

The Yak

Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Volume 20 Number 2
February 2007



www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth

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

This Month's Meeting

Date: Wednesday, February 21, 2007
Speaker: Frank Fujioka
Topic: Fujioka Hybrids
Plant Sales: Colleen Forster

2007 Officers

President: Dalen Bayes
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Vice Pres.: Harold Fearing
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Secretary: Mary-Anne Berg
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Treasurer: Alan March
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Directors: Colleen Forster- 3rd yr
Sean Rafferty - 2nd yr
Larry Morton - 1st yr
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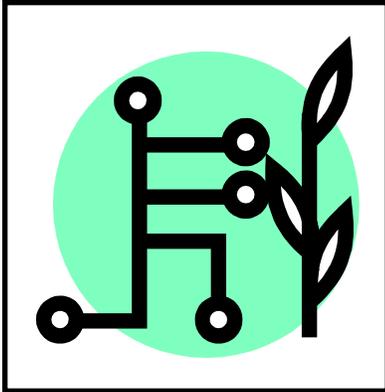
Quick Hits

Inside ...

Colleen Forster has once again saved our collective green thumbs with some timely advice on what to do with those fast-fading "living gifts" we so gratefully received during the festive season.

and ...

if you were unable to attend our January meeting you can read all about the changes to the Chapter Executive as well as the text of the various awards presented to deserving Chapter members during the AGM and 5th Annual Dessert Extravaganza.



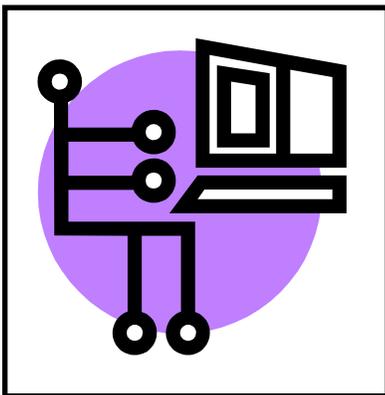
From the President

Notes from the Chair

At this time there is not much happening in my garden, no trees blowing down, no snow falling, and the temperature is no longer dropping into the single digits. A year ago now I had over a dozen rhodies blooming. The only flowers booming in the garden now are cyclamen, hellebores and heather. So to sum it up, my garden is just beginning to show signs of coming out of dormancy, which is right where I am too. My back is better and I actually used my chainsaw a bit yesterday. I know I shouldn't push it, but I probably will.

Frank Fujioka, one of the elite hybridizers of the world, will be our guest speaker for our February meeting. This is a new program which he presented to the Rhododendron Society of France last year. Plus there are images he took in France, Denmark, and at Hachmann's Nursery in Germany. Lori and I saw the first part of his program at Seattle last year. It was absolutely superb. Let's have a great turnout for Frank's presentation.

Dalen Bayes



From the Editor

Last Month

Last month was our Annual General Meeting, election of Chapter officers, and Awards ceremony. This was the time of year in which we review past accomplishments, check on our financial health, and get ready for a brand new year.

By the end of the evening we had received and accepted a detailed and complete picture of our chapter's activities and financial health from our treasurer, Alan March, elected Larry Morton (by acclamation) to the position of Director - 1st year, presented service awards to some of our members (detailed below), and enjoyed a great deal of quality socializing while participating in the 5th Annual Dessert Extravaganza. All in all, it was a swell time, and on behalf of the chapter members I want to thank all those who contributed so much to make the meeting as enjoyable as it

was informative: Alan March for his report and its explication; Karen Linton who organized, and all those members who contributed so generously to the wonderful array of desserts; Larry Morton for accepting the challenge and agreeing to become part of the Chapter executive, (future Nominations Committee members note - apparently agreement by the prospective nominee is facilitated by cornering him/her between the onions and the rutabagas in the Produce aisle of the local Safeway); the (anonymous) Awards Committee for their astute recognition of the hard work and significant contributions made by this year's recipients; and the always generous and truly talented Sue Klapwijk for preparing the beautiful Award plaques.

The following awards were presented at the 2007 AGM:

HAROLD JOHNSON MEMORIAL AWARD 2006

Presented to: SEAN RAFFERTY

Sean supports the club in many ways at each meeting by managing the raffles and being a general "dogs body" at such chapter events as plant sales. He also has entertained us with his slide presentations on his plant-hunting trips to China. Specifically, at the A.R.S. Fall Conference, Sean set up and managed the very successful plant sale for the weekend. This work involved endless phone calls to our growers and to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency plant

inspection people, as well as tracking sales and assisting with the set up and take down of the plants sale area. Sean's friendliness and good humor always make our chapter meetings and events so much fun. Thank you, Sean.

