

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 19 Number 5 May 2006

This Month's Meeting : Wednesday, May 17, 2006
Speakers: David Sellars
Topic: "Alpine Gardening"
Companion Plants: Colleen Forster
Show and Tell: Vern Finley
Plant Sales: Harold Fearing

Quick Hits

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
604-888-0920



Welcome ...

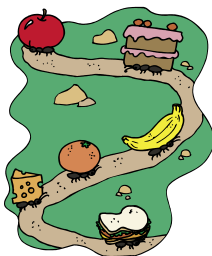
to our newest member, Laura Lynds of Aldergrove. Laura visited our Show and Sale last month, and then came to our Justifiably Famous Beer Bottle Truss Show last month.

Welcome aboard, Laura!



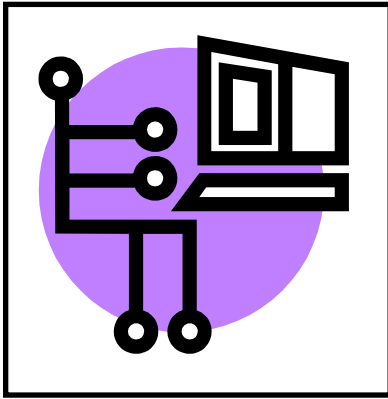
Attend the last Open Garden of the Season

at Lu Zhu, Mike and Patty Bale's garden in Agassiz. See the Classifieds on page 3 for more details.



Next Month - The FSRs Picnic

Don't forget our annual picnic and auction
Date: Sunday, June 18th
Time: 3:00pm
Place: Alan and Wenonah March
3759 - 201A Street
Langley



From the Editor

This Month: :

This month David Sellars will discuss the principles of design and construction of rock gardens and provide ideas on plant selection. The presentation will be illustrated by photographs of construction of David and Wendy's garden in South Surrey and some of the alpines growing in the garden including Saxifraga, Androsace and Lewisia. He will also show photographs of alpine flowers in natural rock gardens in our local mountains and in the European Alps.

Last Month:

Last month was our annual Justifiably Famous Beer Bottle Truss Show. It was held during our April meeting rather than our May in order to take advantage of the earlier-blooming species and hybrids which we do not usually have chance to display, Probably the total number of trusses entered was lower than last year, but it was nice to see some we do not usually have available.

Next Month:

Next month is, of course, our Annual Picnic and Auction, to be held on Sunday, June 18th the home of Wenonah and Alan March, at 3:00 pm. Assistance with setting up (come a bit early - 1:30pm) and break-up would be appreciated. The address is 3759 - 201A Street, Langley. You can contact them at 604-532-9062 if you get seriously lost. We are deeply grateful to Wenonah and Alan for hosting us all.

You will probably be contacted by Karen Linton, who has does such a wonderful job of coordinating the potluck contributions, but don't forget to bring:

- a chair to sit upon
- a plate to eat off
- cutlery to eat with
- the adult beverage of your choice, if desired
- a mug for the adult beverage of your choice, or the tea and coffee which will be provided
- your potluck contribution, for sharing with others
- utensils to serve your potluck contribution, if necessary
- any friends, neighbours, or visiting relatives whom you think enjoy meeting us and learning more about

the FSRS

Also, 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 taking over most of your backyard?

Bring something someone else will be interested in, and then bid early and bid high for something you are interested in.

Notes:

This will be the last Yak of the year. We will not be returning from China until the day of the picnic - leaving Hong Kong at 3:00pm and arriving back home some 3 hours and 10 minutes before we leave (ah, the wonders of modern travel) - certainly too late to produce a June edition even by my tardy standards.

The September meeting (Wednesday, September 20th) promises to be a treat: **A Pre-Conference Soiree** designed to allow everyone to become involved in the Western Regional Conference to be held the following weekend. There will be lots of treats while you preview the programming, including the visuals, and help complete all the myriad last-minute chores that will undoubtedly crop up. More about it in the September Yak.

In the meantime, I wish you all good gardening and a happy summer.

Brenda Macdonald

The Yak Classifieds

Arlene Darby seeks non-smoking female roommate to share the cost of the room she has a confirmed booking for at the Fall Conference at Harrison Hot Springs, September 22 and 23. Please call Arlene at 604-597-1849 to take advantage of this offer.

Mike Bale will be holding an Open Garden at Lu Zhu, on Sunday, May 14th between 12:00 noon and 4:00pm.

Don Martyn will be leading another spring hike through Manning Park to view the rhodos and alpines. The date is Sunday, May 28th.

Meet at the parking lot across from the Yellow Barn at the Cultus Lake turnoff (#3 Road) at 8:30am, Sunday, May 28th.

“This year we should take the Ross Lake road and look at the more southern group of *R. macrophyllum*.”

Everyone should bring a lunch, be prepared to walk 4-6 km and be prepared for whatever the weather will bring. The “walk” doesn’t gain more than 500 feet or so and it is a gentle grade, but it can get muddy.

