

The Yak

Newsletter of
The Fraser South
Rhododendron
Society

Volume 27 Number 3
March, 2013



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, March 20th, 2013
Topic: "Rhododendron Species"
Speaker: Steve Hootman
Plant Sales: Harold Fearing

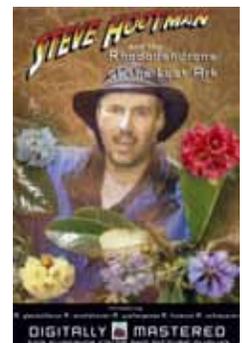
2013 Officers

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:	Chuck Floyd	604-541-2884
	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

Quick Hits

This month's speaker will be the world renowned, modern day plant hunter and species rhododendron authority, Steve Hootman.

Details page 6.





Notes From the Chair

EPIMEDIUMS (EPIMEDIA?)

Already many of the earliest signs of spring are upon us, at least those of us who do not live halfway up a mountain. However, even in our garden we can see the earliest of the crocuses (those sort of washed-out mauve ones that only really look impressive if you have an entire swathe of them, and you stand far enough away) and some smallish patches of snowdrops that I keep hoping will turn into largish patches sooner rather than later. Rhododendrons

'Christmas Cheer' and its doppelgänger 'Rosamundi'

are out in many gardens, as well as the species *mucronulatum*, *ririei*, and *moupinense*.

Another early riser is the genus *Epimedium*. Even at our shady altitude we noticed that one of our not-yet-planted specimens *E.* 'Black Sea' was showing its curled up flower stem on the surface of the soil. So if you have not been out to shear back last year's now-tatty leaves, it would be a good time to get to it.

From a paleontological perspective epimediums are a temperate zone plant that was probably found all across the northern hemisphere. However several millennia of ice ages reduced its spread to areas of China that were not glaciated, and a few other pockets. Only its close cousin, the pristine and delicate *Vancouveria*, remains in North America, native to the west coast of Washington, Oregon, and California.

A few of the Chinese species were sent home as part of the enormous booty of the great Victorian hunter-gatherers, but the vast majority of the species only became available after the Cultural Revolution had spun itself out. Of the 44 recognized species of epimediums, 36 were discovered and documented after 1975.

The few specimens and seeds that did survive those earlier voyages home to Britain and other part of Europe were enthusiastically embraced by gardeners. The plants were bullet proof or ironclad or whatever descriptor is appropriate for a plant that can thrive under two of a gardener's obstacles - winter cold and summer shade - and even survive quite nicely under the third - lack of water during the growing season. Moreover, importantly for the modern North American garden, epimediums are deer resistant.

Epimediums have an amazing array of common names, some of which are hard to reconcile. Barrenwort and Anchor plant are easy to deal with, even Rowdy Lamb Herb, but how could those decorous Victorians have reconciled Bishop's Hat with Randy Beef Grass, or Fairy Wings with Horny Goat Weed?

The less salubrious names describe the effect of ingesting epimediums rather than their appearance, and are the result of this plant's long history as part of traditional Chinese medicine. Stories of shepherds noticing the increased frequency and enthusiasm of breeding activities in their herds after grazing in meadows filled with these plants led to a predictable use in humans as the original





Viagra. This has, of course, led to over-exploitation of wild populations, which can be considered only slightly less objectionable than killing rhinos for their horns or bears for their gall bladders.

Epimediums are herbaceous perennials; some are evergreen but most die back to the ground each winter. They can be divided into two broad groups: those that spread and those that clump. Various hybrids have now been developed that range in height from only a couple of inches to a good two feet. Their leaves are often attractively heart shaped with deep red or maroon edges. The leaves are often tinted bronze or copper when new, and many display very attractive fall colouring. The blossom colours range from maroon and red through orange to yellow and white. Held aloft on thin, wiry stems, the flowers seem to dance about in the slightest breeze.

A moist woodland with dappled shade is an epimedium's domicile of choice. It will sulk in bright sun and in heavy shade. Even then, epimediums are one of the few plants that can survive in the dry shade under conifers, if only as an attractive ground cover. They are care free, with the caveat that the deciduous types should have their last-year's leaves cut off at ground level in December or January, allowing the flower stems and new leaf growth to show to advantage.

