

The Oak

Newsletter of
the Fraser South
Rhododendron
Society

Volume 25 Number 2
February 2011



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 Months Meeting

Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2011
Topic: "The Carolinian Forest"
Speaker: Philip MacDougall

2011 Officers

President:	Bill Bischoff	604-589-6134
Past Pres:	Harold Fearing	604-857-4136
Vice Pres:	John Dodd	604-530-0153
Secretary:	Sandy Procter	604-857-0440
Treasurer:	Alan March	604-532-9062
Directors:	Arlene Darby	604-597-1849
	Matt Groves	604-856-2624
	Kathy Delory	604-576-1172
Programme:	Sean Rafferty	604-990-5353
Membership:	Mai Swan	604-852-1992
Newsletter:	Brenda Macdonald	604-990-5353
Librarian:	Joan McGiveron	604-538-9347
Website:	Chris Klapwijk	604-581-0925



Quick Hits

Not much in the way of colour yet, with the exception of some lovely photos of *Hamamelis* cvs. taken by Bill Bischoff. See also page 7 if you desperately need some colours other than green and grey in your life right about now.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Notes From the Chair

January 19th was our first membership meeting of the calendar year, and what a meeting it was. As tradition has it, the tone was rather festive and rightly so, because this is the get-together when we elect the executive body that will guide us through the year ahead. Let us all thank our past executive members for a duty well performed. And let us say thank you especially to Wenonah March for the many years she so faithfully served, as well to Lori Bayes who has always joined our meetings by taking a long trip across the border from the USA. And now a whole-hearted welcome to the new board

members: Mai Swan, who takes the place of Wenonah March as Membership Chair, and Kathy Delory, who fills in for Lori Bayes as Director.

A new position, Tour Coordinator, has been taken on by Chris Klapwijk, presently our Web-Master par excellence. Thank you to Chris for his past services, which he donates to the club for free, and thank you also for accepting this new task. At our January meeting Chris showed some slides of potential places to visit during our first planned two day trip to Vancouver Island, which will likely take place during the first week in May.

Also at the January meeting, Bev Hansen entertained us with pictures from her garden, where she demonstrated the evolvement of different aspects of the lands around her house in Aldergrove. It also showed how her husband Bent performed nearly a miracle in such a short time, with proper female guidance of course. The main features are a green-house which will be changed into a tropical flower-house very shortly I am certain. There was also an intriguing water feature with a unique water filtering system and several plants native to Australia. Bev's and Ben's garden is definitely on our "must-visit" list.

Congratulations to the recipients of the awards of merit at our last meeting - in all cases well deserved recognition for services given to our society and by extension to all of us. Thank you to the persons who provided these medals and award diplomas, all in deepest secrecy.

The ARS has announced an extension to last year's membership drive contest. As you recall, our club placed first in this event. We won 36 very healthy rhododendron plants which were auctioned off, with a lot of hoopla, at our meeting later in the year. We are still offering the special \$15 per year full membership during this year (FSRS & ARS, including the newsletters). It has been decided that we will again be part of this contest. Again, Briggs Nurseries of Oregon will donate prize plants for this race. This promotion will run until the end of September of this year. Each new member that joins after April 1st, is eligible for 18 months of ARS membership, this translates to 6 very informative and colourful journals. Each individual member is urged to get at least one new member. Please remember, people can visit our meetings as guests without having to enlist as a member. Let us first show potentially-new members what we have to offer, then they may join. (Just remember the two tables full of very enticing deserts at our last meeting; we definitely need help there, ideally in the form of new members.) You can find new members at other organizations you belong to. There are more than a dozen horticultural clubs in our area. Other societies, including religious gatherings, have potential new members for us. There are invitation pamphlets available at every one of our meetings, for you to take and distribute. At our yearly sale, any customer is a potential new member. Just hand out our meeting invitations. Carla and I belong to three other plant clubs and we visit several clubs and functions during a year, where we hand out information about our club and its events. We never have been turned down when we asked for permission to hand out our information.

