

The Yak

Newsletter of
the Fraser South
Rhododendron
Society

Volume 20 Number 5
May 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: Wednesday May 16, 2007
EARLY - at 7:00pm

THE 14TH ANNUAL FRASER SOUTH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BEER BOTTLE TRUSS SHOW

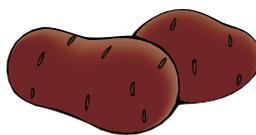
Admission: One truss - any kind, any colour



2007 Officers

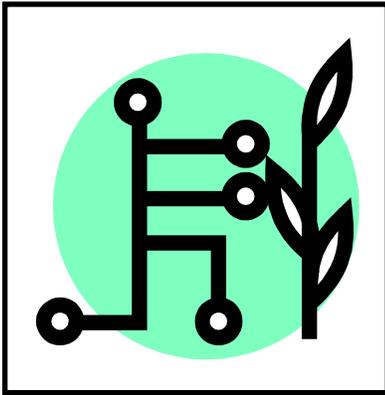
President:	Dalen Bayes 360-966-4596
Vice Pres.:	Harold Fearing 604-857-4136
Secretary:	Mary-Anne Berg 604-853-5737
Treasurer:	Alan March 604-532-9062
Directors:	Colleen Forster- 3 rd yr Sean Rafferty - 2 nd yr Larry Morton - 1 st yr
Programme	Les Clay 604-530-5188
Membership:	Wenonah March 604-532-9062
Newsletter:	Brenda Macdonald 604-990-5353
Website:	Chris Klapwijk 604-581-0925

Quick Hits



**And now for something
completely different ...**

This month Norma Senn has
provided us with information to
feed both body and mind.



From the President

Notes from the Chair

ARISAEMAS

The genus *Arisaema* has over a hundred and fifty species, with new ones being discovered frequently. To many people, they are known as “Jack in the Pulpit.” This name arises from the spathe (the pulpit), which is a modified leaf that forms a lower tube -like structure which then flares to form a hood. Encased within the spathe is the spadix (the Jack), which is a modified stem carrying the individual flowers. These flowers are not conspicuous as they are small and hidden inside the spathe.

Arisaemas arise from an underground tuber or rhizome, with one or two, rarely three, stout petioles carrying one to three leaves or an inflorescence. There are several different leaf arrangements that occur in *Arisaemas*, these vary from trifoliate to whorled. Those with whorled leaves, such as *A. taiwanense* can have or more leaflets, 10 - 12 inches in length with long drip tips. Trifoliate leaflets

12 - 15

number only three, but they can be massive, reaching up to 2 feet in length. Leaves on some species have markings on top that are reminiscent of cyclamens and asarums, and the stems can be mottled in snake-like patterns.

The spathe can arise from petioles carrying the leaves or from their own petiole arising from the tuber. They are usually green, brown or purplish in color with white striping which may be translucent, resulting in a most unusual and beautiful effect.

The spadix is a modified stem carrying the flowers on the lower part, with the top varying from a knob to a long thread- like tip. The length of the spadix can vary from a couple of inches to 2 feet. The plant can have both male and female flowers, or it can be either male or female in many species. Plants start out as male and then after gaining vigor they become male and female, or solely female. After bearing a large fruiting body up to 3 or 4 inches in length and an inch or more in diameter, the plant can lose vigor and revert back to being male. This can also result from environmental stress. Then as it regains strength it will revert to being female. Being as the fruiting body can sap the strength of a plant it is best to remove it, unless one wants the seed. The fruiting body itself is often red and very attractive. This makes one reluctant to remove it, but plants with a large fruiting body will pay a significant price for this.

Overall *Arisaemas* are very striking and elegant, although some species have been described as sinister or menacing in appearance. They make a wonderful and eye-catching addition to a garden.

Five of my favorite species are *A. taiwanense*, *A. griffithii*, *A. wilsonii*, *A. sikokianum*, and *A. candidissimum*.

