

The Yak

Newsletter of
the Fraser South
Rhododendron
Society

Volume 22 Number 10
December 2009



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
(except June, July and August) at:
United Church Hall
5673 - 200th Street
Langley BC

This Month's Meeting

Date: Wednesday, December 16, 2009

Fraser South's Annual Christmas Potluck Dinner and Festive Frolic

early time:

set-up at 6:00

commencement at 6:30

2009 Officers

President:	Harold Fearing	604-857-4136
Past Pres:	Dalen Bayes	360-966-4596
Vice Pres.:	Bill Bischoff	604-589-6134
Secretary:	Mary-Anne Berg	604-853-5737
Treasurer:	Alan March	604-532-9062
Directors:	Larry Morton	604-888-6564
	Lori Bayes	360-966-4596
	Arlene Darby	604-597-1849
Programme:	Sean Rafferty	604-990-5353
Membership:	Wenonah March	604-532-9062
Newsletter:	Brenda Macdonald	604-990-5353
Website:	Chris Klapwijk	604-581-0925

Quick Hits



Don't forget

- to bring back any library books you have out
- to let us know of any recipes you want published in next month's Yak
- to get a few slides ready to show at next month's AGM



From the President

Notes From the Chair

It was a beautiful sunny day today, at least from inside the house. Once I got outside however, into that cold northeast wind that seems to blow so often at our place, I was reminded that it is December, winter is upon us, and maybe it is time to quit working in the garden, and start thinking about the holidays and the plans for the spring to come.

In this traditional season of gift giving it is always difficult to choose gifts for our rhodoholic friends. So I thought I would devote this column to some of the resources that I have found useful over the years in helping me learn about and care for a collection of rhododendrons. Most of these things could be gifts.

But first let me mention a simple, inexpensive gift, that you may not have thought about, which would be ideal for many of your not-yet rhodoholic gardening friends. That would be a gift membership in our own Fraser South Rhododendron Society. Thanks to the subsidy agreed on by the executive, a new membership costs only \$15 for the first year.

That gets the recipient a full membership in the American Rhododendron Society and in our Fraser South chapter. It includes the Journal of the ARS and our excellent newsletter, The Yak, plus the opportunity to participate in all the fun activities of our chapter. It would be a great gift for a gardening friend

who might like to learn more about rhodos, or for a young couple with their first house and a yard to landscape, or even for a shut in, who would enjoy all the information in the Journal and Yak. Think about it. Contact our membership chair, Wenonah March, at the Christmas party or by phone, to fill out the application.

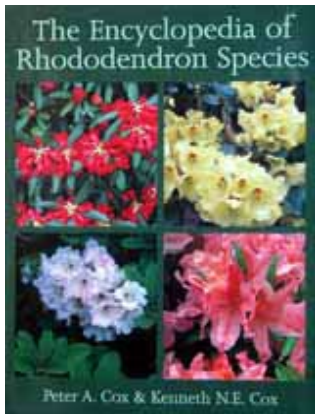
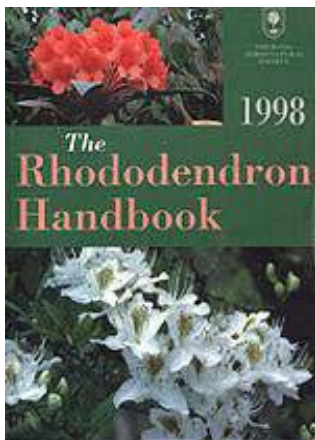
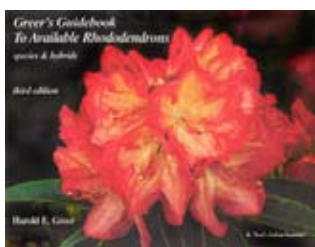
For the person just starting to learn about rhodos the most important resource is a copy of "Greer's Guidebook to Available Rhododendrons". This is a classic book with general information about rhododendrons and capsule descriptions of several thousand rhodos, both species and hybrids, which were in cultivation and likely to be available at the time of writing (1996). Hardiness ratings are given for most plants, which I have found quite useful and reasonably accurate. Plants Greer rates as hardy down to +5F I usually have had no problem with. Those rated +10F were sometimes damaged in hard winters, and those rated only to +15F I could keep alive only until the first hard winter.

