

# The Oak

Newsletter of  
the Fraser South  
Rhododendron  
Society

Volume 25 Number 10  
December 2011



[www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth](http://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 14, 2011

### Fraser South's Annual Christmas Potluck Dinner and Festive Frolic

Time: (early) set-up at 6:00  
commencement at 6:30

## 2011 Officers

President:	Bill Bischoff	604-589-6134
Past Pres:	Harold Fearing	604-857-4136
Vice Pres:	John Dodd	604-530-0153
Secretary:		
Treasurer:	(Harold Fearing)	604-857-4136
Directors:	Arlene Darby	604-597-1849
	Matt Groves	604-856-2624
	Kathy Delory	604-576-1172
Programme:	Sean Rafferty	604-990-5353
Membership:	(Ginny Fearing)	604-857-4136
Newsletter:	Brenda Macdonald	604-990-5353
Librarian:	Joan McGiveron	604-538-9347
Website:	Chris Klapwijk	604-581-0925

## Quick Hits



The Welcome Kitty raises a Christmas paw to welcome our newest members Sandra and Brock Short. The Shorts make their home and Abbotsford and we are so glad they have decided to join our group. We are also eagerly awaiting the appearance of the members from the Fraser Valley Chapter who will be officially joining us in the New Year. Hopefully some of them will be able to join us for our Christmas Potluck.



**FROM THE PRESIDENT**

# Notes From the Chair

A few thoughts at the end of the year for all you rhododendron growers and garden enthusiasts. No more watering for the next 3 months at least. This leaves us time to enjoy our plants in leisure and not look at them as a chore. It is the time to look at all the different flower-buds on our rhododendrons and speculate what kind of floral show we can expect during the coming flowering seasons. Judging by the plants in our garden it will be an excellent display.

To overcome some of the weevil damage to the rhododendron leaves I took the advice of Chuck Floyd and started spreading bird seeds under plants that have been affected with leaf damage in the past. The results so far have been very interesting where we have members of just about every bottom feeding bird species in our area pecking and scratching the ground from dawn to dusk; time will tell. If I don't bring notched leaves to our truss-show, the bird-feed method worked. For this method of insect control

to work, it must be continued at least until next spring when the new beetles emerge to their night-time foraging. For now our soil will be aerated on a daily basis.

Even though the year is just about over and the coming cold season has already rattled our houses with high winds, there is still enjoyment in our gardens. Some late flowering plants still give us some colors and will do so up and past Christmas. This is also the time to look at the many ground covering perennials that give us a most enjoyable leaf display, with new leaves emerging even now. When all the festivities of the year's end are over it is only 2 weeks ahead for the new flowers of the new year to emerge for us to marvel at how tough they really are.

It will be a good year, this coming 2012, for us at the Fraser South Rhododendron Society. Already we are experiencing the additions of new members from the two neighbouring District 1 Societies, new members with talents and ideas. Two new members have volunteered to be added to our list of executive officers to be elected at our next January meeting.

For now I am looking forward to seeing all of you at our Christmas party. Until then all the best of the season to you and your families.

*Bill Bischoff*



Some of the winds that have already buffeted our gardens.  
Photo by Lis Bianco



## FROM THE EDITOR

### Last Month:

Always ready with knowledge and enthusiasm, President Bill was good enough to share with us his recent experiences in working with tufa. It was an interesting and timely topic as so many of us look for ways to incorporate more plant material into smaller spaces. Thank you, Bill.

### This Month:

This is the month of good cheer and turkey fixings. This is also the month of the Fraser South annual Christmas Potluck Dinner and Festive Frolic. As mentioned last month, your Executive decided to alter the format somewhat insofar as we will not be exchanging small gifts this year. We encourage Santa Dalen and Elf Nancy to wear their special hats anyway, but this year we will be collecting donations for the

Food bank in lieu of a gift exchange. Please bring some canned or dried goods for donation, or for those of you who can never find something suitable in the cupboard - do they really want a six month old can of artichoke hearts? - we will also accept cash donations. The Food Bank is always grateful for cash donations as well as foodstuffs since they can use the money advantageously to purchase bulk foods at a discount. Please give generously.

Now to the fun part.

I think most of you are familiar with the routine. We start a bit earlier, set up at 6:00 everything is usually ship shape and ready to go by about 6:30. Les and Bev Clay will be doing their usual wizardry with the turkey, so your responsibility is to bring something else to share. Karen Linton, our Social Convenor Extrordinaire, will probably have already contacted you about what you would like to contribute, but feel free to call her yourself at 604-888-6564 if she hasn't been able to get in touch. Or you can just wing it and bring whatever you would like. It always seems to work out perfectly anyway. Don't forget to bring serving utensils if appropriate, for the sharing part, as well as your own plate and cutlery for the not-sharing part. Tea and coffee will be provided as usual.

