

The Yak

Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Volume 19 Number 9 November 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

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Colleen Forster - 2nd yr
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Membership: Wenonah March

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This Month's Meeting : Wednesday, November 15, 2006

Speaker: Gerry Gibbens

Topic: "Rhododendron Problem Solving"

Companion Plants: Colleen Forster

Plant Sales: Dave Shantz

Quick Hits



Welcome!

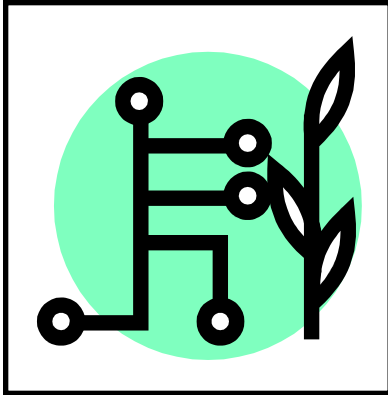
to our newest Associate Members, Joan and Alan Yoder, of the Komo Kulshan Chapter, part of ARS District 2. Joan and Alan were so supportive and helpful at the Fall Conference at Harrison Hot Springs that the Executive unanimously voted to award them honorary memberships

at Fraser South. In particular, the Yoders were instrumental in constructing the marvellous "Rhodo Stump" and helping transport and arrange the wonderful display of species leaves from the Bayes' garden. Thank you, and welcome to our group!

As the Goose Fattens

Just a reminder that our December meeting will be held on the second Wednesday instead of the third. Mark your calendars for Wednesday, December 13th. More details to follow.





From the President

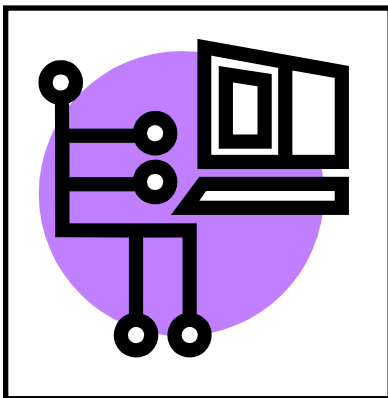
Notes from the Chair

As I write this, the wind is blowing, leaves flying, and the rain coming down in buckets. The 'soggies' are here again. Garden work has pretty much ended for the year. Tools that have been stored under two big cedar trees during the summer have been brought in and put away. There are lots of projects and work that didn't get done this year - but there is always next year.

In taking stock of this year's gardening: I saw a number of rhodies and other plants bloom for the first time, weeds grew and prospered, lots of beautiful flowers and foliage to match were seen, weevils were well fed, and a new record for dryness and sun scorch was achieved. Best of all, more time was spent wandering in the garden than working. Overall it was a most successful year.

I will have seeds from several different kinds of *Cardiocrinums* at the next meeting. I hope to see you there.

Dalén Bayes



From the Editor

This Month:

This month's program features a presentation by Gerry Gibbens, Sr. Gardener at Van Dusen's Sino-Himalayan garden. Gerry apprenticed at Windsor Great Park in England, and has served on the Vancouver chapter and District One executives, as well as the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust.

Next Month: Our next meeting will be a week ahead of schedule, on Wednesday, December 13th. The vagaries of the calendar has dictated that this year the third Wednesday will be December 20th, which everyone agreed was a little too close to Christmas to ensure maximum participation in our Annual Festive Potluck Dinner. Don't forget, we start

a bit earlier than usual - so plan to arrive about 6:30pm, or even earlier if you would like to help set up.

Bring a cup, plate and eating utensils. And don't forget a gift under \$10.00 for the gift exchange. Karen Linton will be contacting members to coordinate the potluck contributions, and Colleen Forster will organize the festive activities.

Brenda Macdonald

ARS FALL CONFERENCE 2006

The Chapter can take considerable pride in having hosted an ARS Conference which some delegates have reported was the “best they had attended”. We were extremely fortunate to have had such an ideal location and unbelievably beautiful weather. Now that the learning curve has been surmounted, is any one up for a Convention?

