

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

2006 Officers

President: Dalen Bayes
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Vice Pres.: Harold Fearing
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Secretary: Mary-Anne Berg
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Directors: Les Clay - 3rd yr
Colleen Forster - 2nd yr
Sean Rafferty - 1st yr

Membership: Wenonah March

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This Month's Meeting : Wednesday, April 19, 2006

EARLY - at 7:00pm

THE 13TH ANNUAL FRASER SOUTH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BEER BOTTLE TRUSS SHOW

Admission: One truss - any kind, any colour



Quick Hits

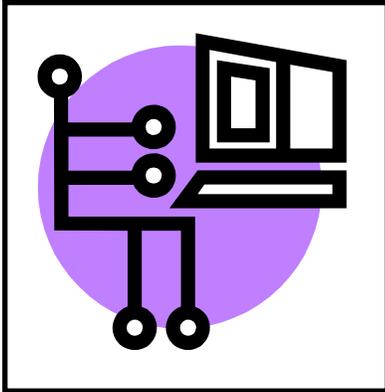


Garden Open Houses!

Somewhat less formal than a Garden Tour, this is your opportunity to wander around somebody else's "work in progress" and get a fresh outlook on plant material, siting, colour combinations, hardscaping, and what to do about those #&@#* weevils.

Harold and Ginny Fearing will be having an open garden at Fearing's Farm, on Saturday, April 22nd and Sunday, April 23rd, between 12:00 noon and 4:00pm.

Les and Bev Clay will be having an open garden on Sunday, April 30th, between noon and 4:00pm
(Addresses are available on the attached membership list.)



From the Editor

This Month: :

This year the Executive Committee decided to break with tradition, and have the Annual Beer Bottle Truss Show in April rather than in May. We were hoping that the change in schedule would allow everyone to bring in for show and display many examples from their gardens that have ordinarily finished blooming by the time the May meeting rolls around. This will be the year of the “earlier” rhododendrons, although for a while our spring was advancing so quickly and winter had been so mild, it began to look as if a Truss show in April of 2006 was going to be just like a Truss show in May of any other year. Luckily (or unluckily for those of us who watched the early flower buds on many plants blast into dark brown desiccated lumps) the abrupt plunge back into the cold a few weeks ago slowed things down considerably. So everyone should have lots to bring and brag. Remember, the official rules, such as they are, are on the next page.

Don't be shy, bring whatever you can. Remember this is the best opportunity we have to share the exuberance of our gardens. Come and celebrate the spring.

Also, this year the Executive Committee voted to initiate a new award in honour of “Mike” Trembath. 2006 will be the inaugural year for “The Lionheart Award” for the best yellow truss from the genus *Rhododendron*. It can be a species or hybrid, it can be a lepidote or elepidote, but the overall impression must be one of a yellow flower. However, a splash of another colour in the throat, or perhaps a few tasteful speckles on a flare would not be amiss.

Last Month:

Last month Joe Ronsley led us on a ramble through the wonderful property he and his wife Joanne have spent so many years developing. It was a treat to see what a wonderful result could be obtained by a concerted effort to retain the sylvan backbone of the garden, while adding accents of light, colour and texture throughout the space, and throughout the four seasons. The impression was not so much of a walk through a garden as ramble through the woods, only the woods were far more attractive and, well just - prettier - than anything one would be likely to experience anywhere else. A truly inspiring glimpse of what a garden should be, and so often is not, a place of sanctuary.

Notes:

WESTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Just a reminder that we as a Chapter will be sponsoring the Western Regional Conference in September of 2006, and it behooves us all to contribute what we can to ensure that this is a conference well enjoyed at the time and well remembered afterwards. So dig deep into your creative psyches and get started on something to donate to the raffle that will do us all proud. Perhaps the rustic birdhouse you have been meaning to make, or a nice crocheted shawl to wear during an evening constitutional around the garden as the evenings cool. Or even a small terrarium or trough garden. You know you can do it!

FSRS ANNUAL PLANT SHOW AND SALE

The Annual FSRS Plant Sale was held on Saturday, April 8th this year, and despite weather that threatened to change from clement to inclement several times during the course of the day our sellers managed to draw in the customers. Our Chapter owes a debt of gratitude to all those volunteers who made the day such a success: the cashiers, the coffee brigade, the lunch corps, and the usual stalwarts who helped with the setting up and the taking down. A special thanks to Vern Finley who so graciously provided a wonderful show of trusses to entice the uninitiated in. Hopefully our Treasurer will be able to advise how successful this year's major fund-raiser was at our next meeting.

