

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

Volume 17 Number 6 June 2004

This Month:

**THE FRASER SOUTH RHODODENDRON
SOCIETY'S RENOWNED**

ANNUAL PICNIC

SATURDAY, JUNE 19TH

OFFICIAL COMMENCEMENT AT 3:00 PM

BUT COME AND HELP US SET UP

ANYTIME AFTER 1:30 PM

2004 Officers

President: Bobby Ogdon
604-535-5158

Vice Pres.: Colleen Forster
604-534-1840

Secretary: Mary-Anne Berg
604-853-5737

Treasurer: Alan March
604-532-9062

Directors: Dalen Bayes
Les Clay
Harold Fearing

Membership: Wenonah March

Newsletter: Brenda Macdonald
604-990-5353

Website: Chris Klapwijk
604-888-0920

Quick Hits



Picnic!

Don't forget our annual picnic
Date: Saturday June 19th
Time: 3:00pm
Place: The home of **Bev and Les Clay**. The exact address is listed on the attached, newly-updated, FSRS Membership List.



Welcome Back!

A warm welcome back to our former members Judy Lee Jardine and Max Plater. They are also included in the updated Membership List attached.



From the President

AT THIS TIME OF YEAR ...

Looking back on my life with rhodos, it was at this time of the year I usually began to think about propagation, specifically cuttings. The shows were finished. I had seen new and wonderful plants and trusses exhibited. Many were completely foreign to me. Some, while familiar in name were unattainable. All of the above were coveted. If I knew of a gardener who owned and exhibited one or more of the beauties I needed for my collection, and who would be willing to share a cutting, well perhaps I could have a close encounter with my sought after plants.

My early attempts at propagation were a dismal failure. I killed every cutting I touched. I was consistently ineffective with no glimmer of hope for success. So, I asked the experts. An initial mistake I made was to approach someone in the Vancouver Rhodo Society who was well known as a successful hybridizer. I quickly learned he had time only for those who emanated a certain socio-economic status, or had a track record of success, or who would return some benefit to him. He had no time for rookies questing for knowledge. He suggested I read some books if I had questions about rhodos. And he deigned to SELL

me some cuttings if I thought I could root them, which he sneeringly questioned. He referred to his propagation methods with more secrecy than undercover cops. Thankfully he was the sole exception. Other members enthusiastically opened their gardens, their homes, and their hearts to me in my pilgrimage.

Among the first of my mentors was Lillian Hodgson, a charter member of the VRS and a most respected rhodo expert whose beautiful property on Chancellor Boulevard near UBC overlooked Howe Sound. Her garden was chock-a-block with hundreds of mature rhodos, including one delicious plant hybridized by Dr. Bob Rhodes which he named for her. She and her husband, Bill, patiently demonstrated how to take cuttings and how to get them to root. They graciously offered an almost unlimited supply. Further, Lill unravelled many of the esoteric mysteries that had heretofore shrouded the art form of propagation. I was shown a variety of rooting mediums, correct rooting hormones, and the poor man's greenhouse: a Ward's propagator. Someone named Ward had miniaturized a greenhouse, one you could hold in your hand, as a means of propagating seeds or cuttings. I was amazed. It required little space and minimal expense.

Off to a garden center for some purchases. Peat and perlite were needed to provide the rooting medium. Seradix Number 3 to stimulate the formation of a callous out of which the roots would form. Of the several sizes of Mr. Ward's invention I conservatively selected the middle one. Before leaving Hodgson's garden I had taken 200 cuttings. With a pen I dutifully marked the variety on the underside of a leaf on each truss. According to Lill's instructions I selected the thin trusses of the current year's growth on the lower limbs of the plant. Later I discovered they rooted more easily than the turgid trusses atop the plants. Also, the plant does not appear as butchered as when the top is pruned. The cuttings had been calmly waiting in the refrigerator from the moment I arrived home. Now two days later I was ready to follow my mentor's instructions.