Epimediums have a significantly unique flower shape - the cause of at least some of their common names. The flowers are not large but often each flower scape has many blossoms. Usually there are four petal-like inner sepals; the outer sepals are small and quickly shed as the flower opens. The actual petals are often developed into long spurs, giving the flowers a reflexed and delicate appearance. Conversely sometimes it is the greatly expanded sepals that provide the colour, the petals being much less conspicuous. Either way, the blossoms are most often heavily reflexed, and this, in combination with the tall and wiry flower stems, is what gives the plant its delicate and ethereal appearance.

(Pages 2 and 3 - Top to bottom: *E.* 'Black Sea'; *E.* 'Bandit'; *E.* (unknown yellow); 2 of *E.* 'Sweetheart'; *E. grandiflorum* 'Nanum'; 2 of *E.* 'Yokichi')

Brenda Macdonald



FROM THE EDITOR

Last Month:

We were presented with a comprehensive lecture by Bill Bischoff on the genus *Gentiana*. Bill dazzled us with a prodigious number of images showing beautiful gentians in their native habitats. I have always been enamoured of these blue beauties, with the relatively large upward-facing flowers from such a small plant and Bill managed to overwhelm us with the lovely variety he had on offer. I am now galvanised enough to park out a suitable patch of the rainforest and invite several more of this lovely genus to come and stay. Thank you, Bill.

Last month we completed our awards presentations to the club members who have risen above the ordinary in enhancing the Fraser South Rhododendron Society. Their citations are listed below.

HAROLD FEARING

You have been a generous and outstanding member of the
Fraser South Rhododendron Society.

You have served admirably and faithfully as President and Past President, and are presently diligently
serving as Treasurer.

The knowledge and enjoyment you have shared with all, of growing species rhododendrons from seeds,
is immeasurable.

We have welcomed every generous invitation
to visit your lovely garden.

The Chapter is pleased to recognize you
for your many contributions
with the highest award that we are able to bestow, the

ARS BRONZE MEDAL – 2012

CHRIS KLAPWIJK

As a gesture of our gratitude for the many years that you have served as Webmaster of the
Fraser South Rhododendron Society,
we are pleased to bestow on you our
highest award.

Since establishing this website in May 2002, you have maintained and supported it, creating an amazing,
easy-to-use site, with pictures, calendars, history, “The Yak” and much more. This is a website well
appreciated by all who visit.

As Mike Trembath would say, “You need to post a new picture to the front page”.
It is our privilege to award Chris the

ARS BRONZE MEDAL – 2012

ELLA J. CRABB MEMORIAL AWARD 2012

Presented to: **MARGARET HODGSON**

You served on the executive of PARS for many years,
experience which now fortifies the Fraser South Rhododendron Society.
Your insightful, monthly contributions to "The Book Cart" are a welcome addition to our newsletter, "The Yak".
Your willingness to accept the position of secretary of the FSRS, and carry out those duties in such a praiseworthy
manner has demonstrated your commitment to the rhododendron community.
It is with pleasure that we present you with this award.

THANK YOU, MARGARET

HAROLD JOHNSON MEMORIAL AWARD 2012

Presented to: **NANCY MOORE**

We wish to express our appreciation of the many hours you have volunteered
as a Director of our Society.
You are a long time and involved member of our club who brings a wealth of gardening and landscaping
knowledge to our general meetings.
Your relationship to and insight of other clubs in the local gardening community and your congenial personality
inform and augment the club's executive committee meetings.
You are the most enthusiastic Santa's elf to ever to grace the halls of the Fraser South Christmas Party.
In appreciation for these things, we present the Harold Johnson Memorial Award.

THANK YOU, NANCY

GERRY EMERSON MEMORIAL AWARD 2012

Presented to: **MATT GROVES**

We wish to thank you for the years that you served as a
Director of our Society
You have been a long standing and ardent supporter of all
club activities.
You are a calm, thoughtful, constructive and wise executive member who has contributed much to
committee meetings.
You have for many years, given generously and abundantly of narcissus bulbs and cut flowers to
enhance our raffle tables.
With our sincere appreciation, we present you the
Gerry Emerson Memorial Award.

THANK YOU, MATT

This Month:



We are again fortunate to receive Steve Hootman, who will visit our next meeting and have us spellbound with his penetrating knowledge of species rhododendrons ... or any other plant for that matter. His understanding of the plant world seems boundless, and he has a gift of effortlessly imparting his knowledge to all with whom he is in contact.

