

The Yak

Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Volume 19 Number 10 December 2006



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
360-966-4596

Vice Pres.: Harold Fearing
604-857-4136

Secretary: Mary-Anne Berg
604-853-5737

Treasurer: Alan March
604-532-9062

Directors: Les Clay - 3rd yr
Colleen Forster - 2nd yr
Sean Rafferty - 1st yr

Membership: Wenonah March

Newsletter: Brenda Macdonald
604-990-5353

Website: Chris Klapwijk
604-581-0925

This Month's Meeting :

Wednesday, December 13, 2006

early date, early time: set-up at 6:00
commencement at 6:30

THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

.... definitely the highlight of any rhodophile's festive season

Quick Hits



Christmas is almost here ...

which means our Annual Christmas Potluck Dinner has arrived. As in previous years we will start a bit earlier than usual, so mark your calendar for 6:30 pm, or come at 6:00 pm if you want to help set up.

Bring something to contribute to the potluck dinner, and some dishes and eating

utensils so you can try everyone else's contributions.

Each attendee should also bring a wrapped gift valued under \$10.00 for the gift exchange. We have asked Santa Dalen to officiate again this year

And, Colleen has promised to organize a little something in the way of a group activity to amuse ourselves during the post-feast lull.



From the President

Notes from the Chair

Our November meeting was canceled due to windstorm. This was the first time we had ever had to cancel a meeting, but it seemed best to stay home and be safe. I hope everyone, homes and etc. came through okay.

Bellingham recorded winds up to 82 mph and I heard things were no better across the border. Our place is sheltered from the NE winds but we seem to be in a wind tunnel for winds from southeast to southwest. We lost a number of trees including two big Douglas firs, and numerous alder and hemlocks. Thankfully the trees missed the house, the vehicles and us. They fell along the edges of our garden, and did little damage.

A strong wind the week before had broken a large hemlock right off, and it came down with a big thud. It wiped out an *R. hodgsonii*, *R. roxieanum*, *R. recurvoides* and *R. sangiunum*, all of which had been blooming for several years. I might be able to salvage one or two, but I'm not sure if it is worth the wait for them to become attractive plants again.

Then, as if that weren't enough, a few days later we (as many of you also) were hit with 14 inches of snow and the thermometer dropping into the single digits. Actually, and luckily, the snow served as insulation for many plants. Since we started growing rhododendrons twenty-some years ago, we have been fascinated with the big-leaf species. In the last 10-12 years we have been growing quite a number of semi-tender big-leaves. Some plants are up to 10 feet tall with beautiful foliage. *R. sinogrande* has leaves up to 26 inches long and 10 inches wide. But we have been aware that our string of mild winters would come to an end sooner or later, so it will be interesting, and probably quite disappointing, this next spring to see what has survived and what has not.

I can't complain much however, because three days after the snowstorm began Lori and I landed in Maui in the Hawaiian Islands to join five of our best friends for some vacation time.

We will be back home for the famous Fraser South Christmas dinner. We hope to see you all there.
HOLD THE PRESSES - UPDATE

This morning the seven of us drove to the N.E. side of Maui and hiked in a half-mile up a valley to a nice big pool with a ten-foot waterfall. We swam to the waterfall and swam under it and played around for several minutes. Eventually we went back to where we had left our shoes and towels and got ready to head out. I was lacing my last boot when we heard a loud "WHOOSH". We looked up in horror to see a five foot wall of water pour over the waterfall. We were still at water's edge and had to go 15-20 feet up to higher ground.

There were slippery boulders to cross and by the time our friend Sandy and I got to the edge, the water was two feet deep and rising fast. I helped boost while Denny and Mike pulled her up the 6-8 foot cliff. In another few seconds they pulled me up. By that time the water had come up to mid-chest on me, and I was losing my footing in the fast current.

