

# The Yak

Newsletter of  
The Fraser South  
Rhododendron  
Society

Volume 27 Number 4  
April, 2013



[www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth](http://www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth)

Fraser South Rhododendron Society  
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 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013  
Topic: "Private Gardens of Victoria"  
Speaker: Norma Senn  
Plant Sales: Les Clay

## 2013 Officers

President:	Brenda Macdonald	604-990-5353
Past Pres:	Bill Bischoff	604-589-6134
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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

## Quick Hits

Our steadfast VP, Chris Hodgson,  
is taking us out on the road again  
with a

*Carpool Nursery and Garden Tour*  
on

Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup>

Details and map on the last page  
for you to conveniently print and  
save.





## Notes From the Chair

### AS BLUE AS IT GETS ...

Writing about blue is not going to be as easy as writing about pink because, face it, there are actually very few true blue flowers in all of the plant kingdom. It would be interesting to speculate why - harder to attract pollinators than the whites, yellows and reds? but then what is the excuse for all those purples out there?

There are whole swathes of people determined to see the colour blue in genera they are passionate about, and African Violet fanciers and *Rhododendron* hybridizers seem to be at the vanguard.

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

Blue is a colour universally beloved in the garden, perhaps because it is so rare, perhaps because the lighter blues look like a piece of summer sky pasted onto the ground, perhaps because the darker blues look so sumptuous and royal. But apparently all we need is a hint of blue in the colour of the flower in order to wax rhapsodic in the naming of the plant.

That being said, there are a few *rhododendrons* that are bluer than others, and certainly the stronger candidates for that designation are all lepidote plants. I know, there was a flurry of blue-naming of lepidote hybrids - 'Blue(s) Boy', 'Crown', 'Jay', 'Frost', 'Hawaii', 'Ensign', 'Lagoon', 'Pacific', 'Peter', and 'Rhapsody' to name just a few. But through my eyes this was just so much wishful thinking. These are purples. They might be grape purples rather than wine purples, but they are purples nonetheless.

The only *rhododendrons* with a hope of being considered blue are the lepidotes, specifically the *augustinii*'s within the *Triflora* subsection, and quite a few members of the *Laponica* subsection.

Opinions vary about the number, but if we subscribe to the notion that there are four subspecies of *R. augustinii*, it is really only *ssp. augustinii* that can be considered blue - *ssp. chasmanthum* comes closest, but it never really gets beyond mauve, and *ssp. hardyi* and *rubrum* aren't even close.

There are many beautiful selected forms of *augustinii*, ranging in colour depth from pale to quite saturated, but perhaps the paler ones, particularly those with some green spotting in the throat like 'Green Eye', seem to give the bluest overall impression in the garden.

Within the subsection *Laponica* there are several candidates for blueness: *impeditum*, *nitidulum*, *polycladum*, *intricatum*, and *russatum*, not to mention our own *hippophaeoides*. Even within a particular species there will be colour variation, both natural and environmentally-influenced.

And of course, hybridizers, ever eager to improve upon nature, have had some good success with various combinations of these two blue subsections.



*R. augustinii* ssp. *augustinii* 'Green Eye'



*R. russatum*

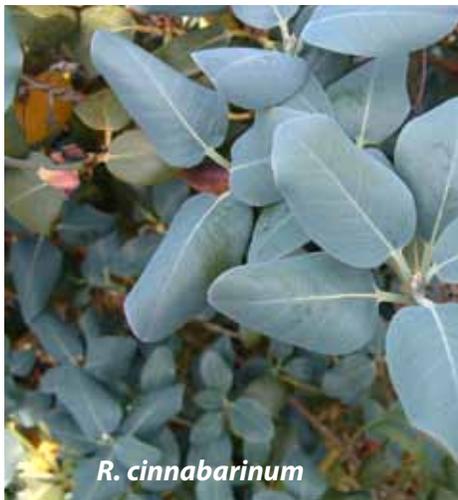


*R. 'Gletschernacht'* ('Starry Night')



*R. campanulatum ssp. aeruginosum*

Interestingly enough, it appears that the Lapponicas have, as they say in cattle-breeding circles, the prepotent genes. Most of the hybrids between the tall (17'), willowy *augustinii* and the short (3-4'), dense Lapponicas came out on the side of the Lapponicas. Nevertheless, the results were very attractive.