Steve has spent the past twenty years at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden at Federal Way, in Washington, where he is the Executive Director and Curator. As Director of the RSFBG he has played a determining role in making this garden one of the premier gardens of its kind in the world. The Rhododendron Species Foundation and its garden are devoted to the conservation and distribution of many ericaceous plant species and to informing gardeners of

their beauty and versatility. Steve lectures at a great number of international conferences and does not hesitate to travel throughout North America in order to give presentations to all chapters of the American Rhododendron Society. He also travels the world collecting species rhododendrons and companion plants in order to fulfill one of the RSFBG's missions, which is to acquire and maintain as comprehensive a collection of rhododendron species as possible. We shall vicariously travel with him on one of these expeditions at our next meeting.

Next month:

Norma Senn, a long-time Fraser South executive member and garden writer for 'The Yak' ("Up the Garden Path") will be returning to give us a presentation on some private Victoria gardens. As many of you know, Norma is a retired Botany professor and a brilliant speaker who now resides in Victoria. I eagerly await her homecoming.

Other Duties as Assigned:

Alan and Wenonah March, Arlene Darby, and Ken Parker have all printed off their Kitchen Duty Rosters which arrived with last months 'Yak' and duct taped them to their refrigerator doors. All are now champing at the bit to get at the tea and coffee making business for all of the Hootman fans at the next meeting. Any additional treats that you may wish to bring along will be well received. And please try not to forget the raffle. Thanks to all of you for making it is a truly magnificent event.

The Business Stuff:

Try, at the next meeting, to pay attention and listen for any announcements regarding outings to gardens and nurseries where plant shopping may occur. Rumour has it that Chris Hodgson is itching to take us out on the road again.

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:

Wednesday, March 20 7:30 pm	Fraser South Rhododendron Society Steve Hootman: Species Rhododendrons (TBA)
Thursday, March 21 7:30 pm	Vancouver Rhododendron Society Steve Hootman: Species Rhododendrons (TBA)
Saturday, April 6 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm	Alpine Garden Club of BC, Spring Show and Sale Van Dusen, Floral Hall
Wednesday, April 10 7:30 pm	Alpine Garden Club of BC Jan and Dave Dobak: "Some Scottish Gardens"
Wednesday, April 17 7:30 pm	Fraser South Rhododendron Society Norma Senn: "A Tour of Private Victoria Gardens"
Thursday, April 18 7:30 pm	Vancouver Rhododendron Society Andy Hill, Curator Asian Garden, UBC Botanical Garden
Saturday, April 20 10:00 am - 3:00 pm	Fraser South Rhododendron Society Plant Sale United Church Hall 5673 - 200th Street, Langley BC
Sunday, April 28 10:00 am - 4:00 pm	Fearing's Farm open garden and rhododendron sale 5376 Ross Road, Abbotsford, BC
Wednesday, May 1 - Sunday, May 5	ARS Convention, Seattle Airport Marriot Hotel. Early registration pricing expires March 31, 2013
Saturday, May 4 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm	Francisca Darts: Celebration of Life Darts Hill Garden Park, 16th Avenue and 170th Street, South Surrey
Wednesday, May 15 7:30 pm	The Fraser South Rhododendron Society Justly Famous Beer Bottle Truss Show
Thursday, May 16 6:00 pm	Vancouver Rhododendron Society A Walk in the UBC Botanical Garden with Andy Hill
Thursday, May 30 7:30 pm	Vancouver Rhododendron Society and The Alpine Garden Club of BC present: Chris Chadwell, Alpine plants and Rhododendrons of Kashmir Van Dusen Floral Hall

Librarian Joan McGiveron, wishes to ascertain whether or not to maintain the below-mentioned titles on our library shelves. Should you wish to provide input on this matter, please speak with Joan at our meeting next Wednesday. Thank you.