What works for the membership department will also work for our plant sale on Saturday, April 23rd. Remember our plant sale numbers were considerably up from past years. Advertising was likely a factor in this positive outcome. Advertising is a very old concept - it predates humans by many millions of years. Just consider our friends, the flowers: when ready to produce seeds, they advertise, with an eye-catching and colourful display, powerful scent and intriguing forms. All we have to do is imitate them in any way possible to us. Let the entire world know who we are and what we do and most importantly, what we offer to potentially new members.

And now the race is on. Who can report the first Rhododendron flower of this season? Brenda needs a photo as proof, to be published in our next YAK.

Happy gardening to all.

Bill Bischoff



FROM THE EDITOR

Although we have not been given an official title to this presentation, my guess is that his subject will be ... rhododendrons.

The Business Stuff:

Our AGM last month has taken care of the nitty-gritty of being a not-for profit organization in this day and age. Last year's AGM minutes accepted, financial report audited, presented and accepted, new Executive slate presented and accepted. We are now, as they say, good to go for another 12 months.

OTHER DUTIES AS ASSIGNED: .

- ✿ Into the kitchen fray for the first time at the FSRS, Barbara Inniss will be ably assisted by Lori Bayes for the February tearoom honours.
- ✿ The February issue is usually the time when we publish any recipes people have requested during the year. However apparently everyone was too satiated to worry about requesting anything new, since the only requests I heard about were for Cherry Groves 'Yams in Orange Juice', and Sean Rafferty's 'Salmon Teriyaki', both of them perennial favourites at the Christmas do, and both of them published in last year's "Incredible Edibles" section, January, 2010 edition of the Yak. Let me know if I missed anything else you wanted.

THE CALENDAR:

Wednesday, February 16	Fraser South Chapter Philip MacDougall - The Carolinian Forest
Thursday, February 17	Vancouver Chapter Carol Dancer - "The Government House Gardens"
Tuesday, February 22	Peace Arch Chapter TBA
Monday, February 28	Fraser Valley Chapter Bill Bischoff - "Gardens of the Olympic Peninsula"
Wednesday, March 16	Fraser South Chapter Steve Hootman - Topic TBA
Thursday, March 17	Vancouver Chapter Steve Hootman - Topic TBA
Tuesday, March 22	Peace Arch Chapter TBA

Last Month:

Last month was our annual AGM and Dessert Extravaganza. The proposed slate of Executive and Directors was elected by acclamation, and is noted on the first page of this issue. One of the recipients of an award was missing, so a complete report on that portion of the evening will await completion of the task. The desserts were great, and Bev Hansen's slides of her wonderful garden emerging from a plain, flat piece of ground in Abbotsford were fascinating.

Next Month:

Next month we will welcome back Steve Hootman, Executive Director of the Rhododendron Species Foundation located in Federal Way, Washington.

Monday, March 28	Fraser Valley Chapter TBA
Wednesday, April 20	Fraser South Chapter Sue & Garth Wedemire - "Plants of South Africa"
Saturday, April 23	Fraser South Chapter Annual Plant Sale - United Church 200th St. at 56th Ave.
Wednesday, May 10 to Sunday, May 15	65th Annual ARS Spring Convention Vancouver, Washington
Wednesday, May 18	Fraser South Chapter Annual Beer Bottle Truss Show
Saturday, June 11	Fraser South Chapter Annual Picnic

The Business Stuff, Redux

FSRS Members may recall that their Executive has struggled over the past year with issues surrounding the appropriate utilization of Chapter funds in support of the ARS, our own FSRS Chapter, and the intermediary administrative level of the District and its District Director. (FSRS is part of District 1, whose Director is currently Mary Parker from the Mount Arrowsmith Chapter.)

In particular, the Executive of the FSRS were uncomfortable with the method and level of funding for the travel/accommodation expenses for the District 1 Director to attend the twice-yearly ARS Officers and Directors meetings held in conjunction with the Spring Convention and the Fall Conference.

