

The Yak

Newsletter of
The Fraser South
Rhododendron
Society

Volume 26 Number 4
April 2012



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, April 18th, 2012

Topic: "Pink Mountain"

Speaker: Ron Long

Plant Sales: Sue Klapwijk

2012 Officers

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Social Convenor	Karen Linton	604-888-6564
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BCCGC Liaison	Bill Bischoff	604-589-6134

Quick Hits

Our April speaker will be Ron Long, speaking on the endangered flora and fauna of Pink Mountain, BC.

See inside for details - page 4 .





Notes From the Chair

THE UNDERSTORY - REDUX

Now that spring has appeared, even in our damp and wooded location, it is time to celebrate the return of the Spring Ephemerals.

Usually as fleeting as their name describes, these are herbaceous plants that emerge, grow, flower, and set seed, all in the brief time between snow melt and

FROM THE PRESIDENT

when the deciduous forest canopy overhead is fully leafed out.

Here on the wet west coast our coniferous forests do not provide the appropriate habitat, so it is only through judicious garden plantings that we can enjoy their brief splendour. Found almost exclusively within the Carolinian Forest biosphere of the eastern part of North America, there are a few plants which serve the same purpose from other parts of the world.



Fawn Lilies or Dog's-Tooth Violets (*Erythronium* spp) are one of the first to appear, and while the east coast has its yellow *Erythronium americanum*, we have been blessed with the exquisite *Erythronium revolutum*. Usually a clear delicate pink, there is a white form also - both of them with attractively mottled leaves.

At about the same time, the trilliums start their welcome display. Many gardeners are familiar with the lovely white *Trillium grandiflorum* and the almost wine-red *Trillium erectum* from back east, but a less well-known but lovely addition, also from the eastern

top: *Erythronium revolutum*
middle: *Pseudotrillium rivale*
bottom: *Trillium undulatum*



part of the continent, is *Trillium undulatum*, the Painted Trillium, with its splash of red at the throat. Still the prize for most winsome surely must go to the previously-known-as-Trillium, now *Pseudotrillium rivale*. Native to the Siskiyou mountains of southern Oregon and northern California, it is only seven or eight inches high. This diminutive gem, with its dainty pink blossoms will form a compact and robust patch if kept happy with light shade in the summer and nice woody soil.

Although dismissed with a sniff as "slug fodder" by one nurseryman I inquired of, I have always had a soft

spot for *Dicentra cucullaria*, or Dutchman's Breeches. This eastern native displays the same soft and ferny, blue-green foliage as our native *Dicentra formosa*, but has wonderful white flowers with jolly yellow edges, that do indeed look like upside-down versions of the something Hans Brinker might have worn. While neither *cucullaria* nor the other eastern native, *Dicentra canadensis*, (plain white, and known as Squirrel Corn) display the flamboyance of the Chinese *Dicentra spectabilis* we are more familiar with, they still provide a welcome message that spring is finally come to the garden.



Two of the Spring Ephemerals that I regularly bought and lost were Blood Root, *Sanguinaria canadensis*, and Twinleaf, *Jeffersonia diphylla*. That is, until I realized that the trick was to plant them above the root ball of a thirsty tree such as a maple or a limbed-up conifer, or even close to that cemetery of plants, the house foundation. They simply cannot thrive in the constant wet that we experience from fall through to spring. Blood Root is now commonly available in a double form, and while on the whole I am appalled by this drive to make every blossom look like a cabbage rose, I must admit that the patch of chalky virginal white showing up against the dark damp soil and the fresh green leaves is so, well clean looking. And of course the double flowers have the specific advantage of being



slightly less ephemeral than the singles, which shatter and drop their petals as soon as they are fertilized. The blossoms of the Jeffersonia, while very white and starry are very short-lived, but the blue-green two-lobed leaves look lovely dancing on their ten-inch wiry stems, like a swarm of blue-green butterflies hovering over your garden bed.

And last but certainly not least we need to consider *Iris reticulata*. Although a native to the Caucasus it fits



right in with the other Spring Ephemerals and provides a welcome splash of colour. There are a number of named varieties available in various colours, but best of all is 'Cantab' - a clear flax blue, which looks like nothing so much as a patch of blue sky on the garden floor when viewed from the window through the drab grey rain of a March day.

Brenda Macdonald

top: *Dicentra cucullaria*
left: *Sanguinaria canadensis*
right: *Jeffersonia diphylla*
bottom: *Iris reticulata* 'Cantab'



FROM THE EDITOR

including such beauties as *arboreum*, *edgeworthii*, *ciliatum*, *cinnabarinum*, *hodgsonii* and both white and pink colour forms of *kesangiae* among others. There were also images of many rhododendron companions; notable among them were *Arisaema griffithii*, *Meconopsis delavayi* and *Paris polyphylla*. All of these visual treats were accompanied with Carmen's well informed, enthusiastic and detailed descriptions of the plant materials, lending a good deal of vitality to her talk and to the evening in general. I very much look forward to a return engagement.