*R. cinnabarinum*

'Gletschernacht' (*R. russatum* x 'Blue Diamond Group'), which is usually marketed as 'Starry Night' in North America, and 'St. Tudy', (*R. impeditum* x *R. augustinii ssp. augustinii*), both at about 7', are equally attractive. 'St. Tudy' has blue stamens and a magenta stigma and

appears slightly darker than 'Gletschernacht' whose magenta stamens match the stigma. These two hybrids resemble the *augustinii* parent more than any of the others.

The world of smaller Lapponica hybrids, many of which are hybrids of hybrids, includes the almost ubiquitous 'Bob's Blue' ('Illam Violet' x 'Blue Diamond Group'), 'Bluebird' (*R. intricatum* x *R. augustinii ssp. augustinii*), 'Songbird' (*R. russatum* x 'Blue Tit Group'), and 'Blaney's Blue', ('Intrifast Group' x *R. augustinii ssp. augustinii*), as well as the really lovely 'Señora Meldon' (*R. augustinii ssp. augustinii* x 'Blue Diamond Group').

And although not quite as spectacular, one can introduce hints of blue with foliage, where it is particularly apparent in the new growth. *R. campanulatum ssp. aeruginosum*, *R. oreotrephe* 'Blue Calyptus', and the *cinnabarinums*, particularly 'Roylei' and 'Conroy' have very attractive glaucous blue foliage.

And that, dear gardeners, is as blue as it gets.

Brenda Macdonald



*R. 'St. Tudy'*



*R. 'Bob's Blue'*



*R. 'Blaney's Blue'*



*R. 'Señora Meldon'*



## FROM THE EDITOR

then returned us to Federal Way and the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden itself, to demonstrate that the RSBG is very much more than rhododendrons alone. Some RSBG history was explained and many of the rare plants now occupying places in the garden were shown sharing rhododendron habitat. Not only are flora from temperate regions displayed throughout the garden, but those gems from tropical and sub-tropical regions are now able to flaunt themselves in the Rutherford Conservatory.

Steve's presentation was all-embracing, exceptional and brimmingly informative. I believe that he is unable to deliver anything but a superb discourse concerning our favourite genus. Thank you, Steve.

## Last Month:

Steve Hootman, Executive Director of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, was our guest speaker and we, in turn, became his guests as he whisked us away to many exotic rhododendron habitats around the world. Areas shown were those that Steve had visited on his many plant hunting excursions. He



## This Month:

Norma Senn, retired botany professor, brilliant speaker, garden writer, globetrotter, former long time member of the Fraser South executive and columnist for "The Yak", FSRS Bronze Medalist, presently programme director and President of The Victoria Rhododendron Society (and bootles of other fine accomplishments) will finally come home for a visit. She has been sorely missed since retiring and moving to Victoria five years ago, where it seems she has given no moss any time to gather. Shortly to be roaring off to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, Norma has kindly agreed to travel across the great divide and deliver us a presentation on some private Victoria area gardens. You should all make every effort to attend this lecture.

## Next month:

Next month???... Next month???... We all know what next month is. We have all been counting the sleeps, studiously checking [Poor Richard's Almanac](#), speaking gently yet conspiringly with our precious rhododendrons, cautiously [studying the entrails](#), and inserting damp digits into the atmosphere to discover how the wind blows. Yes. We all know. Hallelujah! It will be May. And if it is May then it must be time for The Fraser South Rhododendron Society's Justly Famous Beer Bottle Truss show. If you haven't already had it engraved, please take out your crayon and draw a large circle about the date of May 15<sup>th</sup>. ( The ides of May? ). You may start the preparations now; rinse and shine you beer bottles, keep a weather eye on your rhododendron buds, and have your cleaned and sharpened secateurs at the ready. We shall post the rules of engagement in next month's Yak.