We quickly looked around and were relieved to see we had all made it out, but just by seconds. Below us there were several other pools, some with waterfalls dozens of feet high. Badly shaken, we moved downstream a hundred yards, where we met two other couples who had also barely escaped the water. At this point we needed to cross the current to get to our trail, but there was no chance of that happening, and it soon became apparent that we could not hike through the semi-tropical rain forest either. There was nothing

to do but wait for the water to subside. A light rain was falling with the air temperature around 75 degrees F.

The rain quit and rocks were put as markers at the edge of the stream. Two hours later the stream had dropped a few inches, but this was followed by a heavier shower and the water rising again. We were all huddled under a large tree of some sort, but still able to joke and laugh. We asked Denny (he and Nancy have been coming to Maui for 10 - 12 years) what he had planned for us tomorrow.

Soon the water began dropping again, and faster this time. After a while we decided it was time to cross. People held onto one another for balance and all went well. I stayed back to look upstream and shout if another surge came, then I crossed quickly. Below was one more crossing, but the stream was wider and not as deep. We were back to the road soon.

When we were swimming under the waterfall, there hadn't been more water coming over than a 2-inch pipe could handle. How quickly things can change. If the flash flood had come 3-4 minutes earlier, while we were at the waterfall, all of us would probably have drowned. Looking back there hadn't been time for fear, just action.

We are going for another hike tomorrow. Denny says it's on a ridge. I sure hope so. After that, we only have some snorkeling and a four-day hike in a crater. So, the flash flood did not get us, and barring white sharks eating us or a sudden volcanic eruption, Lori and I will see you at the Christmas dinner.

Dalen Bayes



From the Editor

This Month:

Our Annual Christmas Potluck ... the protocol is traditional but flexible. New members could follow the guidelines as listed below, or just wing it like the rest of us:

1. Be merry, or if you cannot make it all the way up to merry, be placid
2. Come early, festivities start at 6:30, but you can come earlier if you want to help set up
3. Bring a dish of food to share, with serving utensils if required
4. Beverages will be provided: tea, coffee, and the usual Punch Bowl A and Punch Bowl B. Those wishing to move from placid to merry should choose Punch Bowl A.
5. Bring your own plates, mugs, and cutlery, then remember to take them home again.
6. Wear something seasonal. For the season we have all been enduring, hip-waders or mukluku would make the most sense, but do not be discouraged. A few well-placed Christmas stickers, or a small but tasteful string of Christmas lights plugged into a battery pack in your hip pocket will do wonders to disguise the necessarily utilitarian nature of your outfit.

8. Come bearing gifts, or at least one small gift (value under \$10.00), for Santa Dalen to redistribute, remembering that those who give, also receive.

6. Be placid, be merry, but be there. The grits are great and the company better. Everyone will have, as they used to say down in Haight-Ashbury, a huge time.

Next Month:

Next month is our AGM (Annual General Meeting) and Dessert Extravaganza. It is during this meeting that we elect the new Club Officers, present Awards, and review and approve our Annual Report. Some of these activities are, if one were to be brutally honest, somewhat less than riveting (it's really hard to tart up an Annual Report, no matter how many bar graphs are created) so we always break up the proceedings with frequent visits to the teapot, coffee urn, and splendid array of desserts. It is also the date of our annual DIY visuals, so dig out some old slides you might like to share.

Brenda Macdonald

ARS FALL CONFERENCE 2006

... and the bottom line is ?

This information would have been presented at the Chapter meeting of November 15th, but that meeting had to be cancelled due to the dreadful weather conditions and the closure of the freeway.

The good news is that after paying all the expenses, the Conference account has a residual balance of approximately \$5,000 and an inventory valued at approximately \$3,000 (cost) for a total of approximately \$8,000.

The Conference Committee has unanimously agreed that these funds should be disbursed in the following way:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. repayment of deposit to the Chapter in the amount of | \$2,500 |
| 2. donation to the American Rhododendron Society | \$ 500 |
| 3. donation to the Rhododendron Species Foundation | <u>\$1,500</u> |
| | \$4,500 |

This leaves a Residual amount (cash plus inventory) of approximately \$3,500 to the chapter.