FSRS ANNUAL POTLUCK PICNIC AND AUCTION

This year our annual Picnic and auction will be held at the home of Alan and Wenonah March, on Sunday, June 18th. Remember that this is our other major fund-raising function of the year, but it will only work if there are plenty of auctionable items. Start going through those closets and that garage and workshop right away, looking for likely articles for “re-gifting”. It's all in a good cause.

Brenda Macdonald



Thirteenth Annual Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show

The world famous Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show will be held at our April meeting, Wednesday, April 19th. This is a fun event in which everyone can participate.

Here are the rules, beautiful in their simplicity:

1. **Entry to the hall will be by bringing at least one truss. It is not necessary that it be a rhododendron.**
2. There will be three areas for display:
 - a. competitive rhododendron trusses
 - b. non-competitive rhododendron trusses
 - c. companion plant displays.
3. For the competitive event, participants will be allowed to enter only one truss in each class. Additional trusses can be displayed on the non-competitive table.
4. To assist in deciding which class to enter, an Advisory Panel will provide guidance and make any final decisions necessary.
5. All trusses must be in glass bottles. (Cans and plastic pop bottles are too unstable.)
6. Judging will be by member votes. We have given up on the Smarties this year - too sticky - but the show organizers will still supply something you can use to vote with.

CLASSES **Division I**

Species Classes

- Class 1. Rhododendron (lepidotes)
- Class 2. Azalea (deciduous and evergreen)
- Class 3. Hymenantha (elepidotes)

Division II

Hybrid Classes

- Class 4. Any lepidote hybrid

- Class 5. Any deciduous azalea hybrid
- Class 6. Any evergreen azalea hybrid

Colour Classes

- Class 7a: Red - (small)
- 7b: Red - (large)
- Class 8a: White - (small)
- 8b: White - (large)
- Class 9a: Pink - (small)
- 9b: Pink - (large)
- 9c: Pink - (really, really, large)
- Class 10a: Yellow & Cream (small)
- 10b: Yellow & Cream (large)
- Class 11: Mauves & Purple
- Class 12: Orange
- Class 13: Bi-colour

Division III

Special Classes

- Class 14: "What's it Called" - best new non-registered hybrid - a special class for the hybridizer
- Class 15: Truss with the Best Fuzzy Foliage
- Class 16: Best Blotched
- Class 17: Best Speckled
- Class 18: Most Lurid
- Class 19: Best Last Year's Truss
- Class 20: Most Elegantly Weevil-Notched
- Class 21: Best Hammerhead
- Class 22: Most Flaccid
- Class 23: Best Miniature Truss - under 6"
- Class 24: Most Fragrant (Az. or Rh.)

Definitions:

1. Small - 6" or under
2. Large - 6" to 10"
3. Really, Really, Large - over 10"
4. Blotch - each individual flower shows a solid colour mark on dorsal lobe (or three lobes), distinctly different from the base colour of the flower.
5. Lurid - most vividly garish
6. Hammerhead - an inflorescence which arises from more than a single flower bud
7. Speckled - distinguished from blotches by non-solid colour sprinkles and spots, either around entire flower, or at least on upper lobe(s) - e.g. 'Paprika Spiced'

GORDON FINLEY (1920 – 2006)

Remembering Dr. Gordon Robert Finley.

To the best of my knowledge, few people ever called him Gordon. Most of us knew him as either 'Doc' Finley or just plain 'Fin' or 'Doc'. If you called him Gordon, likely you did not know him well.

Born April 25th, 1920 in Cranbrook, B.C., Fin attended the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Alberta and interned at the Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton, where he met Vernon, his wife to be. Vern, or Vernie as he liked to call her, was taking her nurse's training at the same hospital.

Being unconventional and in search of experiences better than those being afforded by the Misericordia Hospital, Fin and one of his fellow students broke with tradition and moved to the West Coast.

Fin took up internship at Shaughnessy Hospital, and Vern, who had moved to the West Coast separately, went to work at the Grace Hospital.

Fin and Vern got married on September 29th, 1949 and his dedication to his work was exemplified by his leaving the ceremonies prematurely to deliver a set of twins.

Survived by Vern, their 5 children, 11 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren, Fin was an unpretentious man. He was compassionate and honest, with a command of the English language that seldom left you wondering what he meant.

In addition to practicing medicine, he played the violin, was a mariner, an airplane pilot, a HAM radio operator and last but not least, he grew rhododendrons, by the thousands.

Doc Finley was not a vain man, and of the many hybrids the Finleys produced, Fin never deemed any worth registering. He readily shared his knowledge with anyone who asked, and generously donated countless plants to the raffles of the various ARS Chapters of which he and Vern were members. The Fraser South Rhododendron Society recognized his generosity in bestowing upon him the Gerry C. Emerson award in 1999.

