

The Oak

Newsletter of
the Fraser South
Rhododendron
Society

Volume 25 Number 7
September 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 Month's Meeting

Date: Wednesday, September 21, 2011
Topic: "Companion Plants for the Rhodo Garden"
Speaker: Janis Matson
Plant Sales: Sue Klapwijk

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 |
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| | 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

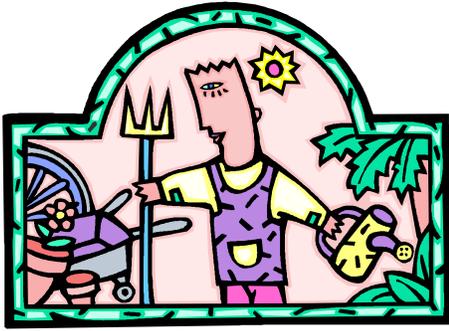
There you are in all your glory.

You have done what you could in the amazingly short summer we had this year. Now it's time to down tools and return to the fold of the FSRS monthly meetings, where we

can communally celebrate our horticultural triumphs and commiserate about our botanical disasters.

And there will be more of us than ever! In this, our first meeting of the year, we send our very warmest welcome to all our new members recently arrived from PARS (Peace Arch Rhododendron Society). Come in! Sit down! Tell us how doth your garden grow. We are all so pleased you have joined us.!

Notes From the Chair



FROM THE PRESIDENT

a very worthy undertaking, enjoyed by all. Thanks to our hosts, Karen and Larry. Everything was prepared to make all visitors feel at home for the afternoon, and extending well into the evening. Most visitors took pleasure in a stroll through the lovely garden, well enhanced with prize winning rhododendrons (recall our truss show). Thank you also to the auctioneers who took shifts to tirelessly entice buyers to ever increase their bids. Our gratitude to all donors of plants and things. Thank you also to Mary-Anne Berg and Nancy Moore who helped again by keeping the tally-books for the auction. This is a demanding and intense job which lasted well past the time when most visitors had gone home. Again our thanks to both.

While most of our members enjoyed a relaxing west coast summer, unknown to them an exiting new development took place. Our good rhododendron friends, the members of PARS (Peace Arch Rhododendron Society) decided to amalgamate with the FSRS. A welcome event that will benefit each society equally, through sharing knowledge and talents. Several of the PARS members were also members of the FSRS; the majority however will be new to us. Let's do our best to make these newcomers feel at home with us.

Coming events: Saturday, September 24th, starting at 10:30 am, a free rhododendron propagation demonstration by Les Clay at his home at 3674 – 224 Street, Langley (604-530-5188). There will also be plants available for purchase, some rare species and interesting hybrids.

At the same day and the following day, at Arts Nursery in Port Kells, that is, Saturday and Sunday, September 24th and 25th, from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm, a special plant instruction and information afternoon. Refreshments and reduced prices will be offered. The FSRS will man an information tent to offer rhododendron related information and memberships in our society. Please come and visit us or better yet, help us for a while.

Also on Sunday, September 25th, at Van Dusen Garden in Vancouver, the Alpine Garden Club of B.C. will hold its fall plant sale. To all rock-garden plant lovers, this is a must-see event. Alpine plants you always wanted will be for sale there. At the same time you can have a look at the new Van Dusen headquarter building (still under construction). A building of very intriguing design with a roof that will eventually be planted with some greenery.

Yesterday, Wednesday, September 7th, was a jolt into reality for some of our members, especially the executive members - their first meeting of the season, at the home of Mai and Alan Swan in Abbotsford. The somewhat excitable and heated discussions were luckily tempered by the very amiable hostess and her excellent selections of refreshments.

Thank you very much, Mai and Alan.

Until our next meeting on Wednesday, September 21, I wish you all a continuing pleasant late summer.

Happy gardening to all ...

Bill Bischoff



at left, a photo of *R. thomsonii* ssp *thomsonii*, taken by Garth Wedemire at the Rhododendron Species Foundation. See page 6 for more *thomsonii* information.



FROM THE EDITOR

Last Month:

Last month we held our annual potluck picnic and fund-raising auction. Everything went swimmingly: we ate good food, we had good chats with our neighbours, and we raised good money for the club. Although the final figures were not available at the September Executive meeting, our Treasurer, Alan March, estimated that we raised slightly under \$1000. Yeah for us!

Thanks again to our hosts Karen Linton and Larry Morton, and to all the others who also pitched in and helped.

This Month:

This month we have a speaker new to FSRS. Janis Matson is a landscape designer and installer under her own company, Shoreline Landscape Design Ltd. She has a number of diplomas and certifications concerning landscaping and horticulture, including a Diploma of Technology in Landscape Design and Horticulture from BCIT, and a Certificate of Floral Design from the Floral Design Institute in Bellevue, Washington. In addition, she is a certified Arborist.

Janis worked at the well-known Murray's Nursery in Vancouver for five years before setting up her own company in landscape design and installation some 18 years ago.

