

The Yak

Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Volume 19 Number 8 October 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
604-888-0920

This Month's Meeting : Wednesday, October 18, 2006

Speaker: Paul Wurz

Topic: "Lofthouse's Legacy"

Companion Plants: Colleen Forster

Plant Sales: Colleen Forster

Quick Hits



Membership:

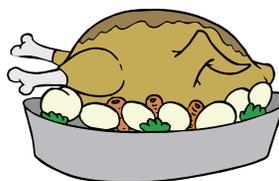
It's that time of year again! - same fee, different timetable.

The ARS has made the date by which all registrations need to be in to them a little earlier this year. This means that we must receive all the registrations by the end of October in order to batch them up and submit them to the ARS for processing. Please use the Enrolment Form attached to the back of this month's newsletter, or complete one of the blank copies that will be available at this month's meeting, to ensure that our

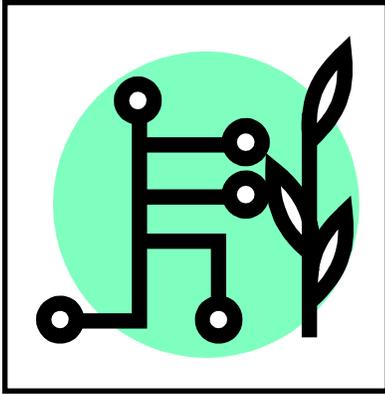
Membership Chair, Wenonah March, has the registration form and fee by October 30th at the latest.

Early Warning:

And, while this may look like an image of Thanksgiving Past to you, it is really an image of Christmas Yet to Come. The calendar seems to have placed Wednesdays in an awkward configuration again this year, so our Annual Christmas



Dinner will take place on the second Wednesday instead of the third. Mark you calendars for Wednesday, December 13th. More details to follow.



From the President

Notes from the Chair

We did it !!! Our chapter hosted what many have said was the best conference ever. This shows what can be accomplished when one has an inspirational leader, as we did in Mike Bale, and a dedicated conference committee backed by a supportive membership. There are far too many members who deserve a special thanks to list them all individually, so a general thanks to all will have to suffice.

Just when I thought the driest summer ever had ended with the mid-September rains - our well went dry. Our plants went through the summer without water and now it's our turn.

This fall we noticed lots of flower buds on a *R. fictolacteum* which has never bloomed before. This plant is close to twenty years old and about fourteen feet tall. It grows in a shady location and it's great foliage has earned it a certain amount of forgiveness for its lack of interest in reproduction.

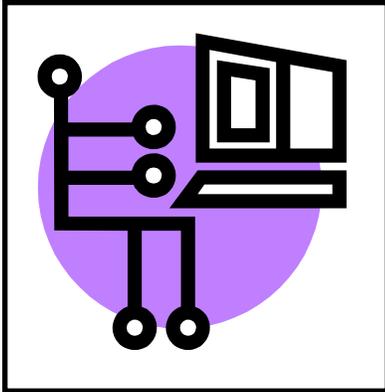
Upon closer examination our delight changed to despair. Most of the flower buds were on only one of the four main trunks. As we looked closer we noticed that the branches on this trunk were retaining only two years of leaves whereas the branches on the other trunks were holding leaves from three to four years ago. Also, as one looked further up the trunk in question, last years leaves were beginning to yellow and drop and near the top this year's leaves were smaller as well.

As to the name to put on this affliction we don't know, we call it terminal die back. Over the years we have seen this on other plants. It appears to be an airborne disease as it seems to start at the end of a branch or trunk and spread downwards. We try to remove any diseased wood and some healthy wood below that, hoping to get all of the affected parts. This works sometimes, other times we find ourselves cutting more wood off later as it seems we did not get all of it the first time. Eventually, the plant may just end up on the burning pile. (Yes, living in the country below the 49th parallel we can actually burn at times.) It makes sense to sterilize any tools used to remove the diseased wood and also dispose of all plant material.

Lori joked that most of next years deadheading is already done now. As for those of you who see a dead plant as an opportunity to plant something else, I can only say I want my beautiful *R. fictolacteum*, not another opportunity. I would probably muff it anyway

At our October meeting I will have some fresh seeds from *Cardiocrinum cordatum* var. *cordatum* or var. *glehnii*. My label says it's var. *cordatum* but it fits Dan Hinkley's description of var. *glehnii* better. However it's not a total match with his description of var. *glehnii* either. Hinkley (this is my only source of information on cardiocrinums) says it can have up to twenty flowers per stem whereas mine have up to fifty flowers per stem. Stems are up to eight feet in height and the flowers are much smaller than on *C. giganteum*. I can not attest to it's fragrance as it blooms in late July, which is prime time for canoeing . All I get to see are the seed capsules.

