COMPANION PLANTS

Colleen Forster has agreed to share her enthusiasm for companion plants with us again this year. She will be unable to come to this first meeting of the year as she will be attending a trade show. However she will be back next month, bringing some examples for purchase.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Lori and Dalen Bayes for being awarded the Bronze Medal by the Komo Kulshan Chapter. Lori and Dalen have contributed immensely to that Chapter. They were also much involved in the very successful 2002 Western Regional Conference held in Bellingham. We value their continuing contribution to our own Chapter.

MORE CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations are also due to Ken Gibson on the award of the Queen's Jubilee Medal in recognition of his involvement as a district councilor in Tofino and of the discovery of Fort Defiance on Meares Island. Ken and Dot have been valued associate members of our Chapter since its inauguration and rarely miss an opportunity to attend our annual BBQ. We recall with great affection the very helpful and generous hospitality Dot and Ken extended to us on our bus tour to Tofino a few years back.

JUNE BARBECUE

Many thanks to all those people who by their presence or contribution made the June BBQ a great success despite the threat of poor weather. The weather began to clear as the starting time drew close, and we were fortunate to have beautiful blue skies to go with the wonderful setting. Our many thanks are due to Doreen and Trevor Badminton for once again hosting the reception and for sharing with us their magnificent garden which, as usual, had been specially groomed for the occasion.

We are also indebted to Sue Klapwijk and Leigh Mikitka for their coordination of the event and their solicitations for contributions to the auction and the banquet. The event would not have been a success without the wonderful assortment of entrees and desserts. Also a big thank you to all those people who contributed so generously to the auction and to those who so willingly dipped into their pockets and contributed to the proceeds. Wendy and Dave Sellars again did a magnificent job of coaxing the very last dollar from our wallets. I am sure that our treasurer (and host) was very pleased with the outcome.

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TWOONIE TABLE

Please remember to bring along any contributions that you would like to see go to other enthusiastic gardeners. Your excesses will become someone else's treasures.

ARS WESTERN REGIONAL MEETING

The Western Regional meeting this year is to take place at Seaside, Oregon, on October 3-5, and the organizers have prepared a tremendous program. Hopefully some of our members will be able to participate.

PORTLAND TOUR

The Portland Tour last May was a grand success and much enjoyed by all participants. There will be a full report by Norma Senn in the October issue of *The Yak*.

WILD RICE SOUP

And ... further to that tour, here (courtesy of Anya Averill) is the recipe for a wonderful Wild Rice Soup served to us at our get-together with the Portland Chapter at the Molly and Cecil Smith Garden:

Wild Rice Soup (makes 6 cups)

6 tablespoons butter	1 tablespoon minced onion
3 cups broth (chicken or vegetable)	2 cups cooked wild rice
1/2 cup sliced carrots	1/3 cup minced ham (optional)
2 tablespoons toasted slivered almonds	1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup half and half	2 tablespoons dry sherry
minced parsley	

Melt butter in saucepan; saute onion until tender. Add broth and bring to boil. Boil one minute. Stir in rice, carrots, ham, almonds, and salt. Simmer about five minutes. Blend in half and half and sherry. Garnish with parsley.

ROSE SOCIETY MEETING

The Vancouver Rose Society has advised us that the speaker for their Ninth Annual Goulding Memorial Lecture will be Rayford Clayton Reddell, who owns a nine acre ranch in Petaluma, California, planted with over 8,000 rose bushes and containing a one acre fragrant garden. An expert on roses, he is a garden columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, a guest on *Martha Stewart Living*, and a regular contributor to *Horticulture* magazine. The lecture is scheduled for Tuesday, September 30, 2003, 7:30 pm, at the Norman Rothstein Theatre, 950 West 41st Avenue, Vancouver, BC. Tickets: \$10.00

EXECUTIVE MEETING

The FSRS Directos meeting will be held this month on Wednesday, Sept 24th, at the home of Mike and Patti Bale.

Mike Bale

R. hippophaeoides

Emblem of the
Fraser South Rhododendron
Society



Photo: Chris Klapwijk



COMPANION PLANTS

E is for EUONYMUS
 the Spindle Tree family
 Family: Celastraceae

Well-known? – fairly. Well-used? – not often. Well-deserving? – very definitely!

