

The Yak

Newsletter of
the Fraser South
Rhododendron
Society

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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:

**THE FRASER SOUTH
RHODODENDRON SOCIETY'S
RENOWNED
ANNUAL PICNIC
SATURDAY, JUNE 14TH**

**OFFICIAL COMMENCEMENT AT 3:00 PM
BUT COME AND HELP US SET UP
ANYTIME AFTER 1:30 PM**

2008 Officers

President:	Harold Fearing	604-857-4136
Vice Pres.:	Sean Rafferty	604-990-5353
Secretary:	Mary-Anne Berg	604-853-5737
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Membership:	Wenonah March	604-532-9062
Newsletter:	Brenda Macdonald	604-990-5353
Website:	Chris Klapwijk	604-581-0925



Quick Hits

Picnic!

This year's annual picnic
will be held at the home
of Larry Morton and Karen
Linton, on Saturday, June
14th.
See the attached map for
directions.



From the President

Notes from the Chair

We had a great truss show at the last meeting, with some varieties that we don't usually see, apparently delayed by the cold spring. Thanks to everyone who brought trusses or helped with the show. Particular thanks to Wenonah and Alan March for organizing the judging and tabulating the results, to Mary-Anne Berg for preparing new signs for the different classes, to Vern Finley and Bobby Ogdon for judging the trusses for the Lionheart Award, to Colleen Bojczuk for bringing the prize plants, and to Mike Bale for manning(!) the kitchen and providing the food.

Our next meeting, June 14th, is our annual picnic and auction, which is a lot of fun and a major fund raiser for the chapter. So gather up your surplus plants, garden items, and anything you think might sell, bring along some food, and come help us confirm our reputation for being the chapter that has the most fun and the best food of any in the lower mainland.



I wanted to write this month about the deciduous azalea species, in part because they tend to be late, generally blooming from late May into July. Somewhat coincidentally there was a very interesting article in the latest Journal of the ARS in which a group of dedicated amateur enthusiasts teamed up with some academic molecular biologists to identify a new species in this group which had been overlooked for years - but more of that later.

These azaleas, from the section Pentanthera, consist of about twenty species, most of which are native to the woods and mountains of the southeastern US, from Virginia down through the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama and Florida. Despite this southern origin, they seem to be perfectly hardy here. They are all deciduous, with leaves 2-3 times as long as wide, tapering at both ends. The leaves are similar to many of our common hybrid azaleas.

The distinctive feature of most of the species are the flowers, which have long narrow tubes with flaring lobes at the end. The 5 stamens and the style extend past the end of the flower, sometimes by several centimeters. The books claim up to 20 flowers in a cluster, but most of those I have seen have more like 4-8.

For us, the first to bloom are *R. canescens*, *R. periclymenoides*, and *R. prinophyllum*, all of which are nearing the end of bloom now. These three are very similar, with long rose colored tubes and lighter pink lobes. *R. canescens* is the showiest, at least for us, as it blooms before there are very many leaves, and thus makes a lacy cloud of pink. The other two seem to come out more with the leaves and so are nice, but not quite as showy, at least that is true for the clones we have.

A very nice member of this group, currently in bloom, is *R. atlanticum* which is usually white perhaps marked with pink, sometimes with a very long (4 cm) tube. It is also very fragrant, so that one can smell it from some feet away. Its leaves are smaller and rounder than the others and tend to be a gray green. Unlike most of the others, it spreads by stolons (underground roots), so that after a few years it forms a low spreading clump.

R. alabamense is also white, and also currently blooming. Some of the pictures make it look spectacular, white with a yellow blotch, but



The very similar *R. canescens*, above, and *R. periclymenoides*, below. Generally, the *R. canescens* flowers blossom slightly before the leaves expand, creating a showier garden display





R. atlanticum, showing its exceptionally long floral tube and exerted stigma and stamens. The intoxicatingly fragrant and fuss-free cultivar *R. 'Snowbird'* is *atlanticum* x *canescens*; it also presents with long tubular flowers tipped with pink.

the clone I have has been pretty puny and slow to bloom. *R. viscosum* will bloom in June. It too is white or very pale pink, very nice and very fragrant. *R. arborescens* is a similar white, fragrant, late bloomer which is widespread throughout the Southeast US. *R. eastmanii* is a newly described member of this group, also white. Neither of these last two have bloomed for me yet, so I don't have personal experience with them.