### Next Month:

Next month will be our Annual General Meeting and 9th Annual Dessert Extravaganza. Taking care of business has never been so enjoyable. We need to ratify the new Executive members, review and approve the past year's financial report, and celebrate and reward the contributions and accomplishments of some of our FSRS members.

All this and food too! Far be it for us to leap into the New Year's resolutions for caloric intake restriction and output amplification too precipitously. All in good time, we say. We'll just ease into it, we say. And certainly we won't begin to consider the easing until after the January meeting.

So get yourself organized by thinking of a little something toothsome to bring and share - channel the Goldilocks paradigm: not too big, not too small, ... just right.

And your other mission, should you wish to accept it, is to bring something for Show and Tell. This is your opportunity to catch us up on what you have been doing, horticulturally or otherwise. If speaking in front of crowds makes you nervous you can even do it silently. We can cope with all technologies - slides in a carousel, Power Point presentations, even a simple memory stick. If you bring it, we can show it. Start thinking about it now. It will be good for you, I promise.

### The Business Stuff:

✿ **Other Duties as Assigned - Recipes** - Don't forget that January is the month we attempt to obtain and publish recipes for any of the various treats or Christmas potluck offerings you deem essential to your future happiness. Think of it as "Gourmet" re-visited, with horticultural overtones. However, we don't know what to publish until you tell us. Let me know of any recipe you want to know about, and like cub reporters everywhere, I will get the scoop.

*Brenda Macdonald*



# The Book Cart

*Winter-flowering Shrubs*

by Michael W. Buffin

Timber Press Inc., Portland, Oregon, 2005, \$54.95

232 pages, approx. 138 colour photos.

1 Hardiness Zone Map, Bibliography, Index

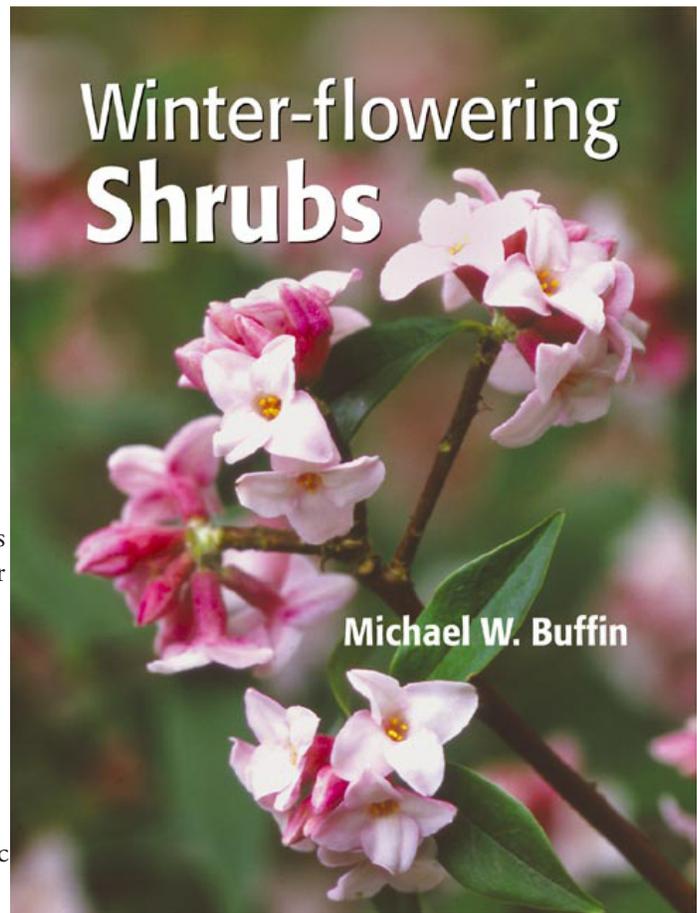
ISBN 9780881927221

This book by Michael Buffin seems to be the perfect selection for a book review at this time of year. Buffin presently advises on 70 historical gardens and parks in southern England for the National Trust. His biography reveals that he spent several years as Curator of Living Collections at The Harold Hillier Gardens in Hampshire where, among other responsibilities, he designed the planting of the Winter Garden. He trained at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and spent time at the Morris Arboretum at the University of Pennsylvania.

