

# The Yak

# Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society



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

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Treasurer: Trevor Badminton  
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Norma Senn  
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Volume 17 Number 1 January 2004

This Month's Meeting: Wednesday, January 21, 2004

## THE SECOND ANNUAL AGM AND DESSERT MEETING

Slide Presentations by: Dalen Bayes  
Don Martyn  
Dave Sellars  
Norma Senn

## Quick Hits



### Errata

First order of the day is to make some corrections:

- 1) Chris Klapwijk, who handles our website, has advised that I have been using incorrect formatting in our website address. The correct format has a capital F and S in the FraserSouth portion. Using the lowercase doesn't actually prevent access, but it does play havoc with various administrative functions of the site. So, if all of you who have bookmarked our page as [/frasersouth](http://frasersouth) could change it to [/FraserSouth](http://FraserSouth) it would be very helpful.
- 2) I regret that my fumble fingers reduced what could be mellifluously termed the 'sesquicentennial celebration' (150<sup>th</sup> anniversary) of George Fraser's birth to the less euphonious and definitely incorrect 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in last month's note about the Fraser Days to be held in Ucluelet next May. My apologies to everyone for confusing them, and particularly to Bill Dale who sent us the information. The website copy of last month's Yak has been corrected.

### 'Nameless Beauty'



This month we are profiling another of the rhododendrons developed by our members. R. 'Nameless Beauty', with parentage and looks very similar to the Loderis, was developed M.L. (Mike) Trembath and registered in 2001.

See Page 10.



From the President

#### DESSERT JANUARY AND AWARDS

We are hoping that the January Dessert Extravaganza will be as exceptional and excessive as last year! We are pleased that Diane Scott is back after a difficult personal year, and has again agreed to co-ordinate the evening. In order to accommodate our gastronomic interests and out of respect for the creativity of our members we will provide special plastic "doggie containers" so that we can take home additional portions to tempt ourselves later. It would be a great help if you would bring with you a serving spoon and pallet as needed to serve your creation. We will use the plates at the Church and clean up at the end of the evening. The agenda will include:

Annual Reports

Awards Presentation

Election of Officers

Slide Presentations by Dalen Bayes, Don Martyn, Dave Sellars and Norma Senn

#### CHRISTMAS DINNER

Many thanks to everyone for their participation in the Christmas Potluck Dinner which proved to be as spectacular as in previous years. A very special thank you for Sue Klapwijk for coordinating the event and also for making the beautiful centerpieces and bringing in the plants for the door prizes. Bev Clay kindly brought in the turkey for the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, and as usual it was cooked to perfection. Mike Trembath was unable to attend but again provided a delicious ham. The event was a success solely as a result of every member's participation and contribution. We greatly missed those members who were unable to attend.

#### ANNUAL ELECTIONS

The January meeting and AGM is perhaps the most important meeting of the year. It is an opportunity for all of us to thank those members (both on the executive committee and at-large) who have been so supportive and worked so enthusiastically on our behalf, as well as the occasion on which the memorial awards are presented. It is also the occasion at which the new Executive members are elected, and your support is vital to provide encouragement and appreciation. Nominations from the floor for the vacant positions will be encouraged.

This year will see the retirement from the Executive several members who have been active for many years.

*Wendy Sellars* first became a member of the executive in 1993 when she assumed Editorship of *The Yak* from Ella Crabb - a role she ably filled until 1997. In 1999 Wendy assumed the Membership chair, and then took over the position of Secretary in 2000. Wendy has been involved in many other aspects of the Chapter's activities in addition to these official functions, and has been a most enthusiastic member. Hopefully, after a short respite she will again be willing to provide a leadership role.

*Norma Senn* has been involved in the executive for a period of almost ten years. She was President in 1994/95 and 1995/96, and during the past two years has chaired the Speaker's Committee. In addition, Norma has been a regular contributor to the newsletter and her articles are widely read by ARS members throughout the world.

