

# The Yak

# Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Volume 17 Number 2 February 2004



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

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

[www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth](http://www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth)

## 2003 Officers

President: Bobby Ogdon  
604-853-8839

Vice Pres.: Colleen Forster  
604-534-1840

Secretary: Mary-Anne Berg  
604-853-5737

Treasurer: Alan March  
604-532-9062

Directors: Dalen Bayes  
Norma Senn  
Harold Fearing

Membership: Wenonah March

Newsletter: Brenda Macdonald  
604-990-5353

Website: Chris Klapwijk  
604-888-0920

This Month's Meeting: Wednesday, February 18, 2004

Speaker: Chris Klapwijk

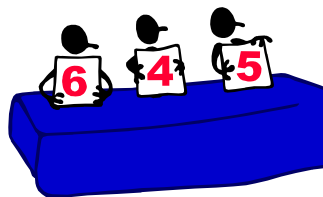
Topic: FSRS Garden Tour, May 2003

Companion Plants: Colleen Forster

Show & Tell: Vern Finley

Plant Sale: Colleen Forster

## Quick Hits



## Survey

Thank you to all Chapter members who took the time to complete the survey which was attached to the December issue. The responses we received to date have been collated and are shown on page 4. Also included are the various suggestions and comments, all of which were interesting and valuable. Another copy of the survey is attached at the back of this month's Yak, in the hopes that more members will take the time to consider what's good, what's not so good, and what we can do to improve.

## Membership List

The 2004 Fraser South Rhododendron Society Members list is attached at the end of the newsletter.

## What's In Bloom?



*R. 'Nobleanum'*  
one of the earliest man-made  
hybrids, developed by Waterer at  
Knap Hill in the 1830s

as seen in the garden of Ken and Dot  
Gibson, Tofino, B. C.



From the President

## WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE?

With a shy smile, a sly smirk, or one slightly raised eyebrow, the questions come tumbling forth. “How do you like living in a townhouse?” “Do you like neighbors living so close?” “How are you adjusting to the loss of your acreage?” “What did you do with your plants?” “Can you have a garden in your new complex?” “A gated adult community – what’s that like?” “How are you handling such a radical change?” “Do you miss you garden?”

There are no perfect answers. As with so many choices in life, selecting a home requires a series of compromises, not the least of which is location. Transitions are part of life but that doesn’t mean we have to like them. We procrastinate, or at times live in denial. Inevitably, however, our lives emulate our gardens: always in dynamic process – never a static completion. Our residence changes because we prefer another location due to demographics; or we are moved out by encroaching development; or we are forced out by our declining health. For me it was all three.

Our home and garden was in the Fraser Heights area of Surrey, a mere stone’s throw from the Port Mann Bridge. This formerly pastoral community is now repeatedly subdivided by developers hungry for land in the bedroom suburbs of Vancouver. Native plants and wildlife have been supplanted by traffic jams road rage, and high density development.

Thirty years ago developers made annual visits to the door to entice homeowners to sell. Latterly the doorstep coercion was a daily occurrence. Close behind them stood the neighbors, begging us the get with the program. If we agreed to sell they too would benefit by increased property values since a larger piece of land could be developed. How do you say no to loving friends you have known for thirty years?

And, add one more ingredient to the mix. The park-like property was created at a cost. I learned that “back-breaking labor” was more than hyperbole. It was in fact painful reality. Rhododendrons are heavy. They also outgrow their space. I was the landscaper and only member in my park department. Lifting heavy objects is hazardous to your health. A herniated disc evolved to a ruptured disc with attendant nerve damage. The subsequent surgery was considered a success – have no pain, praise God, however, I have very little strength for lifting. Hence, a life style change was necessary; a transition of sorts.

In our world gentlemen offer to do things for ladies – lift heavy objects, rearrange furniture, set up chairs and tables for rhodo meetings, lead work parties at rhodo gardens. You will note my absence at these events. It is not that I don’t want to help; it’s that I am unable. The spirit is willing but — you know the rest. I have learned to garden on my hands and knees. It puts me much closer to the weeds that way, though I end up looking like Pigpen in “Peanuts”.

Speaking of transitions: Dr. Mike Bale has been front and center for many years, especially the past two as our president. While we will not see him in that capacity these days, we rejoice that he will continue to be an indispensable leader in FSRS. I know that on behalf of all members you join me in expressing deep appreciation to Mike for his invaluable leadership. He has not only stimulated interest in rhododendrons but he has touched our lives.