In the Introduction, Buffin describes how he was very much influenced by Graham Stuart Thomas' *Colour of the Winter Garden* which Buffin read as a young student. This book was to shape his passion for winter gardening in the years to come.

The book is well organized with a preface and brief introduction, followed by a chapter entitled *Designing for Winter* which gives tips on such topics as the importance of winter sunlight, stem and bark effects, evergreen companion plants, along with many other basic elements.

Following this very informative material, Buffin has organized his material alphabetically A – Z of winter-flowering shrubs with the colour photos closely aligned with the written description of the shrubs. The writer gives the reader many aspects to consider in the winter garden, ranging from unusual or colourful bark on trees, ornamental grasses, delicate foliage on frosty mornings, winter flowers, and bright berries to the weird fruits such as *Decaisnea fargesii* which attract attention in a winter garden. *Winter-flowering Shrubs* is a particularly usual book in our part of the country. Borrow it from our library. You will enjoy reading it.



Margaret Hodgson

# *R. yakushmanum*

Well, actually *R. degronianum* ssp. *yakushmanum*, but nobody can deal with that mouthful, so *yaks* they have been and *yaks* they will remain, at least for all the gardeners out there more interested in their appearance and performance than where they are placed in the nomenclature diagram.

Lumpers and splitters apart, this is a fine, fine plant. And like all fine specimens it has suffered some inevitable abuse by over-use in hybridization schemes. Really, do we actually need any more frilly pale-pink fading to white hybrids with fuzzy leaves?

Of course the reason it was everyone's favourite for hybridizing is because it has such good genes: slow-growing, with a compact and mounding habit, densely leaved, wonderful indumentum that starts out fawn and ages to cinnamon, and one of the least fussy plants in your rhododendron garden. Like the Energizer bunny it just keeps on going, year after year, covering itself with apple-blossom pink blossoms that fade to white, over a decently long bloom period. Moreover, it blooms late enough in the season to avoid all danger of late frosts as well as provide colour when many of the other rhododendrons have already finished. Add to all of that the fact that it is easy to propagate by either seeds or cuttings and flowers at a young age and you have the perfect trifecta of the hybridizer's world.

First described in 1921, *yakushmanum* was not introduced into cultivation until 1934 when two plants were sent to

Species and their Hybrids		pollen ♂	
		B	b
pistil ♀	B	BB	Bb
	b	Bb	bb



Engraving by Margaret Stones, 1976  
Curtis's Botanical Magazine



Lionel de Rothschild at Exbury from the K. Wada Nursery in Japan. One of these, the eponymous 'Koichiro Wada' form is still propagated as a superior selection, and has been the parent of many hybrids.

*Yakushmanum* is widely variable in the wild, where it is now protected in its only native habitat in the mountains of the island of Yakushima in Japan.

And the hybrids are almost beyond counting. The Hirsutum site lists 276 hybrids between straight *yak* and some other parent, a further 151 hybrids between a clone or named selection (some of which, such as 'Ken Janeck', are widely suspected of being something a bit short of pure *yak*) and another parent, and an additional 130 hybrids of which one of the parents is itself a *yak* hybrid. Quite a record.

