



### **This Month's Meeting**

Date: Wednesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014 @ 7:30 pm

Topic: **Pollination, Bees, and Related Problems Gardeners Face.**

Speaker: Jacquie Bunse

Plant sales: Colleen Bojczuk

## 2014 Officers

|                |                  |              |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| President:     | Chris Hodgson    | 604-541-2382 |
| Past Pres:     | Brenda Macdonald | 604-990-5353 |
| Vice Pres:     | Evelyn Jensen    | 604-857-5663 |
| 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:    | Ginny Fearing    | 604-857-4136 |
| Newsletter:    | Sean Rafferty    | 604-990-5353 |
| Librarian:     | Joan McGiveron   | 604-538-9347 |
| Website:       | Garth Wedemire   | 778-882-3834 |
| Hospitality:   | Brenda Macdonald | 604-597-1849 |
| BCCGC Liaison: | Bill Bischoff    | 604-589-6134 |

<http://frasersoutherhododendron.ca/>

## Quick Hits

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



We are searching for all copies of *The Yak* dating from 1989 to 2002 in order to scan them to an electronic archive and add them to our new website as it becomes fully operational.

As we are aware how valuable they are to you, upon hearing that many issues trade for astronomical sums of money on eBay, you have our utmost assurances that we shall take the greatest of care with them and return them safely and promptly.

If you could please check your wall safes, bank deposit boxes and bird cages we shall be extremely grateful.

Many thanks







## President's Remarks

With the new year comes a change of guard at FSRS. With some trepidation I have taken over from Brenda as your president for the next two years. Brenda has performed yeoman (yeo-person? yeo-miz?) service as captain. She has nimbly piloted our ship of state clear of the shoals and has dropped in on some very entertaining monthly ports of call, for which, as well as all of those below-deck tussles with pirates and goblins, we owe her a huge vote of thanks. I only hope that I can come close to the standard she has set. As well as staying on the executive as Past President, Brenda has also taken over the responsibilities previously handled so well by Arlene Darby and Karen Linton. A special thank you to Karen for her huge effort in organizing all those refreshments and spring picnics for so long.

Other executive changes include Evelyn Jensen who has heroically agreed to step into the breach as Vice President, thereby saving our collective bacon. Bill Bischoff, formerly past-president, is now off the executive, but still represents us at the BC Council of Garden Clubs.

This Council is our window on the much larger world of west coast gardening, comprising 131 garden clubs throughout the province, everything from allotment gardens to floral art design. Ginny Fearing has replaced Evelyn as Membership Chair. To fill her spot as Director, Kirsten Martin, a new member from Pitt Meadows, has volunteered. You will meet her at the February meeting. Believe me, you will like her and the enthusiasm and energy she brings to your club. I know each of you will extend her a warm welcome.

To round out the roster, Sean Rafferty remains Programme Chairman and Editor of the highly acclaimed and oft-quoted *Yak*, arguably the best monthly newsletter in the ARS. Margaret Hodgson stays on as Secretary, Harold Fearing as Treasurer, Nancy Moore and Chuck Floyd as Directors and Joan McGivern as Librarian. Garth Wedemire is our new Website Manager and plans to give it a complete overhaul. I urge you all to explore and take full advantage of the useful information and ideas it provides.

Finally, you may notice that the remarks are titled "President's Remarks" rather than "Notes from the Chair" - I don't like to spend a lot of time in chairs. Also, I've requested that editor Sean come up with another logo adjacent the President's Report to replace that bustling briefcase-bearing business lady. I have in mind some guy in dungarees, floppy fedora and a hoe, slugging it out with the slugs and those weeds so lyrically described in last month's *Yak*. Let's see what his creative mind comes up with.