R. alabamense is snowy white and fragrant, but its smaller blossom size and the fully expanded leaves when it blooms make it a somewhat less spectacular garden choice.

There are also yellow and orange varieties. *R. austrinum* is blooming now. The flowers on ours are yellow, tinged with orange and are fairly small, though that may be because the plant is still quite small. Again

some of the pictures I have seen make it look much more dramatic than ours has been so far. *R. calendulaceum*, which is just starting, is however quite nice. It comes in yellow or orange shades. The flowers are larger than some of the others, and come out with the leaves, and so make a nice contrast with new green of the leaves. I think it is as nice as most of the hybrid azaleas. Another more



R. austrinum



R. calendulaceum

familiar species is *R. luteum*. It is actually a native of Europe, from Turkey and adjoining areas. It is bright yellow, often quite fragrant, and very showy. One should also mention our native west coast azalea, *R. occidentale*. It is quite variable. It can be white with a yellow blotch or various shades and variegations of yellow, orange or red. It is sometimes double as well and is usually nicely

fragrant, though the very first one I had, smelled like turpentine. It blooms much later. The buds on ours have not even started to swell as yet.

Finally there are also reds. *R. flammeum*, which I don't know much about, can be yellow or red. *R. cumberlandense* (which used to be called *R. bakeri*) and *R. prunifolium* are usually bright red or orange red. They bloom quite late, into July for us, with flowers coming after the leaves are fully out. They are nice to have, as they extend the blooming past the time when most other rhodos are gone.

But now back to the ARS Journal article I mentioned at the beginning. It seems that since the 1950's people were aware of a May blooming azalea, white or pink, with relatively large flowers which could be found in parts of Georgia and Alabama. It was propagated and widely distributed by local nurseries. It had



R. luteum, native to the Caucasus and Eastern Europe is somewhat more familiar to many gardeners, partly as a result of its extensive use in the early hybridizing frenzy that produced such collections as the Ghent azaleas.



Native to the West Coast, the blossoms of *R. occidentale* are large, fragrant, flamboyant and variable. One of the largest stands of this spectacular shrub exists as a sort of hybrid swarm with an amazing variety of forms, just north of Eureka, California.

been formally identified as *R. alabamense* or sometimes *R. alabamense* x *R. canescens* by the experts, and appeared in local gardens and many herbaria under those names. According to the article it had been distributed as *R. alabamense* by the RSF and by the ARS seed exchange. A group of local amateur rhodo enthusiasts got curious though and started observing it closely. They eventually noticed that as compared to *R. alabamense* these plants tended to bloom a month later, tended to grow in wetter locations, and were often large and multi-stemmed. Somewhat by accident they connected with Ben Hall who had been doing DNA studies on the section Pentanthera. He and his group showed that, based on DNA, the section divided naturally into two clades, or groups.

The first contained *atlanticum*, *calendulaceum*, *austrinum*, *luteum* and this new azalea. The second contained the rest, in particular *alabamense* and *canescens*. Also somewhat accidentally they became aware of some work at NC State University studying the chromosome count of this group of rhododendrons. The new one was tested and found to be a

tetraploid, which means it has twice the usual number of chromosomes. All of the others in the first clade were also tetraploid whereas those in the second clade were the usual diploid. Thus from both observational characteristics and genetic information this could not be *R. alabamense*, but had to be a new species, which they named *R. colemanii*. So even the amateurs like most of us can make a contribution if we observe carefully.

As an interesting footnote to this story is a second article in the ARS Journal which constitutes the formal scientific publication of the new species name. It describes in fairly technical language the genetic studies done and has a page of detailed description of the observational details of the plant, its distribution and habitat. It also contains a paragraph in Latin formally describing the plant, which I guess is a requirement for naming a new species by the rules of botanical nomenclature. What is amusing is that this Latin description contains words like 'tetraploid', 'DNA', and 'genome'. Thus I imagine that it would be just as unintelligible to Caesar himself, though perhaps for different reasons, as it is to me, one who is 50 years from high school Latin!



