

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 18 Number 1 January 2005

This Month's Meeting : Wednesday, January 19, 200

AGM

FOR OUR 17TH YEAR AS
FRASER SOUTH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

AND
THIRD ANNUAL SPLENDIFEROUS DESSERTS GALA

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Quick Hits

This Month....

It's that time of year again!
Join us on Wednesday for the
Annual General Meeting of 2005.

Bring a dessert to share with a
few others, and we'll vote for the
Chapter officers, and clap for the
recipients of the awards, and watch
some great slides as presented by
some of your fellow members.



From the President

TELL YOUR STORY

It is only 350 miles, a leisurely eight hour drive, but in many ways Slocan is a world away. The past two years Judy and I have been invited to participate in the ministry of two small congregations in the Slocan Valley. During the month of September we lived in the manse, and visited area attractions and private homes.

Slocan City, population 300, is located in a long narrow valley heading northward from a mid-point between Castlegar and Nelson on highway 3A. The surrounding mountains are so steep that the valley floor reportedly gets only two hours of direct sunlight daily in the depth of winter. So far, however, we have only experienced the gorgeous fall weather.

Gardening is a passionate pursuit in “The Valley”, but it is not without its attendant difficulties, many of which are peculiar to the area. Serious gardeners have a heated greenhouse, (or two), because of the short growing season. At the least, they have several cold frames to extend the growing season. Sturdy deer fences are mandatory, with a minimum height of eight feet. Elk and bears are not easily dissuaded by insubstantial barriers. The proliferation of grow-ops with high quality crops is a testament to certain horticultural skills. Authorities tend to have selective vision and/or blindness to this lucrative industry. Police presence has been withdrawn, erroneously naming growing/trafficking a victimless crime.

The populace in the valley, a mosaic of ethnicities, has made pluralism an accomplished science. Since the beginning of the twentieth century the predominant ethnic group is the Doukhobors. Though prominent numerically they have blended in as an integral part of the fabric of the Kootenays as to be nearly indistinguishable, until it is time for the fall fairs. Garden produce and domestic arts winners’ ribbons are monopolized by the Doukhobor communities, and rightly so when you see the displays. Agrarian and communal life is symbolized by their slogan “toil and the peaceful life.” Their vegetable gardens are legendary. Preserving the fruit of their labors is a fine art, subsequently stored in root cellars for the long winters.

Many of the Japanese relocated to the valley by a political knee-jerk reaction during World War II remain in the area of New Denver and Winlaw. A museum in the restored internment camp in New Denver is an emotional trip back in time. Meticulous gardens within the compound attempt to beautify the hostile environment, yet fall short of dispelling the injustices.

Other discernible sub-groups include draft dodgers, notorious after a plan to place a monument to them in Nelson; hippies and others with “commune” mentalities; and lifers, those who were born and raised in the area by families of original miners or homesteaders. Called the “Silvery Slocan,” the valley’s history dates back to the silver rush of the 1890’s. Slocan is loaded with fascinating people.

So also, here at home in Fraser South Rhododendron Society, we too have our special charming characters, some of whom we wish to honor at our next meeting.

Most people like to people-watch, and also to listen. The prevalent principle is that everyone has a story to tell. It is a joy to listen to them. The fascinating thing about sharing is that it is never one-directional; it is always reciprocal. The teller and the listener share in the joy of discovering one another. Many have discovered this truth in our garden society. At FSRS meetings we trade more than information or rhodos. A significant part of our time together is simply our time together. We share ourselves. We like one another. We care enough to listen to any willing to open up. We hope to model our caring at all of our meetings, including this month’s gathering.

Our January meeting is special for two reasons: we will be dining on some decadent desserts – sharing food with friends is a special joy – and we wish to say thank you to some of our friends. Thank you to Karen and all the helpers at the Christmas dinner. We also deeply appreciate Sue Klapwijk’s kitchen leadership for many years. Thanks is also extended to the many contributors to the “coffee and calories” each meeting. Your work is truly appreciated, and enables us opportunities to talk together. It is as we share food that we share ourselves.

The awards committee keeps their decisions close to the vest so no one is aware of the specifics until the meeting. But, we rejoice with the recipients and are pleased to be able to say thank you, and to add to their “story”.

Bobby Ogdon



From the Editor

This Month:

January is the time for our Annual General Meeting. It is at this time that we receive the annual reports from the President, the Treasurer, the Librarian; that we nominate and elect club officers for the new year; and that we recognize the efforts and contributions of our members. As in the previous two years, the evening's somewhat business-like demeanor will be leavened with periodic recesses for something substantially more interesting than the box of raisins we used to get when we were in elementary school.