LIBRARY REPORT

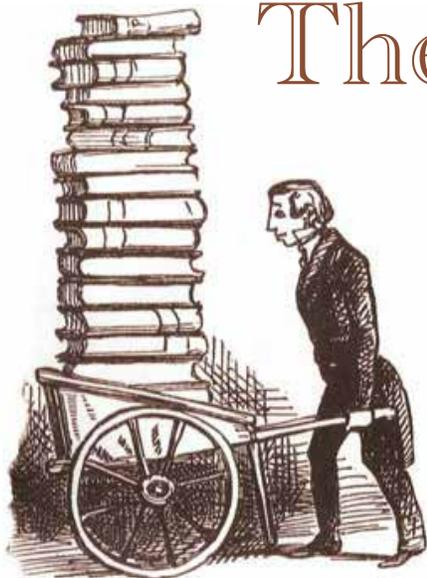
Joan McGiveron



The time has come to weed out a few of the older library books. Mind you, some of these may be good reference books and in which case shall remain in our library. If, from the list below, there are any specific ones that spring to mind, please let me know at the next meeting - 20th MARCH. The remainder will be offered for sale at our annual Spring Rhododendron & Plant Sale this coming April.

The list of books below have never been borrowed "This Century".

- Rodale's Garden Problem Solver, Vegetables, Fruits & Herbs; Jeff Ball
- Rhododendron Hybrids, a Compendium by Parent; Lansing W. Bulgin
- Crossing the Rubicon, New Zealand Raised Rhododendrons handbook; Brian Coker & Kathryn Millar
- The Reference Manual of Woody Plant Propagation, From Seed to Tissue Culture; Michael A. Dirr & Charles W. Heuser, Jr.
- In a Canadian Garden; N. Eaton & H. Weston
- Propagation from Cuttings, a Wisley handbook; Jim Gardiner
- Trees & Shrubs for Pacific Northwest Gardens, 2nd Edition; John A. Grant & Carol L. Grant
- Plant Propagation, Principles & Practices, 5th Edition; Hudson T. Hartmann, Dale E. Kester & Fred T. Davies, Jr.
- Rhododendrons on a Western Shore; J. Alec McCarter
- The Riverview Lands, Western Canada's First Botanical Garden; Riverview Horticultural Society
- Rhododendron Hybrids, a Guide to their Origins, 1st Edition; Homer Salley & Harold Greer
- Basic Book of Rock Gardens & Pools; W.E. Shewell Cooper
- Rhododendron Species Names; Theo C. Smid
- Rhododendrons, Their Care & Cultivation; John Street
- Azaleas, Rhododendrons & Camellias; Sunset Book
- Gertrude Jekyll, a Vision of Garden & Wood; Judith B. Tankard & Michael Van Valkenburgh
- Phenology of Cultivated Rhodies; L. Keith Wade



The Book Cart

Book Reviews (Margaret Hodgson)

An Encyclopedia of Shade Perennials by W. George Schmid,
Timber Press, Inc. Portland, Oregon, 2002.
374 pages, approx. 467 colour photos
1 U.S. Hardiness Zone map, Bibliography, Index
Hardbound, \$67.95

W. George Schmid grew up in Bavaria where he developed a passion for plants, particularly plants in the dark shady woods just beyond his grandfather's farm in Ottobrunn. He went on to study botany, horticulture, and landscape architecture at the University of Munich and devoted his life to growing shade plants, specifically hostas. He is the

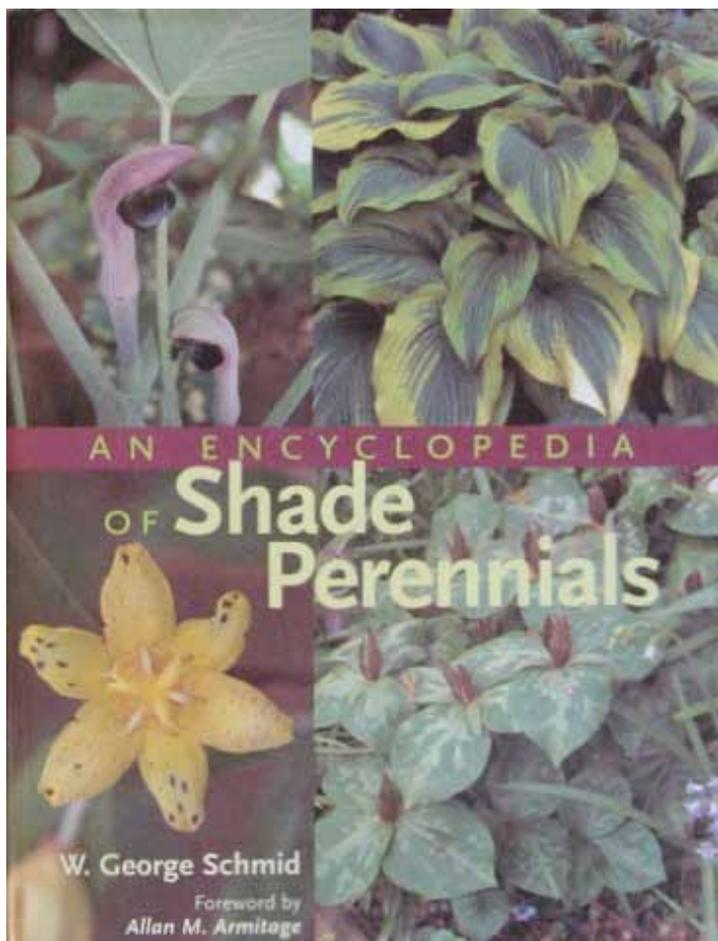
author of *The Genus Hosta* (Timber Press).

