

# The Yak

# Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Volume 19 Number 7 September 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](http://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 - 3<sup>rd</sup> yr  
Colleen Forster - 2<sup>nd</sup> yr  
Sean Rafferty - 1<sup>st</sup> yr

Membership: Wenonah March

Newsletter: Brenda Macdonald  
604-990-5353

Website: Chris Klapwijk  
604-888-0920

This Month's Meeting : ONE WEEK EARLIER THAN USUAL

**Wednesday, September 13, 2006**

Preparation for the 2006 Western Regional  
Fall Conference, Harrison Hot Springs,  
September 22 - 24, 2006

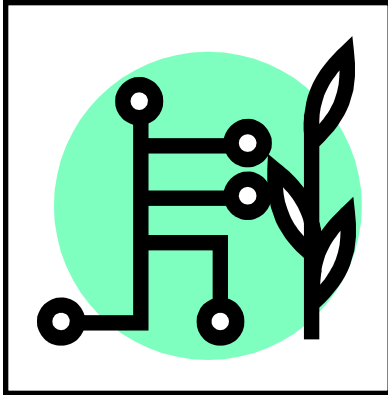
## Quick Hits



### Down tools ...

Time to put down your gardening fork and give that hose a rest.

Welcome back to the first meeting of our 2006-2007 year!



From the President

## Notes from the Chair

Our September meeting has been changed to the 2nd Wednesday instead of the 3rd Wednesday due to our ARS conference at Harrison Hot Springs.

There will be a progress report on the conference as well as a chance to volunteer for different interesting jobs. We have already exceeded our goal for attendance. It looks like this will be a great conference and one that our club can be justly proud to have hosted. For the September meeting there will not be a program as usual, which should give us a chance to socialize with one another.

Our garden has gone through the driest summer ever. We can't irrigate, but most plants have come through okay. We can hand water a few plants that are the most stressed, but with bone-dry root balls this only lasts for a few days at best.

Conversely, we did have lots of water on our canoe trip. We even had a few portages that ran through swamps. You know things are not going well when you find that a beaver has built a dam across your portage trail. Overall Lori and I had a great trip with good weather and scenery to match.

*Dalen Bayes*

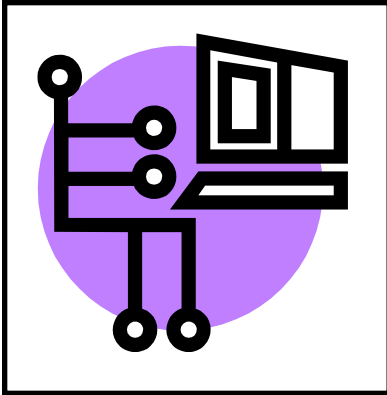
## The Yak Classifieds

### Help Wanted

Many hands needed for light work. Ambitious local garden club requires new recruits for assistance with up-coming Fall Conference. Previous experience not necessary - train on the job! Pay scale commensurate with effort and ability, in RIH (reward in heaven) credits. Please see Area Managers

for available openings:  
Mary-Anne Berg- Registration  
604-853-5737  
Sean Rafferty - Plant Sales  
604-990-5353  
Patti Bale - Hospitality  
604-853-9180  
Joan Bengough - Book and Memorabilia Sales  
604-531-4680  
Lori Bayes - Raffles  
360-966-4596  
Mike Bale - Men in Black - Persons in Green (aprons, that is) 604-853-4100  
Part- or full-time positions

available.  
All applications kept in the strictest confidence.  
*(The Fraser South Rhododendron Society is a Not-For-Profit organization with no significant financial stature at all. Its entire asset base is inherent in the wealth of knowledge and breadth of goodwill of its members, and it trades on none of the TSE, NYSE, PSE, or SEHK.)*



From the Editor

**This Month:** Welcome back! All the members of the executive trust everyone had an enjoyable and productive summer working independently in their respective gardens, and that you are all eager to get back together to compare notes while working a bit more communally as we prepare for the ARS Fall conference to be held at Harrison Hot Springs on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.

There will be no formal program this month, just the opportunity to re-connect with old friends while participating in a work bee to help complete the preparations for the conference.

The conference committee members have been working very hard to put everything in order as the conference dates hurtle toward us, but there are many small jobs with which they could use a helping hand: stuffing registration packages, preparing name tags, etc. etc. This list is almost endless, but none of the chores are onerous and there will be plenty of cookies and tea to keep us going.