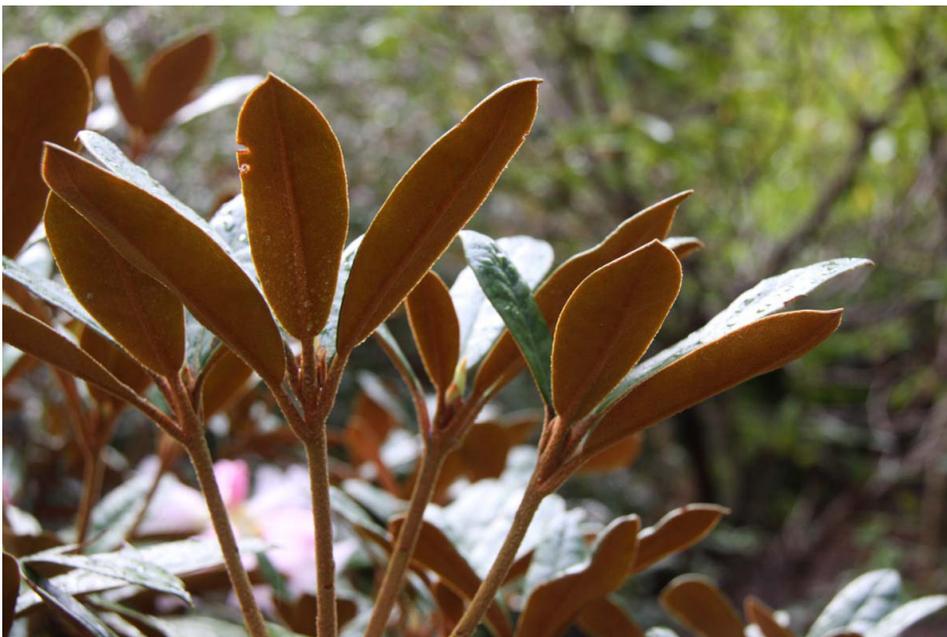
One of the interesting side effects of so many hybrids is how all inter-related the naming becomes. It is as if there are a limited number of meaningful options for a *yak* cross, so all the names begin to link together like a Venn diagram. The white flowers seem to have been a common starting place, so we have 'silver' and 'snow' in various linguistic permutations (schnee, snow, silber silver): Schneekrone, Schneewolke, Silverglanz, Silver Lady, Silver Bear etc. And that intersects with the Bear group: Silver Bear, Teddy Bear, Cinnamon Bear. And then Silver Lady intersects with all the other royalty: Yaku Princess, .. Prince, .. King, .. Queen, .. Duke and .. Duchess. Not to mention all the little dwarves developed by John Waterer in the early 1970's, all seven of them, just to keep the royalty amused. Of course there are the geographical references, such as the Dane series: Best, Spider, White, Silver (back to the silver circle again) and the serendipitous Great Dane - how can you beat that as the name for a *yak* x *rex* ssp. *rex* .

Personally, I have often wondered why there are not more hybrids named after characters in Dickens' novels. Why don't we have a flashy yellow called The Golden Dustman, or *dendrocharis* hybrid called Little Nell, or even something in penury purple called Mr. Micawber? Just a thought

Brenda Macdonald



left *R.* 'Teddy Bear' - Briggs Nursery, 1980  
*R. bureavii* x *R.* ... *yak*  
 Basically a *yak* writ large, this hybrid has slightly larger, more trumpet-shaped flowers, shinier, less recurved leaves, and luscious indumentum.



All photos harvested from the wonderful "Hirsutum" site  
[www.hirsutum.info/index.html](http://www.hirsutum.info/index.html)



H.L. Larson did some interesting work with yaks in the late 1960's.  
 left *R. 'Bill Dale'*  
 - H. L. Larson, 1969  
*R. ... yak x R. strigillosum*  
 Named after the long-time Cowichan Valley Chapter member who has done so much to educate and promote the legacy left by pioneer Vancouver Island rhodo breeder and grower, George Fraser.

right *R. 'Golden Wedding'*  
 - H. L. Larson, 1969  
*R. ... yak x R. 'Mrs. Lammot Copeland'*  
 This is a wonderful, full-bodied, warm, golden yellow, quite unlike most of the pastels of other yak crosses.



left *R. 'Golfer'*  
 - Warren Berg, 1966  
*R. ... yak x R. pseudochrysanthum*  
 One of the best foliage plants ever. The emerging foliage is covered with a thick indumentum that is positively snowy, and is remarkably resistant to being washed off by rain. The blossoms are the typical but very lovely pale pink, and have delicate darker pink sprinkles on the upper lobe.



top

*R. 'Si Si'*

- Weldon Delp, 1973

*R. ... yak* x *R. 'Gold Mohur'*

This hybrid has some lovely delicate colour shading and wide funnel-shaped blossoms



middle

*R. 'Canadian Sunset'*

- Rudolph Henny, 1974

*R. ... yak* x *R. 'Gipsy King Group'*

This is one of the best of the yak "faders" - hybrids whose deep initial colour gradually becomes paler and paler as the blossom ages. 'Canadian Sunset' has a clear bright colour without any spotting that fades cleanly without muddiness.



bottom

*R. 'Centennial Gold'*

- Boskoop Research Station, Netherlands, 1983

*R. 'Goldkrone'* x *R. ...yak*

The lovely primrose yellow shows up well against the dark green leaves. A little patch of spring sunshine for your garden.



left and below  
*R. 'Great Dane'*  
- Jens Birck, 1975  
*R. ... yak x R. rex ssp. rex*  
Somehow this most unlikely pairing works, and works very well. *Rex* lends its large stature to the blossoms and the leaves, *Yak* imparts the dense foliage with the stunning indumentum. What a grand result!



and finally, a pre-Christmas treat  
*R. 'Lem's Cameo x Ken Janeck'*  
- unnamed  
- unregistered  
- unknown  
But how can one resist such festive bells?