....And speaking of vitality and enthusiasm, I must say that I thought the whole meeting had an uplifting feel to it. There was a great crowd, with several new members in attendance, a well burdened table filled with yummy calories, a fabulous raffle table laden with all kinds of lovelies and the air was suffused with an energetic and generous spirit. It was simply great. Many thanks to everyone in attendance.

I was particularly pleased to have Colleen Bojczuk refer to last month's column on *R. insigne* and its hybrids, when she graciously donated a gorgeous specimen of the *R. insigne* hybrid, *R. 'Redwood'*, to the raffle table. Pleased, not only for her thoughtful generosity, but also delighted in the acknowledgement that someone actually reads this stuff.

This Month:

We shall have as our speaker, Ron Long, who was a professional photographer at Simon Fraser University for thirty-six years. He has an intense interest in British Columbia native plants that goes back forty years. Now retired, Ron travels extensively on plant hunting trips around the world and closer to home. His illustrated talks about his experiences are well attended by a wide audience consisting of plant/nature lovers and those who enjoy good photography.

The title of this month's talk is "The Threatened Species of Pink Mountain", which Ron, explains below:

"Pink Mountain stands apart from its surroundings in the far north of BC. Because of its unique combination of altitude, latitude and geology the summit supports an assemblage of arctic/alpine plants that simply does not occur anywhere else. Many of these plants are rare (ie *Rhododendron lapponicum*) and many more are rarely seen (because of remote habitat) and are never seen in the combination and numbers that are found on Pink Mountain. But now commercial development threatens this unique habitat and it could all be lost within a year.

Last Month:

We were treated to a scrumptious journey through the small, mountainous and botanically rich Kingdom of Bhutan. This lovely pictorial lecture was presented by Carmen Varcoe, a notable plantswoman who, although hailing from Victoria, on Vancouver Island, was warmly greeted by many of her longstanding friends within our club.

Carmen's command of her subject material was quite formidable and held all of us fascinated for the duration of her lecture; to which I could happily have listened for another hour or more. She gave us in depth background of the peoples and their customs, including the rather enlightened Royal Proclamation denying entry of any western, fast food chain into the Kingdom.

However, more significantly, Carmen showed us lovely pictures of some of the forty six species of Bhutan's rhododendrons growing high in the wild,



R. flinckii
Endemic to Bhutan

Image courtesy of Hirsutum: hirsutum.info



Left: anemone richardsonii

Right: polemonium boreale

Pink Mountain, BC



Next Month:

Will once again be one of the true highlights of the rhododendron season - drumroll please yes, the Justly Famous Beer Bottle Truss Show will soon be upon us. The May 16th, meeting will be the day upon which the great event will be held, so sharpen your secateurs and empty your beer bottles, or other similar display vessels, and keep a keen eye in your garden towards peak blooming time.

Rigorous examination has already resulted in the selection of Vern Finley and Sue Klapwijk, as Judges for the prestigious “Lionheart Award”, as they were the first club members who could spell *pseudoyanthinum* correctly, and also knew what it meant.

For those confused about truss preparation and presentation, Garth Wedemire, will give a brief demonstration of these arts at the April meeting, and attempt to unravel the mysteries thereof. His hundred or so years of experience in the realm of the rhododendrons should be quite helpful in this regard, and with any luck, he may also assist with truss placement in the particular categories at the JFBTS.



✿ **Other Duties as Assigned -**

Karen Linton and Donna Pyrch will be ministering to all our refreshment needs at the next meeting and if you can think of a little something for the goodies table ... that would be lovely.

The Business Stuff

Mary Parker, Director, District One sends us this reminder of The ARS Fall Conference at Nanaimo, BC.

COMING SOON!

ARS Western Fall Regional Conference, Nanaimo B.C.

“RHODOS IN PARADISE - DESTINATION VANCOUVER ISLAND”

September 21st - 23rd, 2012

For full details:

Check out our brand new website at <http://arsnanaimo2012.ca/>

Registration is open now!

We encourage you to register early!

ALSO, AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM SCOT HENNEY.

Whonnock Rhododendron Garden

April 2012

We have lost the support of the Fraser Valley Rhododendron Society (FVRS) which had to close down at the end of last year.

Previous volunteers from the FVRS are meeting at the garden on Saturdays April 14th and 28th from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. We hope to continue to work in the garden but our numbers are few and we need the support of others to be effective.

We invite you to come to the garden on one of the above dates when we shall explore the way forward. We hope to maintain the garden as a beautiful place for the people of Whonnock and a place of interest to many people who love rhododendrons.