*Chris Hodgson*



Galanthus (Snowdrops), harbingers of spring, Jan 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014



## Last Month:

Was our Annual General Meeting and Dessert Extravaganza. The dessert buffet was laden with an embarrassment of prodigious delights from which I, among others, most dutifully savoured. Harold Fearing presented a full overview of our financial situation showing us to be slightly in the red, but nothing that the purchase of a few more raffle tickets wouldn't correct. Two ARS Bronze Medals were presented to the most deserving, Karen Linton and Larry Morton, while Chris Hodgson was the recipient of the Harold Johnson Memorial service award. Two other service awards, not presented due to absences, will be awarded at this month's meeting and all of the citations will be published in the March edition of *The Yak*.

## FROM THE EDITOR

For our January winter evening entertainment we were whisked away to the warm environs of New Zealand and Hawaii. Chris Hodgson took us on a cycling tour of the beautiful Coromandel Peninsula of New Zealand's North Island, and Sue and Garth Wedemire dazzled us with images of their escapades in the Hawaiian Islands. A joyful and relaxing evening indeed.

## This Month:

Jaquie Bunse, the Regional Apiary Inspector for the Ministry of Agriculture, will present a talk on [bees](#), pollination and the related problems we face as gardeners. This should be a compulsory lecture for those of us enamoured of flowering plants and who are curious about this small yet essential insect.

## Next month:

Dennis Bottemiller, Propagator and Garden Manager of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, will return to deliver a presentation on Wild Rhododendrons for the Pacific Northwest Garden. Dennis is a relaxed and informative speaker with a great wealth of knowledge concerning rhododendron species, and his lectures should not be missed.

## Other Duties as Assigned:

This month's refreshment duties have been accepted by the ever industrious Karen Linton, Larry Morton and Chris Ballyn. We can rely on Karen and Larry for the coffee urn and teapots to be filled to their brims and on Chris to have everything arranged with his artistic panache. And as you are aware, assistance with treats for the goodies table is always welcome.

The raffle will return to action and the ground will be hopefully be thawed enough to allow an abundance of plants to be brought to the table.

*Sean Rafferty*



*cassiope sp. Sichuan, China*  
image: B. Macdonald

# The Business Stuff:

## Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden

Celebrates 50 years

April 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>

As we prepare to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Rhododendron Species Foundation in Federal Way, Washington, I am humbled by the reality of how much has been accomplished these last 50 years. These accomplishments, of course, are only due to the efforts by you, the members and supporters and staffs of this great organization. Fifty years sounds like a lot of time, but that time is dwarfed by how much you have gotten done. From the beginning organizational meetings in 1962-64, to the first steps in collecting and propagating the original mother plants, to the maturing garden that you see today, those so distant beginnings have turned into a beautiful reality. The efforts of many very devoted people have left their mark on this garden and organization, and ultimately have left a significant contribution to the rhododendron world.



As the current President of the RSF, I wish to invite all of you to our celebration. Registration information is available on the RSBG website, [www.RhodyGarden.org](http://www.RhodyGarden.org). Early bird registration ends March 1<sup>st</sup> and all registrations must be in by April 14<sup>th</sup>. Speakers include David Chamberlain, Douglas Justice, Steve Hootman, and Harold Greer. There will be guided tours through the RSF Botanical Garden as well as other gardens in the local area. Those who will gather at the RSF to celebrate will come together as friends to reminisce, and to raise a glass in honor of all who have contributed through the years. If you are unable to attend, please take a moment the next time you are enjoying the beauty of your own garden, and the special species rhododendrons that you so cherish, to remember the many efforts and sacrifices through history that were given in the name of making species rhododendrons available for all of us to enjoy. Celebrate the

beauty of those rhododendrons, and celebrate the day that the Rhododendron Species Foundation was born.