All Conferences are unique and leave their own individual footprint. This Conference introduced several new ideas and concepts that may prove useful to future event organizers. We elected to make the registration fee non-refundable in order to have a stable estimation of the numbers likely to attend, so that planning for tours and activities could be arranged with a fair degree of certainty. We elected not to have an insert in the ARS Journal in order to help reduce our fixed costs by avoiding the additional expense of about \$1,000. This proved to have no adverse effect on our attendance due primarily to an efficient and well-organized web site. Thirdly, we introduced the concept of a Silent Photo Auction, partly as a means of raising additional funds and also as a source of interest and activity. This turned out to be well received and successful. The Conference also introduced a dedicated audiovisual room for the viewing of interesting garden-related videotapes, as well as a digital projector slide show on a large screen in the plant sale area which ran continuously throughout the Conference.

The members of the Executive Planning Committee agreed, at their inaugural meeting, that the emphasis for the Conference should be on education, fun, and humour, and that profit would not be a primary objective. To this end, the delegates enjoyed many complimentary activities and souvenirs. On Wednesday evening, the early registrants were invited to attend the hospitality suite in the evening where snacks and beverages were supplied. On Friday two educational sessions were arranged. The bonsai session, hosted by Roger Low, was extremely well attended - so much so that the additional session held on the Saturday afternoon extended over a four hour period instead of the scheduled two hours. The participants at each of the three sessions were given their own Satsuki azalea and container to work with and to take home. The Conference incurred a \$10.00 fee for each plant. Likewise, the Ikebana sessions were very well attended and the materials for the presentations were provided by the Conference. At the conclusion of the session, these wonderful floral masterpieces were

displayed in the Exhibition Hall, and remained there for the duration of the Conference. The instructor, Cecily Chang, was an entertaining and charismatic presenter and stayed several hours after the conclusion of her session to prepare additional arrangements for the exhibition area. On Friday evening the delegates enjoyed a complimentary “get together and welcome” event with a variety of snacks including strawberries dipped in a chocolate fondue. Beverages of all kinds were provided at no cost. The hospitality room remained open throughout the entire conference, with coffee and assorted beverages. Members attending the bus tours also enjoyed wine tasting at Minter Gardens, and smoked salmon and bannock at Xa Ytem Lodge at no additional cost. Participants on the boat tours were treated to an exotic feast of giant Pacific prawns; a variety of local cheeses and other snacks, lubricated with liberal amounts of their beverage of choice. On Sunday morning complimentary breakfast was offered to the first twenty five ‘early birds’ planning to attend the hybridizers meeting scheduled for 8:00 o’clock. At 6:56 a.m. there was a line up despite many people going to bed very late the previous night!

In addition to the many complimentary activities a large number of souvenirs and gifts were distributed. The statistically inclined might be interested to learn that this included: ten dozen bottles of wine, ten dozen Molson Canadian beer and ten dozen Coors Light (courtesy of Molson Canada); more than 500 bottles of water; 200 bottles of soft drinks; 150 water containers; a vast array of assorted local organic cheeses; twenty five pounds of giant Pacific prawns, twelve dozen croissants, vegetable and fruit platters, ten pounds of strawberries; five hundred pens!; 150 fridge magnets; more than 300 note pads; 150 calendars; several hundred brochures; twelve dozen dahlias; an assortment of other flowers and centerpieces for the banquet; and numerous candies.

The St. Alice Hall proved to be a great venue for the plant sale and the other additional exhibits. Our growers provided a very comprehensive selection of both rhododendrons and companion plants. In addition, there was a good supply of vireyas and of plants from the Rhododendron Species Foundation. The phyto inspections proceeded very smoothly. There were no delays and our visitors from the south were most impressed with the efficiency. We are indebted to Brenda Macdonald and Sean Rafferty who worked throughout the Conference attending the sale desk and looking after the plant sales.

The confirmation and distribution of the registration packets began on Wednesday and continued

throughout the duration of the Conference under the careful stewardship of Mary-Anne Berg and Garth Wedemire.

The Hospitality Desk, Raffle Sales and Merchandise Sales areas were handled by Patti Bale, Lori Bayes and Joan Bengough. The sales area proved to be popular and busy, and remained active for the entire duration of the Conference.

