

# The Yak

# Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Volume 20 Number 01 January 2007



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)

This Month's Meeting : Wednesday, January 17, 2007

## AGM

FOR OUR 19TH YEAR AS  
FRASER SOUTH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

IN ADDITION TO OUR  
FIFTH ANNUAL DESSERT EXTRAVAGANZA

### 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  
604-581-0925

## Quick Hits



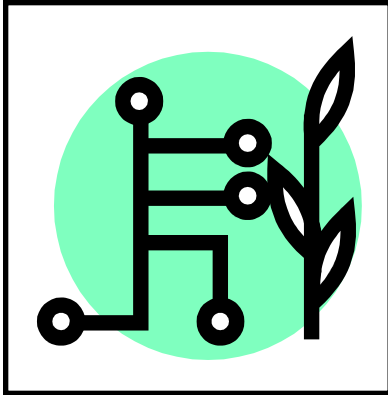
### This month .....

we offer you the opportunity to feed your  
mind and your body, all in one fell swoop.

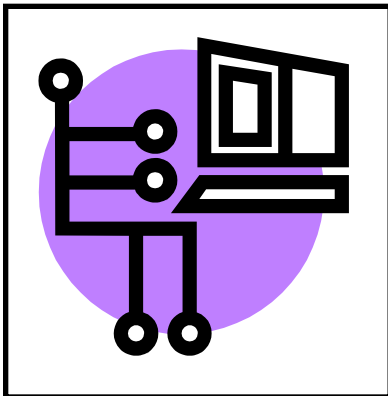
Join us Wednesday for the Annual General  
Meeting of 2007.



Bring a dessert to share with others while  
we elect this year's Chapter officers and  
ratify our yearly financial statements. Then  
we will get to the fun stuff: the awards  
to worthy Chapter members, the chatting  
to fellow members, and the watching of  
a few brief slide presentations from those  
who would like to share their insights or  
memories.



From the President



From the Editor

# Notes from the Chair

Ouch, it hurts!

*Dalen Bayes*

Unfortunately our President, Dalen Bayes, is laid up with a bad back, and is unable to make his usual contribution to our newsletter. Medical science being what it is however, we are very hopeful he will be up and about soon.

## Last Month:

Last month was our Annual Christmas Potluck Dinner, and as usual, everyone had a swell time.

Personally, and on behalf of all the other Chapter members, I would like to thank Karen Linton for her superb job of organizing the food, Colleen Forster for her annual Rhodo Brain Teaser (who would have thought you could create prose out of nothing but the names of various rhododendrons?), and all the little elves who set up, took down, made the centrepieces, did the dishes, assisted Santa, brought the food, ate the food, and generally promoted a good time.

Let's do it again next year!

## This Month:

January is not only the start of a new calendar year, it is the start of a new Fraser South Rhodo Society year. The January meeting is the one in which we elect new executive officers, review and ratify our financial status (both what has been and what is to come), and honour those of our members who have contributed so much to the success of our Chapter during the past year.

These are all crucial activities for any organization, designed to regulate business, recognize virtue, and reward effort. But, never ones to miss an opportunity to increase the cerebral pleasures of duty with the corporeal pleasures of a really good piece of chocolate fudge cake, we will continue our tradition of

interweaving the activities of the Annual General Meeting with visits to tables loaded with yummy treats.

This month is also the time for DIY presentations. Bring a few slides of your favourite (or most unfavourite) garden project, or places visited and sights seen. Share!

The Nominating Committee has proposed the following slate:

- |                     |                            |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| President           | Dalen Bayes (incumbent)    |
| Past President      | Bobby Ogdon (incumbent)    |
| Vice President      | Harold Fearing (incumbent) |
| Treasurer           | Alan March (incumbent)     |
| Secretary           | Mary-Anne Berg (incumbent) |
| Director - 1st year | <b>Larry Morton</b>        |
| Director - 2nd year | Sean Rafferty (incumbent)  |
| Director - 3rd year | Colleen Forster Incumbent) |

Nominations will also be accepted from the floor.

## Next Month:

Next month we will have the pleasure of welcoming Frank Fujioka, of the Whidbey Island Chapter. Frank has been hybridizing rhododendrons for over 35 years now, and continues to develop and maintain his exquisite garden overlooking Admiralty Inlet on Whidbey Island in Washington state.

*Brenda Macdonald*



The Perennial Plant Association has named Walker's Low Catnip as the 2007 perennial plant of the year. The variety takes its name from the Irish garden, Walker's Low, where it was first grown. Patricia Taylor, the garden's owner, made the original plant selection in the 1970's and it was introduced to the horticultural trade in England in 1988. Since then, it has become popular in home gardens, and is readily available throughout Europe and North America.

