

The Yak

Newsletter of
The Fraser South
Rhododendron
Society

Volume 26 Number 9
December, 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, December 12 2012

Fraser South's Annual Christmas Potluck Dinner and Festive Frolic

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

2012 Officers

President:	Brenda Macdonald	604-990-5353
Past Pres:	Bill Bischoff	604-589-6134
Vice Pres:	Chris Hodgson	604-541-2382
Secretary:	Margaret Hodgson	604-541-2382
Treasurer:	Harold Fearing	604-857-4136
Directors:	Matt Groves	604-856-2624
	Ginny Fearing	604-857-4136
	Nancy Moore	604-859-3690
Programme:	Sean Rafferty	604-990-5353
Membership:	Evelyn Jensen	604-857-5663
Newsletter:	Sean Rafferty	604-990-5353
Librarian:	Joan McGiveron	604-538-9347
Website:	Chris Klapwijk	604-581-0925
Social Convenor:	Karen Linton	604-888-6564
Refreshments:	Arlene Darby	604-597-1849
BCCGC Liaison:	Bill Bischoff	604-589-6134



Please let us know if there
are any recipes from the
Christmas Potluck that you
might wish us to publish in
the January edition of 'The
Yak'



Notes From the Chair

AND THE RAIN, IT RAINETH EVERY DAY

FROM THE PRESIDENT

sequence of average temperatures and the pattern of wet and dry periods. And we are part of a climate type that enjoys warm arid summers and wet mild winters.

This is, unfortunately, exactly what rhododendrons do not need in order to grow successfully. What they really need is a 'Monsoon' climate zone, which has warm, very wet summers and mild dry winters. This delivers all the moisture to the plant when it is actively growing, but keeps its feet dry during the cool winters when it is resting.

We are all aware, and quite thankful, that the western edges of the continents in the northern hemisphere are significantly milder both in summer and in winter than the eastern edges. This is true both in North America and in Britain, although the differential is certainly more pronounced in North America, due, no doubt to its vastly greater breadth. In both cases, the western edges of the continents benefit from the tempering nature of warm ocean currents - the North Atlantic Drift (the northern arm of the Gulf Stream) for the western side of Scotland, and the Alaska arm of the North Pacific Current for the Pacific Northwest. It also what causes the high rainfall on these wet west coasts.

But this is also what allows parts of Scotland at 56°N, and Vancouver at 49°N to grow plants that are impossible for almost all inhabitants of the eastern seaboard of North America much above 37°N.

And what allows Scottish gardens at 49°N to grow *rhododendrons* even more effectively than Vancouver or even Seattle is not so much the temperature as it is the rainfall distribution. Scotland definitely does not enjoy a Mediterranean climate, so even though there is less total rain in Perth, Scotland for instance, than in Vancouver, Canada, it is the constant amount, the higher volumes during the crucial growing months of April through September that provide the benefit. You can see the rainfall distribution in the attached chart.

This is what *rhododendrons* like; this is what they have in their native habitat in Asia. All summer long, from the beginning of the wet season in May or early June, to the beginning of the dry season in September or early October, the rhododendrons are bathed in water every day. It can be literally running over their roots, but as long as it is not stagnant and as long as it is during the active growing season, they couldn't be happier. Then, by the time the dry season comes, the rhodos are slowing down and need little water to keep them going until the next spring comes.

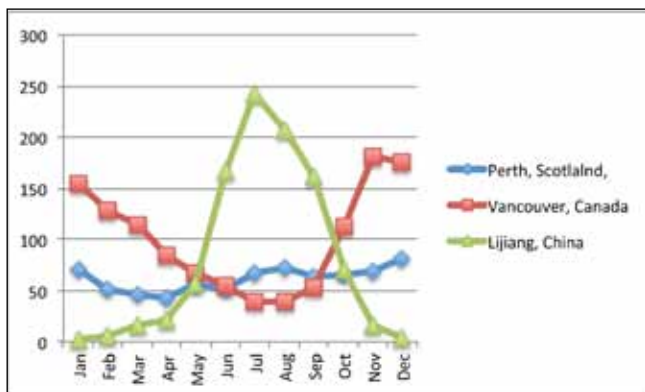
So the problem with the Pacific Northwest is that we have it all bass ackwards. We have drought just when we need deluges, and constant rain when the *rhodos* want to rest.

