

# The Yak

# Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Volume 18 Number 9 September 2005



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)

This Month's Meeting :	Wednesday, September 21, 2005
Speaker:	Bobby Ogdon
Topic:	Landscaping and Landscraping
Companion Plants:	Colleen Forster
Show and Tell:	Vern Finley
Plant Sales:	Colleen Forster

## 2005 Officers

President:	Bobby Ogdon 604-572-9993
Vice Pres.:	Dalen Bayes 360-933-4596
Secretary:	Mary-Anne Berg 604-853-5737
Treasurer:	Alan March 604-532-9062
Directors:	Les Clay - yr. 3 Harold Fearing - yr. 2 Colleen Forster - yr. 1
Membership:	Wenonah March
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## Quick Hits



### And we're back!

Welcome back to all our members. Hopefully everyone had a relaxing and enjoyable summer, and if not relaxing, at least fun, and if not fun, at least some of the weeding got done.



### Membership:

Now is the time for all good members to come to the aid of their Society! It's time for everyone to renew their memberships. Please complete the membership form on the last page and bring it to the next meeting, or mail it to our Membership Chair, Wenonah March, at her address as listed on the FRSR Membership List attached to the February 2005 issue of the Yak.



From the President

## DELECTABLE PLANTS AND DELICIOUS PUDDINGS

Life is competition. I decry those who deny this truth. Do they not stand in lines, impatiently mumbling that bank tellers take too many breaks? Some people give travelers a bad name as they barge through security lines at airports just so they can wait for the baggage smashers to load their luggage on the carousels. Others fume about the postal workers, wondering if things would speed up if perchance there existed an alternative postal service. Driving in rush hour is an exercise in navigating through obstacles, and while not often revealing winners, insurers are ever ready, according to insurance statistics, to penalize losers. Kids learn to cope with competition even before attending school, where the peer pressure is elevated to a much higher level. We learn early and we adapt.

Back to the airport, and to security issues: I have no problem with the principle of tighter security because I know I am not a terrorist, and I do not wish to meet one on my flight. So I ceased questioning the security guards (why was I surprised to see, in London airports, security officers armed with semi-automatic weapons?) and quickly handed over

my favorite wine corkscrew which was confiscated as I passed through the metal detector at Gatwick's departure lounge. It was an honest mistake. Really. But who was I to argue? You need to pick your spots. That is a fight I would not have won.

Further, there is a component of competitiveness in this art form we call rhododendron culture and landscaping. Much of it is self-imposed. We have certain predisposed concepts of who we are, generated by the assessments of others. We do not wish to be embarrassed by sub-par performances or inferior embellishments to our particular garden landscape. Peer pressure intensifies our diligence in the garden, wishing others to see it as a work of art, and often forgetting that all gardens are a work in process.

Garden competitions, whether formal, informal, or even tacit (as in the case of small property owners), are a fact of life in the real world. They have an economic impact. Gardens both public and private, at least those which charge admission for viewing, are competing for the same tourist dollars. In the case of gardens in England that should read "British Pounds." As in most parts of the world, gardens in England are promoted as "largest, oldest, most diverse, genus specific," etc., with a complete listing of ancillary services meant to lure tourists. They frequently point to features in their garden which sets them apart from the competition, much like tourist inducements in our North American societies.

In many ways our tour of English gardens offered no surprises. We were hoping to see mature gardens with a vast variety of plants, and perhaps many rhodos heretofore unseen. We were handsomely rewarded. Leonardslee and Whitehurst Place are a plant-hunter's paradise, exhibiting a veritable cornucopia of diverse species and iron-clad classics from Europe and North America. The Royal Arboretum is peerless as an example of aged, stately arborea. Many historic castles and estates encompass delectable gardens, welcoming visitors to sit, meditate, and enjoy the surroundings. But even four weeks is far too brief a visit to slake the thirst of curious plant-hunting travelers seeking a rhodo fix.