## Other Duties as Assigned:

I note, on the refreshment duty roster, that both Bev Hansen and Evelyn Jensen are up to bat at this month's meeting. It would come as no surprise to me were I to discover that both of these exceptional gardeners are able to grow both *Coffea arabica* and *Camellia sinensis* in their own Fraser Valley gardens. Therefore, I should think that they may be extremely busy tending to roasting and fermenting the essential ingredients which they shall infuse to keep us happy. Perhaps we should allow them both to concentrate solely on these elixirs while the rest of us concern ourselves with supplies for the calorie table

And if you might allow the rafflemaster to proclaim his mantra: please, do remember the raffle table.

## The Business Stuff:

Please remember the 2013 ARS Annual Convention "Rhododendrons, Then, Now and in Your Future" to be held at the Seattle Airport Marriott hotel in SeaTac, WA from May 1 to 5, 2013. Highlights include informative talks by Mike Stewart of Dover Nursery, Richie Steffen of the Elizabeth Miller Botanical Garden, Dennis Bottemiller of the Rhododendron Species Foundation, Kristian Theqvist from the new Finnish Chapter and Brian Coker from the New Zealand Rhododendron Association. A full day tour to beautiful gardens on Whidbey Island, and wonderful half day tours to local gardens are being offered to convention attendees. There will also be a plant sale, book sale and a judged photo contest.

*Sean Rafferty*

## THE CALENDAR:

<b>Wednesday, April 17</b> 7:30 pm	<b>Fraser South Rhododendron Society</b> <b>Norma Senn: "A Tour of Private Victoria Gardens"</b>
<b>Thursday, April 18</b> 7:30 pm	<b>Vancouver Rhododendron Society</b> <b>Andy Hill, Curator Asian Garden, UBC Botanical Garden</b>
<b>Saturday, April 20</b> 10:00 am - 3:00 pm	<b>Fraser South Rhododendron Society Plant Sale</b> <b>United Church Hall 5673 - 200<sup>th</sup> Street, Langley BC</b>
<b>Sunday, April 28</b> 10:00 am - 4:00 pm	<b>Fearing's Farm open garden and rhododendron sale</b> <b>5376 Ross Road, Abbotsford, BC</b> <b>ALSO - Carpool Nursery and Garden Tour</b>
<b>Wednesday, May 1 -</b> <b>Sunday, May 5</b>	<b>ARS Convention, Seattle Airport Marriot Hotel.</b>
<b>Saturday, May 4</b> 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm	<b>Francisca Darts: Celebration of Life</b> <b>Darts Hill Garden Park, 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 170<sup>th</sup> Street, South Surrey</b>
<b>Wednesday, May 15</b> 7:30 pm	<b>The Fraser South Rhododendron Society Justly Famous</b> <b>Beer Bottle Truss Show</b>
<b>Thursday, May 16</b> 6:00 pm	<b>Vancouver Rhododendron Society</b> <b>A Walk in the UBC Botanical Garden with Andy Hill</b>
<b>Thursday, May 30</b> 7:30 pm	<b>Vancouver Rhododendron Society and The Alpine Garden Club of BC</b> <b>present: Chris Chadwell, Alpine plants and Rhododendrons of Kashmir</b> <b>Van Dusen Floral Hall</b>

## Anouncement

There is good news ... and not so good news. My wife will be retiring from her day job at the end of this month ... and that is a good thing.... sadly however, the price of this newly found freedom will be the loss of The Yak's major benefactor - her office photocopying machine, which has served us so well these past twelve years. I am, therefore, now minded to inform you of the costs incurred to mail out hard copies of The Yak. We need to do the math.

Actual costs of sending hard copies of the newsletter: postage @0.73 (per stamped envelope ), copies of 7 duplexed, black & white pages @ 7x 0.08 = 0.56 = a minimum of \$1.29/copy x 10months = \$12.90. This does not, of course, take into account the fuel and time to travel to Staples (free plug, though unlikely to reap any benefit), print off the copies and stuff the envelopes. Neither does it include home office supplies used in production of the newsletter, nor the cost of cat crunchies for the Office Manager.

Thus, a hard copy of the newsletter is \$12.90 plus, plus, per year, and The Yak by email in gorgeous colour is priceless, yet free.