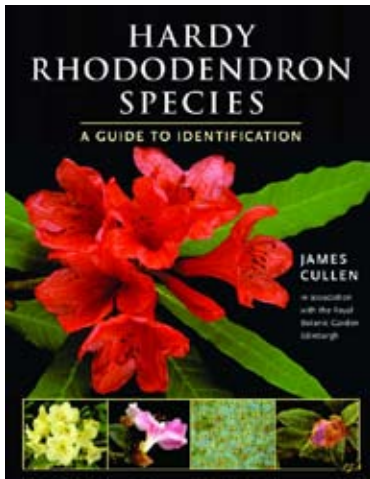
So if you only have one book, Greer's should be it. For hybrids I haven't found much else that is very useful. There is an extension of Greer, "Rhododendron Hybrids" by Salley and Greer (Timber Press, 1992), which is sometimes of value as it lists more than 5000 hybrids and gives a short description and the complete parentage, but I find I consult it only occasionally.

For species there are quite a few books available. The one I have found generally most useful is "The Rhododendron Handbook - 1998" put out by the Royal Horticultural Society. This gives fairly detailed descriptions, hardiness ratings, etc. for species in cultivation, and was essentially the first book to use the new classification system.

Another excellent reference is "The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species" by Peter and Kenneth Cox - 1997 (available from the Rhododendron Species Foundation). This has pictures, as well as descriptions, and is written by two of the leading experts on species.

A brand new book which is going to be a competitor to this however is "Pocket Guide to Rhododendron Species" by J.F.J. McGuire and M.L.A. Robinson, published by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in 2009. I haven't used this a lot yet, but it seems to have many of the newly discovered species in it, has fairly complete descriptions of each species, and importantly has pictures of each species which are large enough (unlike the Cox's book) to be useful in identification. The book is small enough to be portable, but





you do need a large pocket.

For someone interested in the more technical aspects of species, particularly in keys to identify unknown species, I think the best general purpose book is "Hardy Rhododendron Species - A Guide to Identification" by James Cullen (Timber Press, 2005). This has keys to the subsections and individual species which are based on the original work of Cullen and Chamberlain, but are somewhat simplified and easier to use.

Finally I should mention an oddball book which I have had a lot of fun with. It is "The Genus Rhododendron - Its Classification and Synonymy" by David Chamberlain, et al, put out by the Royal

Botanic Garden, Edinburgh (1996). It reads like a telephone book, as it is basically a list of all names which have ever been used for rhododendron species. However, it is useful thus for checking an older name and finding out what the new or currently accepted name is. Another interesting section lists the naturally occurring species by 'Biological Recording Unit'. Thus one can look under British Columbia and find that there are four known species in BC: *macrophyllum*, *albiflorum*, *groenlandicum* and *lapponicum*.

Other things I have found quite useful over the years include a small magnifying eyepiece. Ginny has given me a 10X one, which is the most useful general purpose magnification, and a 20X one which allows one to look at close up details of hairs, leaf scales, etc.



If your rhodoholic has more than a couple of dozen rhodos, then a computer based database program is very useful to keep track of the collection and the information associated with each plant. I use a very old version of Paradox, which I think originally was one of the Wordperfect family of programs. Microsoft Access is the Microsoft Office equivalent. There is also a database program in the Open Office suite of programs, which is a free, open source, substitute for Microsoft Office. (www.openoffice.org).