ELLA J. CRABB MEMORIAL AWARD 2006

Presented to: PATTI BALE

Many people may not realize the hard work that Patti has done ever so quietly for the Fraser South Rhododendron Society and for our A.R.S. Fall Conference. Patti regularly hosted the conference executive planning committee for the last two years, she contributed to the conference raffle, assisted with general organization of the conference, put together conference information packages and special merchandise, helped keep the hospitality room fully stocked and everyone happy. In previous years, Patti has contributed to outfitting and organizing our wonderful spring garden tours. Thank you, Patti.

A.R.S. BRONZE MEDAL 2006

Presented to MARY BERG

For her tireless work on behalf of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society and its members - doing everything: organizing and outfitting tours, record keeping, phoning, problem solving, and as Secretary for our Chapter for several years. And, for her work above and beyond the call of duty for our Chapter's A.R.S. Fall Conference, where her efforts went on and on, mostly behind the scenes. For example, managing the photo exhibit, record keeping, setting up and cleaning up the event's hall, and most importantly, soothing jangled nerves. The Fraser South Rhododendron Society would like to honor Mary Berg by awarding her the A.R.S. Bronze medal for 2006, with our grateful thanks.

This Month:

This month's program features a presentation by Frank Fujioka, of Whidby Island in Washington state. Frank has been hybridizing rhododendrons for some 35 years and is known for his standards of excellence. His meticulous garden overlooks Admiralty Inlet on Whidby Island and many of the hybrids he raises are offered through Meerkerk Gardens on the island.



R. 'Seaview Sunset'
hybridizer - Frank Fujioka



R. 'Starbright Champagne'
hybridizer - Frank Fujioka

Next Month:

Our next meeting will feature a presentation by Peter Wharton, Curator, David C. Lam Asian Garden entitled "Plant Hunting in Southern Sichuan".

Brenda Macdonald

2007 ARS
Annual
Convention

Rhododendrons at the Golden Gate

April 12 – 15, 2007,
South San Francisco, Calif.



The Northern California Chapters of the American Rhododendron Society invite you to attend the 2007 annual ARS convention, "Rhododendrons at the Golden Gate," April 12 through 15, with an optional post-conference tour April 16 through 18.

The convention will take place at the Embassy Suites Hotel in South San Francisco and the host committee has planned a variety of activities.

The Schedule

Thursday, April 12:

- ARS Board of Directors meeting, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- Golden Gate Park tour, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- Dinner, Michael McKechnie, executive director, San Francisco Botanical Garden, 6:30 p.m.

Friday, April 13:

- East Bay Garden tour, 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- South Bay Garden tour, 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- Dinner, Dr. George Argent, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh; followed by Dr. Robert Raabe, UC Berkeley, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 14:

- North Bay tour, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- Santa Cruz tour, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet, Doug Thomson, curator, Dunedin Botanic Garden, 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 15:

- Hybridizers' Roundtable, 8 - 10 a.m.
- Executive Director's Open Forum, 10 a.m. - noon.
- Beach Blanket Babylon and dinner, 3:30 - 10 p.m.

The conference website is at: www.ars2007conf.org

At the web site you can print a registration form or register on line. There is also a link to the Hotel web site for reservations.

SPECIES STUDY DAYS 2007

For the 6th consecutive year a comprehensive study session of species Rhododendrons will be held at the Rhododendron Species and Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington, on the following Saturdays:

April 7
April 21
May 19

The sessions are personally directed by Steve Hootman, who is the Co-Director at the garden and well known for his expertise and for his many plant expeditions and new plant introductions.

No prior knowledge of the subject material is necessary as the course begins with the fundamentals and progresses in detail at each session. The format will follow that of previous years but will introduce new material for the benefit of past participants. The majority of participants will be individuals from previous sessions who continue to attend for the positive experience that the sessions generate.

The sessions begin promptly at 10:00 a.m. and end at approximately 4:00 p.m. The mornings are generally spent reviewing various topics of botanical interest relative to the study of rhododendron species, followed by instruction and keying of plant material which is currently blooming in the garden at that time. After a short break for lunch between 12:00 -12:30 the afternoon is spent touring the RSBG and identifying and discussing the wonderful collection of rare and exotic plants.

