

# The Yak

Newsletter of  
The Fraser South  
Rhododendron  
Society

Volume 26 Number 8  
November 2012



[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, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012

Topic: "Paradise Found"

Speaker: Garth Wedemire

Plant Sales: Bill Bischoff

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Refreshments	Arlene Darby	604-597-1849
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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Meconopsis integrifolia* is a large (sometimes huge), buttery yellow, slightly downward-facing blossom that does indeed look like the kind of lampshade best suited for dancing on tables with. It has a wonderfully disheveled look, with a long stigma and style in the centre of a large boss of golden stamens. It is often confused with its slightly less flamboyant cousin *Meconopsis pseudointegrifolia*, which is usually



*M. integrifolia*,  
Sichuan, 2006

somewhat smaller and has a stigma that does not protrude beyond the stamens. Reginald Farrer was born in 1880, handicapped by his small stature and the speech impediment caused by a cleft palate and the unsuccessful surgeries meant to correct it. He did however have the advantage of being born into a well-to-do Yorkshire family, who were able to educate him at home and allow him to indulge his early fascination with the rocky crags around his house, and the flowers that grew on them. Perhaps more than any of the other plant hunters, Farrer was responsible for the mania for rock gardens that developed in Britain in the early 1900's, having published his book "My Rock Garden" in 1907. The book remained in print continuously for over 40 years, and cemented his place as one of the great plantsmen of the early 20th century. He had a fierce and somewhat eccentric personality, as evidenced by his complaint that *integrifolia* demonstrated a "gollopshiousness of stature". He wrote and painted during his expeditions, and was only 40 when he died on an excursion to Burma in 1920.



*M. punicea*  
Sichuan, 2006

*M. integrifolia* was first discovered for the western world by Nicolay Przewalski in 1872. It has an unusually large altitudinal distribution, ranging from 2,800 to 5,300 meters (9,200 to 17,400 feet) and a significant range from NE Tibet through Gansu to NW Yunnan and western Sichuan. It has a remarkable tolerance for cold at the upper altitudes, and can sometimes be seen blossoming in the snow.

Located in similar geographical areas is *Meconopsis punicea*. One of the most elegant of poppies, its blood-red, satiny petals hang down like drooping military banners from a delicately arched stem. Not a large plant, each scape has only a single nodding blossom, and often rises only 24 inches from the basal

## Notes From the Chair

This month, let us consider more about poppies.

And what better start than *Meconopsis integrifolia*, the famous Lampshade Poppy of doomed plant hunter Reginald Farrer.



*M. integrifolia*,  
Sichuan, 2006



***M. punicea***  
Sichuan, 2006

leaf tuft. The leaves are covered in soft, rather long hairs, that give an overall ginger or grayish cast. There are numerous stamens with dull purple-brown pollen, but they are not often visible under the skirt of red petals.

Interestingly enough, this was a poppy that Reginald Farrer was eloquently in favour

of, describing it as “a single large flower of royal crimson, so floppy and tired in texture that each blossom hangs on its stem like a blood-stained flag hoisted to its pole on a windless dull day in late autumn”.

*Punicea* sets seed well, but is difficult to germinate successfully. It is monocarpic except under the most ideal of conditions and must be continually refreshed in the suburban garden.

*Meconopsis henrici* is a more conventional looking poppy, its tissue

paper thin, royal purple blossoms are outward facing and look jewel-like when back lit. The mass of yellow-orange stamens only serves to accentuate the deep violet purple of the blossoms. It is a higher flyer than either *integrifolia* or *punicea*, surviving in rocky alpine slopes and meadows between 3,350 and 4,570 meters (11,000 to 15,000 feet). Its geographical spread is also somewhat more limited, extending from SE Qinghai and SW Gansu, south to most of western Sichuan. It may be a high flyer, but it is a low grower, often reaching no more than 8 inches high.

Although the ranges of these three poppies are not identical there is certainly some overlap, and it is a remarkable experience to see all three of them scattered throughout the same rocky scree.

Finally, a poppy that we can grow. *Meconopsis napaulensis* is a robust species and widely grown in gardens.