Which brings us to the cultural workarounds we can use to combat these difficulties.

1) plant your rhodos on the ground, not in it. By placing the root ball at or just slightly below ground level,

and piling good quality soil with lots of coarse organic matter all around, supporting the root ball well without smothering the top, you will be able to keep the plant above the worst of the winter wet.

2) which means in the summer you will have to water, water, water. Plants sitting above the ground level will be more susceptible to drought stress than those planted in the garden proper. Rhododendrons are not xeriscape plants, so a system of emitter hoses or sprinklers is going to be essential if you want to have thriving plants with good bud set for the plant to reach flowering size.



Brenda Macdonald



FROM THE EDITOR

Last Month:

Garth Wedemire enthralled us with his technological magic during a presentation that utilised hundreds of gorgeous *rhododendron* images. He had conducted interviews with five well known Vancouver Island gardeners in their gardens. The results of each interview were displayed upon the screen and discussed by Garth, followed by an incredible array of images from each garden. These garden images unfolded with the Ken Burns effect and each of the gardens exhibited was accompanied with its own musical arrangement. It was a truly congenial evening. Thank you, Garth.

This Month:

This is the month of good cheer, turkey sandwiches and of the Fraser South Annual Potluck Dinner and Festive Frolic. If you recall, last year we collected donations for the Food Bank in lieu of a gift exchange. This year, the Executive will be collecting either cash or cheque donations for the Salvation Army so they can to disperse our goodwill to other deserving recipients. Should you wish to maintain a donation to the Food Bank, we shall be pleased to accept it on their behalf and redirect it to them. Please give generously.

Instructions from the President:

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. Colleen will once again dazzle, challenge and frustrate us with yet another one of her famous horticultural puzzles. Tea and coffee will be provided as usual.

Next Month:

Next month will be our Annual General Meeting and 10th Annual Dessert Extravaganza. This is the time of year for ushering in any new executive members, approving the past years financial report and celebrate and reward the contributions and accomplishments of some of our FSRS members.

There are those who think that AGM's are rather dry, dusty and long suffering affairs. We at Fraser South have put the kibosh to such foggy thinking by incorporating our Dessert Extravaganza into this yearly event. If we choose, we may ignore the thrum of profit and loss and engage our gardening colleagues in tales of horticultural triumphs or commiserate with them over catastrophic disaster, while simultaneously indulging in an avalanche of scrumptious desserts. Of course, you may obliterate some recently made and well intentioned steely resolve, but what the heck, that stuff really should not commence until February.

So please bring one of your favourite desserts to share and we shall all have a grand time.

The January meeting is also a time for members to bring in some of their own slides or digital images to share with the rest of the group. Horticultural images are nice but it could also be just something that you wish to share. We all like pretty pictures.

The Business Stuff:

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. Let us know which ones that you fancy and we shall try to publish them for you.

Sean Rafferty

The Rutherford Conservatory

at the

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

The Rutherford Conservatory is the latest addition to the RSFBG and is one of the highlights of its multi-featured, research and education garden. It was officially opened in the Fall of 2010 and displays many of the garden's vireya and tender rhododendron collection alongside orchids and other rare companion plants.

This state-of-the-art, 5,000 square foot conservatory is named in honour of the late Francis C. Rutherford, whose enthusiasm for *vireya rhododendrons* was a catalyst for the creation of the marvelous setting which displays these exquisite plants. The majority of vireyas grow in the temperate mountainous regions of the Malay archipelago, the Philippines, Borneo, Indonesia, New Guinea, and surrounding island groups, with two species in Australia. Of the approximately 900 species of rhododendrons, vireyas comprise a third of the genus, and the ability to create the most beneficial habitat for their presentation, together with the more tender species of rhododendron, is indeed welcome. The interior boasts a stream, waterfalls, huge boulders and the



while the outdoor paved terrace is a popular venue for events.