The interesting display of leaves from a variety of species plants created by Lori and Dalen Bayes (helped greatly by Joan and Alan Yoder and their special display “trunk”) became a focus of constant interest.

The video displays in the Exhibition Hall and in the dedicated lounge were coordinated and set up by Garth Wedemire. These provided additional ambience to the plant display area and received many compliments.

The card and photograph display by Ted Belcher and the art display by Rosemary Burnham provided additional interest for our visitors.

The Bonsai display and the Ikebana floral arrangements were truly superb.

The Silent Auction Photographic display created much interest and proved to be a financial success.

The gorgeous weather provided a wonderful opportunity for the attendees participating in the bus and boat tours to see the surrounding country and mountains at their very best. These tours left precisely on time and returned as planned. The bus captains willingly shared their knowledge of the local countryside in a humorous and informative manner. The sunshine and calm winds provided a wonderful experience for passengers on each of the four boat trips and on their return to the dock it was apparent that there had been much laughter and great enjoyment. Fortunately no one has been reported as lost overboard.

The lecture programme proved to be especially successful. All the presentations required additional seating and despite this, there was standing room only at most sessions. The lectures started and finished precisely on schedule. Our speakers, Dalen Bayes, Colleen Forster, Glen Jamieson, Don Martin, Charlie Sale, David Sellars, Norma Senn and Garth Wedemire all made outstanding presentations, and are to be congratulated for their very significant contributions. The Friday evening presentations began with an unscheduled mystery speaker, Dr. John Farrer, who, at the last minute, most generously prepared a talk for the Conference in order to share his personal childhood experiences and those of his parents at the estate of his uncle, Reginald Farrer. John’s talk was followed by Steve Hootman’s excellent presentation which provided a thoughtful, authoritative and humorous account of

“Rhododendrons in the Wild”

On Saturday evening the attendees were treated to a magnificent banquet that was enlightened by the humour and witticism of our Master of Ceremonies, David Sellars. Our keynote speaker, Des Kennedy, provided a thoughtful and provocative slide introduction to his talk, one which proved to be a fitting prelude to a magnificent oratorical and theatrical performance, the like of which most of us had not seen before. The presentation caused great laughter to most and shock to some, but well deserved its standing ovation. Following the banquet most of the guests returned to the St. Alice Hall for a champagne reception, and to finalize their bids on the photographs, pick up their raffle prizes or pursue additional plant purchases. The hall was still busy and active at midnight.

On Sunday morning twenty-five early birds were treated to a complimentary breakfast that was followed by the well-attended Hybridizers Round Table. This was followed by a presentation to a full house by David Sellars, on alpine plants and gardening. The final lecture presentation was by Steve Hootman entitled “Aristocrats and Tramps”, which again provided much humour and authoritative information about the most and the least desirable of rhododendron species.

The plant sale and educational sessions finished at noon on Sunday. An enthusiastic and willing group of individuals helped with the clean up and the hall was stripped and left ready for the next event by 4:00 p.m.

And what about the bottom line?

The conference hosted approximately 228 fully paid up registrants. Approximately \$50,000 in fees were received. In addition to the many complimentary activities and souvenirs that the Conference provided there were other fixed expenses. These included the cost of insurance (\$480), advertising to the public for the plant sale (\$145) audiovisual equipment and needs (\$1,000) web site hosting (\$238.00) and miscellaneous expenses (\$1,000). The raffle brought in about \$1,800, a substantial part of which was skillfully collected by Les Clay and Cherry Groves at the banquet. The Silent Auction Photo exhibition realized approximately \$800. The plant sales grossed approximately \$8,700. Both the bus tours and the boat tours realized a substantial profit. Merchandise sales also realized a profit. And in addition, the Conference received the benefit of a grant from the Ministry of Tourism in the amount of \$2,000.

And the final sum is ? ?? Details at the next meeting on November 14th.

Mike Bale



Up the Garden Path with Some Trees that Don't Need Summer Irrigation, and Some that Do

Well, they're not Rhodies, but.... Since this past summer was so dry, I've started to pay close attention to which plants grow well in our area without irrigation and which need special attention to their watering needs.