Therefore the executive has decided to impose a surcharge of \$15.00 on anyone who has a valid email address and would also like to have a hard copy of the newsletter delivered to them. The surcharge will take place with membership renewal in the fall. We shall, of course, be pleased to continue delivery of the newsletter, free of charge, to anyone who has no access to a computer.

*Sean Rafferty*



*R. 'Sir Charles Lemon',  
last week at Finnerty  
Gardens, University of  
Victoria Campus*



Fraser South Rhododendron Society

# Annual Plant Sale and Flower Show

Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013

United Church Hall

5673 200<sup>th</sup> Street

Langley, BC

10:00 am to 3:00 pm

(rain or shine)

Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 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 available help at hand. 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 transport 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 from Harold and Ginny Fearing

You are invited to an open garden  
Fearing's Farm Rhododendrons  
5376 Ross Road, Abbotsford, BC  
Sunday, April 28, 2013,  
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

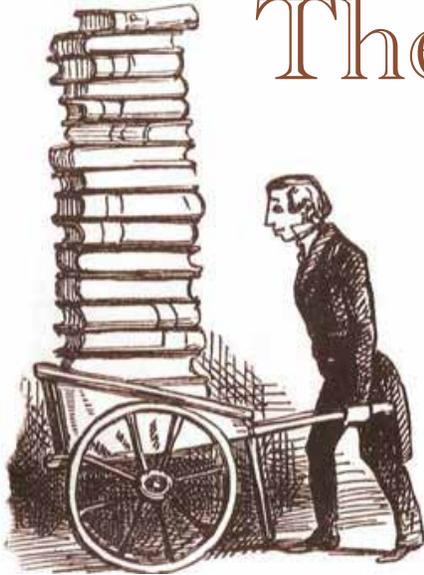
This is a private garden, rarely open to the public. There are some 1300 rhododendrons, 900 of which are species, distributed in an informal way around a patch of woodland.

Some pictures of the garden can be found in the Picture Gallery section at [www.fearing.ca](http://www.fearing.ca)

Rhododendron sales: The nursery will be open for sales and local growers Les Clay and Sue Klapwijk will also be there, offering some of their very special plants: varieties not available at local nurseries.



# The Book Cart



**The Gardener's Guide to Growing Peonies** by Martin Page  
160 pages, approx. 76 plates colour photos, Appendices include Glossary, Bibliography, Synonyms of Peony Species, Where to Buy Peonies. Index. Published in North America in 1997 by Timber Press Inc., Portland, Oregon. Copyright Martin Page 1997. ISBN 0 7153 0531 X (hardcover)

Martin Page studied botany at Swansea University and went on to receive a PhD from the University of Exeter. He has continued his botanical research, developing a specialization in peonies over the last few years. He is establishing a collection of species peonies and has started to breed his own varieties. A professional photographer for many years, he developed a specialization in horticultural and landscape photography. Martin is a member of the American Peony Society, and his other main plant interests

are palms, citrus species and herbaceous perennials.

The Gardener's Guide to Growing Peonies is a comprehensive and wide-ranging study of a large genus with a complex classification, and the first major review of the peony since 1946. Specialists will derive much valuable botanical information, while practical gardeners will find ideas for using peonies in rockeries, herbaceous borders and woodland gardens, both for autumn colour as well as feature plants. The book includes detailed descriptions of over 600 species and cultivars, features a wealth of practical advice on cultivation, pest and disease control, and garden uses, and contains research into the plant's history, distribution and developments in hybridizing.

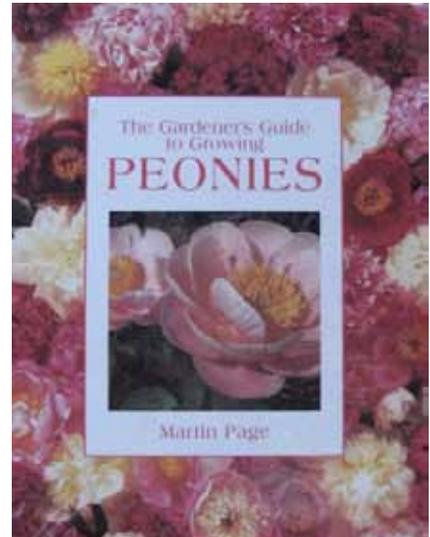
The author points out that the peony is an immensely rewarding plant for gardeners, giving a profusion of magnificent flowers on thornless stems throughout a long season and with little care. Many peonies have the additional bonus of being scented and, with over 4,000 varieties of herbaceous peony available, there is sure to be a colour to suit every situation. They are drought-resistant and largely unaffected by pests and diseases.