The rooting medium was mixed—50/50 peat and perlite. I chose not to deviate, though later I would find a range of opinions on the composition of mediums. The mixture was thoroughly moistened, then compressed to remove excess water and laid into the propagator to a depth of 2-3 inches. The cuttings were retrieved from the fridge, chilled to retard desiccation, and placed on the table. Judy was elated to find me removing the inedible (in fact poisonous) greenery from proximity to our food. She unreasonably questioned why my cuttings were given such a high priority. Her elation however was tempered as she observed me attacking the cuttings with an X-acto knife.....on the dining room table. I was overwhelmed with excitement; why couldn't she get with the program?

Chastised, I continued my mania with rhodo cuttings on the work bench in the garage. Carefully, I cut each truss four inches from the terminal bud. Foliage was stripped leaving four to six leaves at the top. Each leaf was cut in half, I was told, to reduce the transpiration of moisture. The stems were scored in order to expose the cambium layer, and subsequently dipped in Seradix, before inserting them into the prepared medium. Labels were added so I would remember the name of the cutting. Finally the translucent cover complete with a moisture vent was attached. I was rolling now!

Then I took stock of things. My personalized propagator looked great and I was assured it would do its job. Yet I felt a great

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unease. As I observed my handiwork I noted one major problem: I had 194 cuttings left over. Either I would need to fine tune the process or I should become a major share holder in Mr. Ward's company. I could not afford the latter, so it was back to the drawing board and the telephone. My rescuers, who became close friends, were members of VRS and each one a successful gardener and propagator: Gene Round, Francisca Darts, Harold Johnson and most significantly, Gordon and Vern Finley. It was Fin who gave me a propagation box and a cutting bed, along with innumerable cuttings on which to "practice".

In our September meeting we plan to have a workshop about propagation. Experts will demonstrate their successful practices of rooting cuttings. When you branch out into this area of horticulture a new world opens up for you.

Half of the cuttings in the mini-greenhouse rooted, including R. 'Lillian Hodgson', a gorgeous late blooming bi-colour. I was ecstatic with a 50 percent return rate, although in the future I would be devastated with such mediocrity. Fortunately my propensity for preparedness worked in my favour. I had purchased materials in gargantuan sizes. Everything, that is, except the propagator. I had enough peat, perlite, and Seradix to last through my grandchildren's lifetimes. I sincerely hope they become propagators. And, I wonder if these materials have a shelf life through the next century.

Bobby Ogdon

Official Winners of the Justly Famous FSRS Beer Bottle Truss Show - 2004

<u>Class No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Winner</u>	<u>Species/Hybrid</u>
1	Rhododendron (lepidotes)	Harold Fearing	R. xanthocodon
2	Azalea (deciduous & evergreen)	Dalen Bayes	R. indicum 'Balsaminiflorum'
3	Hymenantha (elepidotes)	Dalen Bayes	R. insigne
4	Any lepidote hybrid	(no entry)	(no entry)
5	Any deciduous azalea hybrid	Sean Rafferty	R. 'Cecile'
6	Any evergreen azalea hybrid	Wenonah March	R. 'Betty A. Voss'
7a	Red hybrids <6"	Colleen Forster	R. 'Lord Roberts'
7b	Red hybrids >6"	Vern Finley	seedling
8a	White hybrids <6"	Vern Finley	R. 'Hoppy'
8b	White hybrids >6"	Sue Klapwijk	R. 'Bonito' x R. 'J.C. Williams'
9a	Pink hybrids <6"	Chris Ballyn	R. 'Mme. Ida Rubenstein'
9b	Pink hybrids >6" and <10"	Colleen Forster	R. 'Graf Zeppelin'
9c	Pink hybrids >10"	Sean Rafferty	R. 'Lem's Monarch'
10a	Yellow/cream hybrids <6"	Norma Senn	R. 'Moon Wax'
10b	Yellow/cream hybrids >6"	Dalen Bayes	R. 'Karen Triplett'
11	Mauve & Purple hybrids	Dalen Bayes	R. 'Olin O. Dobbs'
12	Orange hybrids	Sean Rafferty	R. 'May Day'
13	Bi-color hybrids	Dalen Bayes	R. 'Nelda Peach'
14	"What's It Called" (new, non-registered)	Mike Trembath	R. 'Rimini' x R. 'Mrs. Lamont Copeland'
15	Truss with best fuzzy foliage	(tie) Wenonah March (tie) Sean Rafferty	R. 'May Day' R. degronianum ssp. yakushmanum
16	Best Blotched	Dalen Bayes	R. 'Edwin O. Weber'
17	Best Speckled	Dalen Bayes	R. 'Kilimanjaro'
18	Most Lurid	Dalen Bayes	R. 'Midnight Mystique'
19	Best Last Year's Truss	Dalen Bayes	(un-named)
20	Most Elegantly Weevil-Notched	Colleen Forster	R. 'Naselle'
21	Best Hammerhead	Larry Morton	R. 'Purple Splendor'
22	Most Flaccid	Wenonah March	R. 'May Day'
23	Best Miniature Truss (under 6")	Sean Rafferty	R. 'Maricee'
24	Most Fragrant (Az. Or Rh.)	Sean Rafferty	R. 'Snowbird'
	Aggregate Winners	Dalen Bayes	