Named after Euonymy, the mother of the Greek Furies, the name is presumably a reflection on her evil temperament, since

the plants have poisonous fruits and bark and a somewhat unpleasant smell when cut. Variously known as skewerwood, pigwood, bonnet-de-pretre, and gadrose, the spindle tree family has a long history of uses – medicinal, agricultural, industrial and domestic. They are a divided group of plants, evergreen and deciduous types that seem to bear no resemblance to one other. The differences are remarkable, and yet most gardens can easily accommodate both types in good harmony with many other plants. Whether you want all-year foliage effect, fall color in leaf and fruits, or winter bark appeal, or for use as groundcover, background screen or hedging, there's a Euonymus for you.

Some of the deciduous species – *E. alatus*, *E. europaeus*, *E. hamiltonianus*, and *E. nanus*, while excellent border or edging plants, should be placed for best notice in the fall season. The decidedly lackluster green leaves transform almost overnight into a blazing mass of crimson (hence 'burning bush') quite startling in intensity. As long as the weather co-operates, the leaves can hold for several weeks. They eventually fall to expose the myriads of small red and orange fruit 'earrings' decorating the branches (sometimes quite profusely as in *E. 'Red Cascade'*) that last well into winter. On *E. alatus*, there is the added attraction of the curiously winged bark; however, most plants offered are the cultivar 'Compactus', which has only modest wings, so check labels carefully. Give these plants room to thrive – too crowded or too shady puts a real damper on the colour.



The characteristic corky "wings" of *Euonymus alatus*

For all-year evergreen foliage effect, the choices are even greater, the uses and colors more diverse. The two common species, *E. fortunei* and *E. japonicus*, have both sported out to many selections, with more coming on the market all the time. The old groundcover standards 'Emerald Gaiety' and 'Emerald 'n Gold', however useful, have been superseded by many new cultivars. Try 'Blondy', 'Harlequin', 'Sunshine', 'Silver Queen', and



Euonymus 'Blondy'



Euonymus 'Harlequin'

others. We are watching a selection of 'Emerald Gaiety' of our own that is very compact and very white, which we may call 'Blizzard' if it proves to be stable. (There is a propensity for many variegated forms, especially under stress, to revert and have the green overpower the colored foliage.)

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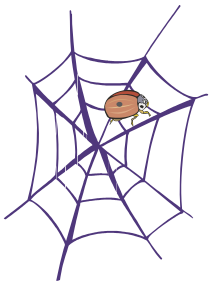
Try using Euonymus as hedging, for a change from boxwood or laurel. (Wow – I never thought I'd ever hear myself say that!!). For low hedges or edging I suggest *E. japonicus* 'Microphyllus Variegatus', a tidy little shrub not unlike a dwarf silver box, that even grows well in planter boxes for a very nice effect. Suitable for larger hedges, and certainly for borders, the two selections 'Silver King' and 'Ovatus Aurea', make stunning statements. When protected from cold winds and given enough moisture, they grow full and bushy, and need only tidy-up trimming to be kept in bounds.

In fact all the Euonymus prefer a well-drained but not too dry soil. The gold-leafed forms have much better color in the sun, while the white-leafed ones perform well in partial shade. *E. fortunei* is easily trimmed to shape, and can be kept low and tidy or allowed to scramble over things. But beware, for it can become quite bare at the base if you let it go. The foliage of *E. fortunei* takes on a pinkish or purplish hue in cold weather, which adds to the appeal.

So whether you're spinning, herding oxen or swine, creating charcoal drawings, or enjoying a pipe in the evening, a Euonymus has been at work for you – and you thought they were just to look good in the garden!