Although monocarpic, it is generous with its seed production and can often be maintained through naturalized seedlings alone. However, with this vigorous seed production comes a degree of promiscuity. Its close cousins *M. paniculata* and *M. regia* probably contribute a great deal to the enormous colour variation one sees in garden specimens.

A multi-flowered scape rises several feet (and up to 8 feet under optimum conditions) from a basal rosette, with flowers that range from yellow to cream to pink depending, probably, on the amount of cross-breeding that has gone on when we weren't looking. The leaves and flower stalk are covered in dense rather bristly hairs. The evergreen basal rosette is often quite magnificent in the winter garden, taking on a rather golden hue for the 3 to 4 years it takes for the plant to reach flowering size.

Brenda Macdonald



***M. henrici***  
Sichuan, 2006



***M. napaulensis***  
Rafferty garden, 2009



***M. napaulensis***  
Rafferty garden, 2009



## FROM THE EDITOR

## Last Month:

Rosemary Prufer engaged us to join her in a pictorial review of her twenty-five plus years as a propagator in the commercial nursery industry, specialising in rhododendrons. She guided us through the various phases of large scale greenhouse operations, and the equipment and techniques utilised to sustain such large scale production. I did manage to retain the difference between misting and fogging and was pleased to be educated about the manner of preparing and sticking cuttings, along with the detailed manner which Rosemary employs to graft scion to rootstock for those plants difficult to root. Rosemary informed us how commercial nurseries handled the potting up and growing on of their rooted material and the kind of media, fertilisers and disease protection used.

Rosemary also touched on some of the difficulties that the commercial nurseries are facing such as having to gauge the market to ensure that the material that you are propagating still finds favour in the market place and perhaps the reduced role that propagation, as Rosemary knew it at least, appears to be giving way to the growing on liners which are brought in from elsewhere. I found it a very enjoyable, valuable and interesting presentation.

**This Month:** we are indeed fortunate to have as our speaker, Garth Wedemire. He has, over many years, given generously and abundantly of his own time to deliver diverse and informed lectures concerning the genus *Rhododendron*, to all of the Lower Mainland Chapters of District One and to the five Chapters on Vancouver Island. He has a vast and varied repertoire of lecture material and each of his discourses is graced with his exquisite photography.

Garth, is a retired school teacher, a double ARS bronze medal recipient, former District Director for the ARS, Director of the Rhododendron Species Foundation, skilled propagator, and a master photographer who has contributed greatly to the website, Hirsutum, and that magnificent newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society, 'The Yak'. He has travelled to China, Nepal, and the



southeastern USA to study rhododendrons in the wild, and with his wife, Sue, is continuing to wander throughout both hemispheres of the globe seeking knowledge. He has created and maintains the District One website, and still finds time to propagate rhododendrons and give lectures.

Garth is first and foremost a great educator, and his talk this month will be another fine opportunity for us to acquire more information about rhododendrons, while also being exposed to glorious visuals.

THE CALENDAR:

Wednesday, November 21 7:30pm	Fraser South Rhododendron Society Garth Wedemire "Paradise Found"
Wednesday, December 12	FSRS Christmas Potluck - Early start @ 6:30

## Next Month:

... will, of course, be our annual Christmas Potluck Extravaganza. The full kit and kaboodle of instructions will be announced in next month's newsletter, however there are two important things to keep in mind: we shall be meeting one week earlier than usual, which will be **Wednesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>**, and the party will commence at **6:30** rather than our regular meeting time. You will be contacted beforehand to confirm attendance and probably have a discussion about culinary contributions.

## The Business Stuff:



## Other Duties as Assigned:

We shall be honoured to have the trio of Colleen Bojczuk, Sue Klapwijk and Vern Finley, harmonising to entertain us with nourishing elixirs and dainty tidbits to sustain our corporeal beings. A fine group of ladies, who amongst them have more knowledge of the genus *Rhododendron* than anyone else in the universe, would most certainly welcome any contribution of delicacies to the table.

*Sean Rafferty*

**Autumn is a second spring  
where every leaf is a flower.**  
*Albert Camus*

The delightful quotation, noted above, was sent in by our good friend and contributor, Bill Bischoff, who fortified those studious words by remitting two fine images of maple leaves, taken by his wife, Carla, and shown below.