For more information call **Scot Henney** at **604 464 7979**

Sean Rafferty

THE CALENDAR:

Wednesday, April 18	Fraser South Chapter 7:30 PM Ron Long - Pink Mountain
Thursday April 19	Vancouver Chapter 7:30 PM Gordon McKay (Alba Plants) Companion Plants for Rhododendrons
Saturday April 21	Fraser South Rhododendron Society Plant Sale 10:00 - 3:00 PM United Church Hall, 5673 - 200th., Street, Langley
Saturday, April 28	Langley Garden Club Bake Sale and Plant Show and Sale 9:00 am - 3:00 pm United Church, 216th. Street and 48th., Avenue, Langley
Saturday, May 5	Vancouver Rhododendron Society Show and Plant Sale Park and Tilford Gardens, North Vancouver 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Sunday, May 6	Burnaby Rhododendron Festival Deer Lake Park, Burnaby
May 4 - 7	2012 ARS Convention - Asheville. N.C.

An extravagant nosegay from the Justly Famous Beer Bottle Truss Show, 2011





Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Annual Plant Sale and Flower Show

Saturday, April 21st, 2012

United Church Hall

5673 200th Street

Langley, BC

10:00 am to 3:00 pm

(rain or shine)

Next Saturday, is our annual Plant Sale and Show which will take place in the church parking lot. This is one of our largest and most important fund raisers of the year, and it would be nice to have all hands to the mast. We have several of our members already signed up for various duties, but it goes without saying that all are welcome to pitch in wherever they feel most comfortable; be it with traffic control, cashiering, set up and take down, or simply as a general dogsbody to answer questions, assist purchasers with their plant selections, and transportation of those purchased gems to their vehicles. And if you are one of those celebrated for the exceptionally fine taste you display in the purchasing of plants yourself, then, of course, you are doubly welcome .

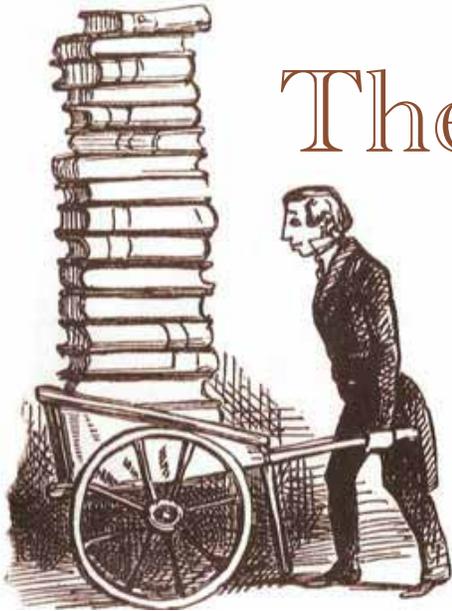
An Invitation

Harold and Ginny Fearing wish to extend an invitation to all their friends at the Fraser South Rhododendron Society to come and visit their garden at 5376 Ross Road, Abbotsford, BC, on Sunday, April 29, 2012, from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm. They also mention that theirs is a private garden, rarely open to the public, and that there are approximately 1300 rhododendrons, 900 of which are species, distributed in an informal way in a woodland area of their property.

Their nursery will be open for plant sales and Les Clay and Sue Klapwijk will also be there and will be selling some of their own very special plants.

Below are some images from Harold and Ginny's garden.

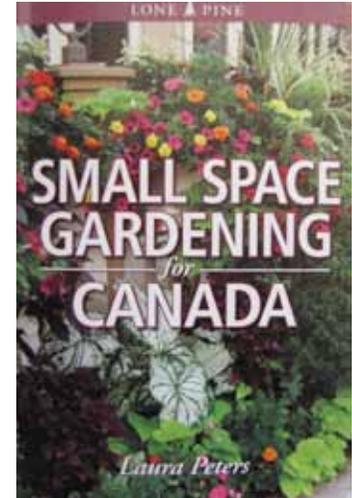




The Book Cart

Small Space Gardening for Canada by Laura Peters,
Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton, Alberta, 2012. ISBN 978-1-
55105-860-3

1. Urban gardening 2. Small gardens
176 pages. 196 colour photos,
1 Hardiness zone map, 1 annual frost
free days map, Appendix of Companion
plants, notes about author.
Soft cover, \$24.95



The notes in Small Space Gardening for
Canada about the author, Laura Peters,

indicate that she is a Master Gardener with over 30 gardening books to her credit. These books cover a large range such as Organic Gardening, Container Gardening, Vegetable Gardening, Tips for Gardeners, Annuals for the Gardens and many other gardening topics. Living in Edmonton, she understands the limitations and parameters of the Canadian growing season. She has been writing and practising her gardening applications for more than 25 years.