A. taiwanense has a whorl of long elegant leaves with extended leaf tips. The spathes are hooded in shape and



Arisaema taiwanense

are a deep purple in color with lighter striping. *A. griffithii* has one of the most intriguing and bizarre inflorescences of all the *Arisaemas*. The spathe is a green-yellow color with veining of black-purple and a fluted edge. The upper spathe curls up and over the spadix extending outward and then curling back. Due to the dark curling spathe this has been referred to as the ‘Cobra Lily’. The trifoliate leaves are large, dark green with deep veining and heavily textured. *A. candidissimum* has large trifoliate leaves and a most unusual and

beautiful flower. The spathe forms a tube up to 8 inches in length and forms a hood at the end. It is light pink in color with white stripes. *A. candidissimum* multiplies rapidly and forms a large clump quickly. It is supposed to be hardy to zone 7, however, my clump, with 15 - 20 inflorescences, either froze, got eaten by mice (not likely), or the bulbs are deeper than I realize. It usually doesn’t come up till the beginning of June. *A. sikokianum* is the most elegant of all *Arisaemas*. It has large dark green leaves that often have a beautiful silver



Arisaema griffithii



Arisaema candidissimum

mottling. The flowers are striking, with a spathe that is pure white on the inside and then expands to show a white spadix ending in a nob. Behind this nob, the spathe continues upward with beautiful striping, ending with a narrow tip 4 or 5 inches above the spadix. Last, but not least of my favorites is *A. wilsonii* which has the largest leaves in the genus, sitting on top of 3 foot petioles. The large hooded flowers are dark purple in color, with lighter striping.

Arisaemas like a moist but well drained soil, rich in humus. Most are hungry feeders and respond well to fertilizers. I use rhododendron fertilizer. Some species do well with considerable sun but most are woodland plants. A nice thing about arisaemas is that the slugs rarely eat them.



Arisaema wilsonii

Arisaemas are a northern hemisphere genus, most being native to the Himalayan mountains, China, Taiwan and Japan. There are three species native to North America, all found in the east.

Some arisaemas are considered toxic, while others have been used for food. In traditional Chinese medicine arisaemas have long played an important role. Today a number of chemicals which hold pharmaceutical promise have been isolated from them. Finding arisaemas for sale can be a problem. Sometimes a limited selection can be found in local nurseries. The best sources we have found are Fraser Thimble Farms on Saltspring Island. Their website is www.thimblefarms.com. Another source is Heronswood Nursery in Pennsylvania, which puts out a catalog with colored photos of some Arisaemas. Their website is www.héronswood.com.



Arisaema sikokianum, front



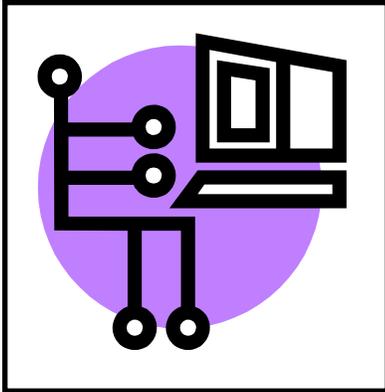
Arisaema sikokianum, rear

I would like to warn everyone that I have already found the winning “Best Last Year’s Truss”, so you might want to concentrate on the other categories. In all seriousness, I would like to encourage everyone to bring their trusses to our truss show.

Dalen Bayes



Bulb Display at 2007 Bradner Bulb Show by Matt an Cherry Groves, photo - Chris Klapwijk



From the Editor

Last Month

Last month Peter Wharton shared with us his unique experiences exploring the native forests of south Yunnan and the border areas of Burma and Vietnam. Peter retains a committed and knowledgeable concern about the bio-diversity of these areas and the possibility and probability of maintaining such ecological niches in the face of economic pressures. It was a most informative and enlightening presentation and we are deeply grateful to Peter for coming to speak to us.

This Month:

Our annual Truss Show! See all the rules and reg's on the next page. This year, for the first time, we will be awarding the annual "Lionheart Award" for the best yellow, in honour of Mike Trembath whose own hybridizing endeavours did so much to brighten up our floral horizons.

Next Month:

Next month, the final meeting of the season, will be our annual Picnic and Auction, to be held on Saturday, June 16th (the day before Father's Day) at the home of John and Gael Dodd (see attached map). The picnic is scheduled for 3:00 pm, but assistance with set up and take down is always appreciated - anytime after 1:30pm. Don't forget to bring your quality auction items for Auctioneers Bayes and Klapwijk to drive up the bids on. This is also the occasion, all calculations having been completed and verified by a secret team of certified and bonded number-crunchers, on which we announce the winners and distribute the awards for this month's Truss Show.

Many heartfelt thanks to John and Gael for hosting us all.

You will probably be contacted by Karen Linton, who has does such a wonderful job of coordinating the potluck contributions, but don't forget to bring:

- a chair to sit upon
- a plate to eat off
- cutlery to eat with
- the adult beverage of your choice, if desired
- a mug for the adult beverage of your choice, or the tea and coffee which will be provided
- your potluck contribution, for sharing with others
- utensils to serve your potluck contribution, if necessary
- any friends, neighbours, or visiting relatives whom you think would enjoy meeting us and learning more

about the FSRS.