*Trevor Badminon* has been very active on the Executive since 1998, initially as a Director and then as President 2001/02 and more recently as Treasurer. In addition, Trevor has been a highly regarded grower of rhododendrons and has been a frequent and generous contributor to the Chapter meetings and plant sales.

The membership is extremely grateful to all of these members for their outstanding contribution.

*Mike Bale*

#### Editor's Note:

Since Mike was too modest and shy to write it down himself, and since my personal history with Fraser South is not long enough to be knowledgeable on the subject, I asked Wendy Sellars to provide a chronicle of Mike's substantial contributions to the Society.

In 1993 Mike became a Director for three years. He was a Director again in 1999 and 2000, assumed the position of Vice-President in 2001, and finally shouldered the responsibilities of being President in 2002 and 2003. Mike's enthusiasm and leadership have made Fraser South a very successful chapter, and the members are justly grateful to him for that. He is well known for the excellent garden tours he has organized over the past several years throughout the Pacific Northwest - another example of his unstinting and committed support of the local rhododendron community.



From the Editor

## Last Month:

Last month was our fabulous Annual Christmas Potluck, and I would like to add my own words of appreciation and thanks, in particular to Sue Klapwijk, Mary Anne Berg, Patti Bale and of course Mike, for all their efforts. The organization and production of such an event consumes vast amounts of time and energy, and the rest of us are all immensely grateful for the good time we had as a result of their efforts.

## This Month:

This month is our Annual General Meeting, and for the second year in a row we will interpose a number of coffee and calorie breaks (or tea and calorie breaks for the more civilized amongst us) amid the business at hand. As Mike has pointed out in his remarks, this meeting is a crucial part of our activity as a society, and we need everyone's support in order for it to be successful.

## Next Month:

Next month Chris Klapwijk will provide a multi-media presentation on the Portland Garden Tour of Spring, 2003.

## Notes:

### • FSRS Survey

I know that many of you had not received, and therefore did not have the opportunity to complete the FSRS survey prior to the Christmas meeting. I urge you to fill one out and either bring it to the next meeting, or mail it to me at: 4440 Marion Road, North Vancouver, BC, V7K 2V2. This month I have sent out copies of the FSRS Survey to former FSRS members, and I will compile all responses received into a report for the new Executive.

### • Note from Mike Trembath

To FSRS and all who sail therein:

My very best wishes for a happy 2004. May this snow and cold only increase the size and clarity of our rhodo blooms. I wish to thank FSRS who, either collectively or per an individual, provided me with such a lovely seasonal bouquet of flowers. I and my family have enjoyed them throughout the Christmas festivities. Many thanks.

'Mike' Trembath

*Brenda Macdonald*

Lillian M. Emerson, along with her husband, the late Gerry Emerson, was a charter member of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society. She was our first treasurer, and then became our secretary for a term.

An enthusiastic supporter of the chapter, Lillian was always ready to help – to cook a ham for a Christmas party, to serve coffee and calories at a meeting or plant sale, or to prepare her own garden for visitors on garden-tour days.

Lillian had a zest for life and adventure we envied. Who else would do a bicycle tour of Australia – at the age of 72; or spend seven weeks on a tour of England covering, if not John o' Groats to Land's End, at least Inverewe to Trewithin and many points between – at the age of 83.

Lillian taught school for many years. She excelled in teaching special-needs children, and she was able to pass along her enthusiasm for this work to other teachers.

Justly proud of the accomplishments of her children and grandchildren, she remained a source of love and support for them.

Her death, at the age of ninety, leaves us all poorer.

*M. L. 'Mike' Trembath*

And, as a special tribute to Mike Bale's sweet tooth, the Yak presents the following challenge which he included with his "From the President" notes this month:

## THE SECOND ANNUAL DESERT EXTRAVAGANZA CHALLENGE .....ANY TAKERS ????

### Black Forest Trifle

The same principal as the famous cake but in a different form and lots more chocolate!