From the Editor

This Month:

Two activities for this month: Foremost is our annual **Potluck Picnic and Auction** to be held Saturday, June 19th, at 3:00pm, at the home of Bev and Les Clay. The Clay address is listed in the FSRS Membership List, attached. Don't forget to bring your own plates and eating utensils, as well as something to sit on. Sue Klapwijk is doing her usual superb job of organizing the food contributions.

Don't forget that the Annual Picnic is also the second of our two major fund-raisers. Look around you, there is sure to be something worthwhile to contribute to the auction: superfluous gardening tools or equipment, horticultural texts on a subject which no longer interests you, the occasional rhodo grown too big for its placement? Bring something someone else will be interested in, and then bid early and bid high for something you are interested in. Dalen Bayes will preside.

The other activity for this month is the yearly clean-up of the Ella Crabb memorial garden located in Langley. This is scheduled for 7:00pm on Wednesday, June 16th, and

will involve a little deadheading, a little pruning, a little weeding. Come if you can - many hands make light work. Call Mike Bale or Bobby Ogdon for directions.

Last Month: Last month was the occasion of our Justly Famous Beer Bottle Truss Show. It was the first show I had been able to attend, and I thought it huge fun. Everyone had a swell time, and it gave us all a wonderful opportunity to see actual trusses - not just photographs - of an incredible number of different species and hybrids. All the winners have been tabulated, and the results are shown on page three.

The other big event last month was our annual Plant Sale, held this year on May 15th. This appears to have been our best Plant Sale ever, with sales of \$4,245.00, raffle income of \$117.00, and even \$5.50 in coffee sales. This means the Chapter will realize over \$1,100.00 in income. It was a wonderful opportunity for the Chapter to showcase our club, for our growers to sell their products, and for the public to see a wonderful display of, and learn more about, rhododendrons, azaleas, and some companion plants.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to such a successful event - the growers: the Clays, Harold Fearing, Colleen Forster, Sue Klapwijk, the Badmintons, and Dave Shantz; those who manned the cashier positions; those who organized the refreshments; and those who contributed something to the Toonie Table. And extra thanks to Dave Shantz, Sue Klapwijk, Bev and Les Clay, and Colleen Forster for their generous contributions to the lottery table. We had one winner from the general public who was so excited about her prize of the lovely 'Caroline Gable' azalea for the 3rd lottery draw that she bought a number of new tickets and stayed around until the final draw was complete.

Next Month: Next "month" will actually be September, when we will all stagger back from a summer replete with gardening triumphs and tragedies. The scheduled activity for our first meeting back is a series of short presentations from some of our own members on rhododendron propagation.

Notes: We have been informed that Chapter member Susan Murray's book "Our Sylvan Heritage", a guide to the magnificent trees of the south Fraser Valley, has now been published. You may recall that Susan gave us a peek at some of the material in her book during her presentation to us last November. The book is published by Fitzhenry and Whiteside and is available at retail stores for around \$60.00, however the FSRS executive have made arrangements to make it available to any of the Chapter members for \$45.00. This well-illustrated book should make a valuable reference source. Please contact Joan Bengough before the end of June so that she can place a bulk order, or contact Norma Senn should you wish further information.