Also, don't forget that the Annual Picnic is also the second of our two major fund-raisers.

Look around you, there is sure to be something worthwhile to contribute to the auction: superfluous gardening tools or equipment? mysterious seedling tree peonies? horticultural texts on a subject which no longer interests you? the occasional rhodo taking over most of your backyard?

Bring something someone else will be interested in, and then bid early and bid high for something you are interested in.

The Business Stuff:

NEW MEMBER

We all join in welcoming our newest member - Bob Dunning of Seattle. Bob, already a member of the Seattle Chapter, has joined us as an associate member and we welcome him.

Brenda Macdonald



Fourteenth Annual Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show

The world famous Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show will be held at our May meeting, Wednesday, May 16th. This is a fun event in which everyone can participate.

Here are the rules, beautiful in their simplicity:

1. **Entry to the hall will be by bringing at least one truss. It is not necessary that it be a rhododendron.**
2. There will be three areas for display:
 - a. competitive rhododendron trusses
 - b. non-competitive rhododendron trusses
 - c. companion plant displays.
3. For the competitive event, participants will be allowed to enter only one truss in each class. Additional trusses can be displayed on the non-competitive table.
4. To assist in deciding which class to enter, an Advisory Panel will provide guidance and make any final decisions necessary.
5. All trusses must be in glass bottles. (Cans and plastic pop bottles are too unstable.)
6. Judging will be by member votes. Having given up on the too-sticky Smarties, we will be continuing with last year's counting beads. Just drop your bead in the receptacle in front of the truss you wish to vote for.

CLASSES Division I

Species Classes

- Class 1. Rhododendron (lepidotes)
- Class 2. Azalea (deciduous and evergreen)
- Class 3. Hymenantha (elepidotes)

Division II

Hybrid Classes

- Class 4. Any lepidote hybrid

- Class 5. Any deciduous azalea hybrid
- Class 6. Any evergreen azalea hybrid

Colour Classes

- Class 7a: Red - (small)
- 7b: Red - (large)
- Class 8a: White - (small)
- 8b: White - (large)
- Class 9a: Pink - (small)
- 9b: Pink - (large)
- 9c: Pink - (really, really, large)
- Class 10a: Yellow & Cream (small)
- 10b: Yellow & Cream (large)
- Class 11: Mauves & Purple
- Class 12: Orange
- Class 13: Bi-colour

Division III

Special Classes

- Class 14: "What's it Called" - best new non-registered hybrid - a special class for the hybridizer
- Class 15: Truss with the Best Fuzzy Foliage
- Class 16: Best Blotched
- Class 17: Best Speckled
- Class 18: Most Lurid
- Class 19: Best Last Year's Truss
- Class 20: Most Elegantly Weevil-Notched
- Class 21: Best Hammerhead
- Class 22: Most Flaccid
- Class 23: Best Miniature Truss - under 6"
- Class 24: Most Fragrant (Az. or Rh.)
- Class 25: Lionheart Award for best over-all Yellow

Definitions:

1. Small - 6" or under
2. Large - 6" to 10"
3. Really, Really, Large - over 10"
4. Blotch - each individual flower shows a solid colour mark on dorsal lobe (or three lobes), distinctly different from the base colour of the flower.
5. Lurid - most vividly garish
6. Hammerhead - an inflorescence which arises from more than a single flower bud
7. Speckled - distinguished from blotches by non-solid colour sprinkles and spots, either around entire flower, or at least on upper lobe(s) - e.g. 'Paprika Spiced'



Up the Garden Path with Potatoes

Boiled new potatoes served with butter and fresh parsley make a great summer treat. There are many variations in growing methods, but if you haven't grown potatoes before, here are a few hints to get you started.



Buy good quality seed potatoes specifically intended for planting. Do not use "cooking" potatoes bought at the grocery store to start your crop as they may have been treated with sprout inhibitors or have low levels of virus that, while of no concern to us for eating, may reduce your ultimate yield. Choose varieties recommended for our area. Warba, Yukon Gold and



Yukon Gold

Norland are good choices for early potatoes and later varieties like Netted Gem and Kennebec store well. If you have the space, have fun trying some of the novelty varieties that have a variety of flesh colours, for

example some of the blue potatoes.