12 eggs separated  
1 c sugar  
¾ c cocoa powder (we all now know where this comes from!)  
1 large jar or 2 small Morello cherries with cherry liqueur if possible  
2 ¼ c whipping cream or more!  
8 oz mascarpone cheese  
3 tbsp sugar  
7 oz best quality dark chocolate  
4 oz dark chocolate shredded

Preheat oven to 350 Grease 2 shallow baking pans, about 9 " in diameter and lined  
Beat egg yolks with the sugar until mixture is pale and frothy, fold in cocoa powder with large spoon. Beat the egg whites into peaks and fold into the chocolate mixture in 3 patches to keep egg whites from collapsing

Pour into baking pans and bake for 20 min. Top of the cake should be soft to touch. remove from the oven and let cool slightly on wire rack then turn out to cool completely.

Drain the cherries, reserving the syrup Beat the cream with sugar and mascarpone

Cut both cakes in half horizontally making four layer and place one layer in bottom of large glass serving dish. Pour half the cherry syrup on top and some of cherries over sponge cake, Melt chocolate in microwave or bowl over hot water. Spoon a third of it over cherries and cake layer as thinly as possible so it comes in contact with the cake. Repeat the process for the next layers.

Top with whipped cream, cherries and shaved chocolate.

Sante!

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### **In Bloom at Christmas**

*Rhododendron* 'Lucie Sorensen' (Vireya)

*Rhododendron dauricum leucanthum*

photo: Chris Klapwijk





# COMPANION PLANTS

I is for Ilex  
the Holly Family  
Family: Aquifoliaceae

We've decked our halls, mantles and tables, and celebrated the season with family and friends, but just because Christmas is over, it's no time to stop thinking about holly. Holly is not just a decoration with glossy prickled leaves and shiny red berries. It's a tidy clipped hedge that takes more abuse than a boxwood. It's a cluster of ground-to-head-high stems laden with long-lasting berries in winter. It's a stately row of black-green sentinels guiding visitors through your country property to your home. It's a cheerful golden burst of sunshine on a cold winter day. And it's a curious creation with miniature round leaves and shiny black berries in an age-old pot on a stone shelf. These, and many more, are hollies, and there's one for you, no matter what style your garden.

The hollies offer year round interest in abundance, with leaf shapes and colors, berries and form. Flowers are produced in great numbers, but give a relatively insignificant show until they mature to a great profusion of fruits in autumn – red, black, orange, and even some yellow. Bear in mind however, that a solitary plant will not, barring a few hermaphroditic exceptions, produce berries. Male and female flowers are traditionally borne on separate plants, and a proper pollinator (defined as one that blooms at the same time) is necessary to ensure good fruit set on the females. Sorry guys, no berries ever on the males!



*Ilex* 'Ferox Argentea' ('Silver Hedgehog')  
one of the many cultivars with variegated foliage



*Ilex* 'Blue Princess', an example of  
the *Ilex x meserveae* group

Evergreens with boldly patterned foliage are generally selected from either *I. x altaclerensis* or *I. aquifolium*, with such names as Golden King, Madame Briot, Silver Milkmaid, Ferox Argentea (Silver Hedgehog), Lawsoniana, or Handsworth New Silver. These and many green leaved forms will have various habits, whether dense and compact, weeping, upright, pyramidal or columnar.

The Blue Hollies, a hybrid group named *I. x meserveae*, are generally more hardy than the English or Highclere hollies. They only come with dark green foliage and very dark stems, and all have 'Blue' in their names.

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The deciduous *Ilex verticillata*  
'Bonfire' after leaf fall

There are also hollies that drop all their leaves in winter to reveal branches absolutely smothered in berries along their length; cut branches from these hybrids will last very well in vases of water indoors. Their foliage is ordinary and the plants are very adaptable in the landscape. These are selections of *I. verticillata*, with some hybridization with *I. serrata* and *I. decidua*, and go by names like Bonfire, Afterglow, Winter Red, Sparkleberry, Sunset, and Spotlight.