Dalen Bayes



From the Editor

This Month:

This month's program features a presentation by Paul Wurz on the hybrids developed by John G. (Jack) Lofthouse. Paul is a Past President of the North Island Chapter of the ARS and well acquainted with the significant legacy left by Jack Lofthouse, who passed away in January, 2005.

Paul, a retired school teacher, and his wife Lynn, a biologist, operate **Hidden Acres Rhododendrons**, a nursery located north of Campbell River BC. They also maintain a wonderfully informative and visually attractive website at: <http://hiddenacresrhodos.com/>

Next Month:

Gerry Gibbens, Sr. Gardener at Van Dusen Gardens will discuss Garden Problems.

Brenda Macdonald



Two of Jack Lofthouse's uniquely named hybrids: *R. 'Yellow Petticoats* and *R. Oo La La*

The Yak Classifieds

Found

Left, in white plastic carrier bag, at 2006 Fall Conference Sales table: two (2) copies of *Rhododendron Species*, Vol 1, 2006 (annual yearbook of the Rhododendron Species Foundation) and one (1) copy of the CD compilation of *Happy Planting, Up the Garden Path*, and

Yak'stracts from the Fraser South Rhodo Society. Probably a purchase by one of the Canadian attendees as the Plant List Order Form included in the RSF Yearbook was the International edition. Owner can claim by forwarding suitable tale of woe to the Editor.



Up the Garden Path with Hardwood Cuttings

Do you think it's time to put your feet up and take a break from garden chores? Well, perhaps a short break is in order, but now is a good time to look ahead and plan some winter propagation work. Hardwood cuttings are an easy and inexpensive way to increase the numbers of many of your favourite evergreens or deciduous shrubs.

Hardwood cuttings are taken after plants go dormant and the stems become woody, and in the case of deciduous plants, lose their leaves. The season for hardwood cuttings may start as early as late November, especially in northern BC, and extends through late February.

Hardwood cuttings are used to propagate many coniferous plants, but are especially useful for cedars and junipers. They are also used for lots of deciduous plants, for example grapes, kiwis, and shrubs like Forsythia, Cotoneaster (both deciduous and evergreen), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*), Mock Orange (*Philadelphus*), *Spiraeas* etc.

Cuttings should be collected when temperatures are above freezing since handling frozen wood may cause damage. Remove cuttings from the mother plant carefully using sharp pruning shears or a sharp knife.

As you might expect, how cuttings are handled makes a difference to rooting success. There are variations on a theme, but if possible, take the cuttings as close to the time they are to be stuck as possible. Don't let them sit in a warm or dry area. If you do have to store them for any length

of time, wrap them in moist newspaper and keep them cool. Some propagators will store wrapped deciduous cuttings in a fridge for several weeks, while others bury bundles of dormant, deciduous hardwood cuttings in the ground in a well-drained, sheltered spot in the garden until late February or early March. Then, in late winter, the cuttings are removed from the fridge or lifted from the ground and stuck into flats for rooting. With these methods, vegetative buds receive the cold treatment needed to satisfy their dormancy requirements while allowing the propagator to collect wood early in the winter before it gets too cold to work outside comfortably. This latter method is only used for deciduous cuttings since evergreens need to have their leaves exposed to light throughout the winter.

When preparing cuttings, the size varies depending on the type of plant being rooted. If possible, you'd like to have something with at least 3 to 5 sets of buds and hopefully be around 12 cm (5") long. However, something like a grape vine may be very long and whippy and could be up to 30 to 38 cm (12-15") in length, while other plants, like heathers, may be smaller. Prepare cuttings by making the cut just below a bud. Sometimes, it is helpful to take a small sliver of bark off one side of the base of the cutting. This process, called wounding, permits new roots to emerge more easily from the woody stem. Treat hardwood cuttings with a Number 3 rooting compound. There are various products on the market, but they all contain an auxin type of material which promotes root growth. Most auxins are prepared in a talc base, but there are now some in a gel formulation. Commercially prepared rooting powders are readily available from garden centres.

continued on page 5

The rooting media should be able to hold the cuttings upright while providing some moisture retention and aeration. Many different media can be used, but a mixture of about 40% peat moss and 60% perlite, by volume, works well. The mix should be well-moistened when the cuttings are stuck, but don't allow it to become soggy. Pots or flats that hold the rooting media should be clean and provide good drainage.

After applying rooting powder to the stem bases, stick the cuttings in the prepared flat or pot. Firm the media around the cuttings gently so that the cuttings don't have any major air pockets around them, as this can lead to the developing roots becoming too dry. To encourage rooting, you want to keep the cuttings in an environment where the stem bases are relatively warm, around 20°C, while the tops remain cool. This allows the roots to form before the cuttings put out top growth. If the air temperature is too warm, the plants may expend

stored reserves to support new leaf growth at the expense of root formation. An ideal location for rooting is a cool greenhouse or sun porch with the flats or pots placed on a heating cable. Another technique is to prepare and place cuttings outside in a very sheltered area in late winter, before top growth begins. I often use an area right next to my house to root cuttings I prepare in late February when the worst of the cold weather is over



but before the buds break.