To reiterate from last month, we were deeply disappointed in the home gardens in England. Maybe we missed some of the more representative homes but we saw few rhodos in private landscapes. It is as though individual and family gardeners have given jurisdiction of the care and keeping of rhodos solely to Garden Foundations or parks.

Speaking of parks. While in London we stayed at the Tavistock Hotel, near the British Museum. Ah, now that was a delight. Is there a more intriguing spot in the whole world than the British Museum? I think not, unless one considers some of the awesome English gardens. There really are enough tourists' GBP to go around; especially when admission to museums is free and entrance fees to gardens appears costly yet of fair value. So to those gardens threatened by lagging gate receipts from fellow gardeners I say as a native would loudly intone, "Oh, come off it." Next time we go to England we will visit many more of the spectacular gardens, recognizing similarities and celebrating diversities. We have yet to experience Windsor Great Park, Wisley, Kew (though Whitehurst is affiliated with Kew), and dozens of other classic gardens.

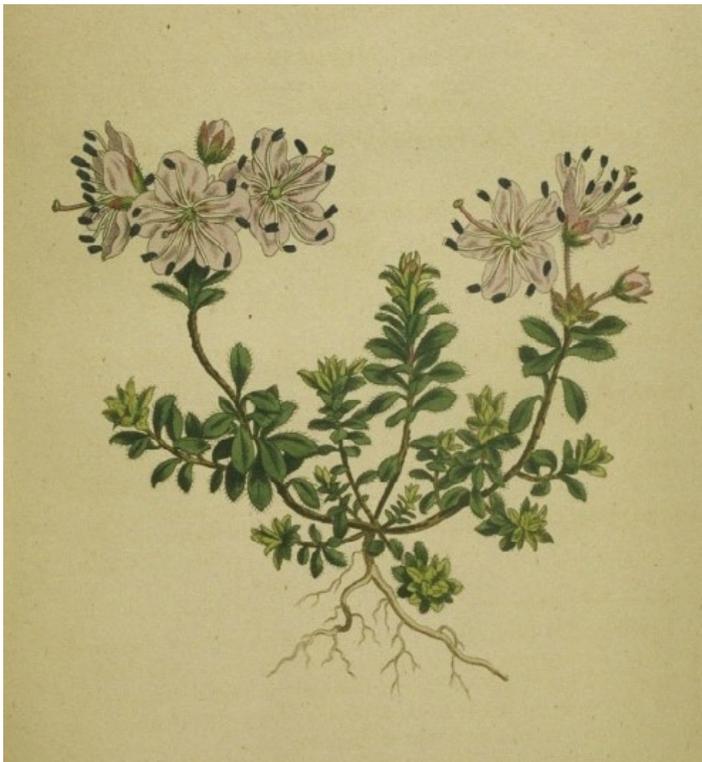
Across the street from the Hotel was a beautiful, one square block inner-city park called, naturally, Tavistock Park. Unpretentious, it was nevertheless a welcomed haven amid moderate metropolitan chaos. And, yes it is that Tavistock Park of July 7<sup>th</sup> terrorist

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fame. Praise God, Judy and I did not have to witness the bloodshed which beset the area five weeks after our departure. By the way don't tell the police "we don't live in a competitive society." We can all rest easier knowing that law enforcement is striving to stay ahead of the competition.

Many, in fact most, of the gardens have cafes or coffee shops on their premises, advertising tempting delicacies at admittedly inflated prices. In England desserts are grouped together under the inclusive rubric of "puddings," sort of like horticulturalists classifying genera under a title of grex. Every meal and/or tea is expected to conclude with a pudding. Similar to the varied plants in the gardens within which the tea was served, the pudding lists revealed many old familiar favorites with a few deliciously novel and unusual offerings sprinkled in. Comparisons abounded as to the quality and quantity of the goodies. I unabashedly compared notes and comments with other tourists as to the virtues and relative values of particular puddings as opposed to others we had sampled. I confess, however, I did lower my voice conspiratorially on those occasions when placing certain orders and it had nothing to do with competition. It is simply that I could never order "spotted dick" without blushing.