THE YAK IS NOW AN ADDRESS- AND TELEPHONE NUMBER-FREE ZONE



After considerable agonizing over the question, I have made this issue of The Yak the first in which no telephone numbers or addresses, either physical or email, (other than the contact information for the Chapter Officers listed on the first page) will be published. I realize that it will raise the inconvenience factor if members must look up addresses and telephone numbers in the FSRS Membership list, but I no longer felt comfortable about posting that sort of definitive information where it would be available to anyone cruising the internet. I will endeavour to ensure that the FSRS Membership listing is kept up to date and accurate, and will send out new paper and email attachment editions whenever necessary.

Brenda Macdonald



COMPANION PLANTS

N is for

Nothofagus of the Beech Family

Nyssa of the Sour Gum or Tupelo Family

I toyed with doing Narcissus or Nymphaea for this segment, but our newsletter has only so much space, and I'd need a book to say all there is to say about those vast groups of plants. Instead, I will tell you a 'tale of two trees', not well known or widely used, but surely worthy of attention and trial in our gardens.

NOTHOFAGUS Family Fagaceae

The False or Southern Beeches are a small group of trees from the southern hemisphere that are just on the edge of our hardiness range. I have only grown one, the hardiest species, *N. antarctica* (Antarctic Beech – oh yes – they really appreciate the shade on the ice stations), which is native to southern Argentina and Chile, but lost them all in pots in the cold winter of 1990.

Small crinkly dark green leaves are precisely arranged on a herringbone pattern of branches on a tree that seems to prefer to be a large shrub here in the north. I tried training them to a single stem, and did succeed – sort of! They display a definite perversity to twist and squirm, and send out branches and leaders at odd tangents – basically a botanical juvenile delinquent- but in time I achieved a tree-ish look, I guess. No idea how they would have done later, as they became landfill after that killing winter, but I will try again one day.

Autumn color varies through yellows-oranges-browns, and sort of sneaks up on the tree by creeping slowly along the branches. This gives a marbled look to the whole thing which is quite striking considering also the branch layout. The flowers and nuts are inconspicuous.

There are a few other deciduous species, *N. procera* (*N. alpina*), *N. pumilio*, and *N. obliqua*, but at Z8-9, we're pushing the limit. The Chilean evergreen types, *N. betuloides* and *N. dombeyi*, are rarely available, and probably even touchier, as are their Australian cousins *N. gunnii* and *N. cunninghamii*. If you are lucky enough to come across any of these, two factors are crucial to their survival – no cold winds, and lime-free soil. They root well from cuttings, or come from seed sown in fall. Try to find one – I was intrigued by them for the texture and unusual shapes, and look forward to another attempt.

NYSSA Family: Nyssaceae

The Tupelo, or Black Gum, or Sour Gum (not related to Eucalyptus, the Gum Tree, or Liquidambar, the Sweet Gum), is, strangely enough, directly related to the *Davidia*, or Dove Tree. However it displays neither the heart-shaped leaves nor the showy flower bracts of that sister tree.

There are only five species from China and North America, and the most available would be *N. sylvatica*, which has a large native range from Mexico to the eastern seaboard, and on into the southern tip of Canada. It is a perfect tree for lime-free, moist but well-draining, sites near water.

The Tupelo will become a large shade tree, so give it room to mature. More importantly, it should be acquired at a small size and left in place – it hates to move! It will rival even the best maples for fall color display – the shiny 6-inch leaves turn a kaleidoscope of yellow, scarlet and orange earlier than most other trees, and will set your pond on fire! Flowers are inconspicuous, and although it bears small blue egg-shaped fruits, you'd have to look sharp to see them. The Chinese *N. sinensis* is equally spectacular, but not quite as hardy (Z7), and more difficult to locate in plant centers. So if your koi pond is aching for a shady corner, this could be the answer that you'll love as much as they do.

Happy Planting!

Colleen Forster



Nothofagus antarctica



Nyssa sylvatica

N^o 636



[636]

RHODODENDRON DAURICUM. DOTTED-LEAVED RHODODENDRON.

Class and Order.

DECANDRIA MONOGYNIA.

Generic Character.

Cal. 5-partitus subinfundibuliformis. *Stam.* declinata. *Capf.* 5-locularis.

Specific Character and Synonyms.