Last Month:

Last month was our annual Christmas Pot Luck Dinner. On behalf of everyone who attended I would like to praise and thank Karen Linton and her band of merry elves who contributed, organized, and cleaned up - always the worst part of a Christmas fête.

Sometimes it pains me to say it, but my mother was right: many hands do make light work. And thanks also to Les and Bev Clay who provided us with a done-to-perfection turkey, Colleen Forster for her clever Rhodo Quiz, President Bobby for his guitar-escorted sing along, and Santa Dalen for distributing all the thoughtful, funny, useful, and tasty gifts that went into the gift exchange. All in all, it was a swell time.

Next Month:

The speaker and topic for next month's meeting have not yet been finalized.

Notes:

Les Clay brings us further news on the SOD front. A five-year phase-in program for BC has been developed by the members of the landscape and nursery trades - those people most directly connected with this problem - in conjunction with various governmental agencies.

This five-year phase-in program involves a SOD Certification program, with high-risk companies (those with previous SOD findings) undergoing immediate testing and certification procedures, and lower-risk companies undergoing testing and certification at a later date. This stepped approach will allow the most efficient utilization of the existing resources.

And, in the meantime, here is a handy cheat-sheet to enable you to keep all the players sorted:

BCLNA	BC Landscape and Nursery Association	instrumental in developing the SOD certification program
CNLA	Canadian Nursery Landscape Association	ditto
CFIA	Canadian Food Inspection Agency	the federal government umbrella-department which oversees inspection programs which are agriculture based, whether or not the agricultural product relates to food
BCMAFF	BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Fisheries	provincial equivalent of CFIA
USDA	US Department of Agriculture	the big daddy, making sure that anything untoward that got out of the USA, doesn't get back in again
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service	big daddy's big right arm
SOD	Sudden Oak Death	current acronym for the plant disease caused by <i>Phytophthora ramoran</i> . The BCLNA has, however, made a change of name from the "SOD Certification Program" to the "P. Ramoran Certification Program". It is hoped that this change will be less confusing to consumers (does it designate those who <u>have</u> SOD? or those who <u>don't</u> have SOD?) and/or less offensive (Good grief! SOD what?). The change is also designed to pacify the local turf-producing community, who are concerned (probably legitimately) about the increasingly negative connotations associated with their industry.

To keep up to date, check out the information on this topic on our website at www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth. It is kept very current by our website guru, Chris Klapwijk.

Brenda Macdonald



COMPANION PLANTS

S is for *Styrax* the Snowbell or Storax Family Family: *Styracaceae*

There are shade trees, and then there are shade trees! If you like a massive great lump of branches and leaves that nothing will grow near, there are maples and conifers that will do just fine. But if you like graceful branches, dainty leaves and fragrant flowers gently sheltering your blooming rhodos and perennials, then the Snowbells are the trees for you.

Of the 120 or so species in the world native to Asia, Europe and southern U.S.A., only a handful are generally available. Although most are shrubby forms, attaining heights to 12 feet, a select few will grace a woodland garden as a lovely light-textured tree to 25 feet or slightly more. Rare finds would be *Styrax hemsleyana*, *S. obassia*, or *S. wilsonii*, but the most popular and certainly the most widely used among plant breeders is *S. japonicus*. This species, from Korea and Japan, was introduced into cultivation in 1862, was awarded an FCC in 1885, and has been gaining popularity ever since. It is hardy to Zone 7 and forms a graceful spreading tree, with fan-like branching. The pure white bell flowers appear in late spring and dangle enchantingly beneath the branches. For this reason, it should be planted where you would walk under it, to enjoy the blooms to best advantage. Round seed pods are produced and decorate the branches through the winter.

Selections have been made for features such as pink flowers – ‘Pink Chimes’; weeping branches – ‘Pendula’; and prolific blooms – ‘Snowfall’. There is also a very different selection by the late J.C.Raulston called ‘Emerald Pagoda’, which has larger, leathery leaves, much larger blooms, and greater heat tolerance than the species. It truly is an outstanding plant, and should be much more widely known.



Styrax japonicus ‘Emerald Pagoda’



Styrax japonicus ‘Pink Chimes’

All these selections will thrive in moist loam soil of moderate acidity and good drainage. Bear in mind that their propensity to grow late in the season, which may result in soft growth that doesn’t harden off quite properly, might cause a bit of tip die-back in winter. A position out of cold winds with soil a bit on the lean side should keep this to a minimum, and the tree quickly compensates with the new growth in spring.

Find a place next to your garden tea table, along a path where you walk to admire your best rhodos, or by the bench where you sit to watch your fish swimming lazily around the pond, and you’ve got a place for a *Styrax*.