Bobby Ogdon



RHODODENDRON CHAMÆCISTUS, THYME-LEAVED RHODODENDRON.

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*Class and Order.*

DECANDRIA MONOGYNIA.

The illustration on the left of the "Thyme-Leaved Rhododendron", *Rhododendron chamaecistus* is from "Curtis's Botanical Magazine" published in 1800. The accompanying text places this "rhododendron" within the Class "Decandria" and the Order "Monogynia".

However, modern botanical treatment of this lovely alpine places it in the Ericaceae, as *Rhodothamnus chamaecistus*. The photograph above is by S&J Perkins from the wonderful virtual library of the Massachusetts Chapter of the ARS at [www.rosebay.org](http://www.rosebay.org)



From the Editor

## This Month :

This month our own Bobby Ogdon will give a presentation entitled "Landscaping and Landscraping". At least I think that is what the title is. I was unable to attend the Officers/Directors meeting last week so I am a bit unsure, but no doubt it will be fascinating.

## Last Month:

Our last meeting was our annual Picnic and Auction in June. It was held again in the wonderful garden at Trevor and Doreen Badminton's Rhodo Ranch, and on behalf of all those who so enjoyed themselves in those lovely surroundings I would like to express our gratitude to Trevor and Doreen for their hospitality. It is never an easy task to take on the hosting of such an event, no matter how many helping hands there are, and Trev and Doreen have been wonderfully generous with their time and energy, hosting the Annual Picnic many times over the years. And this year, as usual, a grand time was had by all. The weather cooperated nicely, there was plenty of good food and enjoyable

companionship, and we raised a swack of money for the Chapter at the auction. So, thank you again to Trev and Doreen whose contribution to the success of the afternoon is very much appreciated.

**Next Month:** Our next meeting will be Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>. The speaker has yet to be confirmed.

## Notes:

**KITCHEN DUTIES** - Cherry Groves has forwarded the following fall schedule for the Coffee and Calories Brigade:

September	Joan Bengough, Marge Mueller
October	Mary-Anne Berg, Nancy Moore
November	Lori Bayes, Patti Bale, Joan McGiveron

**DISTRICT 1 MEETING** - Mary-Anne Berg took on the responsibility of attending the August 21 meeting of the District 1 Officers and Directors. The following items of local interest were discussed:

- 1) An increase in the amount per person with which each Chapter of District 1 funds the activities of the District was approved. The annual fee for 2006/2007 has been increased from \$2.00 to \$2.50.
- 2) Chapter Plant Show and Sales have been tentatively marked in for:
 

April 1, 2006	Peace Arch
April 8, 2006	Fraser South (pending approval)
April 23, 2006	Fraser Valley
- 3) Ron Knight of the Vancouver Chapter has been appointed Alternate District Director following the resignation of Gerry Gibbons
- 4) Mary Anne reported on the progress of the ARS Western Regional Conference, which our Chapter is hosting at Harrison Hot Springs in the fall of 2006. Promotional material was distributed at the 2005 Fall conference just held in Newport, Oregon.

### **WESTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER 2005, NEWPORT, OREGON**

Several members of the FSRS attended this conference at the seaside resort town of Newport. It was a lovely setting right on the ocean's edge, and the speakers and workshops were both informative and entertaining. Moreover our own Garth Wedemire walked away with one of the prizes in the Photography competition. The plant material available was most impressive and we were able to clear the Phyto certificates through a USDA inspector who came to the conference facilities on the Sunday morning so that we would all have our papers in order for our return.

### **CONDOLENCES**

It is with deep regret that we inform our members of the passing of Eleanor Firby in early September. Eleanor was a remarkable lady - graduating as an RN from one of the first graduating classes - and an enthusiastic member of our Chapter. She was an independent and vigorous participant in horticultural activities, taking herself off to Ireland only a few years ago to enjoy "all the shades of green", as well as an enthusiastic participant in the Portland bus tour of 2003.