Oh — the answers to the previous questions are: fine; yes; it’s a struggle; sold most; tiny; secure; cautiously; with a passion! Often I have “withdrawals” and need to get some soil under my fingernails. So – if I ask to work with your rhodos, please don’t tell me your garden is weed free.

*Bobby Ogdon*



From the Editor

## Last Month:

Last month's business of Annual General Meeting and election of new officers was accomplished with minimal tedium, relieved as it was with frequent visits to the extensive dessert buffet and informative and entertaining slide presentations by Dalen Bayes – his usual spectacular photos, this time of the Yukon, including Bison, a Musk ox, and a whole bunch of eskers; Don Marytn – precisely 16 slides, of the Cathedral Lakes area flora; Dave Sellars – of several gardens in the exceedingly temperate biozone of Cornwall, U.K., including Caerhays Castle, developed and owned by the Williams family of *R. williamsianum* fame; and Norma Senn – of her trip to the Three Gorges area of China prior to its disappearance under the rising waters of a massive hydroelectric dam complex. Truly, presentations such as these are the next best thing to being there. In fact they tend to reconfirm my secret opinion that there are many places in this world that I would rather watch a really good presentation on than be there. I just know that if I actually went to Central America I would spend my entire time standing in a damp and unfriendly environment with a crick in my neck, defeated by mist and mosquitoes and the

extraordinary and unexplained absence of the thousands of tropical birds which had been there only the week before. Sometimes it is better just to let "Nature" send a crew down there for 6 weeks to build blinds, and rappel up to the forest canopy, and employ their remarkable telescopic lenses to show me, in the comfort of my own home, what I never would have been able to see anyway.

The February meeting is also the time when we honour our own chapter members. This year the Awards Committee made the following presentations:

The Harold Johnson Memorial Award to Wenonah March – "In appreciation of your dedicated efforts in increasing membership in the Fraser South Rhododendron Society and organization of the Annual Truss Show we are pleased to honour you with the Harold Johnson Memorial Award."

The Gerry C. Emerson Memorial Award to Vern Finley – "In appreciation of all your many contributions to the Fraser South Rhododendron Society over the years we are pleased to honour you with the Gerry C. Emerson Memorial Award."

The Ella J. Crabb Memorial Award to Mike Bale – "In appreciation of your leadership and dedication to the FSRS as President, and for organizing the most incredible garden tours for our members, we are pleased to honour you with the Ella J. Crabb Memorial Award."

The new roster of Directors, all elected by acclamation, are:

President	Bobby Ogdon
Vice-President	Colleen Forster
Secretary	Mary-Anne Berg
3 Year Director	Les Clay
2 Year Director	Harold Fearing (incumbent)
1 Year Director	Dalen Bayes (incumbent)

Significant Volunteers are:

Programs	Colleen Forster and Dave Sellars
Ways and Means	Sue Klapwijk
Refreshments	Wendy Sellars
Joan Bengough	Librarian
Mike Trembath	Historian
Phyllis Anderson	Membership Tags
Website Manager	Chris Klapwijk
Newsletter Editor	Brenda Macdonald

## This Month:

This month, Chris Klapwijk will present a program on the gardens visited by members of last year's spring bus tour to Washington and Oregon, including the Kubota and Lakewold gardens near Seattle; the Cecil and Molly Smith, Elk Rock, and Crystal Springs gardens, and Van Veen's and Bovee's nurseries in the Portland area.

*Brenda Macdonald*

## December 2003 - FSRs Survey

														Average
Programme and speakers	3.5	4	5	5	5	4	3	4	4	3	5	4	4	4.13
Reception, refreshments, camaraderie	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.83
Garden tours and visits	-	5	4	5	5	5	3	-	-	5	5	5	5	4.67
Christmas Party	4	5	4	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	-	5	5	4.55
June Picnic	4	5	5	-	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.91
Newsletter	5	5	5	5	5	5	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.67
Availability and cost of plants	3	5	4	5	4	5	3	4	5	5	4	5	5	4.33
Location, day, and time of meeting	4	4	4	5	5	3	2	4	5	5	4	5	5	4.17
Communication by executives/directors	4	4	5	5	4	3	3	5	5	3	4	5	5	4.17
Membership costs	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4.75