Happy Planting

Colleen Forster



Crawling 'Round the Web:

- The **University of Connecticut** has a very extensive website, with plant pages searchable by both latin and common names. It also includes a "plant selector" function for choosing plant material which meets your needs. The emphasis is on woody trees, shrubs, and vines, including rhododendrons, and quality of the photographs is good.

www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/

- Another academic site is that of the **Alderman Library at the University of Virginia**. This is the site which houses the on-line version of the Rhododendron Species Dictionary published on the internet in 1998 by Herb Spady.

www.lib.virginia.edu/science/sciscan/rhododendrons/rhododict.htm

- The **Lake Tapps Rhododendron Garden and Nursery** is a commercial site, but it has an extensive catalogue listing of both species and hybrids for reference. The plant listing shows bloom time, plant height in 10 years, hardiness, and colour. Many (although not all) plants have photographs, of good quality. The Lake Tapps Nursery is located near Sumner/Buckley in Washington State, and so features rhodos suitable for our area.

www.rhodies.com/

- This is the site for **The Dictionary of Botanical Epithets**. In botanical terms, the "specific epithet" is the term used for the second half of any plant name. The first part is the genus - *Rhododendron* - which always starts with a uppercase letter, and the second part is the species, or specific epithet - *campylogynum* - which always starts with a lower case letter. The specific epithet often describes some attribute of that species, although sometimes it commemorates who discovered it, or where. And sometimes it just seems to commemorate the name of some civil servant who happened to be on duty when the plant collector was trying to arrange travel back home. This is a useful site for checking on the meaning of the original Greek or Latin root words used when the species was named. It often makes the botanical name much easier to remember.

www.winternet.com/~chuckg/dictionary.html



Up the Garden Path with Norma Senn

Layered Bulbs September 2003

Planting bulbs in containers is nothing new, but layering a variety of bulbs at different depths in the same container has recently become popular. Layering bulbs provides a succession of flowers over a long a time period and is a great technique for anyone who loves bulbs but has limited space available. Late September through early November is the best time to plant spring-blooming bulbs.

Pots need to be large enough to accommodate several layers of a variety of bulbs. Containers that are between 14 and 16 inches tall and at least 12 to 14 inches wide work well. Larger containers can be used, but the maximum height for the containers is about 20 inches since the bottom-most layer of bulbs has to be able to reach the surface of the pot. Large plastic pots are a good choice since they are relatively inexpensive, light-weight even when planted, frost resistant, have drainage holes, and come in attractive colors. Containers made of wood or other frost resistant materials are suitable too. You also need a potting mix that provides good drainage for the bulbs. There are a number of commercially prepared potting mixes available, or you can make your own by mixing peat moss with perlite and/or coarse sand, at a ratio of about 40% peat to 60% drainage material.

The secret to having a successful layered container is in the careful selection of good quality bulbs. When shopping, look for bulbs that are heavy for their size and free from bruises, rot, or damage. If possible, choose bulbs that have the papery skin intact. Especially with tulips, the bulb skins, or tunics, often get rubbed off, however, as long as the underlying tissue in the bulbs is sound, they are satisfactory. Select a range of bulbs that will provide bloom from late winter through spring, give variation

in height, and, since there may be some overlap in blooming time from one bulb layer to the next, select bulbs that offer a complementary colour scheme.

The "earliest to bloom" bulbs are also the smallest in size, and are planted in the top-most layer of the container. Examples of "early to bloom" selections include: *Crocus* (white, purple, yellow), *Iris danfordiae* (yellow), *Iris reticulata* (blue, purple), *Chionodoxa* (pale lavender blue) or *Galanthus* (white). Slightly "later to bloom" and a bit taller are *Muscari* (shades of blue and white), and many of the small daffodils like *Narcissus cyclamineus*, 'Peeping Tom' or 'February Gold' (all of which are yellow). These will go in the second layer from the top of the container. In addition to these, there are many other bulbs that could be used in the second layer, or if the container is deep enough, be selected for a third layer. Examples are the early species tulips like *Tulipa kaufmanniana* (red) or *Tulipa saxatilis* (pink), or large trumpet daffodils (yellow, white) and hyacinths (blue, white and pink). All are in the mid-season and medium height group, and are good selections for the middle layers of the container. For late-season bloom, choose tall-growing tulips or the spring blooming alliums. These are planted in the bottom-most layer of the container and will be the last to bloom.

For the greatest impact at flowering time, plant just one variety rather than a mixture of bulbs per layer. A simple planting scheme follows, but once you've had some experience, it's fun to experiment with other bulbs and, if the container is deep enough, increase the number of layers. The actual number of bulbs you need to buy depends on the size of the container and bulb sizes. Bulbs should be spaced so that they are close together but not actually touching.