*Brenda Macdonald*



## Up the Garden Path with Summer Blooming Shrubs

Canadian gardeners tend to plant woody shrubs to provide either spring flowers or good autumn leaf displays and then use annual bedding plants or perennials to give summer colour. However, there are many lovely, easy to grow summer flowering shrubs that add flower interest and colour to our gardens in July and August.

One of the toughest summer-blooming shrubs for Canadian gardens is Cinquefoil, *Potentilla fruticosa*. Traditionally, Potentillas have golden yellow flowers, but plant breeders have been at work, and the flower colour range now extends from pure white, through soft yellows, pinky-peaches and orange shades. Potentillas have an excellent major flower display in spring, but they continue blooming throughout the summer by producing flowers on new growth.

They are deciduous shrubs, hardy to Zone 2 and range in height from 2 to 5 feet, depending on the variety and growing location. Potentillas have small, fine textured, five-parted leaves. In winter, the plants may look a bit straggly and twiggy, however, they are amenable to pruning, and benefit from being headed back or thinned out as needed, every spring.

*P. fruticosa* is definitely a sun lover, growing best with good drainage, and once established it is drought tolerant. For this reason it has been used (even overused) as the plant of choice for use on berms. I personally like to see Potentillas included in mixed shrub borders where they add bright summer flower interest.



*Potentilla fruticosa*  
'Mt. Townsend'

shaped flowers reminiscent of the tropics, but those of our hardy species are smaller and their colour range is restricted to whites, pinks, reds and bluish-pinks.

Like their tropical cousins, the flowers are ephemeral, lasting for just a day or two, but flower production continues for several weeks, usually starting in late July and continuing through early September. Flowers may be single or double, and many varieties have a dark centre that contrasts nicely with the lighter petal shades. Look for varieties like 'Red Heart', 'Diana' or 'Bluebird'.



*Hibiscus syriacus*  
cultivars,  
'Red Heart'  
'Diana'  
'Blue Bird'

The Rose of Sharon has nice green leaves which turn yellow just before autumn leaf drop. It is usually grown as a multi-stemmed shrub, and branches have smooth, gray, bark. In time, plants can reach 12 to 15 feet in height. Flowers are borne on new wood each summer, so plants can be pruned in late winter when the branching structure is easy to see and pruning cuts heal quickly. To promote large flowers, some branch thinning is beneficial, and any branches that try to grow inwards toward the centre of the plant should be removed. Plants are listed as hardy to Zone 5, but hardiness seems to increase once plants become established. Young plants may need some protection from dry, cold winter winds for the first couple of years after planting. For best flower production, Hibiscus should be grown in full sun, and they prefer evenly moist soil and good drainage. Other than that, they are relatively easy to grow.

We usually think of Spiraeas as spring blooming shrubs, but *S. x bumalda* is well known for the flower displays that appear in late June through July. The Bumalda Spiraeas are small, tidy shrubs, hardy to Zone 5. The best known variety is 'Anthony Waterer', which has bright pink flowers and has been a favourite of Canadian gardeners since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Other popular varieties include 'Foebeli' which has cerise red flowers and a slightly longer blooming time, or 'Crispa', a pink blooming form that has interesting, slightly twisted leaves.

For best growth, *S. x bumalda* should receive full sun, and while

The Rose of Sharon, *Hibiscus syriacus*, has the typical Hibiscus-

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they're not fussy as to soil type, they grow best with ample soil moisture throughout the summer. Remove spindly twigs right back to the ground in late winter to promote stronger, more floriferous wood.

Hydrangeas, and especially *H. paniculata grandiflora*, the PeeGee Hydrangea, have been Canadian garden favourites for decades. Depending on the variety, Hydrangeas produce their distinctive flowers from June through August, but the flowers persist for many weeks, and they can be collected and dried for winter flower arrangements.

The Oakleaf Hydrangea (*H. quercifolia*) is another very fine shrub that blooms in mid to late July. This species has the added benefit of developing scarlet red foliage in the fall, just before leaf drop. All Hydrangeas grow best in partial shade with soils that have good drainage and even summer moisture. The Oakleaf Hydrangea needs to have some exposure to sunlight to develop its fall colour.