The course fee is \$35.00 for each session and the entire proceeds are used to provide a stipend for instruction and a donation to the garden. A nominal sum of \$5.00 is charged for lunch for those wishing to participate.

In past years, participants from Vancouver Island have traveled to the mainland on Friday evening prior to the session and stayed with a host overnight returning Saturday evening.

It has been our collective experience that it is desirable to cross the international border before 7:00 a.m. in order to avoid any delay at the border resulting from the shift change of the custom officers, and also to avoid the early morning traffic through Seattle. This usually permits a leisurely drive to Federal Way with arrival at about 9:15 a.m. leaving plenty of time for breakfast at the location of choice - for most of us, the Old Country Inn. Arrangements for car pooling will be made. The facilities for instruction at the RSBG are limited and a maximum of 28-30 people can be accommodated.

It would be helpful to confirm your interest as soon as possible and to forward payment to the undersigned. Should unforeseen circumstances arise that prevent an individual from attending a specific session, a refund will be issued.

Mike Bale
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Shared Wisdom

TO SAVE OR NOT TO SAVE

– THE CHRISTMAS PLANT DILEMMA

So ... now we've taken down the lights, chipped the tree and put away the mantle village, and all that's left of our Christmas finery are those lovely blooming plants that our guests and family have thoughtfully given us. But we can't pack them away in the crawl space, and we feel vaguely guilty about just chucking them out – after all, they are living plants, and we are plant people! So what to do? I must confess I have tried and tried to 'do the right thing' and save them, but somehow, despite the best of advice and intentions, I have failed miserably save for a couple of pitiful cactus that manage to push out a few lonely blooms each year.

I've rationalized my poor performance by explaining that just when they need that crucial bit of attention after their post-bloom rest, I'm so excited about my outdoor garden emerging that I forget all about them. Hey – it works for me! So if you're weak and sympathetic, and have succumbed to the guilt and intend to keep them, here are some pointers given by the experts to ensure success (right).

The Christmas Cactus (*Schlumbergera*), although called a cactus, is actually from tropical rainforests, and prefers good light, cooler temperatures, and moderate



watering with good drainage. The Easter Cactus (*Zygocactus*) can be treated in the same way. Once all the blooms are spent, the plant needs a rest for a few months to recuperate. It should be kept fairly dry, in cool bright indirect light. By March or so, you may notice new shoots growing at the tips. If the plant is leggy, the end segments can be carefully cut off and rooted for more plants.

The original plant can be potted-up one size if root bound, and given moderate doses of balanced fertilizer. By fall, after all that new

growth has filled in, and you haven't given it root-rot by over watering, or sun scald by too much exposure, you should find a cool bright place to put it to set the buds. It will respond to 14 hours of total darkness each night, or night temps of 10-13C (50-55F) consistently. As soon as you see the flower buds have formed, move it to the place you'd like to enjoy it for the holidays, as they dislike drastic changes once in bloom, and the buds will drop.

Of course, you could be one of those 'green hands' people (like my Mum) who must have just the perfect situation, for they do nothing special, and their plants are both ancient and glorious!

Maybe you received an Azalea this year, and since we all grow them so easily outside, what could be easier – right? Just be aware, these florist varieties are almost always 'Southern Indicas', and usually can only tolerate a few

degrees of frost, if any. They should bloom for 3-4 weeks if kept cool, bright and moist. Once the weather warms up nicely, say in April, trim it for shape if you wish, put it outside in bright indirect light, feed it some rhodo food (the potted soil has little available nutrition), and keep it evenly moist by plunging in mulch. Bring it back into a cool bright place before frost, and it should be blooming again by Christmas. Cool and humid keeps the buds from dropping.



That Amaryllis should be on its second or third bloom stem now, and will grow more leaves as the blooms fade. Keep it bright, with a bit of food and moderate water into the summer. You can put it outside when frost is over, with shelter from wind. By late summer, the leaves should begin to fade, so gradually slack off the water to no water at all, and let it be. Store in a cool dry place in or out of the pot till late fall (some say put it in refrigerator, some say tip it over under a bench in



the greenhouse – you choose). For blooming at Christmas, figure 7-8 weeks lead time. Pot it up in fresh soil in a pot not much bigger than the bulb, with good drainage, leaving the neck and shoulder above the soil, and water just a bit until growth appears. I

turn mine regularly so the blooms grow straight. They say these are easy, but I've found that after the second year overturned under the greenhouse bench, they've kinda had it! Pansies!