As in any healthy, living, growing organization, the RSF is in a constant state of evolution. Yes, the RSF has many new ambitions, and the culmination of those ambitions will be realized only with your continuing support. We are working hard to develop new methods of reaching out to further strengthen and grow our membership and to find additional ways to meet the demand for needed funds, so that we may accomplish the next 50 years of dreams for the RSF. This is an exciting time for the Rhododendron Species Foundation, as we not only celebrate each of you, but as we work towards the bright future for which you have laid such a solid foundation to build upon. Among the several presentations given during the “celebration event”, you will hear about some of the plans for the future, and you will be amazed and enthused by what the future holds for the RSF. Our task is large, but with continued resolve, and your help, we will build upon that foundation to accomplish the goals that we have planned for the future.

With my deepest gratitude and best wishes to all of you, the Rhododendron Species Foundation members and supporters, I look forward to meeting each of you at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.

*Mike Stewart*

President, Rhododendron Species Foundation



## THE CALENDAR:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Wednesday, February 12<br>7:30 pm, Van Dusen               | Alpine Garden Club of BC<br>Ken Marr: Plant Collecting in the Altai Mountains and Far Eastern Russia   |
| Wednesday, February 19<br>7:30 pm                          | Fraser South Rhododendron Society<br>Jacquie Bunse, Regional Apiary Inspector for the Ministry of Agriculture  |
| Thursday, February 20<br>7:30 pm, Van Dusen                | Vancouver Rhododendron Society<br>Sylvia Mosterman: Maples and the World Maple Society conference  |
| Wednesday, March 12<br>7:30 pm, Van Dusen                  | Alpine Garden Club of BC<br>Rex Murfitt: Waterperry, a Unique English Estate with Saxifrages   |
| Wednesday, March 19<br>7:30 pm                             | Fraser South Rhododendron Society<br>Dennis Bottemiller: Wild Rhododendrons for the Pacific Northwest Garden   |
| Thursday, March 20<br>7:30 pm, Van Dusen                   | Vancouver Rhododendron Society<br>Dennis Bottemiller, propagator, Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden  |
| Saturday, April 5<br>12:00-4:00 pm, Van Dusen              | Alpine Garden Club of BC<br>Annual Spring Show and Sale  |
| Wednesday, April 9<br>7:30 pm, Van Dusen                   | Alpine Garden of BC<br>Nicola Ripley: Bringing the Mountains Home  |
| Wednesday, April 16<br>7: 30 pm                            | Fraser South Rhododendron Society<br>Rosemary Prufer: Horticulture, the Crown Jewel of Oregon  |
| Thursday, April 17<br>7:30 pm, Van Dusen                   | Vancouver Rhododendron Society<br>Sean Rafferty: Rhododendrons and Companion Plants of Sichuan, China  |
| Saturday, April 19<br>10:00 am - 3:00 pm                   | Fraser South Rhododendron Society<br>Annual Spring Plant Sale: United Church, 5673-200 Street, Langley   |
| April 24 - 26<br>Friday and Saturday<br>9:00 am - 10:30 pm | Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Federal Way, Washington. Everyone Welcome. <a href="#">See here for details.</a> |
| Saturday, May 3<br>10:00 am - 3:00 pm                      | Vancouver Rhododendron Society, Annual Show and Sale<br>Park and Tilford Gardens, 333 Brooksbank Avenue, North Vancouver,                            |
| Wednesday, May 14<br>7:30 pm, Van Dusen                    | Alpine Garden Club of BC<br>Richard Ramsden: Wild Flowers of Washington and the Wild Places They Grow  |
| Thursday, May 15   | Vancouver Rhododendron Society<br>A Walk in the Park   |
| Wednesday, May 21<br>7:30 pm                               | Fraser South Rhododendron Society<br>The Fraser South Justly Famous Beer Bottle Truss Show   |

## MIKE BALE 1941 - 2014



Verve is the word that springs to mind when thinking about Mike Bale. While his life was cut shorter than it should have been, the life he led was so filled with interests and enthusiasm that none of it was wasted.

Mike, a family physician with a busy practice in Abbotsford, was an FSRS member by December of 1989, a month after the club's inauguration. And he immediately started making a difference.