To plant, cover the drainage holes with pieces of pot shards or other materials that allow water to drain freely while keeping the potting mix in the container.

Put about 3 inches of potting mix in the bottom of a 14 to 16 inch container, level it off and gently tamp it down. Then, plant the bulbs that are latest to bloom and grow the tallest, for example, plant

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a layer of late-season, tall-growing tulips here. Add potting mix so that the tops of the bulbs are covered with about 2 to 3 inches of potting media, then gently pat the mix down, being careful not to damage any of the bulb noses. After leveling off the potting mix, plant the next layer of bulbs, for example, hyacinths. If at all possible, place this layer so that the bulbs are not directly over the first layer. However, don't worry about it too much because the plants will figure out how to reach the soil surface. Cover the second layer of bulbs with another 2 to 3 inches of potting mix, level and gently tamp it down. Then put a third layer of bulbs on top, for example, crocuses, to provide very early bloom. They will need to be covered with potting media so that the tops of the bulbs have about 2 to 3 inches of potting media over them.



While it's not absolutely necessary, a layer of shredded bark mulch can be added to the top of the pot to help protect the potting media from the force of heavy winter rains. A layer of grit also works well as a protective mulch. When finished, the surface of the potting mix plus mulch should be about 1 inch below the pot rim, to allow the pot to be watered without having media wash out over the top of the pot. After gently tamping the media down, the entire pot should be well watered. All of the media in the pot needs to be thoroughly moistened, but then allowed to drain thoroughly.

For those who live in the mildest parts of B.C., the planted container can be left outside in a sheltered area for the winter to receive the required cold treatment for root formation. From time to time, make sure the container has enough water. The potting mix should be slightly moist, but not soggy. If there is a period of very cold, dry weather, check to make sure that there is adequate moisture in the potting mix.

If you live in areas with severe winters, you need to provide a place where the bulbs receive enough cold to initiate growth, but not so much that

the bulbs are killed. A fruit cellar, for example, can be an excellent place to store planted containers for the winter. Other places to consider are on the inside wall of a sun porch, or in a cold frame. Snow is a great insulator, so it can be piled over the cold frame to help protect pots of bulbs from excessively cold

temperatures. If you don't mind the energy expense, an old refrigerator can be used to provide potted bulbs with moderate cold. If you do this, make sure to regularly check on the moisture content of the potting media as the refrigerated air dries it out quickly. In these cold regions you may also have to adjust your bulb selection to the hardiest kinds available, for example, crocuses and different kinds of daffodils.

Depending on where you are in the province, you should start to see a succession of bloom in late winter to early spring. First the crocuses will

appear, then the plants from the second layer, and so on through the spring. Cut spent flowers to keep the container tidy and water the containers as needed.

For good container displays, it's best to start with new bulbs each year. But if you want to keep the bulbs, they can be transplanted to the garden in late spring. It may take a couple of years for the container-grown bulbs to recover enough to make a really good display, but they are suitable for use in a flower cutting garden. To save them, carefully take the container apart after the last bulbs have bloomed, and plant the bulbs directly in the garden. You can do this even while the foliage is green if you handle the plants gently. This is the time to fertilize the plants. Or, you can leave the bulbs in the containers, making sure you fertilize and water them regularly until the last of the foliage has completely died down. Then, dry the container off. Lift and separate the bulbs in late summer and re-plant them in the garden. Again, the flower display in the second year will not be as good as the first year the bulbs were grown, but after a couple of years, you will have flowers for cutting.

Norma Senn



Welcome

to the FSRS (The New and the Old)

No, I'm not referring to age here. When asked to be the official welcomer of new FSRS members, I thought, "What a nice opportunity to learn about newer members quickly." Then it occurred to me that most of you would also enjoy that change. AND that new members might like to know more about some of the old ... um ... long-time ... er ... other members. So here this is; not likely to be on a regular orderly basis, but whenever we have a few new members and I have a little time - usually meaning the summer.

First the NEW:

NANCY MOORE was born and raised in Abbotsford. She teaches landscape design at UCFV and has her own landscape design company, **Visions Green**.