This topic had been discussed many times during FSRS Executive meetings, and was brought before the entire Chapter for a vote before we proceeded with the decision to decline making a contribution for the years 2009 and 2010. At the time this decision was taken, the monies already accumulated from all the Chapters (including FSRS) were sufficient to fund the Director's expenses for at least 2009 and 2010.

At the same time the Executive wrote to the District 1 Director (at that time, Ron Knight) explaining our concerns and inviting discussion about alternate solutions to the question. Unfortunately there has been no resolution to this issue, although it is a subject that continues to be discussed by all levels of the ARS.

At this point, having utilized the \$2.50/member levy required by District 1 as additional funding for support of our own Chapter for the years 2009 and 2010, the Executive will reconsider providing contributions to the Director's Travel Fund for 2011. As before, any decision by the Executive will be brought before the general membership for their ratification.

The FSRS does not seek to withdraw support for District 1, simply to ensure that the financial resources of all the District 1 Chapters are utilized in the most effective way. And to this end, the Executive have sent the following Open Letter to the ARS Officers and Directors, and all District 1 Chapter Presidents, in the hope that continued discussion about these matters will generate more equitable funding procedures as well as more cost-effective ways of handling ARS business.

Brenda Macdonald

Open Letter to the ARS Officers and Directors, and to all District 1 Chapter Presidents

To: Ted Stecki, President ARS
cc: all other Officers and Directors, District 1 Presidents

Dear Ted,

As you know our Society, in common with other gardening organizations, has wrestled with declining membership numbers and falling revenues. This phenomenon has been discussed frequently and in depth at all levels of the ARS – by individual Chapter executive committees and by the Chapter members, as well as by the ARS Officers and Directors both as a whole and as members of specific committees.

The content of these discussions is universal: a) how to maintain/increase membership numbers, and b) how to manage more effectively our diminishing resources, both fiscal and human. Although many valid ideas have been discussed it does not appear that we have reached a consensus about what to do, or how to go about doing it.

The Fraser South Chapter has had many discussions at both Executive and full membership levels about these issues, and resolved to focus our energies and resources on two basic goals:

- to support the ARS parent organization
- to maximize the effective use of money gained and money spent in supporting both our FSRS Chapter members and their activities, and the ARS

And it is in the light of maximizing the effective use of increasingly limited resources that we would like to urge the ARS to reconsider some of their present policies and processes.

- #1 – The ARS should reconsider the need for twice-annual Board of Directors meetings, since many of the discussions and decisions can and should take place electronically.**
- #2 – If the ARS decides to maintain the twice-annual meetings, then the ARS should assume financial responsibility for the travel/accommodation costs for delegates. Fiscal support for these meetings should be handled by the ARS and applied universally to all Chapters, and the cost should be included in the annual ARS fee schedule.**

#1

It seems self-evident that the universal availability of information and knowledge from the internet is at least partly to blame for the decreasing attractiveness of specialized groups such as the ARS. Once, joining a gardening club and attending meetings was the only practicable way of obtaining the breadth of knowledge and experience that is now available with a few mouse clicks. Of course the clubs provide a social network and depth of experience that remain important and cannot be replicated with even the best on-line listservs and chat groups, but they are no longer the only, or even the best, purveyor of basic information.

It also seems clear that just as computers have already had this profound effect on structure and function at a Chapter level, they should have as significant an effect on the way the ARS conducts its activities.

In particular, the ARS needs to re-think the need for District representatives to attend semi-annual meetings to discuss ARS business.

A review of the minutes of any of these meetings reveals that very few decisions are concluded at the meetings. Most often new subjects are referred to various committees for examination and old subjects are reviewed by way of committee reports distributed for later consideration by the attendees. It is difficult to see how this business could not be more effectively handled electronically – proposals, discussions, the tabling of committee reports, the referral of questions to committee, and even voting on initiatives are daily completed on-line by the business world, without the expense in time and travel necessitated by group meetings.

If the ARS is to maintain its current level of support from the Chapter members it needs to demonstrate an increased willingness to change and mature in the same way that other businesses and organizations have done.