R. prunifolium

So....the section Pentanthera contains quite a few very nice rhodos, valuable for their late blooming, and in some cases for their fragrance. If you just have a small garden you should at least have specimens of *atlanticum* and *luteum*, both of which bloom well, don't get too big, and are very fragrant. For the larger garden it would be nice to have *occidentale*, because it is our west coast native, *calendulaceum*, because it is nice, one or two of the pink or white ones -- *canescens* and *viscosum* would be my choices -- and perhaps one of the red very late bloomers, *cumberlandense* or *prunifolium*.

Harold Fearing

All photos by
Harold Fearing



From the Editor

This Month:

Time for a jolly picnic!

You remember what a picnic is, don't you? when you pack up some food and go outside and sit around in the balmy summer afternoon, chatting and eating and looking at the pretty flowers in the garden and enjoying the feeling of sun on your face and the good company around you. You remember the feeling of sun on your face, don't you? sort of warm and pleasant and not wet, or cold?

We can make it happen! Just think sunshiny thoughts from now until the 14th and we will achieve results that will make Yogic Flying as practised by The Natural Law Party look like the glorified bum-hopping it really was.

And, just to remind you how things were done in previous years under more salubrious climates, here is the plan, beautiful in its simplicity:

The picnic is scheduled for 3:00 pm, but assistance with set up and take

down is always appreciated - anytime after 1:30 pm.

You have probably already been contacted by Karen Linton, who has done 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 that 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, horticultural texts on a subject that no longer interests you, a division from your magnificent perennial border, a garden gnome exhausted by his world travels and ready to settle down by someone else's birdbath, the occasional rhodo grown too big for its placement, volunteer seedlings from your very showy, very rare, Full Moon Maple? Bring something someone else will be interested in, and then bid early and bid high for something you are interested in.

Next Month:

Next month our hall will be strangely silent as we take our annual two month break.

But mark your calendars for Wednesday, September 17th, when we will all return, tanned and fit from toiling in the garden, and replete with the splendours we have wrought.

The Business Stuff:

OTHER DUTIES AS ASSIGNED

☛ Chris Klapwijk, our webmaster extraordinaire, has undertaken to produce "Fraser South Rhododendron Society - The Second Ten Years". Many members will have a copy of "Fraser South Rhododendron Society - The First Ten Years" written by Mike Trembath, which chronicles the history of our Chapter from its inception on November 18, 1988 to the end of 1998. For any of our current membership who have not had an opportunity to peruse our history, there is a copy of the document posted on our website, and paper copies available from our library.

In pursuit of this endeavour, Chris needs to obtain hard copies of our newsletter 'The Yak' from the period

of January, 1999, to April, 2002, inclusive. From May 2002, onward, copies of 'The Yak' have been posted to the website and remain readily accessible.

If you have any or all of these back issues, and would like to support the project by lending them to Chris for photocopying, please contact him at 604-581-0925, or let me know and I will have him get in touch.

☛ Tea room duties for the September meeting will be handled by Arlene Darby et al.

THE CALENDAR

Saturday, June 14	Fraser South Chapter - Annual Picnic & Auction at the home of Karen Linton and Larry Morton
Wednesday, September 17 at 7:30	First meeting of our 2008/2009 year

Fifteenth Annual Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show



Setting Up



Making Our Choices



Tabulating the Results



Announcing the Winners



Fifteenth Annual Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show

And the winners are ...

CLASSES

Division I

Species Classes

Class 1. Rhododendron (lepidotes)

Sean Rafferty and Brenda Macdonald - R. cinnabarinum

Class 2. Azalea (deciduous and evergreen)

Harold Fearing - R. canescens

Class 3. Hymenantha (elepidotes)

Larry Morton - R. degrobianum ssp. yakushmanum 'Mist Maiden'

Division II

Hybrid Classes

Class 4. Any lepidote hybrid

Brenda Macdonald and Sean Rafferty - R. 'Coastal Spice'

Class 5. Any deciduous azalea hybrid

Norma Senn - unnamed yellow azalea

Class 6. Any evergreen azalea hybrid

Vern Finley - R. 'James Gable'

Colour Classes

Class 7a: Red - (small)

Les Clay - R. 'Bikini Island'

7b: Red - (large)

Colleen Bojczuk - R. 'Francesca'

Class 8a: White - (small)