The Butterfly Bush, *Buddleia*, has bright purple flowers from mid to late summer, and as the name suggests, it is a favourite of butterflies and bees. This shrub should receive full sun, but it is very drought tolerant once it is established. Butterfly Bush can get straggly over time, so prune in early spring to remove any winter-damaged wood, then thin out some of the stems and head the plants back so that they are reduced in height by about half. Flowers are produced on new wood each summer, and by pruning you are encouraging new wood to grow which leads to better flowering. The one caveat to growing Buddleias is that in some parts of Canada, these plants can seed themselves and may be potentially invasive, so check with your local garden centre staff to see if this is a concern in your region. A related plant, *Castanea* (the Chaste Tree) has a similar flower display but is



Four cultivars of the Butterfly Bush  
 - *Buddleia* spp -  
 'Royal Red'  
 'Cornwall Blue'  
 'Black Knight'  
 'Pink Delight'

not invasive, so if it's hardy in your area, you might consider growing *Castanea* instead of Buddleia.

There are two hardy Tamarix species that bloom in late July to early August, *T. odessana* (Zone 4) and *T. pentandra* (Zone 2). *T. pentandra* is the most commonly available species. (Note, *T. parviflora* is also available in the trade, and this is a very pretty spring blooming Tamarix, hardy to Zone 4). Tamarix are large shrubs, easily reaching 15 feet. They have soft, fuzzy, hot pink flowers, and when in bloom, they are gorgeous.



*Tamarix pentandra*

The foliage for all species is deciduous, fine-textured and airy. All Tamarix are known for their ability to grow well in hot, dry sites and they are tolerant of salt spray which makes them good summer blooming plants for seaside gardens. While I don't live by the ocean, I've grown *T. pentandra* in my own garden for many years in a site where the plant is practically surrounded by a concrete walkway. In spite of the difficult growing location, the only problem I've had with it happened this past winter when the plant was badly damaged by ice that built up on the stems. The top of the plant split and broke. However, after some corrective pruning, there is lots of new growth coming from the stump and a new top is re-forming quickly. I expect to see flowers on the new wood in late July. This is indeed a tough plant.

While this is a good time to visit local gardens and garden centres to see what's in bloom, you should wait until early fall or next spring to plant shrubs as most will survive transplanting better if they are planted when there is ample soil moisture and the leaves have dropped. But there's always room for just one more plant on everyone's wish list.

Norma Senn

# What's in Re-Bloom?

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



**R. 'Medusa'**

**parentage:** *dicroanthum* ssp. *scyphocalyx* x *griersonianum*  
**type:** elepidote **hybridizer:** Aberconway  
**size:** to 1m | 3' **hardiness:** -15°C | 5°F  
A consistent re-bloomer, with *Clematis integrifolia*  
**photo:** Brenda Macdonald



**R. 'Scarlet Wonder'**

**parentage:** 'Essex Scarlet' x *forrestii* ssp. *forrestii* Repens Group  
**hybridizer:** Hobbie **type:** elepidote  
**size:** to 0.6m | 2' **hardiness:** -26° C | -15° F  
**photo:** Brenda Macdonald



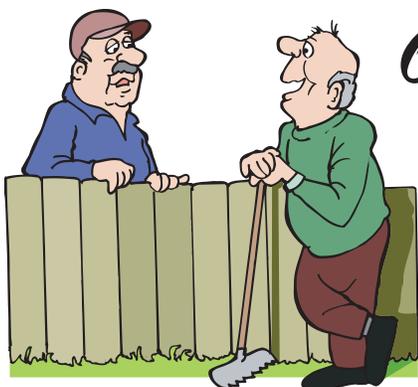
**R. *impeditum***

**type:** lepidote  
**size:** to 0.3m | 1' **hardiness:** -26° C | -15°F  
**photo:** Brenda Macdonald



**R. *campylogynum***

**type:** lepidote  
**size:** to 0.3m | 1' **hardiness:** -23°C | -10°F  
**photo:** Brenda Macdonald



## Over the backyard fence . . .

Mankind endlessly tries to emulate a 'supreme being'; he creates, controls and imposes his will wherever possible. The sub series of humans called 'gardeners' displays this trait very clearly. (if you don't believe me – take a look at bonsai) And the sub group – 'growers of rhododendrons' – shows many similar examples.