*Ilex crenata*, showing the  
boxwood-like leaves and black berries

The Japanese holly, *I. crenata*, a very un-holly-like plant, appears more like a boxwood than any holly. There are fine selections of dwarfs and goldens, most with black but one with white berries.

Undemanding as to soil and exposure, hollies do resent excesses of shade and moisture, which causes lanky growth and few berries. Pruning is best done in spring or summer, and planting is best in spring. But choose the location carefully - they very much dislike being moved as mature specimens. Seedlings sprout up quite spontaneously under mother plants and are 'planted' by birds in all sorts of unusual locations, but there's no telling what sex they might be until they bloom. If named selections are to be increased, cuttings should be taken in fall. The wood of the holly is fine grained and dense, making it much sought after for turning and marquetry.

So let's remember, a holly is not just for Christmas, it's for life!

Happy Planting,

Colleen Forster



# Up the Garden Path with Norma Senn

## Chestnuts January 2004

Chestnuts roasting on an open fire... what a delicious winter treat. Edible chestnuts come from the true chestnut trees, in the genus *Castanea*. Three species, the Chinese chestnut tree (*C. mollissima*), the Spanish chestnut (*C. sativa*), and the Japanese chestnut (*C. crenata*) provide edible nuts, with the first two species having better flavoured nuts than the last. Commercial production for *C. sativa* is centred in several Mediterranean countries, which gives rise to its common name, Spanish chestnut. China, Japan and Australia also have large acreages of nut orchards.

While many of the *Castanea* species are vegetatively hardy in southern British Columbia and Ontario, they have not been economically important because most require a longer ripening period for nuts than we can provide. However, there is a resurgence of interest in chestnut production as an alternative crop in these two provinces due to advances in breeding hardier, more disease resistant chestnuts using the American chestnut as one of the parents.

Eastern North America once had immense stands of American chestnut trees, *Castanea dentata*. These trees figured prominently in our early settlers' lives, as they provided superb nuts for food, lumber for building and tannin for the leather industry. Sadly though, the American chestnut is now virtually extinct due to chestnut blight, a fungal disease that was introduced to North America from the Orient at the beginning of the 20th century. The disease spread rapidly from New York City, killing forests throughout the entire eastern seaboard. I can remember my father talking about looking east from the top of the Niagara Escarpment and seeing the skeletal remains of dead chestnuts as far as he could see in southern Ontario.

Throughout the eastern forests, the above-ground parts of the chestnut trees have died, but some root systems are still alive and occasionally, even after all this time, people will find shoots growing from the old root systems. The shoots live

for a few years, even to the point of flowering and fruiting, but eventually they succumb to the fungal disease. Up until very recently, no one had much hope that anything could be done to re-establish American chestnut trees as they have no resistance to chestnut blight. However, with modern breeding techniques, there is now some hope that in time, varieties of trees can be developed that will have resistance. Nuts from these suckers are an important source of the germ plasm needed to provide genetic diversity.

The major breeding program aim has been to cross disease resistant Chinese chestnuts with the susceptible American chestnut. Offspring of this cross are evaluated for their disease resistance and growing traits, and then if suitable, are back-crossed and more breeding work is done to develop trees with all the desired traits. The goal is to maintain the disease resistant genes in the hybrid varieties but create trees that have the growth habit of the American chestnut. Among the most useful hybrid crosses produced from early breeding programs are some produced by J. Gellatly from the Okanagan Valley. Breeding programs such as this take decades to see results. At least 15 to 20 years are needed to grow each generation of trees long enough to evaluate the seedlings' growth characteristics. Over the last few years however, some hybrid varieties have been identified that have enough promise to be considered as the foundation for a potential "new" commercial crop for southern Ontario and B.C.