Above right: *Acer shirasawanum* 'Aureum'

Left: *Acer japonicum* 'Aconitifolium'

*Images: Carla Bischoff*

As I was sitting in front of the computer with nothing but pages to fill, and contemplating the sagacity of Albert, a decision was made to despatch the Yak's perpetually idle staff photographer out on assignment into the neighbourhood to discover if Mr. Camus' words held any merit. Days later, he stumbled back into the office and submitted the following images, together with a link to the science behind chlorophyll, carotenoids and anthocyanins - the ingredients which create all this autumnal glory - and that information may be found [here](#).

*Sean Rafferty*



*Acer griseum*



*Acer palmatum*



*Parrotia persica*



*Stipa gigantea*  
and  
*Acer palmatum* 'Red Pygmy'



Anthocyanins and carotenoids at work







*Cotinus 'Grace'*  
*Rhus typhina 'Tigers Eyes'*  
and *Berberis thunbergii*



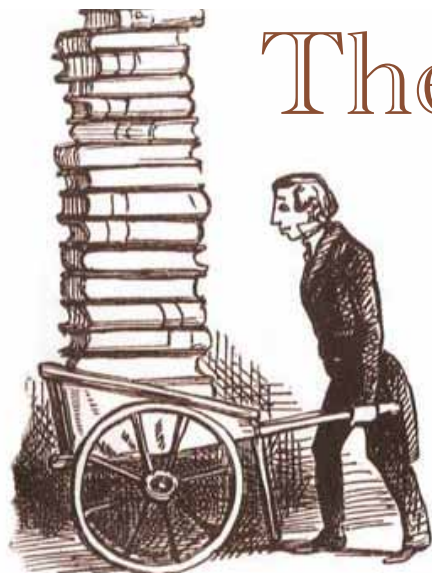
Left: *Oxydendron arboreum*

Below: and looking very much as they do in springtime, is the autumn foliage of some closely shorn deciduous azaleas ..... and the exclamation point to Camus' pronouncement.

All images: courtesy of perpetually idle staff photographer



# The Book Cart



Rhododendron Portraits by D.M. van Gelderen, J.R.P. van Hoey Smith

424 pages, approx. 386 plates colour photos (1144 colour photographs in total), with good descriptions of all the various cultivars. Rhododendron Index. Copyright 1992 Timber Press, Portland Oregon, published in cooperation with the Royal Boskoop Horticultural Society. ISBN 0-88192-1947.

D.M. van Gelderen is a professional nurseryman, active in the Royal Boskoop Horticultural Society and especially involved in the Trials. A leading grower of rhododendrons, conifers, maples, and other woody plants, he is a frequent contributor to Dendroflora.

J.R.P. van Hoey Smith, Director of the Trompenburg Arboretum in Rotterdam, is a leading collector of rhododendrons and conifers. He is active in the International Dendrology Society and travels widely to photograph trees and plants in their native habitats.

D.M. van Gelderen and J.R.P. van Hoey Smith are two of the world's foremost authorities on Rhododendrons, and in Rhododendron Portraits, they have compiled a most lavish and comprehensive photographic survey of the elephantine rhododendrons, illustrated throughout in full colour. The large-flowered, evergreen species and hybrids are grouped according to a system that emphasizes the natural relationship between the many fine hybrids and their parents.

The introduction provides an overview of the genus, including the history of Rhododendron classification and hybridizing. The following reference pages provide more detailed information about the plants documented in the 1144 colour photographs, including notes on distribution, botanical characteristics, and species of particular interest to gardeners, nursery professionals, and landscape designers. The generously sized plant portraits were selected from

more than 3000 taken by the authors since 1960.

The authors travelled far afield to photograph the most spectacular Rhododendron specimens, including many hybrids, as well as the many beautiful cultivars grown in parks and nurseries of Europe, the United Kingdom, and North America. All cultivars are documented.

Production of this first edition coincided with the 1992 Floriade World Flower Show in The Netherlands.

Example of book information:

Explanation of Captions

Format:

'Plant name'. Grower/introducer, year of introduction, year of registration, female parent X male parent awards height in metres or centimetres, months in bloom (in Roman numerals), and hardiness zone.