Contact Don at martynd@shaw.ca with any questions, or if you would like to arrange car-pooling.

You are cordially to an open house in memory of Dr. Mike (Margaret) Trembath.

Date: May 27, 2006

Time: 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Place: 25149 72nd Ave
Aldergrove BC

Please join our family, share some memories, some wine, some eats (desserts were her favourite part of a meal) and enjoy a walk around her beautiful gardens.

Ann Trembath



R. ‘Nameless Beauty’
R. ‘Exbury Naomi’ x R. ‘Canary’
M. L. (Mike) Trembath, 2001
(photo Mike Trembath)



Up the Garden Path with Shady Shrubs

We all know that Rhododendrons and azaleas are great plants for shady areas. Here are some additional shrubs to consider adding to a woodland setting to add texture and extended blooming and foliage interest throughout the year.

Camellias, of course, are great shrubs for shady locations. Perhaps the hardest thing to deal with is choosing which variety to grow from the wealth of varieties available. I'm particularly fond of *C. sasanqua* because it blooms in the fall and sporadically through the winter, and the plants have a finer texture than *C. japonica*. However, the late winter-early spring bloomers like *C. japonica* and *C. reticulata* and their hybrids are nice too. I think most of us like to look for Camellias that drop spent or damaged flowers since many varieties hang onto their blossoms even though the flowers are turning brown. Those of you who attended our regular March meeting saw a couple of lovely named cultivars brought in by Colleen Forester that she was recommending because they dropped their spent flowers.



Camellia 'Winter's Charm'



Camellia 'Snow Flurry'

There are some new, cold tolerant, fall blooming hybrid Camellias that are complex interspecific crosses that include *C. sasanqua*, *hiemalis*, *vernalis* and *oleifera* in their parentage. They have delightful names like Polar Ice, Snow Flurry, Winter's Hope, Winter's Rose, Winter's Star and Winter's Charm. These were released by the U.S. National Arboretum Plant Introduction program in 1991, and are

starting to become more available in the trade. They are reliably hardy to -12 F (Zone 6). There are good pictures of them at: <http://www.usna.usda.gov/Newintro/camelli1.html>



Aucuba japonica

While not to everyone's taste, I personally like well-grown Aucubas (*A. japonica*). One of the common names is Gold Dust Plant which refers to the many forms that have bright yellow variegation. This large, broad-leaved evergreen plant is dioecious. Flowers are borne in spring, and if there are both male and female plants in close proximity, the females produce showy red fruits that are very effective in the winter landscape. Cut foliage and leaves can be used effectively in floral arrangements.

To grow well, Aucubas must have shade. Too much sun leads to bleached leaves and an unthrifty plant. They aren't fussy about soil or moisture, but for best growth, even soil moisture in the summer, good drainage and some humus are beneficial. Aucubas can become large, reaching over 10 feet in height, and if left unchecked, will have a wide spread too. They are amenable to pruning, and can also be grown in large containers. There are a number of good varieties on the market.

Both Camellias and Aucubas are prone to attack by scales and may suffer sooty mould as well. A delayed dormant oil spray will help keep the scale insects under control.

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Abeliophyllum distichum

Abeliophyllum distichum, sometimes called the White Forsythia, does well in partial shade, even moisture and good soil humus. It is a deciduous shrub that produces small white, fragrant flowers in late winter. It often looks scraggly in a nursery container, but planted out and given time, it grows into a mounding form that stays fairly compact. Because of the time of bloom, *Abeliophyllum* benefits from being planted in an area where it receives protection from cold winds, (remember mid-February?).

Another nice deciduous shrub for woodland settings is Fothergilla. This is one of my all-time favourite shrubs. It has fragrant, fluffy white flowers (actually these are long, white stamens) in spring, the plant looks neat and tidy all summer and then in the fall, if the plant is situated where it receives some sun, the foliage colours up beautifully. I find that like so many other members of the Hamamelidaceae, that though slow to establish, Fothergilla is very tolerant of my heavy clay soil. While Fothergilla needs some sun for fall colour, the plant doesn't tolerate the summer noon day sun. Fothergilla remains ball-shaped and can reach a height of about 5 to 10 feet over time.



Symphoricarpos albus

Our native Snowberry, *Symphoricarpos albus*, is another good choice for shady conditions. The Snowberry reaches a height of about 4 to 5 feet in time, and like so many multi-stemmed shrubs, it has an arching growth habit which

looks best when regularly renewal pruned, that is, 1/3 to 1/4 of the oldest wood is removed right at the ground each year once plants are well established. Snowberries have small pink to white flowers in late spring followed by clean white berries in late summer. The berries remain showy for many months. The deciduous leaves are small and rounded, and have a slight bluish tinge to them. There are now selected varieties of hybrid origin, chosen for their good flower production and for pink-coloured fruit. The hybrids often go by the common name of Coral Berry.