### Suggestions:

- #1 Try to keep speaker topics as varied as possible.
- #2 It would be nice to have a speaker relating to ponds and pond plants.
- #3 Re: Christmas Party - eliminate Rhodo matching game, have more fun with gift exchange (can give ideas of how to improve it).
- #4 As noted above, all v. satisfactory, but we often receive the Yak the day of the meeting. Would an earlier mailing be possible?
- #5 Less Companion Plant topics and sales.  
More topics on rhodos.  
More Garden Tours.  
Change format of meetings (business meeting before speakers).  
More rhodo plant sales at meetings.
- #6 Like having speaker first/business later after coffee.  
Speakers: New head of UBC Botanical Garden  
Woman from Washington who does DNA research on rhodos  
Professional nature/flower photographer (check with local photo clubs)  
Brian Minter  
Some Northwest hybridizer, on his own hybrids
- #7 Note: Mike has done a superb job. I always enjoy the show/judging.  
short presentations by members on their own gardens - with or without slides.  
short discussion of one rhodie so we can learn about it (at each meeting).  
presentations by local park people, especially in relation to their rhodies.
- #8 speaker score varies with speaker, but at least greater than or equal to 3.
- #9 I like the variation in topics, but would like to hear more about rhodies - no suggestions as to potential topics or speakers though  
Raffles are great too.
- #10 Newsletter - very informative.
- #11 This is a friendly well-run club. As to the programme, no real complaints, but the difficulty is ensuring that the speaker is as scintillating as his/her topic would have you expect.  
The newsletter is more than excellent.  
AGM/Dessert meeting is an excellent idea - but could we limit the quantity to, say, 12 desserts each year?

*continued on page 6 "Frustrations"*



## COMPANION PLANTS

J is for “Jacob’s Ladder”... well actually *Polemonium* ssp.  
the Phlox Family  
Family: Polemoniaceae

I’ve had to cheat somewhat here, as “J” has a dearth of plants suitable to our rhodo gardens. The Jacob’s Ladders comprise about 25 species of perennials, some native to our area, such as *P. pulcherrimum*, *P. caeruleum*, *P. elegans*, and *P. viscosum*. There are both alpine and woodland types, and all make a cheerful show in May and June – just when many of our rhodos are at their best. Many of the named varieties available in plant centers are selected from ‘*P. caeruleum*’, and are being bred to counteract its somewhat annoying habit of being short-lived but seeding out profusely. (Other species are not so prone to this characteristic.)

They grow from basal clumps of fern-like leaves, with the open bell shaped blooms in delicate clusters standing well above the leaves, from 12-36 inches. For these varieties, choose an open woodland site with cool fertile soil that drains well, but avoid too much shade, as it will encourage mildew and leggy growth. Periodic deadheading will cut down on the seedlings, and well, you’re out there doing the rhodos anyway – right?



*P. 'Brise d'Anjou*

Look for:

- Dark Beauty – with navy blue blooms and purple spotted leaves
- Apricot Delight – an unusual combination of lilac and apricot, to 20 inches
- Brise d’Anjou – a light yellow variegated form, with light blue flowers – striking!
- Snow and Sapphires – a white variegated one with bright blue flowers, but it will burn in too much sun; grows to 2 feet
- Album – is a selection with white blooms, and useful in combination with strong-coloured rhodos

There is another species, ‘*P. yezoense*’, that has an interesting selection called “Purple Rain”, which sports chocolate-burgundy foliage and nodding blue flowers, and tho’ I haven’t seen this one in real life, the photo looks quite intriguing. It also grows to 24 inches.

The fine textured leaves of Jacob’s Ladder are an excellent foil against the blunt rhodo foliage, and the airy clusters of blooms give some movement and light in the woodland. After 3 to 5 years, the clumps will need dividing – this will be evident as the center gets floppy and fewer and fewer flowers are produced. But fear not – they divide easily since the roots are fibrous. Is best done in spring just as growth emerges. Settle the divisions in well, and share some with neighbors and friends too.

These are just a few more plants to add to the beauty of our rhodos: not to replace them, but to compliment, highlight and enhance them. A garden of just rhodos is beautiful when in bloom, but needs other forms and textures to set them apart and show them off, as well as to provide a bit of shade and company, ..... and to keep us busy for the other 6 months of the year!



*P. viscosum*, a glandular native alpine, known as “Sky Pilot” and also “Skunk Polemonium” due to the unpleasant odour of its sticky leaves.

Happy Planting,

Colleen Forster



*Polemonium* 'Purple Rain'



*Polemonium* 'Album'

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Mike Bale writes to say that there are still two openings available for this year's Rhododendron Species Study Days, which commence February 28th. There are four sessions, every three or four weeks, held at the Rhododendron Species Foundation in Federal Way, Washington. Please call Mike at 604.853.8839 if you would like to participate in this fascinating and enjoyable series of seminars.