Come to renew old acquaintances and make new ones - this will be a golden opportunity to talk to the new members of the club you have never had the chance to get to know:

**Next Month:** ... to be announced

*Brenda Macdonald*

#### CONDOLENCES

It is with deep regret that we inform our members of the loss of two of our associates over the past few months.

Janet Warner passed away in May after a courageous battle with illness. She was a published writer, having produced both a scholarly book on the art of William Blake, as well as a novel based on the life of William Blake's wife Catherine. Janet and her husband John were joint recipients of the ARS Bronze medal awarded by the FSRS in 2005 for their capable management of club records, and quiet but cheerful support of many of the club activities.

Max Plater passed away in June after a brief illness. Max was also a published writer, a poet who was active in his local community. He had returned to the FSRS in 2004, having been a member some years earlier, and this spring he had been an enthusiastic participant in the Rhododendron Species Study Days.

We will miss them both.



## *Up the Garden Path with Fall and Winter Containers*

By mid-September, container plantings of summer annuals often look tired and many of us have been in the habit of just cleaning them up and putting them away for the winter. However over the last few years, there has been a concerted effort by retail nurseries to provide good plant material for colorful autumn containers, which in some cases, may even carry us through part of the winter. Most local garden centres carry a nice selection of pre-planted containers, but you can also select appropriate plants and prepare your own. My favorite local garden centre has an area where customers can plant their own containers using good seasonal plant material already assembled and the garden centre's potting mix, all for a very reasonable price.

The general steps to plant containers for fall and winter are similar to those followed for summer season containers, except for a couple of differences. First, the choice of containers is important. Ceramic and clay containers will crack if they are subjected to repeated freezing and thawing, so they are not recommended for fall containers. Instead, use containers made of plastic, resin or wood. Because there can be a lot of rain or snow throughout the fall and winter months, containers must have drainage holes. As well, the larger the container the better, as a larger volume of potting mix will help insulate root systems, offering them some protection from the cold. Use a potting mix that provides very good drainage and if necessary, mix in extra perlite or sand to ensure good drainage. At planting time, the potting mix should be moist, but not soggy.

Because of gradually cooling temperatures and shortening days, plant growth will be slow, and as the fall progresses, growth will stop. For immediate and maximum impact, use lots of large plants. Since there will be little plant growth, it isn't necessary to add much fertilizer to the potting mix. If you do decide to incorporate fertilizer, select one with low nitrogen content (the first number in the fertilizer analysis), for example 4-8-8. High nitrogen promotes new vegetative growth which is very susceptible to frost injury.

Use plants that will provide color interest throughout the fall and into the winter. Certainly include fall flowering annuals, but also look for plants with colorful foliage or berries to increase the planting range. Small conifers and broad-leaved evergreens are also useful to add height and winter interest. Even deciduous shrubs may be attractive if they have interesting bark, for example red or yellow twig dogwood is very pretty in the winter. Depending on the kinds of plants selected and your area's growing conditions, you can pull surviving plants out of the containers in the spring and transplant them to the garden.

Once planted, water the containers thoroughly and then place them where you can easily provide them with some basic care. Containers may need to be watered regularly throughout the early part of the fall, and if they're located under a roof overhang, you may need to continue watering on a regular basis throughout the fall and winter. Depending on the kinds of plants selected and your location, you may want to place containers in a sheltered area near the house to provide them with some protection from the cold. Containers located right next to the house and sheltered from cold winds will survive longer than if left in an open area.

In selecting plants, look for at least one plant that will be tall enough to provide a focal point; this is usually placed in the centre of the container. Surround the tall plant



Lamium 'Pink Pewter'  
and  
Pennisetum setaceum

*continued on page 4*



Ajuga reptans  
'Burgundy Glow',  
Heucherella  
'Burnished Bronze'  
and blue Violas



with plants that have a mounding habit, and then add some trailing plants around the edges of the container to soften the pot edges. The following are some examples of plants to consider, but keep an open mind as you look at the variety of plants available in your local garden centre. If a plant is hardy in your area, and offers interesting bark, berries or foliage, it might be a good candidate.

For flowering interest through the fall, there are the tried and true hardy mums, pansies, violas and English daisies. Other plants to consider include *Bacopa*, *Diascia*, *Bidens*, *Osteospermum*, *Salvia* and Marguerites. These plants will flower up to hard frost and in the southern parts of BC, may survive a mild winter. In colder areas, providing a sheltered location will enable them to flower later into the fall, although they won't make it through winter.