The rationale for these recommendations is as follows:

1. obviously the Chapter must be reimbursed for its initial loan to the Conference account
2. the ARS Guidelines for Conferences suggest that a contribution of 10% of the profits should be donated to the organization. The contribution of \$500 would equate to a 20% contribution
3. the donation to the RSF for \$1,500 is in recognition of the enormous contribution that the RSF and the staff made to the success of the Conference. Steve Hootman and Dennis Bottenmiller spent the entire weekend at the Conference. Steve was a keynote speaker on Friday night and also the major lecturer on Sunday morning. Dennis manned the plant sale throughout the entire Conference. The plants provided by the RSF were discounted 30% as a contribution to the Conference and in addition, were subject to a further discount as a result of the Canadian dollar and expenses incurred in transporting them (including phytosanitary inspection and import taxes). The contribution of \$1,500 will help defray part of the costs incurred by the RSF
4. of the Residual balance (cash and inventory) amounting to \$3,500 it is suggested that these funds be designated to purchase of a digital projector for the Chapter, with any remaining funds being deposited to the Fraser South Chapter account.

ARS WESTERN REGIONAL FALL CONFERENCE 2006

SEPTEMBER 21-24, 2006

HARRISON HOT SPRINGS, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Co-Chairs

Mike Bale

Dalen Bayes

Joan Bengough

Planning Committee:

Patti Bale	Banquet & Hosting
Lori Bayes	Raffle Sales; Foliage Display
Joan Bengough	Merchandise Sales
Mary-Anne Berg	Boat Tours, Registration, Promotion, Photo Exhibit
Brenda Macdonald	Exhibition Hall Manager, Booklet production
Sean Rafferty	Plant Sales and Phyto certificates
Norma Senn	Bus Tours, Lecturer
Garth Wedemire	Web site, Registration, Audiovisual Coordinator, Photo Exhibit, Lecturer

Sub Committees:

Harold Fearing	Finance controller
Vern Finley	Banquet centrepieces
Cherry Groves	Sponsorship coordinator
Sue Klapwijk	Matting of photographs, Plant Seller
Alan March	Treasurer
Larry Morton	Photo display equipment provider

Keynote Speakers:

Dr. John Farrer
Steve Hootman
Des Kennedy

Speakers:

Dalen Bayes
Colleen Forster
Glen Jamieson
Don Martyn
Charlie Sale
David Sellars
Norma Senn
Garth Wedemire

Demonstrations:

Cecily Chang - Ikebana
Roger Low - Bonsai

Registration

Mary-Anne Berg
David & Wendy Sellars
John Warner
Avril & Garth Wedemire

Banquet

Patti Bale
Lori Bayes
Vern Finley
Alan & Joan Yoder

Reception

Patti Bale
Lori Bayes
Ginny Fearing
Sue Klapwijk

Plant Sellers

Les Clay
Harold Fearing
Colleen Forster
Glen Jamieson
Sue Klapwijk
RSF Steve Hootman
Dennis Bottenmiller

Bus Captains

Chris Ballyn
Vern Finley
Nancy Moore
Bobby Ogdon
Mary Parker
Nancy Senn

Boat Skippers

Mary-Anne Berg
John & Gael Dodd
Dixie Mueller
Margaret Mueller
Ernie & Carol Schmidt
Andy & Deena Vendrame
Alan & Joan Yoder

Cashiers & Other Helpers

Patti Bale
Lori Bayes
Joan Bengough
Arlene Darby
Ginny Fearing
Dot Gibson
Matt Groves
Karen Linton

Pamphlets/Promotion/Publicity

Mike Bale
Mary-Anne Berg
Mary Parker
Garth Wedemire

Publications:

Brenda Macdonald
Wendy Sellars

Plant Sales/Exhibition Hall Coordinators

Brenda Macdonald
Sean Rafferty

Raffle/Display/Sales

Patti Bale
Dalen & Lori Bayes
Joan Bengough
Les Clay
Cherry Groves

Master of Ceremony

David Sellars

Web Site:

Garth Wedemire

Photo Exhibit/Silent Auction

Mary-Anne Berg

Vern Finley

John Heinze

Sue Klapwijk

Brenda Macdonald

Larry Morton

Sean Rafferty

Garratt Richardson

Garth Wedemire

Gwen Wright

Audio/Visual

Garth Wedemire

Joe Wedemire

Jordan Young

Art Sales

Ted Belcher

Rosemary Burnham

Foliage Display

Lori & Dalen Bayes

Alan & Joan Yoder

The Executive Planning Committee, on behalf of the Fraser South Chapter is deeply indebted to the following for their support:

- The Corporate Sponsors – BC Tourism
Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa
Molson Canada (Giff Robb)
Vancouver Business Association (Peter Alpen)
Vendrame Nurseries
- All the contributors to the raffle and photo exhibit/silent auction, who made these activities a significant source of income
- The many volunteers who provided assistance and help in many different ways throughout the Conference
- Members of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society
- The registrants from all parts of the globe, without whose participation the Conference could not succeed
- The American Rhododendron Society

A special note of appreciation and thanks to our keynote speakers, Dr. John Farrer, Steve Hootman, and Des Kennedy.

Mike Bale

Coming Attractions:

January 17 - Annual AGM and Dessert Extravaganza

February 21 - Frank Fujioka

March 21 - possible Bonsai workshop

April 14 - Annual Plant Sale

April 18 - (unconfirmed)

May 16 - Annual Truss Show

June (?) Annual Picnic and Auction



Up the Garden Path with Christmas Holly

Holly has been used to decorate European homes since Druid times. Over the centuries and with the advent of Christianity, many associations have developed concerning holly decorations at Christmas time. The evergreen leaves have come to represent everlasting life, and some traditions say that holly made up Christ's crown of thorns. The legend holds that all holly berries were originally yellow, but turned red from Christ's wounds. Perhaps the symbolism associated with holly is less important now, but the bright red berries and lustrous green leaves still make welcome additions to winter flower arrangements and our Christmas decorations.

In addition to their decorative use at Christmas time, hollies are prized by carpenters for their fine, dense wood. Leaves from some holly species have been used to make tea, and their flowers are very attractive to bees, yielding fine honey. Where they are hardy, they also make lovely large specimen trees in the landscape. We are most familiar with the red-berried varieties, but there are also very attractive orange- and yellow-fruited hollies.

Commercial holly sold by florists at Christmas time is harvested from *Ilex aquifolium*, the English holly. In Canada, commercial holly orchards are located in the mildest areas of British Columbia, most are on Vancouver Island, but there are a few orchards in the lower Fraser Valley. English holly is best grown in fertile, deep, slightly acid soils that have good drainage. They like moderate growing temperatures, neither very hot nor very cold, and even moisture is required throughout the growing season.

It takes eight to ten years after planting before the trees are large enough to start harvesting, and often plants are 15 years old before major harvesting

begins. Commercial growers want to know the exact characteristics of the holly they grow, so typically they plant grafted plants or plants that were started from cuttings.

Growers play a guessing game in selecting varieties for future harvesting. They have to predict what will be fashionable in the florist trade in a decade's time. I remember talking to a commercial grower who was trying to decide whether or not he should top-graft his green leafed holly trees to change them over to variegated types because of the rising trend towards the use of more variegated plants. He had planted mostly solid green forms which at the time of planting were what the florist trade preferred. As well, growers have to decide on the number of prickly-leaved or smooth-leaved varieties to plant.