Enkianthus are really good companion shrubs to Rhododendrons. They are members of the Ericaceae, and require similar growing conditions: partial shade, even moisture, acid soils and good drainage, and they benefit from being mulched. These are ultimately very large, multi-stemmed deciduous shrubs. There are several species, but the most commonly grown is *E. campanulatus*, the Redvein Enkianthus. It is hardy into Zone 4-5. Yellowish to pale orange flowers appear in mid to late May, usually just ahead of the foliage, so while individual flowers are small, they are easily seen. There are also selected forms with white to off-white flowers. Fall colour is a brilliant red.



Stranvaesia davidiana

Stranvaesia davidiana is a large, handsome shrub that can be grown either as a background shrub or on its own as a specimen plant. *Stranvaesia* produces clusters of white flowers in early summer that are followed by masses of bright red berries in the fall. The foliage is semi-evergreen and it may develop fall colour, depending on how much sun an individual plant receives. *Stranvaesia* tolerates conditions of full sun to partial shade. The plants I see most often receive late afternoon sun, and they colour up well in the fall and have lots of berries each year. They are not fussy about soil, but even moisture and good drainage are preferred.

There are so many shrubs available to us now, I hope you've got room for at least one more companion plant.

Norma Senn



Rhododendrons of Yunnan



R. genestierianum blossom
Yunnan, China, May, 2005
photo by Brenda Macdonald

R. genestierianum truss
Rhododendron Species Foundation, May, 2005
photo by Sean Rafferty

Rhododendron genestierianum

One of the odder specimens in the rhododendron genus, *R. genestierianum* is understandably rare in cultivation, and only partly because of its slightly tender status. First introduced by Forrest in April 1919, visually speaking its whole remains something less than the sum of its parts.

This lepidote species has long narrow willow-like leaves - the lower leaf surface covered in white hairs with a sprinkling of small golden brown scales - that are quite attractive, and the blossoms are of heavy substance in a deep wine-red with a dense external bloom. But the style is relatively stout and sharply bent with an additional thickness at the stigma end making it look a bit like an elephant's trunk, and the thick stamens bristle somewhat menacingly straight out of the fleshy-looking blooms. The blossoms themselves are shaped like little bells and held aloft on rather long stalks, but somehow the effect is stubby and awkward rather than graceful.

Still, like a baby hippopotamus, there is a certain inchoate charm to *genestierianum*'s disparate attributes, and in any event its very rarity and the challenges inherent in keeping it thrifty will ensure that there are always a few enthusiasts determined to have it in their collection.





This illustration by Lilian Snelling was first published in 1928 in Curtis's Botanical Magazine, and documents a plant grown by the Marquis of Headfort in Kells County, Eire, from seed collected by Forrest in 1921

R. genestierianum was originally included in Balfour's Glaucophyllum Series, along with *R. glaucophyllum*, *R. luteiflorum*, *R. charitopes* and others with bell-shaped blossoms of heavy substance and a dense bloom, but excepting *R. campylogynum* which was kept all alone in its own Series. However, Cullen has separated it back out, leaving it out on its own under the monotypic Subsection Genestieriana, with *R. campylogynum*, to which it seems most closely related, also on its own under the monotypic Subsection Campylogynum, and all the others with waxy bells and heavy bloom left together under Subsection Glauca.



The grave of Père Annet Genestier, Dulong Valley, northwest Yunnan, China. Père Genestier provided invaluable advice and support to several of the great plant explorers who stayed in the area.

What's in Bloom?



R. 'Wee Bee'

cross: *campylogynum* Charopaeum Group 'Patricia'
x *keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' : by Berg **size:** to 12"
North Vancouver / 06MAY2006



R. *quiquifolium*

type: elepidote **epithet:** five-leaved
size: eventually to 9-10'

although the dainty white flowers are a treat, the symmetrically placed leaves with their tidy bronze edges, the lovely new growth shown above, and the wonderful fall colour are reason enough to cultivate this species
North Vancouver/ 06MAY2006



R. *ambiguum*

type: lepidote **epithet:** doubtful **size:** to 5'
the only thing really ambiguous about this plant is the colour, the effect of which is neither yellow nor green, but sort of a pale chartreuse with apple green spotting
North Vancouver/ 06MAY2006



R. *tephropeplum*

type: lepidote **epithet:** with ash-grey covering
size: to 5', but usually sprawling
blossoms are slightly scented
North Vancouver/ 06MAY2006



R. 'Medusa'

cross: *dicroanthum* ssp. *scyphocalyx* x *griersonianum*:
by Aberconway **size:** to 5'
North Vancouver/ 06MAY2006



R. 'Curlew'

cross: *ludlowii* x *fletcherianum* by Cox **size:** to 18"
North Vancouver/ 06MAY2006

(all photos B. Macdonald)