Two plants I'd recommend for their ability to tolerate hot dry areas are the Chaste Tree and Tamarisk. Both have thrived in my garden even though they're planted immediately adjacent to a concrete driveway where watering just doesn't happen.



Chaste Tree
Vitex agnus-castus

The Chaste Tree, *Vitex agnus-castus*, is a good choice for our area. Despite being referred to as a tree in its common name, locally, it is really a large shrub reaching up to about 10 feet at maturity. It is a relative of the common Butterfly Bush, *Buddleia alternifolia*, but the Chaste Tree is preferred because

it isn't invasive. It is deciduous with palmately compound leaves of soft grayish-green. Its chief claim to fame is that it blooms in late summer

when most of our other woody plants have finished blooming. It produces spikes of deep purple flowers on new wood, at the branch tips. In addition to being drought tolerant, it is reliably winter hardy here, and well able to withstand our occasional blasts of cold, dry winds. I've found my own plant to be well-behaved, and after many years of growth is only 5 feet tall, perhaps because it is growing in such a difficult site. The roots stay where they belong, and I'm able to grow grass right up close to the trunk base.

Growing right next to my Chaste Tree is *Tamarisk pentandra*, the Salt Cedar. (Note, the genus name is sometimes spelled Tamarix, and some references list both spellings.) This is another late summer bloomer that has terminal



Salt Cedar
Tamarisk pentandra

spikes of fine-textured bright pink flowers. The foliage is very airy and delicate, looking more like conifer needles than the leaves of most flowering plants. The Tamarisk is not only a great choice for hot, sunny areas but is also salt tolerant. For these reasons, it is often used in seaside gardens. The plant has somewhat brittle wood which may get snapped off in ice storms or high winds. However, the plant re-spouts readily from older wood, and can re-establish a new top

quickly. This species blooms on new wood, and hard pruning it in the late dormant season will promote lots of growth - and the more new growth, the more spectacular the flower display. There are several species of Tamarisk, all of them Old World plants. A second lovely species is a *T. tetrandra* which blooms in spring on one year old wood. It should be pruned immediately after flowering. This species is much more of a small tree than *T. pentandra*, and locally, I see it usually grown as a single stem. When in bloom, it is fabulous.



Stewartia pseudocamellia

Stewartia pseudocamellia is not a drought tolerant plant, but it's such a good companion tree for Rhododendrons that it merits the watering it requires. It is well-suited to woodland gardens where there is some overhead protection from

the noon day sun, at least while getting established. It prefers acid soils with even moisture. *Stewartia* provides interest year round. It is a mid summer bloomer and has attractive white flowers with a large cluster of bright yellow stamens, reminiscent of a single Camellia, hence the species epithet. It may take a few years before reliable flowering occurs, but is worth the wait. The foliage colours well in the fall, and the flaking bark creates patterns of white to cinnamon-coloured patches which are noticeable in the winter. The spring foliage is a bright clear green. I haven't seen a large *Stewartia* in our area, so I think of them as small trees, but the references say it can reach 60 feet in height in its native habitat of Japan. Caveat culere!

One of my favourite deciduous trees is *Paulownia tomentosa*, the Empress Tree. While it has a coarse textured growing habit, its spikes of fragrant, amethyst purple flowers borne in May make it worth growing. It



Empress Tree
Paulownia tomentosa

has large, heart-shaped leaves. Once established, it is a fast growing tree, and grows readily from seed or from root suckers. It resents transplanting, so the usual recommendation is to plant small trees then leave them alone. Dieback of shoot tips on young trees is common in the area due to winter injury, but the plants seem to recover readily, and there don't seem to be any problems due to this injury. I have seen the occasional *Paulownia* grown just for the leaves: each year, plants are cut back hard to force vigorous, young shoots resulting in extremely large leaves, some reaching up to a meter across. Doing this, of course, means that you sacrifice the gorgeous flowers, but the foliage is



Empress Tree
Paulownia tomentosa

striking. For anyone on the Ferncliff Garden tour at the Fall Conference, you may have noticed that the Jacks are growing their *Paulownia* in this manner. *Paulownias* are carefree trees, growing best in full sun with average garden soil. They do prefer even moisture, and while I didn't do a lot of watering, I did give my young tree an occasional deep soaking this summer. The Empress tree is native to China and was formerly found as a native tree in Japan also.