We welcome her to FSRS and look forward to her talk on companion plants suitable for a rhodo garden.

The Business Stuff:

It was agreed at the September Executive meeting that a permanent pictorial archive of Chapter members and activities would be a splendid thing. I have photos from last year's (2010) picnic, but none from this year's. I have photos of several of the past few Beer Bottle Truss Shows, but I am sure others also have some. This also seems an opportune time to gather up any photos and mementos from our new PARS brethren to include in what will hopefully be an on-going archive.

So here is the official challenge to all: have a look around in your photo caches and see whether there are not some images that could be added to this project. You can send them to me by email in probably just about any format you care to, or you can even hand me the hard copies at one of our regular monthly meetings and I ensure they are copied and returned safely to you.

Unfortunately we did not receive the membership details for the incoming PARS members in time to include an updated Membership List with this newsletter. A full listing will be included with next month's issue.

And as usual, everyone wants our money a little sooner than before. The ARS needs to have their membership contributions by the end of November now, which leaves only the next couple of months for us to get everything all together and met. This year's Membership application is attached, and can be completed and handed in to Mai Swan (or any other FSRS officer) at the next couple of meetings.

OTHER DUTIES AS ASSIGNED:

Over the long break, Margaret Hodgson and Jo Wright have kept up their water-boiling skills in preparation for their September tea-room duties and are all primed and ready to dispense.

Yours truly and spouse are on tap for October. Let's see, perhaps we can get the Spousal Unit (otherwise known as The Garden Architect) to whip up some Welsh Cakes.

THE CALENDAR:

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Wednesday, Sept 21 | Fraser South Chapter Janis Matson - Companion Plants for the Rhodo Garden |
| Saturday, Sept 24 | Propagation Demonstration & Plant Sale - Les Clay - at his home, 10:30 am to 12:00 pm |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Monday, Sept 26 | Fraser Valley Chapter TBA |
| Thursday, Sept 29 | Vancouver Chapter Tom Carter - The Rhododendron Forests of Nepal |
| Wednesday, Oct 19 | Fraser South Chapter Steve Hootman - |
| Thursday, Oct 20 | Vancouver Chapter Steve Hootman - |

Brenda Macdonald

Queries

Periodically we receive queries from members of the public regarding things-Rhododendron. They will be published here in the hopes that both the questions and the answers provided by one of our Chapter members will provide additional information for other interested readers.

From: Brenda email address: bsnow@xxxx.net

My Dora Amateis has an issue. It is bent right over where the stalk comes out of the ground. The plant appears to still be alive and healthy. Not sure if a bear or some other creature stomped on it. I plan to stake it but wondered if I should wrap the stalk with something to add strength or protect it in the event that there is some splitting. Do you have any tips. Thank you.

.....

Good afternoon, Brenda -

Of course, from afar it is a bit hard to diagnose these sorts of things because we can't really see how large or how old this particular specimen is.

You can of course, stake it, as you have indicated. (I have always found old pantyhose to be good for supporting woody stems - pantyhose are strong but soft, have enough give to prevent binding and rubbing, their colour is nearly invisible, and they last quite a while.)

If you do not see any evidence of cracking or splitting of the bark then do not cover it with anything - it is better for the bark to be uncovered than covered. If you do see evidence of cracking you could cover the affected area with something that allows the bark to breath, such as landscape cloth. Then you should seal off each end with something like electrician's tape, simply to prevent various insects from taking up residence underneath the protective sleeve of cloth you have applied. Remember to check next year to see if the crack has calloused over. The cloth and tape should not be left there permanently as they will strangle the stem as it expands.

Another option, depending on the size of the plant, is to dig it out (rhododendrons have wide but shallow root balls) and re-position it so that one side of the root ball is lower than the other - that is, tipping the plant back into a more upright position. A better way of describing it would be to say that you should prop up one side of the root ball with additional soil, since it is very important not to bury the existing root ball too deeply. Rhododendrons really resent having all their surface roots covered with inches of soil.

I hope this information helps, and good luck with your Dora Amateis.

Best regards,

Brenda Macdonald

Consider the lilies of the field forest ...

The year 2007 was a very good year for our *Cardiocrinum giganteums*. We had several flower stalks, all of impressive height. However, the only thing more impressive than the blossoms was the immediate and devastating slug damage. Even before the blossoms were fully opened they were being shredded by slugs, who apparently do not suffer from vertigo in the least and are quite happy to find their next meal 8 feet up and 2 feet out. You can see the shreds hanging off the blossom about midway up the right side of the plant in the photo to the right. It was all rather discouraging because once the slugs were up there, there was no way to get them off. They were way beyond arm's reach, and one cannot exactly lean a ladder up against the lily stem to climb up and pluck them off

The year 2011 was not quite such a good year for the lilies. The photo below shows this year's flower stem is clearly not even as high as the last year's stem just to its left. Possibly the long and very cool spring did not allow the bulb to get a jump start. However, careful examination of the flowers reveals no slug damage whatsoever.