Larry Morton - R. 'Helene Schiffner'

8b: White - (large)

John and Gael Dodd - R. 'Phyllis Korn'

Class 9a: Pink - (small)

Wenonah March - R. 'Fantastica'

9b: Pink - (large)

Vern Finley - R. 'Pilgrim'

9c: Pink - (really, really, large)

Mike Bale - R. 'Trude Webster'

Class 10a: Yellow & Cream (small)

Wenonah March - R. 'Creamy Chiffon'

10b: Yellow & Cream (large)

Sean Rafferty and Brenda Macdonald - R. 'Crest'

Class 11: Mauves & Purple

Colleen Bojczuk - R. 'Olin O. Dobbs'

Class 12: Orange

Alan Kilvert - R. 'Brandt's Tropicana'

Class 13: Bi-colour

Carla Bischoff - unknown

Division III

Special Classes

Class 14: "What's it Called" - best new non-registered hybrid -

John and Gael Dodd - unnamed seedling

Class 15: Truss with the Best Fuzzy Foliage

Sean Rafferty and Brenda Macdonald - R. 'Ellie Sather'

Class 16: Best Blotched - 4-way tie

Vern Finley - R. 'Blue Peter'

Larry Morton - R. 'Chapeau'

Colleen Bojczuk - R. 'Bariton'

Les Clay - R. 'Joan Leslie Hammond'

Class 17: Best Speckled

Bobby Ogdon - R. 'Reid Ogdon'

Class 18: Most Lurid

Harold Fearing - R. 'Edwin O. Weber'

Class 19: Best Last Year's Truss

(no entries)

Class 20: Most Elegantly Weevil-Notched

Norma Senn - unnamed

Class 21: Best Hammerhead

Colleen Bojczuk - R. 'Ooh Gina'

Class 22: Most Flaccid - 2-way tie

Sean Rafferty and Brenda Macdonald - R. 'Medusa'

Larry Morton - R. 'Medusa'

Class 23: Best Miniature Truss - under 6"

Wenonah March - R. 'Egret'

Class 24: Most Fragrant (Az. or Rh.)

Sean Rafferty and Brenda Macdonald -

R. 'Fragrantissimum'

Class 25: Lionheart Award for best over-all Yellow

Sean Rafferty and Brenda Macdonald - R. 'Crest'



Aggregate Winner and recipients of all the left-over M&M's - Sean Rafferty and Brenda Macdonald



Up the Garden Path

~*~

Gardens of Scotland Part 1

Early in May, fellow FSRS member Susan Murray and I were fortunate enough to take a vacation in Scotland, and of course, this included visiting gardens. In ten days, we saw nine gardens, most of which featured Rhododendrons at their peak bloom.

We started at Culzean Castle, right on Scotland's western shore, just south of Glasgow. I'd visited this garden very

briefly in 1996, but at the time, our tour guide was busy showing us Robbie Burns' sites, and decided to take us to the castle as an afterthought. It was one of those "I can't believe this garden, and we've only got 20 minutes" affairs.

So, Culzean was high on my list of places to re-visit. The estate is over 600 acres in size and includes formal gardens, a walled garden, a deer park and forests and meadows. The feature here though is the walled garden that offers protection to tender plants from salt laden winds. Dating back to 1775, the walls are about 12 ft. high and encompass a large area. Contained within the walls are lots of tender things like Echioiums, Cabbage palms, some maddeniiis and a double herbaceous border that will be stunning in the summer. Outside the walls, the gardens continue with large expanses of lawns broken up by central beds of shrubs and herbaceous perennials. We saw lots of Gunnera while in Scotland, but the plantings at Culzean were among the most impressive. There was also a small orangerie that contained some



Culzean Castle



Pandorea cultivar.

lovely camellias and a few vireyas. One of the old greenhouses has been converted into a "vinery" with plantings of tropical vines like Pandorea.

From Culzean we headed south to the town of Stranraer, where there are many local gardens open to the public. It was difficult choosing (this became a repeated theme during our vacation), but we selected the gardens at Castle Kennedy and a nursery-display garden called Glenwhan.

Castle Kennedy has 75 acres of exquisite grounds laid out in a naturalistic style between two lochs. There are lovely water views and the grounds are lush and emerald green. Susan said that the area was very like Ireland in topography and colour.