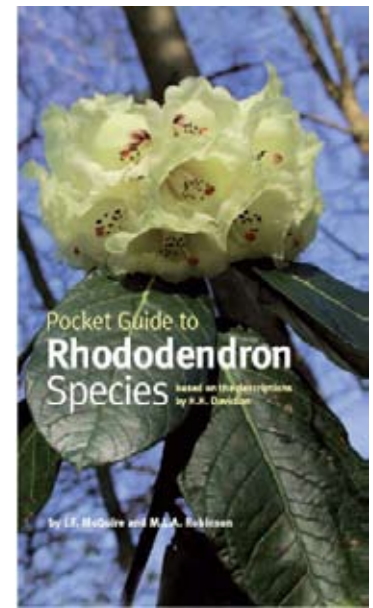
Finally I should mention a gift Ginny gave me just recently - a pair of industrial strength kneepads. She got them at a store specializing in work clothing, and I presume they are intended for people laying floors or carpets. They are nothing like the wimpy foam things one gets in the garden shops, and while (unfortunately!) they don't weed your garden for you, they certainly make weeding while crawling around on your hands and knees a less painful experience.



Before getting too lost in holiday preparations, we need to remember that it is now mid-December and in only two or maybe two and a half months we should have rhodos in bloom. Just to whet your appetite, and give you something to dream about in the bit of snow and cold weather I am sure is still to come, here are a few pictures taken in past years near the end of February, only about 80 days from now: *R. sichotense*, *R. moupinense*, *R. ririei*, *R. imberbe*, *R. dauricum album*, and *R. barbatum*.

Happy Holidays...

Harold Fearing



We're almost there! In just two more weeks the days will start to get longer again, and even if it is still cold, wet, and drear outside, we can focus on the prospect of longer days and milder temperatures by concentrating on Harold's lovely bouquet of early-blooming species.



R. moupinense



R. sichotense



R. ririei



R. imberbe
(*R. barbatum* var. *imberbe*)



R. barbatum



R. dauricum album



From the Editor

This Month:

This month we celebrate another year of horticultural fellowship with our annual Christmas Potluck dinner. Long-time members will all know the drill, but for our newer members we should outline the mysteries of Punch Bowl A and Punch Bowl B, and the cut-throat competitiveness that marks our postprandial “Games on the Theme of Rhododendrons”.



1. Be festive, or merry, or mellow, or all three, as the spirit moves you.
2. Come early, festivities start at 6:30, but you can come earlier if you want to help set up.
3. Bring a dish of food to share, with serving utensils if required.
4. Beverages will be provided: tea, coffee, and the usual Punch Bowl A and Punch Bowl B. Members wishing to move sedately from festive, through merry, and on to mellow should hover around Punch Bowl A.
5. Bring your own plates, mugs, and cutlery, then remember to take them home again.

6. Wear something seasonal, if not festive. These past few days have reminded us that we too are part of the Great Canadian Weather system. Wear some mukluks with Christmas ornaments attached to the ties if your green wellies are too stiff with cold to bend at the ankle and your nice red plaid mackinaw won't keep the arctic wind out. One of those battery packs for hand-warmers can always do double duty as a power source for a small but tasteful string of twinkling lights. Santa hats are optional.

7. Come bearing gifts, or at least one small gift (value under \$10.00), for Santa Dalen to redistribute, remembering that this is a reciprocal arrangement - those who give, also receive.

6. Be festive, merry, or mellow, but above all, be present. There will be good food, a fun game, intriguing presents, and loads of bonhomie. Come early, stay late, enjoy!



Next Month:

Next month is our Annual General Meeting, at which we pass budgets, elect officers and generally act like responsible adults ... keeping in mind that all the time we are hoovering up a goodly portion of the fantastic desserts brought in to make the occasion all the more palatable. For light entertainment several members will show a few slides of something that is near and dear to their heart, be it rhododendrons or not. You too could be one of those persons providing us all with visual delights. Think about it.

The Business Stuff:

THE CALENDAR:

Wednesday, December 16	Fraser South Chapter Christmas Potluck - early start: 6:30pm
Wednesday, January 20	Fraser South Chapter - Annual AGM, Elections, Awards and Dessert Extravaganza
Thursday, January 21	Vancouver Chapter - Annual AGM and Members' Slide presentations
Monday, January 25	Fraser Valley Chapter - DVD of Mendocino Botanical Gardens "A Passion for Rhododendrons"

Brenda Macdonald