He had a wonderfully wry sense of humour. When being pressured to come up with a name for one of his hybrids, he remarked: "What's in a name, you have to 'twikkum' into buying one." Some of you may have a 'Twikkum' in your garden.

He was a mentor to many members of the Chapter, instructing and encouraging anyone who wished to venture into the arcana of rhododendron growing - striking cuttings and successfully rooting them, hybridizing two or more species or other hybrids with an eye to combining some particular and desirable characteristics.

At times Fin was impatient and demanding, and I was at odds with him on a number of occasions but yet, I could not have asked for a better father-in-law. He loved his family and I feel fortunate and privileged in being part of it.

Fin passed away in the early morning hours of March 31st, 2006 with Vern by his side. He touched many lives, as was evidenced by the number of people who came to the funeral service. He will be greatly missed and fondly remembered.

Chris Klapwijk

More Quick Hits



Welcome

To our newest member, David Dunnison, an Associate member from Surrey



Picnic

Don't forget to mark your calendars for our Annual Picnic, Sunday, June 18th at the March's



“It’s Always Something”

Do you remember Gilda Radner, one of the original cast members on Saturday Night Live? She had a great expression, “It’s always something”. Well, at our February meeting, one of our members asked me what I knew about Hosta Virus X. I’d heard there was a new virus, but that was the extent of my knowledge. So, I went looking on-line for some information about it and couple of other new things that may cause problems, and Gilda was right, there is always something!

Hosta Virus X (HVX) has been found in several northern US states over the last few years, and is now known to be in Canada. The extent of spread still isn’t clearly understood, but HVX it is thought be very widespread and is probably in our area. We know there are certain Hosta varieties that definitely carry the virus and show specific symptoms. However, there are also varieties that may be infected but not show any symptoms (we say the virus is masked), and then there are some that may or may not be infected, and may or may not show symptoms.

As it turns out, some of the newer Hosta varieties that were selected for their beautiful yellow leaf markings are definitely virus infected. In reading various websites, the variety names that keep popping up are: ‘Breakdance’, ‘Eternal Father’, ‘Leopard Frog’ and ‘Lunacy’. These varieties have all been confirmed “positive” for HVX, and it is the virus that causes the leaf markings. There are many other varieties that are suspected of being infected, but not yet confirmed. For example, one of the most popular new Hosta varieties, ‘Sum and Substance’, is probably infected with HVX, and this particular variety has been widely sold throughout Europe and North America. However, it still isn’t clear if all plants of ‘Sum and Substance’ are virus infected or not, so you may not necessarily have a potential problem if you’ve planted this in your garden.

If there are symptoms, HVX shows up as random

Up the Garden Path with new Viruses and Pests

mottling, distortion and/or crinkling of leaves, and the overall growth of infected plants can be poor. Infected plants that have natural variegation tend to show a lot of mottling along the main veins. However, just because a Hosta is variegated doesn’t necessarily mean that it is infected with HVX as not all variegated Hostas owe their leaf colour patterns to the virus. So, it can be tricky to decide if a plant is infected or not. The only sure way to assess a given plant is to have it tested for virus by a plant pathologist, but this is a specialized and expensive undertaking. There are some good pictures on various websites which can help give you some idea of the symptoms to look for. A couple of good websites are: www.inthecountrygardening.com/articles/hosta_virus_x.php and www.hosta.org/About_Hosta/Viruses/HostaViruses.pdf

At the moment, it is thought that HVX is spread mechanically when infected plant sap is moved to a healthy plant. This leads to a recommendation of being very careful when handling Hostas. If cutting leaves or flowers or deadheading, wash pruning shears in a solution of bleach and water before moving on to another Hosta plant. Shovels, digging forks and spades should also be carefully washed with bleach and water between plants when digging or dividing, and if you get sap on your hands when handling infected Hostas, you could spread the disease to a healthy plant, so wash thoroughly between plants. Don’t use lawn mowers or weed eaters on or around Hostas at the end of the growing season to cut down spent foliage as this kind of equipment can spread the virus.



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If you suspect you have an infected plant in the garden, the recommendation is to dig the plant and place it in the garbage. Hostas can have surprisingly large root systems, so make sure you remove all the roots. HVX cannot survive in the soil, so it is possible to re-plant another Hosta in the same location where one was removed as long as there are no pieces of root system left from the infected plant.