The conservatory is open year round and if you happen to be in the grip of the winter doldrums, a felicitous trip down to the RSBG and a trek within the comfort of the Rutherford Conservatory may just be the required tonic.

The images in this and the following pages were taken in the conservatory in mid November and if 'The Yak' office staff might be more biddable, I hope to return there in the late winter and early spring and update the plants that are in bloom.



R. brookeanum

Sean Rafferty

R. tuba (epithet: trumpet)

is a particularly beautiful vireya from New Guinea. It is typical of many vireyas in that it has very long, tubular flowers which open out at the end. This sequence of images was taken from different areas of the same plant, and happens to show the progress from bud expansion to full bloom.

Vireya rhododendrons take their name from Julien-Joseph Virey, a French botanist and friend of Carl Blume, who was one of the first to introduce the subgenus in 1826, and named it to honour his good friend. The famous Veitch Nurseries, during the 1840's and 1850's cultivated, hybridised and popularised several *vireya* species. This popularity eventually waned, however, due to their tenderness in outdoor gardens and the introduction of the recently discovered Asiatic rhododendron species.

In 1929 gold was discovered in New Guinea, opening up the country and easing the way for intrepid botanists to discover new species. Professor Hermann Sleumer's revision of the Genus *Rhododendron* was published in 'Flora Malesiana' in 1966, and an extract of this work entitled 'An Account of *Rhododendron* in Malesia' appeared shortly thereafter, detailing a total of 288 species of *rhododendron* within the region, the vast majority belonging to Section *Vireya*. This publication, along with George Argent's 'Rhododendrons of Subgenus *Vireya*' in 2006, has spurred a renewed enthusiasm for vireya rhododendrons, especially with those people living in favourable climates.

More information may be found here:
<http://www.vireya.net/index.html>





Above and below: *R. loranthiflorum*
 (epithet: with flowers like a *Loranthus*)

Height - 6 ft. - epiphytic

Leaves - obovate - 2.4 x 1 in.

Flowers - trumpet-shaped - 4.2cm - scented - up to 7 per umbel

New Georgia Island, - 590-4,900 ft.



Above: *R. stenophyllum*

(epithet: with narrow leaves)

from Borneo. Waxy orange flowers 1.4 in. long. The leaves in this subspecies are more than 30x as long as wide, measuring up to 4.7 in. long by 0.05 - 0.08 in. across.





Above: *R. macgregoriae* (epithet - after Lady Macgregor; husband of Lieutenant Governor of Papua)

Left, orange and right, yellow-flowered forms

Height - to 49 ft - terrestrial

Leaves - elliptic - 5.5 x 2 in. Flowers - yellow, orange, pink or red - shortly tubular - 1 in. - up to 15 per umbel

Location - Indonesia & Papua New Guinea: widespread - 390-9,800 ft.



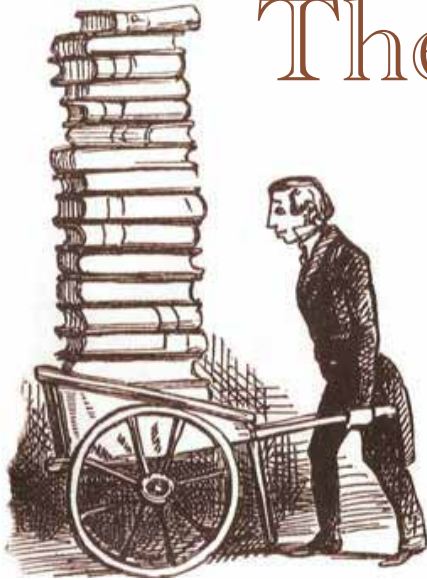
Image: Susan Lightburn



Above: *R. excellens* (epithet: superb) in bud at the Rutherford Conservatory, and at right, in bloom at the Lightburn garden, Nanoose Bay, Vancouver Island. There is confusion amongst the experts whether this plant deserves specific status or to be submerged within *R. nuttallii*, under Subsection *Maddeniae*, Dalhousiae Alliance. Disputes aside, there is however, no doubt that this plant is absolutely drop-dead gorgeous in all aspects. Stunning in leaf, bud, flower and fragrance.