Like all catnips, Walker's Low has aromatic, gray-green leaves and stalks of bluish/purple flowers. The flower stalks can grow to almost a metre in height and are very attractive, both when grown in a massed planting, or when individual plants are mixed with other herbaceous perennials and the flowers are allowed to poke their way up among the leaves of other plants. If deadheaded regularly, flowers will be borne periodically throughout the summer. Walker's Low, like other catnips, makes a particularly good companion plant for roses. Plants are shorter than the flowers and they have an attractive mounded habit that makes them useful in mixed borders and herb gardens. Like other members of the mint family, all catnip leaves are arranged in a distinctive opposite pattern along square stems.

Catnips are easy to grow if they are given well-drained soil and several hours of full sun per day. They will tolerate partial shade, but flowering may

## *Up the Garden Path with Catnip*

be compromised. As well, they prefer soils with a neutral pH, so if you garden in an area with acid soils, adding calcium carbonate or dolomitic lime to the soil at planting time is recommended. Occasionally shearing plants back will keep them looking fresh throughout the summer. Other than that, they are low maintenance plants with few problems. Most catnips, including Walker's Low, are hardy into Zone 3, so can be grown throughout much of B.C.

The majority of catnips grown in home gardens are thought to be of hybrid origin and belong to what



*Nepeta 'Walker's Low'*

is botanically referred to as the Faaseen group. They probably originated from crosses between *Nepeta nepetella* x *Nepeta racemosa*. To maintain desired traits, named varieties like Walker's Low need to be propagated vegetatively, either by dividing existing plants or started from cuttings. Watch for young plants in local garden centres in May. Catnips can be grown from seed too, but seed grown plants will be variable in habit. Cuttings root easily, so once plants are established, home gardeners can take cuttings if more plants are wanted.

Of course, catnip is well-known for its effect on cats. However, cats find some catnips more enticing than others, and anecdotal evidence suggests that Walker's Low is not particularly attractive. So you don't need to be concerned that planting this particular variety will attract all the cats in the neighborhood. If you do want to grow a treat for your own pet, then select another variety, or grow plants from seed.

In addition to some catnips being more enticing than others, not all cats are attracted to catnip. The reaction is an inherited trait and about 30% of adult cats are completely unaffected. Interestingly, until they are 3 to 4 months old, kittens are actually repulsed by catnip, and many cats are less interested in it as they age. Larger members of the cat family like tigers, bobcats and cougars are also attracted to catnip, but again, not every animal within a species responds.

It is catnip's aroma that causes euphoria, and the active ingredient is a volatile, aromatic chemical called

nepetalactone that is released when plant leaves are bruised or crushed. There is more nepetalactone in fresh catnip than in the dried product. Cats "under the influence" will roll, leap about, possibly meow or growl, and in general, just act silly for several minutes. Then, the stimulus loses its effectiveness and it takes a couple of hours before the cat will respond to the leaves again. As long as a cat is healthy, catnip does not harm the animal in any way. However, I've read some warnings that old, obese cats or diabetic cats probably shouldn't be exposed to catnip because it may cause an accelerated heart rate.

According to some sources, catnip was deliberately cultivated by the ancient Egyptians who recognized its effects on cats, and the catnip now found growing throughout Europe spread from the Middle-East.

While catnip is a stimulant for our pets, it has also been used in herbal remedies for people for centuries. It is said that herbal infusions containing catnip leaves are helpful in curing colds, relieving headaches and soothing nerves. It was introduced to North America by early colonists and it quickly spread throughout much of eastern North America. First Nations peoples soon recognized its usefulness, and like Europeans, valued it as a flavouring and medicinal plant.

In addition to being attractive to cats, bees and butterflies adore catnip flowers and you'll find your plants humming with insects when they are in bloom. Deer and rabbits, however, are not fans, so catnip is a good garden choice where deer and rabbit resistant plants are needed.

*Norma Senn*



*Nepeta cataria*

The blossom of common catnip is usually considered significantly less attractive than that of 'Roger's Low' although you might be hard-pressed to find a cat that would agree.

The term "catnip" is a later North American variation on the original name "catmint". The derivation of the term "catnip" is obscure. While possibly a variation/abbreviation for cat nepeta, the intoxicating properties of the herb certainly seem resonant of a "nip" of spirits, another word of enigmatic origin.