A great many plants offer foliage interest. Flowering kale is well-known for white and pink foliage that looks a bit like old "cabbage" roses. *Heuchera* and *Heucherella* offer a wide variety of colorful leaves ranging from green and white to soft amber or dark ruby red. There are a number of ornamental grasses and rushes that add height as well as nice foliage, for example *Pennisetum* (Fountain Grass), *Acorus* (Sweet Flag),

*Calamagrostis* (Feather Grass), *Phalaris*, *Juncus* (Rushes) and *Carex* (Leather Leaf Sedge). *Pennisetum* has dark red foliage, *Acorus* leaves are green and white, and *Juncus* and *Carex* come in a range of colours from bright green to soft brown. One of the advantages of using ornamental grasses is that the dried leaves continue to add interest to the winter landscape.

Plants like *Vinca minor* (Periwinkle), *Ajuga* (Bugleweed), *Lysimachia*, English Ivy, and *Lamium* and *Lamium* (especially some of the new, brightly colored varieties) can be useful trailing plants for placing around the container edges. However, these are all potentially invasive plant species, so if you choose to use them, make sure they stay in your container. When it comes time to replant, these plants should be disposed of by placing in the garbage. DO NOT dump them into your compost pile or in vacant fields or along ditches.



Other plants to watch for are some of the small Cotoneasters, especially those with bright red berries, and small conifers like Dwarf Alberta Spruce (*Picea glauca* Conica) or Dwarf Mugo Pine (*Pinus mugo mugo*). Low growing Junipers can also make nice additions to a fall container. Look for plants like Blue Rug or Bar Harbor Juniper, (*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Wiltonii', or 'Bar Harbor').



Heucherella 'Dayglow Pink'  
and  
Acorus gramineus 'Ogon'

If you live in southern BC, you might also add some spring flowering bulbs to a fall container since it is usually mild enough to allow bulbs like daffodils, tulips and Grape Hyacinths to over-winter in a container. This will add some nice flowering interest in the early spring.

Norma Senn



Cotoneaster horizontalis



Juncus effusus spiralis



# Rhododendrons of Yunnan



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

## Rhododendron calostrotum

*R. calostrotum* is a member of another taxonomically challenged grouping: *Subsection Saluenensia*. The number of species considered under various taxonomic schemes for this subsection has varied from 11 to 2, with sundry plants moving up and down the systematics ladder, at times recognized as a distinct species, at times relegated to the status of subspecies, or even variety.

But however they are named, members of this subsection are attractive and valued additions to the horticultural landscape. They are extremely hardy and remain small (verging on the dwarf), but flower at a young age with a great profusion of disproportionately large, very openly campanulate blossoms.

Often with only one or two flowers per truss, there are still so many blossoms that the leaves of the plant are entirely hidden. Many members of this subsection also have the endearing habit of a significant re-bloom in the fall (see *R. saluenense*, page 8).

*R. calostrotum* differs from *R. saluenense* principally in its petioles being densely covered with stalked scales rather than bristles.



*R. calostrotum* blossom  
Curtis's Botanical Magazine, 1923  
illustration by Lillian Snelling



The stalked and sessile scales found  
on *R. calostrotum*



A hillside beautifully covered  
with *R. calostrotum*  
Yunnan, China, May 2005

The specific epithet for this species is derived from the root words “calo” (Gk) meaning beautiful, and “strotos” (Gk) meaning covered or spread out.

The assumption is that this referred to the plant being beautifully covered with large attractive blossoms, but, given its natural habitat of open meadows, hillsides, and rocky moorlands, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the reference was to the landscape being beautifully covered with *R. calostrotum*.



Like many members of Subsection Saluenense, *R. calostrotum* has a widely open campanulate, almost rotate or flat-faced blossom shape.