Happy Planting!

Colleen Forster



Up the Garden Path with Edible Flowers

January 2005

Over the last several years, you may have noticed that many restaurants have been using flowers as garnishes, and even adding flower petals to specialty salads. If you look around your own garden, you may find that you have your own edible flowers that can be used for everything from simple garnishes, to additions to salads, flavorings for

vinegars and wines, and if large enough, deep fried, or stuffed with meat or rice and baked.

Among the most commonly used flowers are nasturtiums, calendulas, small-flowered pansies, violas, borage, squash blossoms, day lilies and lavender, but there are many others that can be used safely.

First, however, if you are considering eating flowers, you must make sure you can correctly identify appropriate species. While a great many flowers are edible, many others are poisonous, and should NEVER be eaten. If in doubt about the identification



Borage



Calendula



Squash

of a plant, or whether or not something can be eaten, leave the plant alone. And, even if you know that a particular flower is edible, some flowers may cause allergic responses in some people, so start by trying just a small amount of a given flower if you haven't had any experience with it before. Members of the daisy family are reported to cause allergic reactions in people who have allergies to some types of pollen. A good website to get a comprehensive list of poisonous plants and flowers, as well as a list of flowers that are considered safe to eat is: <http://homecooking.about.com/library/weekly/blflowers.htm>



Viola

Flowers to be used in cooking should be free of any pesticide residues. This means that they should not have been sprayed with any garden chemicals. As well, plants that are growing adjacent to roads should not be used as they can pick up potential contaminants from car exhaust and dust. Flowers from the florist should not be used either as you don't know whether or not any chemicals have been used to grow the plants.

Flowers should be picked first thing in the morning so that the petals are turgid. They need to be washed gently before using, and they are best used on the day they are picked. Some flowers can be held for a few days by wrapping

continued on page 6



Nasturtium

them in plastic, or standing them in a vase, just as you would any cut flower. Keep them cool and moist. For most flowers, the pistils and stamens are usually removed as they may taste bitter. The exception to this is violas or pansies, and some of the tiny flowers from herbs. With these, the entire flower can be eaten.

Flowers like calendula, bachelor's buttons, garden pinks, chives and many of our garden herbs are pulled apart and the petals are used to sprinkle over salads. They provide extra color to the salad, and various taste sensations. Calendula petals are orange or yellow, and have a spicy taste. They can also be used to colour rice dishes, sort of a poor man's saffron. Bachelor's buttons come in shades of blue, white or pink. These are sweet to spicy, and are reminiscent of cloves. Petals from pinks also have a sweet, clove-like flavor. The light mauve flower petals from chives, as you might expect, have a mild, onion-like flavor. Garden herb

flowers, for example, basil, lemon verbena, fennel, thyme and mint have the same flavor as the rest of the plant, but it's a milder taste.

Pumpkin, squash and day lily flowers are large enough to be used by stuffing them with things like ground meat, bread crumbs, cheese, and rice, and then baking them. The flowers, by themselves, are also sometimes breaded and briefly deep-fried, then served as a side dish. With day lilies, the white base can be bitter, so you may want to trim this area away before eating.



Pink

Some flowers are used to create scented water for use in pastries and cakes. Rose petals and citrus flowers have been used to make flavored water for use in Mediterranean cooking for centuries. Recipes are available on the web. Flowers can also be steeped in vinegar to make specialty vinegars. Strong tasting, peppery-flavored flowers like nasturtiums are particularly suited to this type of preparation. Add nasturtium flowers to a good, white vinegar, and allow to steep for several weeks. Keep the vinegar in a dark location while steeping and strain out the flowers before using the vinegar. The flavored vinegar makes a nice addition to oil and vinegar types of dressings. You can also steep nasturtium flowers in vodka to create a

“peppery tasting” liquor.



Bachelor's Button

Sugared flowers make pretty decorations for cakes and pastries. Flowers are dipped in egg white (or processed egg white, if this is a concern for you), and then dipped in sugar. Allow the flowers to air dry before use. Violas, tiny marigolds and borage flowers are particularly pretty when done this way.

The web has lots more information about selecting and using edible flowers. There are many recipe sources available to give you more ideas about how to use flowers. The fun part of all this, is that you can enjoy these flowers in your garden, but then you can enjoy these “gourmet treats” in the kitchen too.

Norma Senn

Edible Flowers

All images from *Flora von Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz*, Gera-Untermhaus, 1885-1905



Hemerocallis fulva



Centaurea cyanus



Angelica archangelica



Borago officinalis



Cucumis sativus



Dianthus deltoides