And the secret?

There it is,

nestled around the base of the flower stem: a cozy copper mesh scarf from good old Lee Valley. Of course you have to set it up before any of the slugs start their upward journey, and you have to ensure it touches the ground all around so they cannot just ooze on in underneath, but the untouched blossoms appear to confirm its worth.

Brenda Macdonald



R. thomsonii

R. thomsonii ssp. *thomsonii* is perhaps the iconic representation of the large Thomsonia subsection. Rarely confused with other species it is usually easy to identify, particularly in a garden setting, with its combination of waxy, deep red flowers with prominent almost black-red nectaries, rounded leaves, smooth, peeling, multicoloured bark and those remarkable calyces. Often of contrasting whitish or yellow-green, each large cup-shaped calyx securely clasps the base of the flower, often remaining long after the blossom has dropped off. The effect is somewhat jaunty, somewhat like the a hotel bellboy's cap, and, combined with the fat round leaves and clown-like red of the flowers, gives the plant a cheerful rather than elegant look.

Generally considered hardy, *thomsonii*'s early bloom time does make it susceptible to late frosts, and it prefers the shelter of the woodland away from the wind. In the wild it can be extremely variable in habit and size, as well as in calyx colour, which can range from yellow-green through crimson to purple.

First introduced by J. D. Hooker from Sikkim in 1849-1850, subsequent populations were discovered in Nepal, Bhutan, Assam, and southern Tibet, and by 1857 it was already part of a cross-breeding program that verged on a cottage industry. Reviewing Salley and Greer's Rhododendron Hybrids I gave up counting when I had reached over 100 hybrids and was only in the middle of the C's.

Not only that, but there seems to have been

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



Engraving by Fitch, 1857
Curtis's Botanical Magazine

a particular creativity in evidence as the hybridizers searched for names for these progeny. Either that, or the sheer number of crosses made people look deep in their creative psyches for a name that was not already taken. But how can you resist such names as 'Blazing Petals', 'Banned in Boston', 'Black Prince', or my personal favourite, 'Aroma from Tacoma', a Loderi cross from Hjalmer Larson.

A couple of the original crosses became legends in their own right: Gill, Richards & Sons developed 'Aurora', which was a parent of the Rothschild's ubiquitous 'Naomi' series, and it seems as if there were hardly a rhododendron developed in the 1950's and early 1960's that didn't have a piece of 'Naomi' in it somewhere.

Although somewhat slow to mature (it doesn't bud up in a two-gallon pot) *thomsonii* is reliably floriferous once it does get started, and is a wonderful addition to any garden.

Brenda Macdonald



top left *R. 'Aurora'* - a *griffithianum*, *fortunei*, and *thomsonii* cross by Rothschild in 1922, it was itself a parent to the prolific 'Naomi' group.



top right *R. 'Oporto'* - the almost edible 'Oporto' is a straight *thomsonii* *ssp. thomsonii* x *sanguineum* *ssp. sanguineum* var *haemaleum* cross by Nelson in 1965.



middle right *R. 'Cornish Cross'* - essentially a grex of varying degrees of attractiveness from a *thomsonii* x *griffithianum* cross done by Rothschild in 1935, they all at least retained *thomsonii's* wonderful peeling bark.

bottom right
R. 'Royston Red' - this small gem is a *forrestii* Repens Group x *thomsonii* cross developed by Harry White and named by Alleyne Cook in honour of the local hybridizers Ted and Mary Grieg and their nursery in Royston, BC.



All photos harvested from the wonderful "Hirsutum" site

www.hirsutum.info/index.html



Membership

As in previous years it continues to be the intent of the Chapter officers to ensure that membership fees be kept as low as feasible in order to make our club accessible to all who wish to join.

It is through the ARS umbrella that many of the educational activities and sharing of information and resources is made possible. A strong ARS, supported by Full Memberships all across the continent, is what makes our rhododendron community possible.

All membership questions should be address to our Membership Chair, Mai Swan, or any other of the FSRs officers.

Fraser South Rhododendron Society 2012 Membership

New Membership - \$15.00

Renewal Membership - see below

Date _____

Name _____

Partner or Spouse's Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Province (State) _____

Postal (Zip) Code _____

Telephone Number _____

Fax Number _____

Email Address _____

All personal information collected by FSRs is for Society use only. Chapter members who would like their name and address to be included in the FSRs Member List - to be distributed to FSRs members only - must indicate their consent by marking this box:

Please indicate the type of membership below, and enclose your payment with this registration form.

All cheques should be made out to: **Fraser South Rhododendron Society**

If mailing, send to: c/o 35114 McKee Road, Abbotsford, BC V2F 5F1

Full Member (includes ARS membership and quarterly ARS Journal) \$35.00

Associate (full member of other Canadian ARS chapter) \$10.00

Please indicate name of primary membership chapter _____