*Brenda Macdonald*

# What's in Re-Bloom?



## ***R. fastigiatum***

**type:** lepidote **epithet:** upright **size:** 6" to 4'  
the descriptive epithet for this plant is "upright", but in fact the habit of *R. fastigiatum* varies markedly, from a spreading mat, through a round cushion, to the upright habit of its name. This plant was purchased as *R. impeditum* (as so many are) but clearly differs from that species by its pale opaque scales and glaucous upper leaf surface. *R. impeditum* has a dark green upper leaf surface, rusty brown scales, and an almost invariably mat-like habit.  
North Vancouver/ 27AUG2006



## ***R. Curlew'***

**cross:** *ludlowii* x *fletcherianum* by Cox  
**size:** to 18"  
a consistent re-bloomer. Note the nice rusty-red speckles on the throat.  
North Vancouver/ 21AUG2006



## ***R. haematodes***

**type:** elepidote **epithet:** blood-like **size:** 6" to 5'  
this species shares the red colour, conspicuous calyx, and waxy campanulate flowers of most of the other members of the Neriiflora subsection, although the deep red and very shiny blossoms look more like melted sealing wax than blood.  
North Vancouver/ 22AUG2006



## ***R. saluenense***

**type:** lepidote **epithet:** from the Salween river  
**size:** from 1' to 5'  
the fairly flat-faced blossoms that seems large in proportion to the leaf size give a rather open-faced, eager aspect; the new growth is noticeably bristly.  
North Vancouver/ 18AUG2006





***R. anthopogon ssp. hypenanthum* 'Annapurna'**

**type:** lepidote **epithet:** bearded flower

**size:** to 5'

'Annapurna' is a named variety from a group of smaller-leaved seedlings which were promising because of their compact cushion shape and tendency to blossom at a relatively early age. The "limp tissue paper" texture of the small narrowly flaring blossoms with their short pedicels give the inflorescence an oddly congested look. The leaves are so aromatic they are used as incense in their native Tibet habitat.

North Vancouver/ 18AUG2006

(all photos B. Macdonald and S. Rafferty)

## The Contemplative Gardener

This month's parade of blossoms has prompted a brief contemplation on some of the niceties of botanical naming.

*R. anthopogon ssp. hypenanthum* appears to be a victim of a taxonomic sinking, since at one time there was an *R. hypenanthum* as well as an *R. anthopogon*. The official difference between the two was apparently the presence or absence of persistent leaf bud scales (yes for *hypenanthum* and no for *anthopogon*), although originally they appear to have been divided more along colour lines: *anthopogon* tending toward the pink, red, and rose scheme, and *hypenanthum* tending to be of yellow and cream hues.

Both these species share the trait of having a ring of hairs in the throat of the flower tube, and one can only assume that this was such a salient feature that the botanists deemed it necessary to immortalize that fact in the naming of the species.

<b>antho, anthum (Gk)</b>	<b>flower</b>
<b>pogon (Gk)</b>	<b>beard</b>
<b>hypen (Gk)</b>	<b>moustache</b>

So now, as a result of this sunk taxon, we have a fairly small and delicate flower with the overwhelming name of Rhododendron Flower-beard Moustache-flower 'Annapurna'. And while Annapurna may denote an ethereal white goddess, such an addendum can do little to overcome the almost overwhelmingly shaggy male aura already in place.

The other interesting thing about this flower is the official description of its shape: hypocrateriform. (Initially I was led slightly astray by references in both the Coxs' [Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species](#) and a handy little reference book by Melva Phillipson entitled [Botanical Features Used in the Identification of Rhododendron Species](#) to a "hypercratiform" flower shape, but I am now fairly confident that these two references were simple errors.)

<b>hypo (Gk)</b>	<b>beneath, under</b>
<b>crater (L)</b>	<b>bowl</b>
<b>form (L)</b>	<b>shape</b>

This long word (and its even longer synonym, hypocraterimorphous) is simply the way scientist have - not unlike the Germans - of jamming all the meaning of a longer phrase, such as my "narrowly flaring", into a single word.

I have seen expanded explanations describing "goblet-shaped" or "trumpet-shaped", but they all describe the same basic shape: a blunderbuss or a grain of rice you have cooked too long, with a long narrow tube topped by abruptly flaring lobes, more often flattened than not. A term used more frequently (but apparently not in conjunction with rhododendrons) is **salverform**. The Phlox flower is a typical salverform flower with its wide, flat, flare atop a narrow corolla tube.

I knew that a salver was the term for the small round silver tray on which household staff would present visitors' calling cards to the lady of the house, but what I did not know was that the original derivation of salver is from the Latin "**salvare**", **to save**, or "**salvus**", **safe**. This verb/adjective root was gradually transformed from describing food that had already been tasted (made safe) for incumbent royals (somewhat nervous about the easy access other would-be royals had to various poisons), to the name for the tray which carried the food, and thence to any tray used in the service of the upperclass, including those for calling cards. From poisoned-food testing to a flat-topped flower form, surely metonymy at its finest.

Brenda Macdonald