An Encyclopedia of Shade Perennials is divided into two parts, the first of which the author offers the reader some interesting personal anecdotes as well as good practical advice on managing a garden with shade. He explains the need to understand the basic composition of the available soil, ways to improve it, the pH of the soil, need for water or drainage, need to fertilize or not, problem trees, bacteria and fungi. He also includes in section one a clear explanation of his organization and the keys of the plant descriptions which appear in section two of the book.

In section two, all plants are arranged alphabetically. Names which appear in bold face are pictured in the photographs. In some cases, other closely related genera with similar cultural requirements are combined in the descriptions, but not photographed. Descriptions begin with general comments relating to each genus as a whole, including its general habitat and cultural range with emphasis on performance and hardiness in hot and cold regions, its naming and placement in higher orders, its use in medicine and folklore, its soil requirements and other cultural recommendations, its propagative characteristics, and any concerns regarding pests and diseases. Descriptions of recommended species and cultivars follow the general comments.

The colour photographs are not in close proximity to the descriptions of the plants, but rather are clumped together in the centre section of the book which necessitates flipping back and forth to look at the photos and read the descriptions. The descriptions include a number of common names when more than one name is used. Once again the book includes an excellent index. On the whole, this will be a very useful book for everyone in the club.

Margaret Hodgson

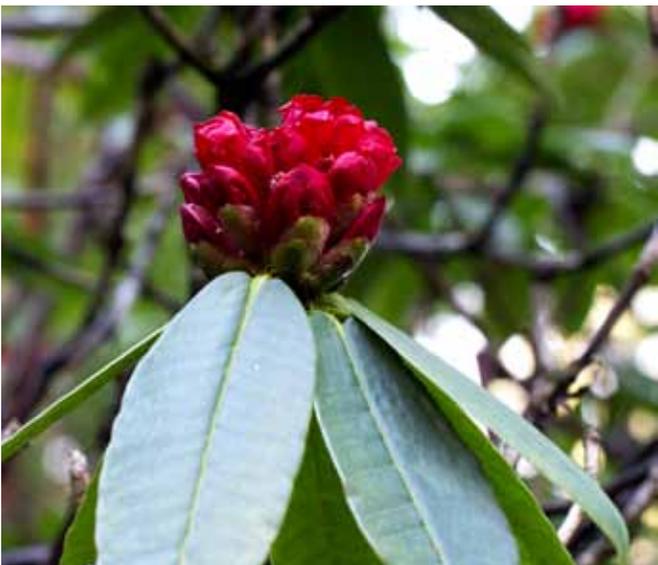


What's in Bloom?

At the UBCBG last week



R. ririei - pale form



R. barbatum



R. barbatum - bark



R. moupinense

R. ririei - dark form



R. mucronulatum



images: S. Rafferty

R. occidentale (epithet: Western)

Rhododendron occidentale was described by the eminent American botanist Asa Gray in 1857. Interestingly, the first herbarium specimen of this plant was likely collected by George Tradescant Lay, a naturalist on the appealingly-named English sailing ship *Blossom*, under the command of Captain Frederick Beechy, while visiting San Francisco for provisions in 1827. Also of note is that William Lobb, employed as a plant collector for the exalted English nursery Veitch and Sons, collected seed of *R. occidentale* in the vicinity of Monterrey, California, in 1841. These seeds, grown on by Veitch, were to become parents of the famous Ghent, Knaphill and Exbury azaleas.