Rhododendrons are classified according to the following zones:

Zone AA – Extremely winter hardy – colder parts of Canada

Zone A - Very winter hardy

Zone B - Hardy most of mid west USA and Canada – most parts of Canada

Zone C - Hardy coastal areas, Oregon, Washington, Vancouver

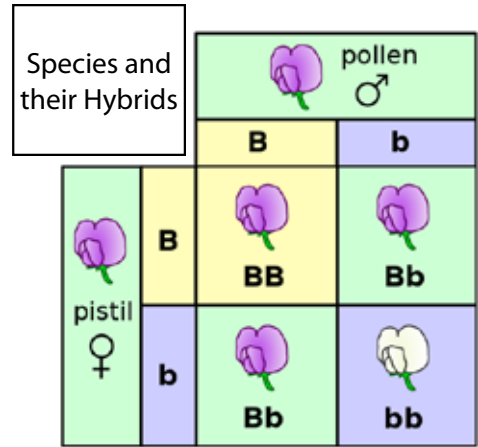
Zone D - Hardy only in California

Zone E - Hardy only in protected gardens, California where rainfall adequate

*Margaret Hodgson*

# *R. racemosum* ( epithet: flowers in racemes )

*R. racemosum* was first described by Adrien René Franchet ( French botanist at the National Museum of Natural History in Paris ) in 1886, from a plant collected by Père Jean Marie Delavay on Heshan, near Dali, Yunnan Province, China, in 1884. *R. racemosum* was raised in the *Jardin des Plantes*, ( which is the main botanical garden in France and a department of the National Museum of History ) and introduced to Kew Gardens in London in 1889. It has been reintroduced many times since by other collectors, which has resulted in several forms being brought into cultivation These forms vary considerably in habit, height of growth and leaf shape and size. They may be



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



from 6 inches to 15 feet in height, compact rounded, spreading, broadly upright or dwarf. A form collected by Kingdon-Ward is recorded as being a dwarf shrub, less than 12 in. in height, and growing in matted carpets on steep rocky slopes. Cox and Cox in "The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species" suggest pruning the taller forms when they are young to improve on later results and prevent them going astray. A common form in the trade is *R. racemosum* 'Rock Rose', a free-flowering selection with clear, medium pink flowers. Another, not quite as common, is a white one from Glendoick Gardens called 'White Lace'.



The leaves of *R. racemosum* are 1/2-2 in. x 1/4-1 in., broadly obovate to oblong-elliptic, the upper surface glabrous except for a few hairs on the midrib, the lower surface glabrous, glaucous and densely lepidote. The inflorescence is 1 - 4 per axil in the uppermost leaves, with a widely funnel-shaped 1 inch corolla that may be pure white, white tinged pink, pale pink, or pink to purplish pink.

The species has a wide distribution throughout the northern half of Yunnan, southwestern Sichuan and western Guizhou, in rather varied habitats. It can be found growing in scrub, pine and oak forest margins, rocky slopes, dry limestone hills, pasture land and peaty boggy ground.

*R. racemosum* is free-flowering from an early age when raised from seed, and most forms available these days are fairly hardy. An attractive aspect of the plant as it sports its new growth is the red colouration of the new branchlets that complement the green glossy leaves.

My experience with *R. racemosum* has been its preference for more, rather than less sunshine, in order to keep it cheerful, but when it is happy it is blithesome to be near. *R. racemosum* manages to radiate this joy through most of its progeny, witnessed by the images below, courtesy of the fine website Hirsutum.

*Sean Rafferty*

**R. 'Brambling'**

**R. 'Razorbill' x R. racemosum**  
**Cox, P.A. & K.N.E., 1993**



**R. 'Donna Totten'**

**R. racemosum x R. unknown**  
**G. G. Nearing, 1983**



**R. 'Ginny Gee'**

**R. keiskei x racemosum**  
**Warren Berg, 1979**



**R. 'Rose Elf'**

***R. racemosum x pemakoense***  
**Lancaster, Ben F., 1947**



**R. 'Mary Fleming'**

***R. ( racemosum x keiskei ) x***  
***R. keiskei***  
**Nearing, G.G., 1959**