Seed pieces are created by cutting up potato tubers, and ideally each piece should be about the size of an egg (at least 50 g in weight) and have two eyes. Pieces smaller than 50 g can be left intact, but most often, we

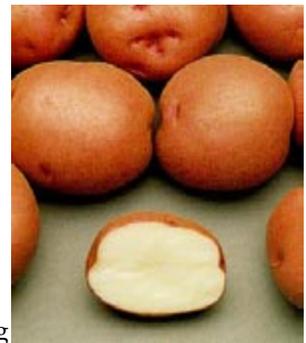
cut tubers to give us the size we need for planting. Allow the cut surfaces to air dry for at least a few hours or up to a day before planting. This will lessen the chances of diseases getting started once the cut tubers come in contact with soil.

While it's not necessary, some gardeners like to start plants indoors by planting seed pieces in flats of peat moss to get sprouting started. Keep the planted flats in a sunny window sill until the sprouted plants can be transplanted outside - when the soil has warmed and heavy frosts have passed. This method may give you a slightly earlier crop than planting the seed pieces directly in the ground.

An even easier way to grow potatoes is to plant them directly in the ground. The soil should be at least 7°C before planting. In some years in the mildest areas of B.C., early potatoes may be planted outside in late March, but planting can continue until mid-June, so you've still got lots of time to plant this year's crop.

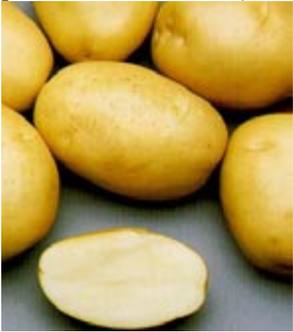
Norland

Sequential planting every 7 to 10 days will provide you with new potatoes for most of the summer.



Potatoes need friable soil and good drainage. Adding things like well-rotted compost or manure is beneficial to soil health, BUT, it's too late to add these kinds of soil amendments for this year's crop because they may make the soil too rich for potatoes. Instead, plan on adding compost or manure to improve soil tilth this coming autumn for next year's potato patch. This allows sufficient time for these amendments to break down before spring planting. Also, potatoes suffer from a fungal disease called potato scab which infects plants when the soil pH is on the sweet side, or has been limed. So do not lime soils where you intend to plant potatoes. Having said all this, potatoes do well in average garden soil

If at all possible, work the soil and then allow it to sit for a couple of weeks before planting potatoes. This allows soil microbes to equilibrate, thus lessening the chances of the new seed pieces rotting. To plant, set the prepared seed pieces directly on the cultivated soil, then rake soil up over them to cover. As the stems elongate, continue to rake soil up over the stem bases to gradually create a mound where the tubers will form. This procedure creates a layer of loose soil that allows you to



dig tubers easily throughout the summer. Potatoes should be watered regularly, but

Kennebec

don't plant them in poorly drained soils or allow them to actually sit in standing water. Excessive amounts of nitrogen will promote lush top growth

at the expense of tuber formation, but a general fertilizer application of something like a 5-10-10 should be applied at planting, following label rates. A second application of fertilizer may be needed after about 6 weeks or anytime you notice pale green leaves.

Harvesting can begin when new tubers reach the approximate size of an egg. If you've grown them in mounds, it's fairly easy to gently move away the soil in search of young potatoes and then you can push the soil back over the stem bases to allow more tubers to form. With new potatoes, the potato vines are still green and actively growing and as long as care is taken to not damage the plants, tubers can be harvested repeatedly. New potatoes should be eaten soon after harvest as they do not store well because of their high moisture content and delicate skins.



Storage or late potatoes are harvested after the leaves start to die back in

Netted Gem

late summer or early fall. At this time, carefully

lift the tubers and allow them to air dry for a few days to allow the skin to cure. For ideal curing, conditions should be dark, with high humidity and a temperature around 15°C. Once the skin has toughened up, typical of what you see in a good baking potato, they are ready for storage. The skins should not slip off if you rub them. Since potatoes are prone to rotting, store only

unblemished tubers.

For best storage, potatoes should be kept in the dark, cool, and if possible, give them high humidity. Do not store potatoes with apples as apples give off an abundance of a natural chemical called ethylene which may cause pre-mature sprouting in stored potatoes. As most people know, tubers exposed to light will turn green and the green areas contain a bitter tasting, and mildly poisonous, alkaloid. If you do find regions of green in a potato tuber, pare away the green area before cooking.