# Rhododendrons of Sichuan



*R. trichanthum*  
Curtis's Botanical Magazine, 1921  
illustration by Lillian Snelling

The name “trichanthum” initially led me astray as I kept trying to think of what part of the plant or flower came in three’s, but of course the word is made up of “trich...” and “...anthum”, not “tri...” and something else.

“Trich” derives from “tricho”, the Greek word for hair, and “anthum” from “anthus”, one of the Greek words for flower.

The original name for this plant was *R. villosum*, derived from the Latin word “villos” - yet another word for hairy. Then it was pointed out by the people who make such determinations that

## Rhododendron trichanthum

A member of *Subsection Triflora*, *R. trichanthum* can be most mnemonically described as a “hairy *augustini*”.

Like other members of this subsection, the blossoms are spotted and widely funnel-shaped, with the outside dotted with conspicuous (in this case golden-coloured) scales. However, what sets *trichanthum* apart from its cohorts is the bristles and hairs, just about everywhere.

The branchlets are bristly, both surfaces of the leaves can show bristles and hairs (with the midrib on the underside being particularly densely clothed), the petiole (individual flower stem) has either hairs or bristles, as does the outside tube area of the flower, and the ovary.

The overall impression is definitely one of fuzziness.



*R. trichanthum*  
showing the minute calyx, and the glands and hairs on the petiole and flower tube

that name had already been used, so *R. trichanthum* it was.

This may not have been the most mellifluous of decisions, for somehow “trichanthum” sounds a bit spikier and more menacing than the cloud-like “villosum” - not a good match for the delicate and somewhat ethereal demeanour of the plant. However, science cannot be denied, and “trichanthum” it has remained.

While the sometimes deep ruby and magenta-coloured blossoms may cause confusion with *R. concinnum*, (another *Triflora* member) *trichanthum*'s exclusively terminal inflorescences and general fuzziness make the distinction easier.

Brenda Macdonald



*R. trichanthum*  
a selection of colour forms  
Sichuan, China, June, 2006  
photo by Brenda Macdonald

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## The Contemplative Gardener

Well, “mine brother Esau” may well have been an hairy man, as Genesis 27:11 has it, but at least he was not lanate, crinose, pilous, villose, tomentose, puberulent, puberulous, or pubescent.

The array of terms used to describe hairiness is staggering. My trusty Roget's lists 37 synonyms for hairy, and that is without even getting down to the bristly end of things.

Here is a quick primer on the many ways to say “fuzzy”.

pubescent	short soft hairs	<b>pubes</b> (L) - as this is a “general public” rated newsletter, I will leave this one for the readers to research on their own ...escent (L) “becoming”
puberulent	very fine, minute, soft hair	...ulent (L) “having the quality of” (the suffix “ul” in the middle of a word usually denotes a diminutive of another word with the same roots)

lanate	woolly	<b>lana</b> (L) “wool”	lanolin
floccose only	very long, soft, fine, hair - loose but tangled, ie woolly tufts (another sheep reference)	this time from <b>floccus</b> (L) “flock” (“flocked”, as in wallpaper, is another term derived from this Latin root ). In botany, this term usually denotes a covering that rubs off readily	
pilose	covered in long, soft, hairs	<b>pilus</b> (L) “hair” ...ose (L) “having a specified quality”	
sericeous	silky	<b>serica</b> (G) “silk” - in botany, usually applied to long, slender, soft, more or less appressed (pressed flat) hairs	
setose	bristly	<b>seta</b> (L) “bristle”	
setaceous	bristle-like	...aceous (L) “the nature of”	
setulose	with small bristles	(see above, re “ul”)	
strigose/strigillose	short, sharp or stiff hairs, usually appressed and all pointing in the same direction	<b>striga</b> (L) “furrow”	
tomentose	tangled or matted, woolly hairs	<b>tomentum</b> (L) “cushion stuffing”	
indumentum	the global term for all types of dense woolly or hairy coverings on a plant	<b>indument</b> (L) “clothing”	
villose	with long, soft, but curved or weak hairs, not matted	“ <b>villus</b> ” (L) tuft or down	
velutinous	velvety, covered in erect, fine, soft, short hair	(as above)	
trichose	hairy	<b>tricho</b> (G) “hair”	
hirsute	with coarse, often bent or curved hairs	<b>hirsutus</b> (L) “hairy, rough” coarser than villose, but not as stiff as hispid	
hispid	bristly, coarse stiff, sharp hairs	<b>hispidus</b> (L) in botany, this term has the additional connotation of being pungent: that is, something that is hispid is hirsute, only smelly	

*Brenda Macdonald*