The Cyclamen also grows from a bulb-type base (a corm, like gladdies or begonias), and the growth cycle is much the same – grow, bloom, rest. The leaves can remain for a couple of months after the blooms are



finished if kept cool, bright, and not soggy wet (seems to be a trend happening here). Once the leaves start to fade, ease off on the water till they go, and then rest the corm in the pot until early fall. Replace or replenish the soil, and then water more as you see leaves starting Soon the flower buds should be unfurling for another gorgeous display.

And now for the one we all love to hate – the Poi***** (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*), which we do not speak of within earshot of our editor. In truth, to succeed in keeping this one over, you must have obtained it from a reputable source and made sure it was kept warm at all times – even a short trip across a rainy, windy parking lot and home in a cold car can be the death knell, and

nothing you do thence forward will help you one bit! They cannot tolerate cold drafts below 10C (50F) or excessive dry heat either - around 18-21C (65-70F) is good. They should be watered when the soil surface is dry to touch, with lukewarm water, and have bright indirect light for at least 6 hours a day. Ensure that it has good drainage – that pretty pot cover may be drowning the Poinsettia within!



If purchased when the true flowers in the center are still closed, the bracts should last at least a couple of months, but even if all else had been done properly, the leaves may be getting tired by then too. Put the plant aside in a slightly cooler place, and water only as needed to keep from shriveling. By April you can cut it back to 8 inches and start to give regular liquid feeding. You can even put it outside once it stays above 13C (55 F) at night. By June it may need potting up or refreshing.

To have blooms at Christmas again, it needs total darkness for 14 hours a night after October 1- (no turning on the light for a quick check of how it is doing). Once the bracts are coloring, don't feed any more.

Oh, and by the way, studies have proven that the sap is not really all that poisonous to humans (pets are another thing, so watch them carefully). A 50lb child would have to eat in excess of 500 bracts to be seriously affected. However, some people can be allergic, as with many plants, and they should not handle Poinsettias without gloves and extra care.

In light of all this scintillating advice, I should think that you're all bursting with enthusiasm and verve, ready to take on the new plant world of re-blooming Christmas gifts, and wowing all your friends and family with your horticultural genius. I read this over myself and sigh..... maybe I'll try again; maybe it'll work this time. Sigh.....

Happy Indoor Gardening (for now) *Colleen Forster*



Rhododendrons of Sichuan



R. trichostomum
illustration by Valerie Price
Curtis' Botanical Magazine

Rhododendron trichostomum

A member of *Subsection Pogonanthum*, *Rhododendron trichostomum* shares with other members of this subsection the wonderfully aromatic leaves and small almost daphne-like flowers that make it such a welcome addition to the garden.

It is a rhododendron beloved by alpine enthusiasts who appreciate its small, very narrow leaves, compact ball-like inflorescence, and somewhat recalcitrant nature. There is nothing a good alpinist likes better than a challenge.

The white through pink blossoms to deep rose blossoms appear somewhat late, in May or June, and are very narrowly tubular with a flared end. At first glance they are difficult to distinguish from a daphne blossom (being often of the same white/flushed rose colouration and capitate inflorescence) but there are five lobes rather than four and the lobes are rounded rather than the pointy ones of a daphne.

The native habitat of *R. trichostomum* in Sichuan and Yunnan (as well as other areas) is surprisingly dry, so it is important to keep its feet above the wet, particularly in the winter. But if it is happy it proves a most rewarding plant, for even after the very long-lasting blossoms have faded, the aromatic leaves continue to perfume the garden whenever you brush by, or the sun warms the leaves.



R. trichostomum
photo courtesy of Hans Eiberg
of the Danish Chapter of the ARS

Although there are a number of named forms available and somewhat better known in the UK than North America ('Lakeside', 'Quarry Wood', 'Collingwood Ingram') *trichostomum* has not been used extensively in hybridizations.

Perhaps the most familiar hybrid is *R. 'Arctic Tern'*, which is, of course, a cross between *R. ledum* and *R. trichostomum*. For a while this hybrid was perhaps more famous for being an inter-generic hybrid than for any other reason, but now that the genus *Ledum* has been sunk into the genus *Rhododendron* it has lost some of its cachet.

Brenda Macdonald