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



R. occidentale: painting by Carlos Reifel from "The Rhododendron" Vol. 2, Edited by Leslie Urquart,



R. occidentale
image: hirsutum.info



R. occidentale Leonard Frisbie
image: hirsutum.info

I mention these dates to underline, that even in its early history, more enthusiasm for the North American western azalea seems to have been generated abroad than at home. The subdued interest by North America may be partially explained by *R. occidentale's* inability to thrive anywhere east of the Rocky Mountains. Anthony Waterer Sr., of Knaphill Nursery, England, was the first known hybridizer of *R. occidentale*, in the 1860's. Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany used *R. occidentale* in their hybridising programs with very favourable results in colour, often even retaining the fragrance. However the major investigation into *R. occidentale* was only undertaken some ninety years later in 1952 by Leonard Frisbie, of Tacoma, Washington. Desiring only to satisfy his own curiosity, he spent many years in the field studying and documenting the locations of the better varieties

of the species. In the early 1960's, Frank Mossman, from Vancouver, Washington, and Britt Smith, of Tacoma, Washington, picked up the torch left by Frisbie and spent sixteen years exploring Oregon and northern California identifying, collecting, describing and making detailed notes on 275 different forms of *R. occidentale*.

During this time American hybridisers started to work with *R. occidentale*. Understandably, it was Frisbie, Mossman and Smith who carried the yeoman's load in this regard along with Ben Lancaster, from Camas, Washington, who did some hybridising with *R. occidentale* and several of the Ghent Hybrids. All of the Smith/Mossman *R. occidentale* collection is now gathered together at the Lake Wilderness Arboretum in Maple Valley, Washington.

All selections of *R. occidentale* species and its hybrids do well on the west coast of America, but even its hybrids suffer when they travel east of the Rocky Mountains. It has been noted, however, that *R. occidentale* has been crossed with the eastern azalea, *R. prunifolium* with seemingly encouraging results for the southeast United States.

R. occidentale is a beautiful plant which is extremely variable in foliage and flower. It has highly fragrant and often quite large flowers that are glandular on the outer surface. They range in colour from white, to white flushed pink, yellowish, pale pink or reddish with a yellow blotch. The flowers appear after the leaves in late spring. The leaves are usually glossy and in autumn will turn brilliant shades of yellow, red, copper, and purple. *R. occidentale* occurs along the west coast of North America from Coos Bay, Oregon, to southern California above the Mexican border. It grows in sandy soils, by the sides of small streams, in wet meadows alongside streams, on hillsides, in moist thickets, in semi-bog, and in margins of marshes; at elevations from sea level to 9,000 feet. It has been found growing and thriving on hillsides with its roots completely covered by



R. occidentale Crescent City Gold
image: hirsutum.info

flowing water. The most attractive specimens, with the largest, most colourful flowers and greatest fragrance, are found bathing in the humidity of the coast at lower elevations. Those from higher up and further inland generally have smaller yellow or white flowers.

R. occidentale has been found difficult to root from cuttings and plants grown from seed are as widely varied as the species in the wild. This makes wide distribution of many of the selected and named forms of *R. occidentale* a slow and challenging process.

Included below is a selection of *R. occidentale* forms and some of its hybrids.



R. occidentale Humboldt Picotee
image: hirsutum.info

Sean Rafferty

R. 'Martha Isaacson'

R. occidentale x
R. 'Mrs. Donald Graham'

E. Ostbo, 1961



R. 'Chaffinch'

R. occidentale x *R. unknown*

H. Waterer, 1941



R. 'Rosella'

R. occidentale x *R. unknown*

H. Waterer, 1958



R. 'Double Parfait'

R. occidentale x *R. occidentale*
'Crescent City Double'

F.D. Mossman, 1972



R. 'Maggie Brown'

R. 'Cecile' x *R. occidentale*
'Leonard Frisbie'

F.D. Mossman, 2008



R. 'Oryx'

(*R. cumberlandense* x
R. occidentale)
x *R. 'Kilauea'*

H. Waterer, 1959