A second line of research has to do with changing the fungal pathogen itself. A non-virulent strain of the fungus has been found growing naturally in European chestnuts, and this strain may eventually be used to combat the pathogenic strain. In the wild and in controlled experiments, the non-pathogenic strain has been shown to weaken the blight enough that infected trees are able to survive the disease. If plant pathologists can find a way to inoculate new stands of trees with the non-virulent strain of the fungus, then the trees will be protected from infection by the pathogenic strain, almost the way we are immunized against certain diseases by having vaccinations. It's all still at the experimental stage, but it does offer some promise as a means of combating chestnut blight.

While *C. dentata* is not native to the west coast, some American chestnuts have been planted in western North America, sometimes as individual trees and sometimes in small groves. These were started from seeds collected in

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the east many years ago. Chestnut blight is not transmitted through the seeds, and since these plants were grown from seed, they are disease free. They've remained free of chestnut blight only because until recently, the blight had not been introduced to the west. However there are now reports of chestnut blight having been found in Oregon. Hopefully, the aggressive steps taken in Oregon to stop the further spread of chestnut blight will be successful, since our few west coast specimens are essentially the last remnants of this beautiful tree.

People sometimes confuse the true chestnuts with another group of trees, the horse chestnuts, which belong to a totally unrelated genus, *Aesculus*. The most common species of horse chestnut planted is *A. hippocastanum*, a plant native to Europe which was introduced to North America by early settlers. This commonly-grown tree has showy white flowers in May. The pink or red flowered horse chestnut, also of European origin, *A. x carnea*, is also grown in southern B.C. A third species, the Ohio Buckeye, *A. glabra*, as the common name implies, is native to the American mid-west. This last species is not used as an ornamental tree very often outside the American mid-west as it does not have the spectacular flower displays of the other two. Its best feature is its fall colour.

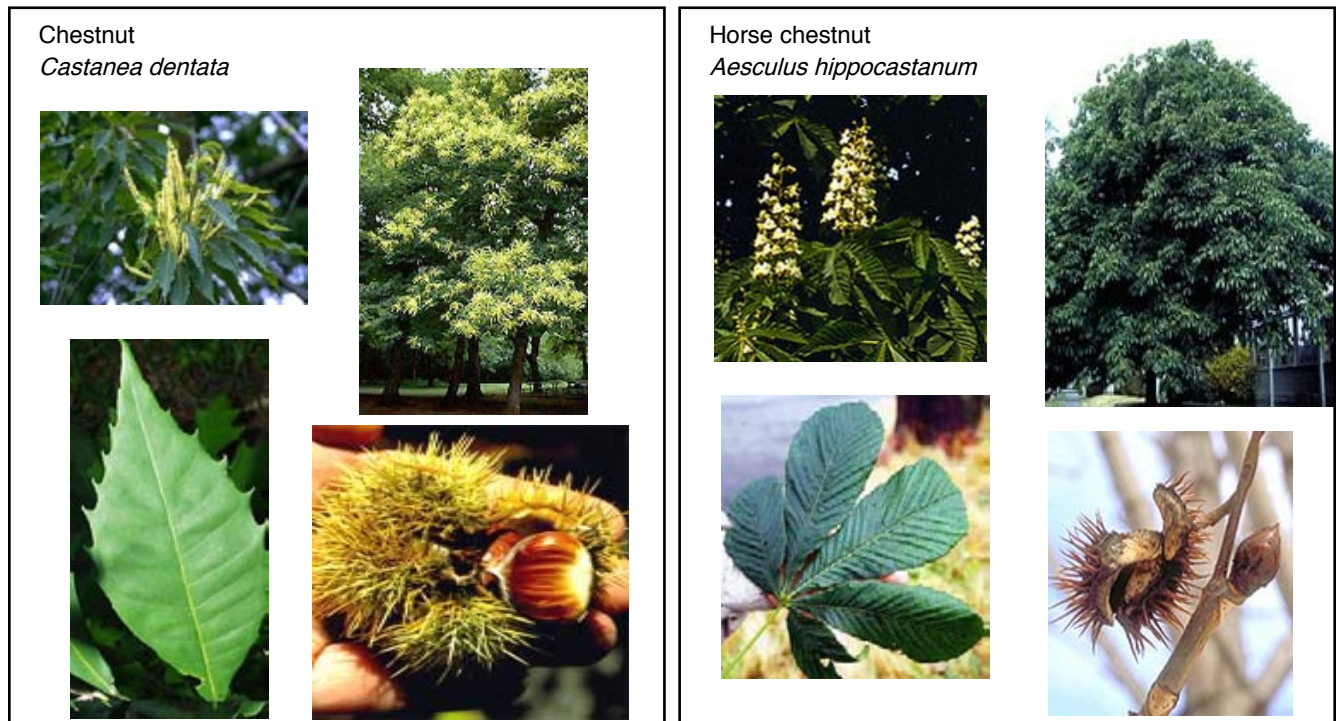
While horse chestnuts are commonly planted, they don't make very good ornamental trees for most of us. They are ultimately very large, easily reaching 20 m. in height, with broad crowns. They are best suited to very large yards or parks. In addition to size limiting their usefulness, these are considered messy trees, especially as street trees. The flowers, foliage and nuts are all large and coarse textured, and when they fall, they make for a lot of raking. The nuts are contained within spiky, burr-like fruits, and you essentially need gloves to handle them. They can make a mess of lawn mower blades too. Horse chestnuts are NOT edible, and in fact, are considered poisonous.