Sean Rafferty

The Book Cart

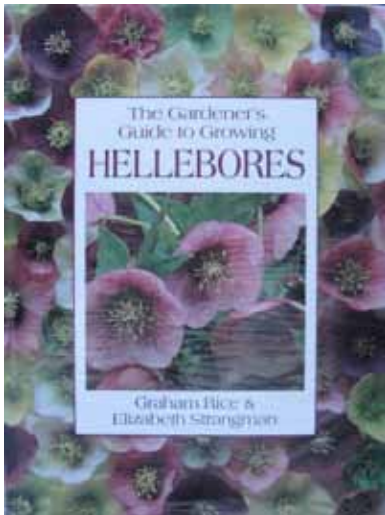


The Gardener's Guide to Growing Hellebores by Graham Rice & Elizabeth Strangman

Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 1993. Reprinted 1996.

154 pages, approx. 38 pages colour photos, 14 line drawings. Appendix and Index of Hellebores. Hardbound, ISBN 0-88192-266-8 (hardcover)

Graham Rice trained at Kew and spent eight years on the staff of Practical Gardening magazine. In recent years he has contributed to all the major gardening magazines and written a number of books, including *Plants for Problem Places* and, with Christopher Lloyd, *Garden Flowers from Seed*. He has served on several committees of the Hardy Plant Society, and is currently a member of the Floral A Committee of the Royal Horticultural Society.



Elizabeth Strangman spent a year at Cambridge Botanic Garden before Studying for a Diploma in Horticulture at Studley College, Warwickshire. Over the past twenty years she has successfully raised and marketed many new strains of hellebore, and has built up an international reputation for the choice plants she supplies from her Washfield Nursery in Kent.

Roger Phillips is a world-renowned horticultural photographer, whose superb close-up shots of individual plants and blooms broke new ground when they first appeared in books and periodicals, and have set the standard for detailed plant photography ever since.

Hellebores are the most captivating of all spring flowers. While winter is still at its worst their buds burst through, their delicate and mysterious blooms opening in an ever-expanding range of colours and forms as spring progresses. In our climate we see these plants sending out their flowers even earlier. 'The Gardener's Guide to Growing Hellebores' features a wealth of practical advice on cultivation and propagation, plus an explanation of how to improve your plants through the breeding and selection of better strains.

Gardeners will appreciate the jargon-free accounts of species in the wild, descriptions of varieties currently being grown and the extensive chapter on associating hellebores with other plants and arranging groupings for maximum effect in the garden.

The book is arranged in the traditional way of giving the reader some background of the lure and magic of hellebores to the authors. The ecology and botany chapter also gives basic classification to divide the hellebores into groups of similar species and nomenclature is covered.

Under "Cultivation", the authors give good tips of soil types to use, preparation needed and general care. Pests and diseases are covered in detail. From there, the authors move on to suggest good plant associations that work well with hellebores such as seasonal plants or colour planning.

Much information is included on dividing hellebores, growing hellebores from seed, storage of seed, sowing seed, and a wide range of topics associated with propagation.

The book also deals with identification of hellebores and their occurrence around the world. The colour plates of various collections are exceptional and a great help in identifying that one unknown hellebore in your own garden.

Margaret Hodgson

R. campanulatum ssp. *campanulatum* (epithet: bell-shaped)

R. campanulatum ssp. *campanulatum* was described in 1821 by *David Don*, a Scottish professor of botany and librarian for the Linnaen Society in London. This species has an extremely widespread range, both geographically and altitudinally. It grows throughout the Himalayan countries of northern India, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet at elevations between 9,000 and 15,000 feet. It is a compact shrub or a tall tree and grows from 1 foot up to 30 feet and

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



R. campanulatum: painting by Carlos Reifel from "The Rhododendron" Vol. 1, Edited by Leslie Urquart



has ovate to elliptic leaves with rounded to heart shaped bases. The upper surface of the leaves is smooth and green with a lower surface having a tan to brownish, continuous, unistrate indumentum. The flowers, as the name implies, are broadly bell-shaped and white to rose or lilac. Habitat for this species is in forest thickets or scattered above the tree line. Plants from the western Himalayas (Kashmir and Nepal) are the most ornamental with large leaves and flowers.