A passionate believer in the value of garden tours to entertain and educate fellow enthusiasts he immediately made open gardens and garden tours his goals when he first joined the FSRS Executive as a Director in 1993.

His bus tours were wondrous to behold and a joy to participate in. There was Nanaimo and Tofino in 2000, Washington in 2001, Vancouver Island in 2002, and Oregon in 2003: fifty rhodoholics travelling about in a big cushy bus with someone else to do the driving. All we needed to do was enjoy the scenery and periodically hop off the bus to wander about a garden - it was bliss.

About the same time Mike joined FSRS he and his wife Patti began to develop their iconic garden, Lu Zhu, located on the lower slopes of a mountain just west of Agassiz. For more than 20 years Mike planted rhododendrons there, many grown from seed or cuttings, others purchased, amounting to many thousands of rhodos. He also added at least as many companion plants to the landscape. Mike loved the garden, whose name means Dewdrop, and loved sharing it with others. He hosted garden tours for our club, other ARS clubs, and other garden organisations touring internationally, including the Royal Horticultural Society.

Mike was an ideas man. As well as the bus tours, he was the driving force behind the decision for FSRS to host the 2006 Fall Conference in Harrison Hot Springs. Many of us in the Chapter helped with the grunt work, but without Mike's vision and creativity it would never have been the great success that it was. During Mike's tenure as President he suggested that the Annual General Meeting in January become a "Just Desserts" event, making the FSRS AGM possibly the only AGM to be eagerly anticipated by group members.

Renowned for his generosity, Mike regularly donated flats filled with rhododendrons grown from seed or cuttings to the raffle tables of both the Fraser South Chapter and the Vancouver Chapter.

It is only natural that Mike should have been recognized for the enormous contributions he made, with a Bronze Medal from Fraser South in 2001, the Ella J. Crabb Memorial Award from Fraser South in 2003, and then a Bronze Medal from the Vancouver Chapter in 2011.

Mike was an enthusiastic supporter of the Rhododendron Species Foundation, located in Federal Way, Washington. Not only did he make some legendary biannual plant purchases of species rhododendrons through them, but he was also responsible for the instigation and organisation of the Species Study Days held there in the springs of 2002 through 2009. These series of spring meetings, under the tutelage of the RSF's Steve Hootman, were an invaluable education in rhododendrons: where they came from, how they grew, what they looked like, and most confusing of all, the complex relationships and taxonomy of the various groupings.

Species Study Days were the necessary and direct precursor to the plant-hunting trips made to China that a number of the Species Study Days participants made in 2005, 2006, and then in 2012. Without Mike's initial organization of the Species Study Days many of us would never have been able to take advantage of these wonderful opportunities, and while he was never able to manage his schedule to join us, we who did participate are eternally grateful that his idea was the catalyst for it all.

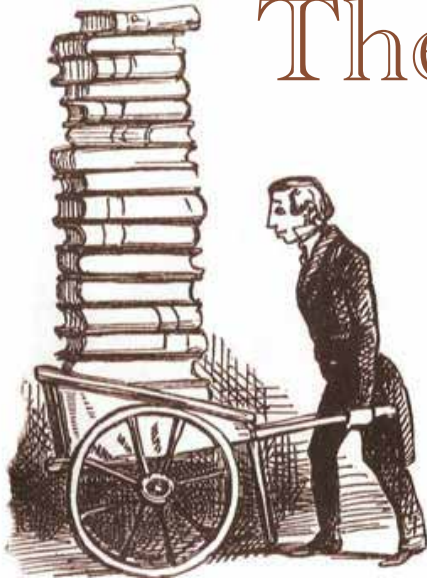
Mike Bale was warm, generous, funny, hard-working, interesting, and a great supporter of all things rhododendron.

Our organization will miss his support, its members will miss his presence.

It was a delight and a privilege to have known him.

*Brenda Macdonald*

# The Book Cart



*Ornamental Grasses* by Roger Grounds

Christopher Helm (Publishers) Ltd. Imperial House, Bromley, Kent, England, 1989.