Another decision to make at planting is to balance the number of male to female plants in an orchard. Most English holly is dioecious, that is, some plants are male and have only staminate flowers that provide pollen, and other plants are female and have pistillate flowers. In order for berries to form on the female trees, pollen has to be transferred from the staminate to the pistillate flowers. A ratio of about one male tree to every fifty to sixty female trees is commonly planted in large commercial orchards, but this ratio can vary tremendously depending on the size of the planting. For home growers, if berries are wanted on English hollies, care must be taken to plant both a female and a male tree. Watch for the identifying tags on plants in the garden centres that tell you which plants are male and which are female. Happily, there are now some holly varieties that have perfect flowers, so berries will be borne on a single tree.

Growers are paid based on the weight and quality of a crop. Good berry set adds to the weight, so growers want a balance of berried branches to leafy branches in

order to make the most money. Of course, the overall quality of the leaves and the ratio of variegated and dark green branches also determine the crops' value.

Holly is cut by hand in late November. The branches have to be handled carefully to avoid having the prickly leaves physically damage other leaves, and to prevent knocking off the berries. After cutting, holly is washed to rid the leaves of algae or dirt. The leaves are also inspected for obvious damaged areas and any individual leaves with leaf miner spots or other blemishes are removed.

For floral arrangements we want the berries to stay on the branches as long as possible, but once holly is cut, the berries start falling off. To prevent both premature berry drop and leaf discoloration, many growers dip cut holly branches in a weak solution of naphthalene acetic acid. This material is related to the naturally occurring auxin compound found in plants, and it can prolong the useful life of cut holly by several

weeks. After dipping, the branches are allowed to partially air dry, and then are boxed for shipping. Garden centres sometimes sell a holly dip product for homeowners.

To use cut holly in floral arrangements, re-cut the stem ends using sharp shears. Try to make the cuts on the diagonal to expose as much wood as possible to the water. Make sure the arrangements have ample fresh water, or if oasis is used, it should be kept well-moistened at all times. Arrangements will last longer if they are kept in a cool location. Well-conditioned holly should last for at least three weeks if kept cool. For holly wreaths or other outdoor decorations, the cool weather helps to preserve their appearance. However, if exposed to very cold weather, the berries will freeze and as they thaw, they turn black. To prolong the life of your wreath, if possible, keep it in a protected location, for example between a main door and the storm door.

Norma Senn



The Holly and The Ivy



I had always wondered about the cultural history of the combination of holly and ivy and Christmas. They seemed such an unlikely pair of dark and woodland plants to celebrate an event which took place in the arid hills of the Middle East.

I became even more curious when I realized that one of my favourite Christmas carols, the beautiful and haunting, "The Holly and the Ivy", doesn't actually mention ivy at all. It is a sort of ghost plant, boldly named as part of the title, but then only hinted at as some sort of holly rival in the body of the song.

Of course the truth is that both these plants, whose berries were visible all throughout the cold and fruitless winter, were used as mid-winter talismans and decorations long before they came to be associated with Christianity.

There appears to have been a long tradition of rivalry between the two plants, as to which one should have pride of place on the walls. And then, somehow genders were assigned to each of the plants, with the

upright, strong-wooded holly being male, and the pliant, clinging ivy being female - neither description going on to mention, however, the painfully armoured leaves of the holly tree, or the immense and strangulating strength of the ivy vine.

Apparently remnants of those pagan origins insinuated themselves into other Christian events, for as late as the 18th C. one of the pre-Lent activities in the small villages in Kent was the burning of an effigy Holly-boy by all the girls of the village, and of an effigy Ivy-girl, by all boys of the village.

Of course, the blood-red berries and thorned leaves of the holly made it much more accessible for absorption into Christian mythology than did the blue-black berries and plain leaves of the ivy.

The result appears to be that we are left with the iconic holly and a tag-along ivy, commemorating an event which took place hundreds of years after and thousands of miles away from the place where these two plants held sway over the long northern winters.

Brenda Macdonald