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*continued from page 4* FSRs Survey

### **Frustrations:**

- #1 Should we try to make New Members more welcome, and get them more involved in Chapter affairs?
- #2 Better viewing when we have these beautiful slide presentations.  
The June Picnic is awesome and we just need more contributors/more bidders after we have all that beautiful food and wine. The least we could all do is bring something and spend something.
- #3 I preferred the coffee at the end of the meeting.  
Would like to see the newsletter come the week prior to the meeting - it is too close to the meeting dates at the moment.
- #4 Lack of club member participation - too much sitting on hands, jobs left to same few members every year.
- #5 It would be very helpful to receive Financial Statement a reasonable time before the AGM. (Please see the "Act")
- #6 Newsletter too long  
Too much info on companion plants (this is a rhodo club)
- #7 Maybe more of the programmes should relate to rhodos.
- #8 It's hard to hear some of the speakers, esp. when people are talking at the back of the room.  
And, I'd like the meetings to start on time.  
But overall, I think we have a terrific group.
- #9 Could we get the newsletter a week before the meeting instead of a day or two before?

On behalf of the Directors I would like to thank all those who took the time and trouble to respond to our request for feedback. There is a great deal of valuable information in both the "Suggestions" and the "Frustrations" which will help guide our future decisions.

And, on a more immediate note, it was chastening to see how many of you have been inconvenienced by the last minute arrival of your copy of *The Yak*. Since this is now my second term as editor I can no longer hide behind those classic excuses of ignorance and terror, and pledge to you all that future issues will be mailed out two weekends prior to the meeting.

*Brenda Macdonald*

# A Request From the Glades



The Glades Woodland Garden  
photo: Tiina Mack

Jim De Wolf writes:

As you may know, The Glades Woodland Garden is now a part of Surrey's Park system. Much pruning and thinning is being done to eliminate straggly, poorly shaped and otherwise undesirable plants from the garden. As such, the garden now has a number of open spaces requiring new plant material. UBC Botanical Gardens has offered some Rhododendron Species to be transplanted in late February.

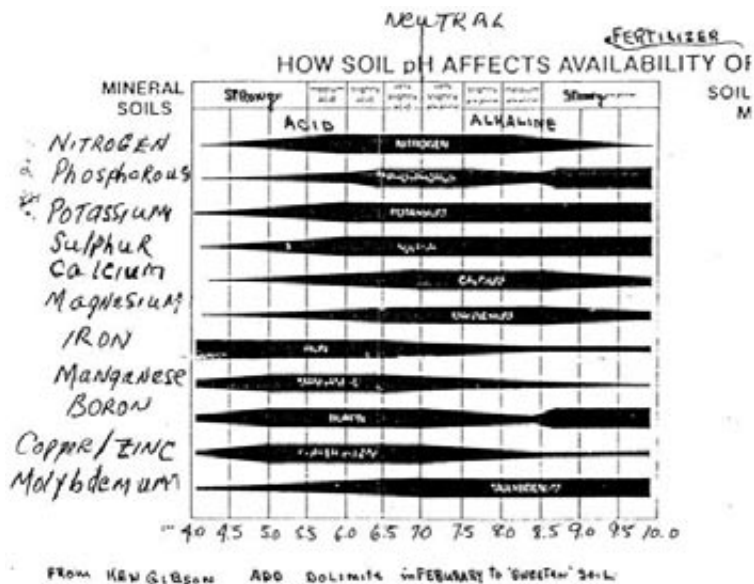
We are looking for people who have mature, well shaped Rhododendrons, Camellias, Acers and other special non-native plants that have grown too large for their present location. Ferns and groundcovers are also required.

Transplanting is best before mid March, but we can move most plants anytime after blooming is complete. We will do all of the work of removal and cleanup.

Donations to the garden would be greatly appreciated, but if this is not possible reasonable remuneration can be arranged.

For further information please call Jim or Elfriede DeWolf at 604.538.0928.

And Ken Gibson sends along the following chart showing the effect of soil pH on the availability of nutrients in support of his faith in the efficacy of a spring-time application of Dolomite lime as well as some photos of what is currently in bloom at "Painted Mountain" in Tofino.



*R. ririei*  
showing the deep purple  
nectar pouches



*R. 'Robert Fox'*  
part of the 'Barclayi' grex  
developed in Cornwall in  
the early 1920s

## 2004 FSRS Survey

Please rate the FSRS activities on a scale of 1 (terrible) to 5 (excellent):

- 1) Programme and speakers \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Reception, refreshments, and camaraderie \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Garden tours and visits \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Christmas party \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) June picnic \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) Availability and cost of plants \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Location, day, and time of meeting \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) Communication by executives/directors \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) Membership costs \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions: Speaker Topics/Activities/Other

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Frustrations:

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