The book is divided into nine chapters, plus an Introduction and the Appendices and Index following at the end. Following the common pattern of so many gardening books, Chapter One leads the reader into History and Botany with such interesting details as the likely derivation of the name "peony" which the author explains should be "peony" and not "paeony", which is a recent corruption of the Latin name. It is thought to have been named after the Greek mythological figure, Paeon, a pupil of Asclepius, the Greek God of medicine and healing. He reputedly discovered peonies growing on the slopes of Mount Olympus – after Leto (Apollo's mother) told him where to find them – and used them to cure a wound that Pluto had received in a fight with Heracles. Asclepius was so jealous of Paeon's success that he had him killed. However, the grateful Pluto then had him changed into the flower that cured him. The author dryly comments that this seems little compensation for Paeon's fate!

In medieval times, peonies were highly valued as medicinal plants to relieve "pains of the belly", "jaundice", "complaints of the kidneys and bladder", "falling sickness", "convulsions", and "to prevent nightmares", to name a few. Dried peonies were hung outside of houses and were peony bushes planted to ward off evil spirits, and petals of dried peonies and root bark are still used extensively in traditional Chinese medicine.

The Gardener's Guide to Growing Peonies offers the reader a wide range of subjects, covering in the various chapters peony species, hybrids, tree peonies and the best way to use them in your garden. Enjoy this book.

*Margaret Hodgson*



# What's in Bloom?

At The Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden



*R. lacteum*



*R. hongkongense*



*R. nutallii*, new growth



*R. beesianum*

*R. ciliicalyx*



*R. retusum*



*images: S. Rafferty*

# *R. cinnabarinum* (epithet: Cinnabar-red)

*Rhododendron cinnabarinum* was discovered and introduced by J.D. Hooker in 1849 from Sikkim and reintroduced by Ludlow and Sherriff along with other collectors from the Himalayas.

I believe that the best way to sort the differences between the various subspecies of Subsection cinnabarinum, is to set them out as seen below. This information is taken from a study guide prepared by Steve Hootman some years ago for the Species Study Day courses he taught at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden. The various comparisons are quite clear, and succinct and much more digestible than those given by most of the other authorities.

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



*R. cinnabarinum* var. *roylei*: painting by Carlos Reifel from "The Rhododendron" Vol. 2, Edited by Leslie Urquart



*R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *cinnabarinum*  
Image: [hirsutum.info](http://hirsutum.info)



*R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *roylei*  
image: [hirsutum.info](http://hirsutum.info)

**General description:** Upright evergreen (sometimes deciduous) shrubs with terminal or axillary clusters of pendulous tubular to bell-shaped flowers with nectaries in their bases. The fragrant leaves are densely scaly on their lower surface. Native from the eastern Himalayas east into extreme NW Yunnan.

## *R. cinnabarinum*

- leaves elliptic to lanceolate and often glaucous blue-green when young
- flowers in a terminal inflorescence

### Subspecies *cinnabarinum*

- leaves more narrow than in ssp. *xanthocodon* and typically without scales on the upper surface.
- flowers red, orange, yellow, or a combination thereof.
- the furthest west populations (Nepal, Sikkim and adjacent parts of SE Tibet)
- includes Blandfordiiflorum Group with bi- or tri-colored flowers. This group is very susceptible to powdery mildew.
- includes Roylei Group with red to purple-red flowers with a waxy bloom. Less susceptible to powdery mildew.