Requiring the Chapters to support travel and accommodation expenses for District Directors to attend meetings that may be better served through electronic traffic appears neither cost-effective nor efficient to the average Chapter member.

#2

It has become increasingly obvious that there is no consistency across the ARS in regards to the financial support of the District level of governance, with individual Districts providing variously full, partial, and no funding for travel and accommodation expenses for their District Directors.

District 1, in which the FSRS is a member Chapter, has in place a policy requiring all member Chapters to contribute a per/head levy of \$2.50 to provide funding for the travel and accommodation expenses of the District 1 Director to attend the two ARS Officers/Directors meetings each year. During 2008 this account had a significant surplus, with enough money to fund travel and accommodation for the District 1 Director (at the prescribed flat rate of \$500 for West Coast venues and \$1000 for elsewhere) through to 2011.

Basically the FSRS felt that that \$2.50 could be more productively used at the Chapter and ARS level than it would be in funding travel expenses at the District level – particularly for meetings that might be better handled in some other format. Moreover we were concerned that the method of funding these expenses was neither appropriate nor in keeping with common business practices in both the marketplace and government. Typically, in both the public and private sectors, only those extra expenses associated with the business portion of a conference are reimbursed.

After months of discussion at the FSRS Executive meetings, and only after further discussion and voted approval from the Chapter members, FSRS decided to withhold their \$2.50/head levy from the District and instead to use that money to directly support the FSRS and the parent ARS organization. We used the money to additionally subsidize our membership fees so that we could eliminate the “Local” or “Friends” category of membership traditionally used by those members who were reluctant to participate in the higher cost of full ARS membership.

Our intention was to raise all members to full ARS membership and provide that additional support to the parent ARS organization, and our hope was that once this initial financial hurdle had been overcome, we would be able to maintain that full ARS membership status without loss when the next year’s membership came due. And, in fact, we have been successful in this endeavour. All persons in the FSRS are now full ARS members, and we did not experience a significant loss of numbers at this year’s enrollment.

The FSRS recognizes that this was a unilateral decision, not sanctioned by others members of District 1, but also not, according to any documentation we could find, specifically disallowed.

Currently the organization of the ARS interposes the additional level of “District” and the representative “Directors” between the individual Chapters and the ARS, but the exact function and structure of this level of administration is unclear. Certainly here in District 1 there is no Charter or bylaws governing the activities of this level. While such an ad-hoc administrative structure may well be a reasonable and efficient way of handling ARS business, it does leave itself open to discrepancies. Specifically, a quick survey of other Districts’ documentation reveals that there is no consistent approach to financial support for their Directors, and even less consistency in how that support is provided.

The District (and Director) level, if deemed necessary by the ARS for ease of administration, should be both implemented and funded by the ARS, with the same rules for expense reimbursement for ARS business applied universally across all Chapters and Districts.

Having this expense management under ARS rather than District control would level out the playing field for all member Chapters, ensure that appropriate fiscal controls are in place. It will give the ARS further incentive to implement more cost-effective ways of conducting its daily business and maintaining its activities in support of its mandate to encourage interest in, and disseminate information about, the genus Rhododendron.

Yours sincerely,

Brenda Macdonald,

on behalf of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society Executive