Left to themselves, rhododendrons, like humans, may be beautiful babies, then gawky, awkward adolescents, and finally over-blown, sagging adults. Our purist, conforming, grower must avoid this progression. In the case of the rhododendron grower this compulsion to "alter to suit", is exhibited as a need to produce "shapely" plants (Some people simply cannot walk past a young seedling, or cutting without reaching out and nipping off the central growth bud.)

The current trend to produce massively branched and budded plants for the unsuspecting public, plays into the hands of those outspoken landscape designers who insist that rhododendrons are dull garden plants. Certainly after the spurt of colour at bloom time there is an unremitting greenness. If your rhododendron beds contain a neatly rounded pink, next to a shapely lavender, beside a dear little ball of a yellow, next to a shapely pink, next to a rounded red, beside a shapely cream next a curvaceous rosy pink, beside a well shaped white, next to a neat bi-colour beside another well endowed pink – all as shapely as a well-corseted Edwardian lady – you are adding to the detractor's ammunition. Not all rhodies were meant to be discrete 'buns' of assorted sizes. Many of these mutilated rhododendrons will become the horrors of the garden in 10 or 15 years, with no 'skeletal' strength and sprawling, weak limbs, prey to breakage from exuberant pets (or children) or a wet snow load. But then, perhaps we don't plan that far ahead for our gardens, or we plan to grub out the unsightly and replace.

Although I am an unrepentant foe of the "nippers" I admit to the practice being necessary in some situations. Williamsianum crosses – especially those where the other parent is a large flowered plant – tend to produce rather thin and weak stems, not up to the task of supporting the disproportionately large flowers. A vigorous routine of repeated forced branching can shorten stems and then, when the container is filled with the heady mixture to produce buds on each terminal, the totally budded plant will perforce go on to 'police' itself. This happy state will continue at least until the buyer forgets where he bought the plant. Some varieties (I think of 'The Hon. Jean Marie de Montague' especially) thoroughly resent this attempt at coercion, and fight it all the way. But hey – you win some, you lose some.

M. L. "Mike" Trembath

The stubbornly vigorous but gloriously red  
'The Honourable Jean Marie de Montague'



## Membership



As in previous years it continues to be the intent of the Chapter officers to ensure that membership fees be kept as low as feasible in order to make our club accessible to all who wish to join. This year's fees will remain the same as last year's, with the current schedule being supported with a subsidy from other club revenues. Moreover the Chapter officers encourage all members to participate as Full Members, which includes membership and support for the parent organization, the American Rhododendron Society. It is through the ARS umbrella that many of the educational activities and the exchange of information and sharing of resources is made possible. A strong ARS, supported by Full Memberships all across the continent, is what makes our rhododendron community possible. All membership questions should be addressed to our Membership chair, Wenonah March, or any other of the FSRS officers.

### Fraser South Rhododendron Society 2006 Membership Form

- New Membership  
 Renewal Membership

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Partner or Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
Province (State) \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal (Zip) Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Fax Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

*All personal information collected by FSRS is for Society use only. Chapter members who would like their name and address to be included in the FSRS Member List - to be distributed to FSRS members only - and who wish to receive a copy of the FSRS newsletter, must indicate their consent by marking this box:*

Please indicate the type of membership below, and enclose your payment with this registration form. All cheques should be made out to: **Fraser South Rhododendron Society**

- Full Member (includes ARS membership and quarterly ARS Journal) \$35.00  
 Local Member (without ARS membership and Journal) \$20.00  
 Associate (full member of other Canadian ARS chapter) \$10.00

Please indicate name of primary membership chapter \_\_\_\_\_