If you'd like to read more about the story of the American chestnut, there are hundreds of articles about it on the web. To check it out, simply type in *Castanea dentata* and hit search.



The botanical names attached to the "real" or sweet chestnut reflect the Latin word for chestnut: *Castanea*, and the sharply toothed nature of the leaves: *dentata*. The botanical names attached to the horse chestnut refer to the Latin word for an acorn: *Aesculus*, and its resemblance to the true chestnut: *...castanum*. One can only speculate how the horse: *hippo* got in there.

For two trees which look so very similar (the most easily distinguishable feature is that the leaves of the true chestnut are alternate and simple, and the leaves of the horse chestnut are opposite and palmately compound) they are remarkably far apart genetically speaking. The true chestnut is more closely related to oaks (with acorns) and beeches (with beechnuts), and the horse chestnut is more closely related to maples (with the winged samara) and litchis (with the edible litchi nut fruit) than they are to each other.





# PROPAGATORS AND PEDIGREES

Sorting out the parentage of *R.* 'Nameless Beauty', another of the rhododendron hybrids developed and registered by our own Mike Trembath, was not quite the task it had been for *R.* 'Lionheart' (see *The Yak*, February, 2003) although even knowing the names of all the parent hybrids does not mean that one necessarily knows the names of all the parent species.

The immediate parents of *R.* 'Nameless Beauty' were *R.* 'Exbury Naomi', one of the justly famous Naomi grex developed by Rothschild in 1926, and *R.* 'Canary', developed in 1930 by Koster.

The Naomi grex has almost the same parentage as the Loderi grex, and all the named plants from both grexes are immensely popular, both as garden specimens and as a source for hybridization. The Naomis are statuesque, large-flowered and fragrant, just like the Loderis, but unlike the Loderis - which were straight *R. griffithianum* x *R. fortunei* - they had a touch of *R. thomsonii* in them. Perhaps it was that touch of the red *thomsonii* which infused all of the Naomis with the undertones and subtle shadings of yellow, peach, and apricot which are absent from the Loderis.

*R.* 'Nameless Beauty'  
*R.* 'Exbury Naomi' x *R.* 'Canary'  
M.L. (Mike) Trembath, 2001  
(photo Mike Trembath)



Although *R.* 'Canary', was developed by Koster at about the same time, it had neither the pedigree nor the attractiveness of the Naomis. What it did have was a yellow colour. Its parentage was also less well documented. There was some *campylocarpum* in there, also some *caucasicum*, but the other parts of the equation were unknown and unnamed. Mike describes it as somewhat scruffy, and certainly it cannot have been tremendously successful as a garden specimen since it has almost disappeared from the catalogues.