Bill Bischoff - President

Arlene Darby, Director

Harold Fearing - Past President

Matt Groves, Director

John Dodd - Vice President

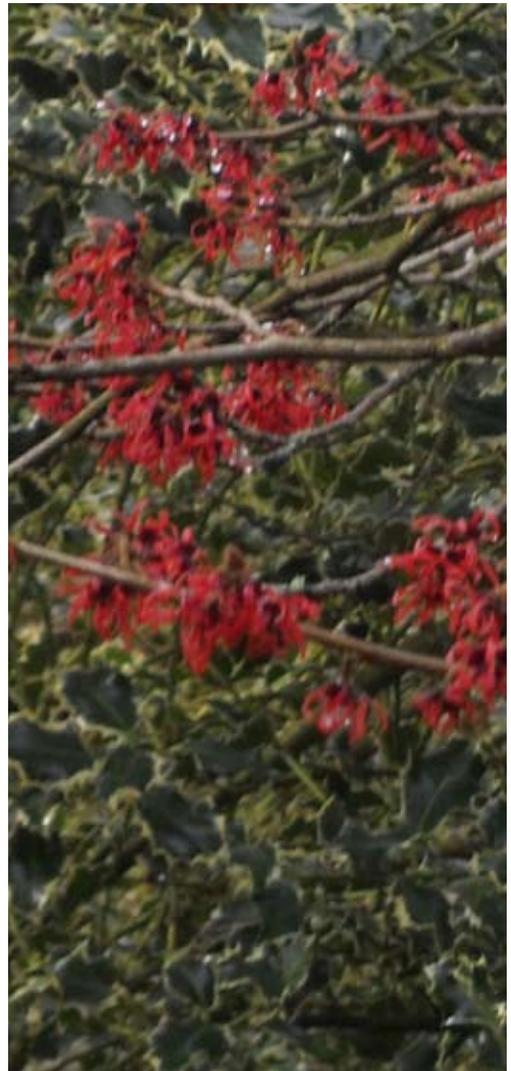
Kathy Delory, Director

Sandy Procter - Secretary

Alan March - Treasurer



Desperate for something that looks like spring, we resort to this lovely collage of different varieties of Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis mollis* cultivars) taken by Bill Bischoff. The yellow variety is in his own back yard. The orange and red varieties are located in Bear Creek Park in Surrey.



R. ririei

There is the very real possibility that *R. ririei* would not be so well admired were it not for its extraordinarily early bloom time. Usually the first of the elepidotes to blossom in the spring, it can easily be dismissed with the single, fatal, descriptor “mauve”. Like the similarly coloured, small-flowered hybrid ‘Olive’ our gaze seems to focus on them more because there is a want of competition than any intrinsic beauty. But such a shortsighted view does not take into consideration the real, if subtle, attractiveness of this plant.

Like other members of the Subsection *Argyrophylla*, *ririei* has a plastered silvery-white indumentum on the backs of its nicely shaped leaves, but unlike other members of the same subsection it has deep, dark purple, glistening, nectar pouches, which contribute a great deal to its attractiveness. Although some plants can look pale and washed-out, a good specimen is a wonderful pale purple, somewhat like grape jelly on white bread

It is unclear why *ririei* has been used in so few hybrid crosses - perhaps the extremely early bloom period made the hybrids susceptible to late frosts, or perhaps the pale purple colour only served to muddy the hybrid colour rather than enhance it, but I could find only three listings and a single image when searching available sources.

Goheen registered his ‘Marzo’ in 1982, a complicated cross with *griffithianum* and *fortunei* parentage, and although I could not find a single image, its description as “magenta flowers opening to spirea red and fading to rosine purple” sounds good enough to eat with a spoon. ‘Maya’ is a much earlier *sutchuenense* cross developed by Magor in 1933 that seems to have entirely disappeared.

Lord Aberconway (the younger) developed ‘Snowy River’, a *ririei* x *niveum* hybrid in 1974, perhaps looking to add *niveum*’s longer leaves and tighter inflorescence to *ririei*’s early bloom, without complicating the

purple colour and deep nectar pouches present in both species.

Brenda Macdonald

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



Illustration by Lilian Snelling, 1925
Curtis's Botanical Magazine

On the left, the deep purple nectar pouches can be seen. On the right, the very tall and thin leaf buds of *ririei* are a good identifying characteristic.





All photos harvested from the wonderful
"Hirsutum" site
www.hirsutum.info/index.html

with the exception of the lovely photo
on the lower left sent by Ken Gibson in
April, 2004

R. 'Snowy River'
R. ririei x *R. niveum*
Aberconway, 1974



Above, *R. ririei* in bud and flower.
To the left, *R. ririei* in the garden
of Ken Gibson, Tofino, BC.