A nice story I heard about the Paulownia in Japan is that in some areas, it was the tradition to plant a Paulownia in honour of a daughter's birth. At the time of her wedding, the tree would be cut down and the wood used to build her wedding chest. In addition, seed from the tree would have been saved to plant for her future daughters. The wood has also been used to make lutes and other instruments.

We are very fortunate in being able to grow some lovely broadleaved evergreen trees, including the beautiful Eucryphia.

There are a couple of species available in our area, *Eucryphia glutinosa* and *E. x intermedia* (a cross between *E. glutinosa* and *E. lucida*). I've had *E. x intermedia* growing in my garden for a few years, and it seems to be perfectly hardy, although this is one plant that I do need to water regularly. In dry summers, it sulks. The evergreen foliage is fairly small and relatively fine-textured.

Beautiful white fragrant flowers, similar to those of *Hypericum* appear in August. Typically, Eucryphia flowers have a centre boss of stamens surrounded by

4 large white petals in a cross-shaped pattern. My *E. x intermedia* seems to be maintaining a pyramidal habit, and after about 6 or 7 years of growth is about 10 feet tall.

The species, *E. glutinosa*, is evergreen to semi-evergreen, so depending on where it is grown, it may lose its leaves in very cold weather. Both *E. glutinosa* and *E. cordifolia* are native to the Lake District of Chile where they grow wild along the ditch banks. Bees just love the beautiful tree, *E. cordifolia*, known in Chile as the "Ulmo Tree" and Ulmo Tree honey is highly prized. At maturity the Ulmo Tree is large, reaching 40 m in height, with a broad crown, and having a trunk diameter in excess of 2 m dbh (diameter breast height). There are several New Zealand species of Eucryphia, but I haven't seen them for sale locally. Colleen sometimes brings in *E. x intermedia* to our plant sales, which is where I got mine. So, there's an easy plant source for you, and a plant I'd recommend if you can supply the summer moisture it needs for growth.



Eucryphia lucida

Norma Senn



Fall colours of *R. schlippenbachii*



Rhododendrons of Sichuan



Rhododendron galactinum

Yet another “milky” rhododendron. This one however, whose specific epithet is derived from the Greek word for milk - gala - at least bears the name legitimately with its opaque white blossoms. (Which is in some contrast to the other “milky” rhododendron, *R. lacteum*, from the Latin work for milk - lact - whose colour is almost always quite indisputably yellow, only rarely deep cream, and almost never white.)

R. galactinum is a lovely thing, whose large campanulate blossoms are often tinged with a very pale wine-red wash, displaying an intense crimson blotch deep down at the base, and looking vaguely like the old vanilla Dixie Cups with the swirl of deep red right in the centre.

Its large oblong leaves have a dense buff-grey to dark fawn indumentum. One of the

diagnostic traits of this species is its densely tomentose (otherwise described as really fuzzy) rather short, fat flower buds.

Although not quite so spectacularly “big leaf” as the other members of subsection Falconera such as *rex*, *hodgsonii*, and *basilicum*, it has the advantage of being slightly hardier, thereby providing a suitably exotic look for those gardens too cold for many of the other large-leaved species.

Originally introduced by Wilson in 1910, it was not re-introduced until 1989. Until that time all plants grown were from Wilson’s original collection #4254, or open-pollinated seedlings, of which Davidian claims the “vast majority came true to type”.

The photo above is one of my favourites from Sichuan because it captures so well the feel of the place - tall rangy rhododendron trees, dripping with moss and moisture, reaching out to grab what light they can. Often bent by wind or trauma, none of them were perfect specimens but seemed all the more evocative for all that.

Brenda Macdonald



R. galactinum
Sichuan, China,
June, 2006
photos by Sean Rafferty