Potatoes are very amenable to being grown in large containers too. Bushel baskets or large plastic garbage cans make good containers. If using a basket, line it with black plastic to hold the growing mix, but punch holes in the plastic to permit good drainage. A garbage can also needs to have holes made in the bottom for the same reason. Put a layer of good potting mix in the container, add prepared seed pieces and cover lightly.

As the vines emerge, gradually add more potting mix to build up the volume of soil at the stem bases. Plants will need to be watered regularly,

"Blue" potato



and moderate amounts of fertilizer, like a 5-10-10, will be needed to support growth.

Place containers in full sun. You should get some lovely tubers with this method. Some people use old car tires as containers, starting with two tires stacked on top of each other and as the plants grow, additional tires are added to the top to allow more root volume for the growing plants. Because the tires are black, they absorb the heat and allow the tubers to get an early start on the growing season. These container methods are also useful if you've got poorly drained soils since you're planting on top of the soil.

There are pictures and additional instructions on how to do this on the internet, simply type in "growing potatoes in the home garden" and let your search engine come up with sites.

Norma Senn



Rhododendrons of China



R. campylogynum
Illustration by Lilian Snelling
- Curtis' Botanical Magazine



R. campylogynum
photo by Sean Rafferty

Rhododendron campylogynum

This darling of the rock garden set has led a checkered career in rhododendron classification systems. It does not easily align itself with any of the other sections or subsections, and has been variously allied with subsection *Genesteriana* - due to its papillose leaves with widely separated scales, and the resemblance in colour and texture of its pruinose (with a thick bloom, like a plum-plum), red-purple, blossoms to that of *R. genesterianum*, as well as with subsection *Uniflora*, because the growth habit, inflorescence and fruit resemble that of *R. pumilum*.

Current thinking appears to be that it, in all its variations, comprises a monotypic subsection, *Campylogynum*, with its closest allies being members of subsection *Glauca*, which often look just like campylogynums writ large. There have been various attempts over the years to further differentiate this species into subspecies or varieties based on the significant morphological differences, but these have all been sunk into synonymy, with broad "Group" status being accorded to plants within the same general physical appearance.

The main groups are:

- Celsum Group - erect and tall, with plum-purple flowers
- Charopoeum Group - low and spreading with large rose to plum-purple flowers
- Cremastum Group - more erect, the only plants without the glaucous white lower leaf surface, flowers usually cerise or red
- Leucanthum (clone) - low and spreading with cream flowers
- Myrtilloides Group - tiny leaves and purple to deep purple flowers

Whichever way they are classified however, *R. campylogynum* is instantly recognizable with its tiny thimble-shaped flowers nodding at the ends of disproportionately long pedicels. 'Bodnant Red', a named clone of the Cremastum Group, is one of the few red lepidotes available.

Found in the area sweeping from northeast India through Tibet to northwest Yunnan, they vary widely in hardiness, but universally dislike hot summers or dry soil.

Brenda Macdonald

What's in Bloom?



R. 'Carmen'

type: elepidote

cross: *sanguineum* ssp. *didymum* x
forrestii ssp. *forrestii* Repens Group
by Rothschild, 1934

North Vancouver/ 29APR2007



R. 'Carmen' This little hobbit of a plant is hard to reject. Small and slow growing, it doesn't gobble up valuable garden terrain and it flowers at an early age with black-crimson waxy bells of heavy substance. The rounded, emerald green leaves and mounded habit make it the very definition of cute.



R. williamsianum

type: elepidote

epithet: after J. C. Williams, of Caerhays Castle, Cornwall, sponsor of many plant hunting trips by both E. H. Wilson and George Forrest

size: broad, low, to 2' in 10 years
North Vancouver/ 29APR2007



R. williamsianum

Beloved by hybridizers everywhere for its tidy little rounded leaves and disproportionately large, candy pink bell-shaped flowers, *williamsianum* itself was often much less easy to locate than any of its progeny such as 'Bow Bells', Mission Bells, etc. However its neat mounding habit, lovely bronzed new growth, and free-flowering characteristics were ample reason to search out the real thing. Happily now more easily found, there is even a white form available.