Another of our local garden 'workhorses' is the daylily, and it too has a couple of new problems. The Daylily Gall Midge is definitely in the lower Mainland. This tiny fly lays her eggs in the daylily flower buds. After hatching, the larvae feed within the bud causing the flower bud to become swollen and distorted. If you open one of the buds, you may see up to a couple of hundred tiny white larvae feeding - use a hand lens as the larvae are very small. If left alone, the infested bud drops to the ground and the larvae are thought to pupate in the soil over winter. One relatively easy control method is to patrol your daylilies frequently and physically remove all flower buds that look abnormal in any way. Put the buds in the garbage; do not compost them or leave them lying on the ground. It seems that the adult midge is particularly attracted to early yellow daylily varieties, so you may want to avoid growing these types. As well, yellow sticky traps can be mounted on small stakes and placed around your daylilies to trap some of the adults. Pam Erickson has written a more detailed article about Daylily Gall Midge that includes some pictures of infested buds. The article is at www.plantlovers.com/daylily/news/



The galled bud is fatter, and matures earlier

Daylily rust is the third example of: "it's always something", but fortunately, to my knowledge, this new disease isn't a problem here ... yet. However, daylily rust has been found in Ontario, so it could be just a matter of time before it shows up in local gardens. Daylily rust looks like a typical rust infection: leaves will have small raised areas of rusty yellow pustules on the leaves or flower stalks. After infection, the infected leaf tissue becomes progressively chlorotic.



As is the case with other rusts, this fungus alternates between two host plants, in this case daylily and *Patrinia* (Golden Valerian). We don't grow *Patrinia* very often locally (I had to look up the plant as it was a new genus to me), so this should help us keep daylily rust in check if it does finally show up. However, it may be that part of the rust cycle can be completed by living on any daylily foliage that overwinters in our area. This leads to a control recommendation of cutting back the foliage in the fall so that no green leaf tissue remains. Also, do not mulch plants for winter protection as the mulch may protect rust pustules present at the leaf/root junction. Plants should be divided and spaced out regularly to provide good air circulation. Don't grow any *Patrinia* species near daylilies and when watering, avoid overhead irrigation, or if watering with a sprinkler, do this early in the day so the foliage dries out quickly. Rust spore germination and infection is favoured by having foliage continuously wet for 5 to 6 hours and temperatures of 22 to 24°C. There is an excellent site with information about this rust (*Puccinia hemerocallidis*) at www.daylilyrust.org/

In addition to these three problems, there are other new pests too, Sudden Oak Death, European Chafer Beetle and Viburnum Leaf Beetle immediately come to mind. Sad to say, but "It's always something!"

Norma Senn



Rhododendrons of Yunnan



Photo - Sean Rafferty
Yunnan, China, May, 2005

Rhododendron yunnanense

Another one of the vigorous and hardy Triflora subsection, *R. yunnanense* is one of those plants that looks best either from a great distance, or no distance at all. From far away this plentiful and free-flowering shrub, covered with pale flowers in pink and lavender shades, imparts a delicate pastel haze to a mountainside. Up close, the myriad and delicate blossoms look like so many butterflies settling on the somewhat straggly branches. But from a middle distance the effect is somewhat dishevelled, its sparse somewhat vertical habit marred by the occasional errant branch wandering off as if unsure of its purpose, and the thin willow-like deciduous or semi-deciduous leaves not providing much to hold our interest. Still, in blossom it is a sight to behold, the cheerfully spotted widely funnel-shaped blossoms in their delicate colours covering the branches with both terminal and axillary loose racemes of three to seven flowers, transforming a somewhat awkward and erect bush into a cloud of gauzy cheer.



Illustration - Valerie Price
Curtis's Botanical Magazine

What's in Bloom?



R. coeloneuron

epithet: hollow nerved **type:** elepidote
size: to 25' **introduced** 1990's
North Vancouver / 08APR2006



R. coeloneuron

a pretty plant with loose trusses of pale pink to purplish blossoms with spotting that seems more visible on the outside than the inside. The leaves are somewhat rugulose or wrinkled, with rufous (reddish) indumentum.



R. beanianum

type: elepidote
epithet: after W.J. Bean, curator, Kew Garden
size: to 5', early flowers easily frosted
Note the large calyx
North Vancouver/ 08APR2006



R. beanianum

this upright shrub has a rather brooding quality, with its dark green somewhat bullate or puckered leaves, bristly stems and dark indumentum. The flowers are of such deep red and so shiny and wax-like they almost look artificial, or like the drops of "wax" on the wing-tips on a Cedar Waxwing. Note the obvious nectaries.



R. 'Airy Fairy'

type: lepidote
cross: *lutescens* x *mucronulatum* 'Cornell Pink'
North Vancouver/ 08APR2006



R. 'Coral Glow'

type: lepidote
cross: *mucronulatum* 'Cornell Pink' x *lutescens*
North Vancouver/ 08APR2006 (all photos B. Macdonald)