R. campanulatum ssp. *aeruginosum* and *R. wallichii* are also species belonging to Subsection Campanulata. All three species have pointed buds. *Ssp. aeruginosum* differs from *ssp. campanulatum* by having a more rounded and compact habit and a distinctive glaucous-blue bloom on the more convex leaves. The lower leaf surface of *ssp. aeruginosum* has a very striking thick orange-brown to rusty-brown bistrate indumentum and is rather shy to bloom. *R. wallichii* differs from both *ssp. campanulatum* and *ssp. aeruginosum* by having smaller, elliptical to ovate leaves with a thin,



ssp. campanulatum
Image: Garth Wedemire



ssp. aeruginosum
Image: S. Rafferty

discontinuous indumentum of dark brown hairs in tufts . Some forms are even glabrous.

There is consensus that the ‘Knaphill’, ‘Roland Cooper’ and ‘Waxen Bell’ forms of *R. campanulatum* *ssp. campanulatum* are among the best selected clones, although ‘Roland Cooper’ seems to be quite difficult to propagate. With good drainage and protection from hot sun, these species are fairly easy to grow.

The earliest record that I could find of an hybrid with *R. campanulatum* in its lineage is *R. ‘Pictum’*, a J. Waterer cross (*R. campanulatum* x *R. maximum?*) done before 1839. Many more have been bred throughout the 19th Century up to the present time. Some of the older hybrids are still in the trade, and even in our garden. *R. ‘Beauty of Littleworth’* (*R. griffithianum* x unknown, although believed to be *R. campanulatum*) manages to protect us from the occasional stray tourist.



R. wallichii
Image: Hirsutum.info

In each of the hybrids mentioned above you may note the ambiguity in the identification of the pollen parents. This is an unfortunate and ongoing problem when searching parentage of registered hybrids prior to 1958. Since 1958, however, The International Cultivar Registration Authority (IRCA) for the genus *Rhododendron* has implemented stricter and more consistent rules for the registration of hybrids. All registered hybrids, both pre and post 1958, are listed in The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist.

However, unknown parentage in no way demeans the garden worthiness of a plant. While searching for hybrids with *R. campanulatum* in their lineage, I reunited with *R. ‘Sir Charles Lemon’*, which I had always believed (and still do) to be a selected form of *R. arboreum cinnamomeum var. roseum alba*. I have now noticed three references believing *R. ‘Sir Charles Lemon’* to be a hybrid between the two species *R. arboreum cinnamomeum var. roseum alba* and *R. campanulatum*. This sort of thing is not uncommon, but is irritating, and may grow to be a article one day. The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist, which should be the final arbiter in these matters, makes no mention of *R. campanulatum* in the parentage of *R. ‘Sir Charles Lemon’*. Even knowing this, I still choose to include him with the other *R. campanulatum* hybrids below, because he is a favourite of mine and supremely garden worthy.

Sean Rafferty



Above and right
R. 'Sir Charles Lemon'
in cultivation since 1851

Selected form of
R. arboreum cinnamomeum
var. roseum alba



R. 'Beauty of Littleworth'
***R. griffithianum* x**
R. campanulatum
ssp. campanulatum
1884, J.H. Mangles



R. 'Susan'

***R. campanulatum*
ssp. *campanulatum* x
R. fortunei ssp. *fortunei*
1935, J.C. Williams**



R. 'Neato'

***R. campanulatum*
ssp. *campanulatum* x
R. degronianum ssp.
yakushmanum
'Koichiro Wada'
1964, D. Goheen.**



R.'Muncaster Mist'

***R. campanulatum* ssp.
campanulatum x
R. floribundum
1964, J. Ramsden**



all images: Hirsutum.info

Unregistered , Frank Fijioka Hybrid



We wish everyone good health and a very joyous Christmas season.

From all at 'The Yak'.