Large expanses of lawns are broken up by mature plantings of a wide selection of trees. The native beech trees were particularly fine with their tracery of branches and emerging leaves. Joseph Hooker was responsible for giving much of the original seed for many introduced species to the Stair family, so that there are now many large Rhododendrons, Camellias and Magnolias growing throughout the estate. As well, there was an avenue of mature Monkey Puzzle trees dating to 1849 and another avenue of Noble Fir planted in 1851 to gawk at. Also located on the grounds are several champion trees for Great Britain, so think big trees!



Olearia cultivar

The old castle ruins date to the 16th century, but in the 19th century, the family built a new castle and the parkland extends between the old and new buildings. The public has access to most of the property, although there is a fence that separates the family from us poor plebes. However, the fence-line is planted with a long herbaceous

border containing some choice plants. I particularly liked *Pittosporum* ‘Tom Thumb’. The new growth and flowers are burgundy red on this small, well-behaved shrub. As well, there were several *Olearias* in full bloom. This was a new plant for me although we saw it several times on the trip. *Olearia* or Daisy-bush is a member of the *Asteraceae*, with typical aster-like flowers of either white or lavender blue on a woody plant. They made a good show, and the bees loved them.

There is a nice walled garden here as well. We chatted with the head gardener, John McCarthy, and it turned out we knew several people in common, including Alleyne and Barbara Cook. John had stayed with the Cooks when he traveled throughout North America as a young man. We had an interesting discussion about *Phytophthora ramorum* and its nasty “cousins”. SODS has become a very serious problem throughout Europe, but especially in western Scotland. In many gardens, visitors must now walk over a disinfectant mat before entering the gardens. There are also many pleas for visitors to stay strictly on the paths and not to handle any plant material.



Glenwhan Gardens

Nearby Glenwhan Gardens is built high on a windy hilltop, and starting in 1974, this 12 acre garden was literally carved out of sedges, bracken and gorse. There are lots of changes in elevation with natural streams draining into some good-sized garden ponds. The daffodils and snowdrops had finished, but there were lots of small rhodies either just coming into bloom or out full. Since this is a garden intended to display many of the plants for sale in the adjoining nursery, there were lots of popular modern hybrids to look at, especially featuring some of the Cox hybrids like Curlew and Egret. They had a fine display of our west coast Skunk Cabbage (we saw lots of plantings of *Lysichiton americanus* in Scotland where it is a much admired harbinger of spring). Later in the summer, the Hydrangeas will put on a good show.



Logan Botanic Gardens

Our next stop was Logan Botanic Gardens in southwestern Scotland, very close to the Mull of Galloway. Logan, one of the national gardens of Scotland, is a regional garden associated with the Edinburgh Botanic Garden, so we went with high expectations. It didn’t disappoint. Again, there is a large walled garden here. This garden is noted for its large collection of tender southern hemisphere species like *Cordyline australis*, *Dicksonia*, *Eucalyptus*, *Echium*, *Pittosporum*, *Embothrium*, *Azara*, etc. Outside the walled garden, there are lovely woodland gardens and the English bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*) were in full bloom. I suspect Susan got tired of me oohing and aahing over the bluebells all the time, but I

noticed that she took lots of pictures of them too.

This was the first garden of the trip where we saw *Embothrium coccineum* in full bloom, although we started seeing it regularly from this point on. For me, this was the “plant of the trip”, and I just couldn’t stop myself from taking pictures of it every time I saw it. This graceful broadleaved evergreen tree simply glows red when in bloom. Its common name is Chilean Flame Tree, one of the most appropriate common names ever. It grows easily throughout western Scotland, and we even saw it used as a parking lot tree at the Younger Botanic Garden near Benmore.



Echium cultivar

Since we were close to the Mull, we went right out to the point where they’ve got cameras set up to watch the kittiwakes and terns nesting on the cliff sides. This is wild, wind-swept countryside, lovely on the sunny day we visited, but I could just imagine the wind howling across the land in a winter gale. We saw some lovely native wildflowers perched close to the cliff edges that offered a great contrast to the cultivated plants growing in nearby sheltered gardens.

The garden tour will continue in September’s edition of the Yak. In the meantime, Happy Summer Gardening.

Norma Senn