Nancy says her first gardening experience was with her grandfather who was an organic gardener and considered all flowers to be weeds. Grandmother grew the flowers – a minor act of defiance perhaps? Nancy came to love rhododendrons through her hiking. She saw how well the wild rhododendrons grow in our area and how very beautiful they are.

Nancy's garden now, she claims, is somewhat neglected as she is so busy. However, she can make a statement that will have a number of us green with envy – ALL of her new rhodos are already out of pots and planted! Her favourites, she says, are the stunning 'Lem's Cameo' and the lovely 'Mary Fleming'.

"What are some of your other interests?" I asked, and Nancy sighed. "I work a lot. Near life experiences?" Besides work, her business, and garden, Nancy has a husband, Ian, an 18-year-old daughter, and a 16-year-old son. A very full agenda indeed.

Welcome to Fraser South, Nancy.

IRENE STEWART began life in Alberta but must have intuitively realized that it was too cold for rhododendrons because she moved to Vancouver to grow up.

Irene is a piano teacher so enjoyment of music is an important part of her life. Her husband has passed away but they were lucky enough to have three children and now four grandchildren.

"We were married young," Irene told me, "and lived on an acre 'way out' in Surrey. My husband was the gardener and I was the weeder. But I was the one who got two rhododendrons in jam pots – a pink and a red. (Did she way they were 25 cents or do my hastily taken notes deceive me?) Today the red one still blooms at 13516 – 96 Ave.

As for favourites, Irene loves them all. Today's garden is a tiny flower garden around her townhouse. It still has room for two rhododendrons.

Along with gardening, Irene volunteers with FSRS member Arlene Darby at their

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church thrift store. She enjoys the interesting people she meets there as much as she does the recycled treasures.

Welcome to Fraser South, Irene.

YVONNE LANDRY comes from a GARDENING FAMILY (capitals needed here.)

Yvonne was born and raised in London where her summers were spent visiting Kew Gardens, Hampton Court, and Windsor Great Park. Her aunt's garden is one of some fame and many of you will recognize the name when Yvonne can retrieve it. (I particularly like an FSRS member whose word retrieval is as challenged as my own.) Her father grew prize roses and even discussed them with the Queen in one garden visit. So you can see why this is indeed a capital-letter gardening family. Today her four children and six grandchildren seem to be carrying on the tradition – with a few nudges from Yvonne.

Yvonne can hardly recall when she came to like rhododendrons. She remembers them in childhood but thinks the time of really liking them may have been in college where the lovely Hume rhodos were all around.

Living on the ground floor of a condo now, Yvonne and her husband have continued with plants by making the gardens for the entire grounds, including a 'crinoline lady'. For other interests, Yvonne is a bibliophile and does anthropology studies.

Welcome to Fraser South, Yvonne.

And now, for contrast, the OLD:

VERN FINLEY (chosen because hers was the first rhododendron garden I had ever seen.) Vern was born in Kamloops, raised in Jasper and Hanna, Alberta. She trained as a nurse, then spent most of the next twenty years nursing the scrapes and ills of three little boys and two little girls, having married the doctor. Where on earth did they find time to plant such a wonderful garden?

Vern's earliest garden memories were of her Dad's fantastic vegetables and flowers, grown within the shadow of the Rockies. Dad was a traditional Dutch gardener who once took the Fall Fair prize for the best garden in Jasper.

When Vern and Gordon bought their three acres, her friend Mike Trembath stepped in. "You have a perfect spot for rhododendrons," she persuaded (and many of us have seen how persuasive Mike can be), "you must plant them and join the Rhododendron Society." Vern did, and it all grew from there.

Vern's garden is by no means in a steady state today. Hurricane Freda in '64 took down 28 trees and opened up new areas to plant. Again, three years ago (September 8, 1999) many trees blew down. Once more she planted, making a good thing of a bad.

Her favourite rhodo? Vern thought a while before she chose Sue-Mel, named for her two daughters, a lovely pink of many shades ('Vanessa Pastel' x 'Loderi King George'). Now, can we hope she'll bring a few to sell at our meetings?

Other interests occupying this busy woman are bridge and golf (for mind and body), "And of course," adds Vern, "the grandchildren and great-grandchildren."

Thank you to the four interesting and enjoyable FSRS members who took the time to talk with me. The pleasure was all mine; any errors are too.

Dixie Mueller