Hardwood cuttings may take 6 to 8 weeks, or occasionally even longer, to root. It is important during the process to prevent them from drying out, but also to make sure the rooting media doesn't get too wet since this could lead to rotting of the lower portion of the stems. Once rooting has occurred, the air temperature can rise gradually to promote the top growth. Do protect new shoots and leaves from late spring frosts. Once the cuttings have a decent sized root ball, they can be potted up in individual pots or lined out in the garden to be field grown for a couple of years. It will take a few to several years for plants to achieve good size, depending on the kind of plants propagated.

There are many good references available on how to propagate plants, and most will include a section on hardwood cuttings. For example, try propagation books from Reader's Digest or the Royal Horticultural Society for more information. These



books and lots of others are available in most library systems. If you have access to the internet, there are dozens of on-line sites available that can be helpful. Use your favourite search engine and type in something like "how to propagate plants in the winter" and you'll find lots of good advice. Many sites have good pictures to show you how to prepare cuttings.

Suitable subjects for hardwood cuttings:
Actinidia deliciosa
Philadelphus delavayi
Lonicera 'Mandarin'
Juniperus horizontalis

Norma Senn



Rhododendrons of Yunnan



R. anthosphaerum
Curtis's Botanical Magazine, 1925
illustration by Lillian Snelling

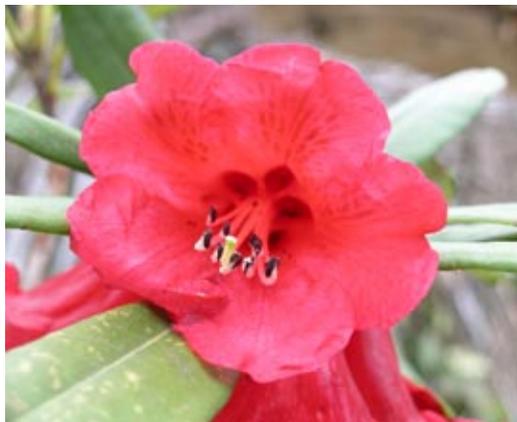
Rhododendron anthosphaerum

A member of *Subsection Irrorata*, *R. anthosphaerum* also often displays the minute but copious spotting so evident in the closely related *R. irroratum*. It also displays the much more dependably diagnostic deep nectar pouches. The colour of the blossoms varies considerably, with some plants having an almost picotee appearance, but is most often in the pink to rose range. Many blossoms also display a deep basal blotch.

Although an attractive plant, with long narrowly oblong leaves, its value in the garden is somewhat diminished by its habit of flushing out very early in the spring - often by February or March. This precocious growth makes it very vulnerable to late spring frosts in any but the mildest of locations.

It was first introduced into cultivation by George Forrest in 1910, having been collected and described under a number of different names as early as 1887. The plant illustrated above was from seed collected by Forrest and raised in St. Tudy, Cornwall.

Two different
colour forms of
R. anthosphaerum
Yunnan, China,
May 2005
photo by Brenda
Macdonald



What's in Re-Bloom?



R. campylogynum

type: lepidote **size:** to 1'

epithet: with bent ovary

the descriptive epithet for this plant is "with bent ovary", although this may be arguable. Certainly something is bent, but it would seem more accurate to say that it is the style that is sharply bent as it emerges from the ovary, as is clearly visible in this photo .

North Vancouver/ 11SEP2006



R. 'Medusa'

cross: *dicroanthum ssp dicroanthum* x *griersonianum* by Aberconway, 1936

size: 3' at 5 years

another consistent re-bloomer in our garden. The fall re-bloom (which is so heavy that it resembles a somewhat light spring show rather than the patchy sporadic fall display usual with re-bloomers) never seems to interfere with another solid display the following spring.

North Vancouver/ 30SEP2006



R. 'Elizabeth Red Foliage'

cross: unknown, by Ostbo, before 1960

size: 3' at 5 years

this rather generically-named plant is sometimes known as 'Ostbo's Red Elizabeth', a name not significantly more explanatory. It is not clear whether this plant represents a hybrid or sport of Aberconway's 'Elizabeth'. In any event, its most salient feature is the deeply red new leaf growth, although certainly the specimen we have produces significantly larger flowers, and the overall appearance of the plant is much less shaggy than the our two existing

Aberconway 'Elizabeths'.
North Vancouver/ 22AUG2006



R. 'Razorbill'

cross: *spinuliferum* x unknown, by Cox, 1976

size: to 3'

considered by many to be Cox's best "bird", this is the first instance of precocious flowering we have had on this plant. The somewhat upright and clustered blossoms are a lovely clear but sprightly pink.

North Vancouver/ 16SEP2006

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 2007 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 _____