RHODODENDRON *dauricum* ; foliis glabris punctatis nudis, corollis rotatis. *Sp. Pl.* 562. *Pall. Ross.* 1. p. 47. t. 32. *Bot. Rep.* t. 4. *Mart. Mill. Diet.* *Willd. Sp. Pl.* 2. p. 604.

CHAMÆRHODODENDROS folio glabro majusculo, amplo flore roseo. *Ann. Ruth.* 181. t. 27.

ANDROMEDA foliis ovatis utrinque punctatis. *Gmel. Sib.* 4. p. 124. n. 10.

This very beautiful shrub is, according to PALLAS, peculiar to the subalpine tracts of eastern Asia, occurring chiefly in the northern parts of Siberia between the Jenisea and Lena rivers, where the northern sides of the mountains in the beginning of May are entirely empurpled by it. It must of course be considered as a very hardy plant, though like many other inhabitants of the coldest regions, when cultivated in this country, from the greater mildness of our winters it is apt to expand its flowers prematurely, which are usually destroyed by subsequent frosts and cold winds. On this account it is better, as soon as the blossoms begin to appear, to remove the plant under shelter, where it will prove exceedingly ornamental in the very depth of winter; but should the frost begin early and continue so long as to retard the opening of the blossoms till its

its natural season, it might be suffered to continue in the open border.

GMELIN remarks a resemblance between this plant and *AZALEA lapponica*, which comes much nearer to *RHODODENDRON ferrugineum*: perhaps it was this observation that led MURRAY in the 13th and 14th editions of the *Systema Vegetabilium* to quote *LEDUM groenlandicum* of the *Flora Danica* (*The Labrador Tea*) as a synonym; an error which PALLAS has properly corrected. The leaves, which are dotted on both sides, continue all the Winter on the plant in Siberia and, as in our specimen, change to a brown colour; it sometimes however happens with us that all of them fall off before the appearance of the flowers. The leaves and more especially the bark have a strong aromatic taste and smell, and the scales of the flower-buds diffuse this odour some distance; but, when separated from these, the flowers themselves appear to us to be scentless.

Our drawing was made at the garden of E. J. A. WOODFORD, Esq. of Vauxhall, from a very fine specimen, which began to expand its blossoms in the open air in the beginning of January, and was then removed under shelter.

COMMON_NAMES-Dotted-leaved Rhododendron
SPECIES-Rhododendron dauricum
AUTHORITY-Linnaeus
SOURCE-The Botanical Magazine
VOLUME-17
PUB_DATE-1803
EDITOR-John Sims
ARTIST-S. Edwards, Sansum

What's in Bloom?

The following is a selection of rhododendrons and companion plants currently in blossom.



R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *blandfordiiflorum

epithet: flower resembling *Blandfordia*, a small lily-relative native to Australia and known as "Christmas Bells" **type:** lepidote
hardiness: -15°C|5°F **size:** to 5m|16' **bloom period:** Apr-Jun
photo: 'Mike' Trembath



R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *xanthocodon

epithet: with yellow bells **type:** lepidote
size: to 5m | 16' **bloom period:** Apr-Jun
hardiness: -15° C | 5° F
photo: 'Mike' Trembath



R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *roylei

epithet: after J.R. Royle **type:** lepidote
size: to 5m | 16" **bloom period:** Apr-Jun
hardiness: -15° C | 5° F
photo: 'Mike' Trembath



R. 'Ocean Lake'

type: lepidote **hybridizer:** A. Wright, Sr. and Jr.
parentage: 'Blue Diamond' x 'Sapphire'
hardiness: -20°C|-4°F **size:** to 0.5m|3' **bloom period:** May-Jun
photo: Sue Klapwijk



R. 'Loderi King George'

type: elepidote **hybridizer:** Sir Edmund Loder | F.C.C. 1970
parentage: *R. griffithianum* x *R. fortunei*
hardiness: -20°C|-4°F **size:** to 3m|10' **bloom period:** May-Jun
photo: 'Mike' Trembath



R. 'Mrs. G. W. Leak'

type: elepidote **hybridizer:** M. Koster | F.C.C. 1934
parentage: 'Coombe Royal' x 'Chevalier Felix de Sauvage'
hardiness: -20°C|-4°F **size:** to 2m|6' **bloom period:** May-Jun
photo: 'Mike' Trembath