As cities continue to expand, more emphasis is placed upon the need to increase the density, and greater pressure is placed upon the green space surrounding the city. At the same time, in Canada, the population continues to age and there is the continual movement to downsize from larger homes to townhouses, apartments and condominiums. That does not mean that the dwellers lose that desire to be growing their own flowers, vegetables and fruit where possible. There has been a definite movement on the west coast towards guerilla gardening and community gardens supported by city councils. This book offers practical advice to those living in apartments or homes with small gardening spaces on ways to maximize the space at hand and how to go about the task.

The book is well organized with a brief introduction, followed by three main sections to the book.

In section 1, Optimizing your garden space covers many interesting ideas for balcony containers, hanging and upside-down gardens (this will make you want to read this book), collapsible containers, requirements of light, problems of pollutions, space, weight, container materials, self-watering containers, the pros and cons of raised beds and much more.

In section 2 - Maintenance- the author covers, in a very organized fashion, all the tools required for the garden, the requirements of container gardening maintenance, overwintering requirements, problems of pests and diseases in a container garden and much useful information of composting, including anaerobic composting and vermicomposting

In section 3, The Plants - the reader finds great descriptions of fruits, vegetables, and annuals which can be grown in small spaces. Much good practical advice is here plus lists of vegetables, fruits and flowers which will grow in partial shade if this is what your space dictates.

Small Space Gardening for Canada is a particularly usable book for those who are living with confined gardening spaces or even for those who would like some new ideas for container gardening for patios. You will enjoy reading it.

Margaret Hodgson

R. calophytum (Epithet: beautiful plant)

As the specific epithet informs us *R. calophytum var. calophytum* is certainly a beautiful plant; a densely compact shrub or tree standing tidily and cleanly in the landscape. *R. Calophytum*, to my eye, always seems well groomed with very little out of place, even when grown quite large. Grown under optimum conditions, *R. calophytum* may grow to fifty feet in the wild, at least according to Davidian in “The Rhododendron Species Vol. 11”, while Cox and Cox, in “The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species” peg its height at thirty feet. Either way it is always an impressive plant in the landscape.

A native of Sichuan, growing from 10,000 to 13,000 feet, *R. calophytum* was first described by the French plant hunter, Adrien Franchet, in 1886, and later introduced into cultivation by Ernest Wilson in 1904 and reintroduced in 1908 and again 1910. This striking, long-lived plant is one of the hardiest of the big leaves, and boasts long leaves from seven to fourteen inches in length and one and a half to three inches



R. calophytum: painting by Carlos Reifel from “The Rhododendron” vol. II, Edited by Leslie Urquart

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

wide. In keeping with the plants stature, the inflorescence consists of 15 - 30 flowers upon a long and very striking, scarlet pedicel. The corolla is widely campanulate, white to pink, rose, rosey-pink or purple with a deep red blotch and spots. The flowers have 15 - 21 stamens, a stout style and an incredibly large stigma which is one of its defining and identifying characteristics.

Another relative of *R. calophytum var. calophytum* is *calophytum var. openshawianum*, introduced in 1995, but this species is given rather short shrift by Cox and Cox as being an inferior form of *R. calophytum* with smaller leaves and only 5 - 10 flowers to the truss. Its other drawback is that it grows at low elevations, 4500 - 10,400 feet, on Wa Wu Shan, Sichuan and is therefore not generally hardy in cultivation and certainly not a reliable or worthy candidate for hybridising.

There is really no need for another variety of *R. calophytum* to enter the world of the hybridiser since *calophytum var. calophytum* is able to shoulder the load alone. It is hardy, with huge leaves, drop-dead gorgeous early blooming flowers, terrific size and habit, and an incredible ‘wow’ factor. The hybridisers must have salivated at the possibilities when they first encountered this plant. They did not seem to waste very much time creating new hybrids as they appear to have initiated their work at least as early as 1920. Work with *R. calophytum* appears to have been relatively unrestricted geographically as registrations occurred throughout Europe and the British Isles and across the Atlantic on both coasts of North America and on to New Zealand in the Southern hemisphere. There have been some interesting partnerships brought to this dance over time, from *R. Loderi*’ and many of the big leaf species to the small and prostrate *R. forrestii repens Group*.

While the *R. forrestii* pairing, at first blush, seems somewhat ludicrous . I find the offspring to be a very attractive.

Sean Rafferty



Above: *R. calophytum*, Maple Ridge, BC. Image courtesy of *Garth Wedemire*

Below: *R. calophytum*, UBCBG. Image courtesy *Sean Rafferty*





R. 'Avalanche': L. de Rothschild 1934
R. 'Loderi Group' x R. calophytum'
Image: courtesy *Garth Wedemire*



R. forrestii repens x R. calophytum:
Unknown.
Image: *Dick 'Red' Cavender*



R. 'Babylon': Reuthe, 1955.
R. calophytum x R. praevernum
Image: *Garth Wedemire*