But for Mike's purposes, it was very useful. She was aiming for a good yellow with a large, substantial blossom and attractive foliage. Hoping to capture the yellow of 'Canary' and the attractive habit, foliage, fragrance, blossom size, blossom shape, and apricot shadings (under the pale lilac-pink) of 'Exbury Naomi' she made her cross, and grew on a group of seedlings.

Several of the resulting shrubs had cream-coloured blooms with a slight fragrance and rather lax inflorescence. One had a perfectly round truss of 10 to 12 long-lasting flowers of good substance with good foliage, but was a vivid magenta. Where had that come from? Some by-blow of errant garden pollen? Some bizarre predominance of *R. thomsonii*? But it didn't matter, because the last seedling turned out just right.

A mid-May bloomer, it displayed a big, full truss of 10 to 12 widely campanulate, almost reflexed blossoms, with good substance. The foliage was also substantial, but clean and tidy - no blotches, little weevil damage, and no mildew. The

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bud was pink, but each long-lasting flower opened up the colour of rich cream edged in pink, with a greenish touch to the throat and a green stigma. The pink at the edge faded as the flower aged, but the hint of yellow in the cream remained, rather like cream from a good Jersey cow. All that, and fragrance too.

It is impossible to know which species contributed which characteristics to 'Nameless Beauty', but always fun to speculate. Certainly it is easier to decide what did not get passed down: there are no nectar pouches from *R. thomsonii*, nor is there much evidence of its deep, deep red colour. None of the thin rust-coloured indumentum from *R. caucasicum* showed up, and the attractive peeling bark of *R. griffithianum* isn't evident either.

What is there, is a large, upright, subtly-coloured, and fragrant truss on a large-growing and cold-hardy shrub with impeccable foliage. It is an handsome combination, and probably owes much to the predominance of the *griffithianum* and *fortunei* genes.

Despite its many good qualities however, it is unlikely that 'Nameless Beauty' would be a good candidate for the commercial market. Mike reports that it is easily propagated, and its lovely colour, good foliage and fragrance would seem to make it a natural, but the problem is that it is just too much of a good thing. With today's smaller gardens, the tall- and wide-growing Beauty is just too big for most suburban gardeners: an elegant and aristocratic lady, destined only for those with the space to keep her.



R. 'Nameless Beauty'  
(photo Mike Trembath)

Over the past few years it seems that the genesis of a name for a new hybrid has become an activity fraught with at least as much anxiety as the development of the plant itself. Before a new hybrid can be registered, the hybridizer must come up with name which no other registered rhododendron has. As more and more people around the world develop more and more rhodo hybrids, choosing a unique name becomes more and more problematical. Only the other day I was wandering around in the website for the Société Bretonne du Rhododendron and came across a new hybrid (*R. 'Kernéostic'* x *R. 'Lem's Monarch'*) registered as *R. 'Rwain'*, with the explanation that RWAIN stands for Rhododendron Without An Important Name. It is not clear how the name Rwain is pronounced in either language.

However, it was a similar sort of problem which Mike faced in August of 2001 as she attempted to register her hybrid. It was a plant which Dave Crabb had particularly admired, and Mike wanted to acknowledge Dave's long-time interest and support of all things rhododendron, as well as his perspicacity in choosing this particular one to favour. But it seemed that no matter which names Mike provided the registrar as possibilities, the registrar came back saying they were already taken, or too similar to an existing name, or something. So it was with some frustration and a certain sense of pique that Mike finally stated that they might as well just call it "Nameless Beauty" and be done with it. The registrar, apparently having little sense of humour, proceeded on that basis.

*Brenda Macdonald*