Erythronium oregonum

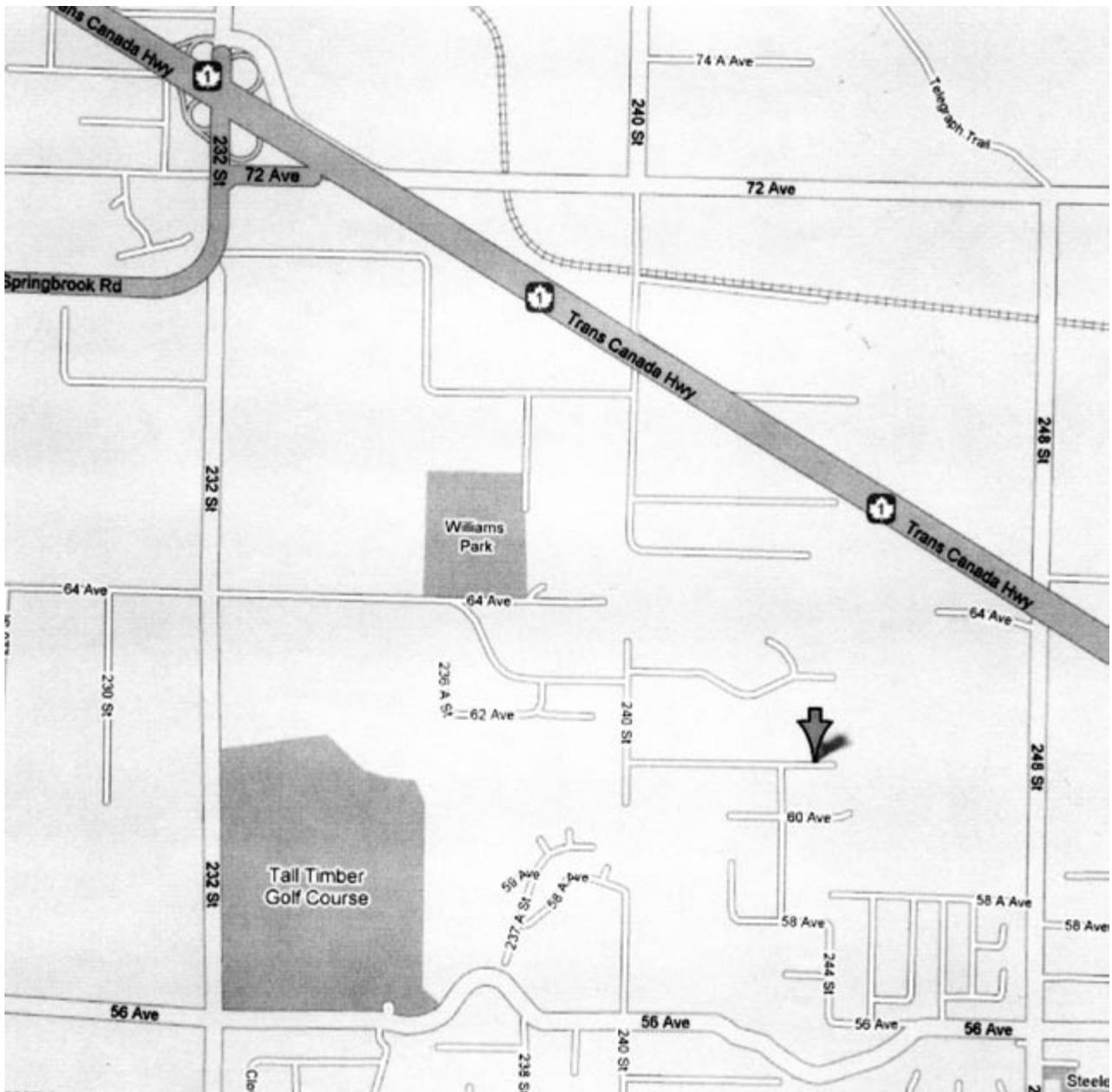
Native to the west coast of N.A. from southern BC down through to Oregon, this is one of the largest of the fawnlilies. It is a "woodland ephemeral" well worth cultivating with its bright white blossoms lighting up the shady forest floor with their harlequin-like accents of yellow and scarlet at the base of the tepals.



Erythronium oregonum

North Vancouver/ 29APR2007

all photos - Brenda Macdonald



FSRS Annual Picnic and Auction:

John and Gael Dodd
24365 - 61 Ave, Langley
604-530-0153

Saturday, June 16 3:00 pm (come earlier to help set up at 1:30 pm)

from the 232 Street exit, go south of freeway to 56 Ave and turn east, or
from the 264 Street exit, immediately turn west onto 56 Ave

where the main 56 Ave and smaller feeder 56 Ave meet at an acute angle (around 245 Street) proceed west on the small residential road, wiggle your way up to 61 Ave and turn right.