### Subspecies *xanthocodon*



- leaves more broad than in ssp. *cinnabarinum*, with persistent scales on the upper surface.
- flowers broader in shape (tubular bell-shaped to bell-shaped) in various shades of yellow, orange, apricot or purple (Purpurellum Group).
- the eastern subspecies (Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan and Tibet).
- moderately susceptible to powdery mildew
- includes Concatenans Group with rounded and more compact habit, large broad glaucous leaves and apricot-yellow flowers.
- only from the Pemako region of SE Tibet.
- includes Purpurellum Group with small, rounded and dark green leaves, and short bell-shaped purple to rose-purple flowers

### Subspecies *tamaense*

- leaves almost deciduous, glaucous blue-green when young.
- the large bell-shaped flowers are purple with scales on the outside.
- disjunct in N Burma and adjacent extreme NW Yunnan.



### *R. keysii*

- tall and leggy, vigorous evergreen shrubs.
- elliptic to lanceolate, non-glaucous leaves
- flowers in clusters, both terminal and in the upper leaf axils.
- the distinct narrowly tubular flowers are usually bicoloured in shades of red to orange or salmon with lobes of yellow or red, occasionally solid red or even yellow.
- native to the eastern Himalayas

**Cultivation:** These plants require good light and very good drainage. Some forms are very susceptible to powdery mildew and may need fungicide treatments to prevent loss of foliage or even death (rare).

**R. 'Lady Chamberlain Group'**

*R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *cinnabarinum*  
'Roylei Group' x *R. 'Royal Flush Group'*  
L. de Rothschild, 1931



*Image: Garth Wedemire*

**R. 'Conroy'**

*R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *cinnabarinum*  
'Roylei Group' x *R. cinnabarinum*  
ssp. *xanthocodon*  
Lord Aberconway, 1937



*Image: Susan Lightburn*

**R. 'What a Dane'**

(*R. ambiguum* x *R. cinnabarinum*  
'Concatenans Group') x  
*R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *cinnabarinum*  
'Nepal'

Jens Birck, 1983



*Image: Jens Birck*

**R. 'Cinkeys'**

*R. cinnabarinum* ssp.  
*cinnabarinum* x *R. keysii*

E.J.P. Magor, 1917



*Image: S. Rafferty*

**R. 'Alison Johnstone'**

*R. yunnanense* x *R. cinnabarinum*  
ssp. *xanthocodon* 'Concatenans  
Group'

G.H. Johnstone



*Image: Garth Wedemire*

# Carpool Nursery and Garden Tour

Field Trip to gardens & nurseries in the Aldergrove area, Sunday, April 28.

Well, the days are drawing out, our gardens are sprouting out and it's time for our spring walkabout. This year we're visiting gardens and nurseries in the Aldergrove area. As much as we loved the Burn-A-Bee Swinging Seniors' bus last year, this will be a car-pooling event, allowing us to purchase and transport as many plants as we like.

The tour starts at 10am sharp at *Cherry and Matt Groves' daffodil farm, 7271 LeFevre Road* (604-856-2624). Their farm boasts 170 spectacular hybrid daffodil cultivars, many produced by Matt himself. He assures us a good number will still be in bloom on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

We then move on to nearby *Ginny and Harold Fearing's nursery at 5376 Ross Road* (604-857-4136) where we can view species rhodos in a woodland setting and choose to purchase from the many species under cultivation. It will also be the Fearing's annual open house, so we can expect company. We'll plan to leave shortly before noon.

If time permits, a quick stop at *Devan Greenhouses, 28904 Fraser Hwy*, is always a treat. They offer about the best prices around on annuals and shrubs.

We'll then take a well-deserved lunch break at *Station House Grill, 3122 Station Road (276 St.), Aldergrove* (604-856-3111).

The tour of our last garden/nursery, *Gloucester Green 25922 64<sup>th</sup> Avenue*, starts at 1:30 pm. The owners, Vickie and John Willems (604-856-2427), specialize in Japanese maples, but raise many shrubs (esp. evergreens and rhodos). Again, prices are excellent.

Remember, we'll be driving or car-pooling to this event so make plans with your friends **NOW**. A signup sheet will be passed around at our regular April meeting to connect drivers with those looking for a ride. And please **PRINT A COPY** of this notice and the attached map to avoid getting lost. Map directions start at the turnoff from Hwy 1 onto 264 Street north. Questions may be directed to Chris Hodgson, (chodgson@telus.net).

Hope you can join the fun on Sunday, April 28

Chris Hodgson