232 pages, approx. 20 plates colour photos, 35 black and white figures.

Appendix 1 Hardiness Zone Map, Appendix 2 Conversion Tables, Appendix 3 Suppliers Index, Glossary, Index of Plant Names. Hardbound.

ISBN 0-929050-87-8 (hardcover).

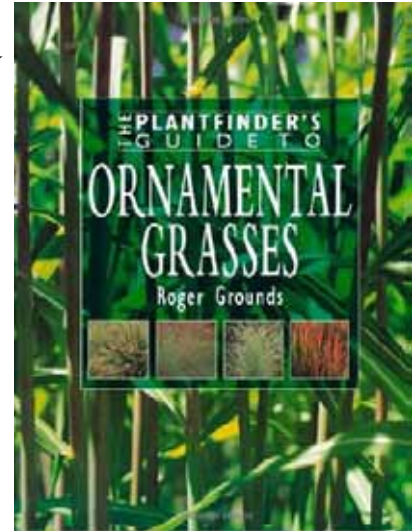
Roger Grounds is the author of many books on gardening subjects. He has a garden design and consulting practice with a small nursery, specializing

in grasses, at Lymington, Hampshire, England. The following is but a small indication of his prolific authorship of many gardening books:

*Practical Pruning, Trees for Smaller Gardens, White Garden, Fresh From the Garden, Small Garden, Grasses: Choosing and Using These Ornamental Plants In the Garden, Ferns, The 2 Hour Garden, The Private Life of Plants, Plantfinder's Guide to Ornamental Grasses, The Natural Garden, Growing Vegetables and Herbs.*

The author points out at the beginning of his book that ornamental grasses are fast becoming the most fashionable group of hardy plants. They are easy to cultivate and are at home in mixed borders or in large broad plantings on their own. Grasses have a grace and beauty as well as a diversity of size, form and habit that make them suitable for a great variety of ornamental garden uses. They range from miniatures to shrub-size giants and also from invasive ground-covering grasses to non-invasive grasses that are very elegant in borders. Some fit into rock gardens, others in bog gardens; some love hot, dry conditions, others love to have wet feet; some are woodland plants, others meadow grasses.

Grounds has organized his book to introduce the reader to the vast diversity of grasses right in his introductory chapter, and follows quickly with the garden uses of grasses in Chapter Two. He suggests looking at the "lawn" through new eyes. Problem areas usually appear under the trees and Grounds' solution is to plant woodrushes, as they are natives of woodlands and so enjoy these conditions. He also suggests replacing heavy traffic areas with stepping stones and using blue grass in the area adjacent to heavy traffic volume. A further idea is to plant a whole multi-coloured lawn. In Chapter Three the author discusses in detail the cultivation of grasses, following this up with a chapter on arrangements of dry grasses in floral design. An entire chapter (Five) is devoted to the structure and identification of grasses with much description and many colour plates. The author has devoted entire Chapter Six to Bamboos, which he sees as an essentially distinct and cohesive group within the grasses. He points out that bamboos may be herbs, shrubs, trees or climbers, and include few distinctly odd genera. It is generally accepted that bamboos were, in evolutionary terms, the forerunners of the modern grasses. They evolved as forest plants gradually adapting themselves to aquatic and forest margin habits, but have failed to adapt to grassland habits. They seem to need the moister, shadier conditions associated with the forest. Sedges, (Chapter Seven), although lumped together with grasses, are very different ancient plants, separated by millions of years in evolutionary terms, grasses being the most modern of plants. This chapter spells out the main characteristics of sedges in full detail. Chapter Eight describes the various rushes and Chapter Nine deals with cat-tails. The book has an excellent index.



*Margaret Hodgson*



# *Rhododendron ambiguum*

(Epithet: Doubtful)

*Rhododendron ambiguum* was discovered and collected in 1904 by Ernest Henry 'Chinese' Wilson in western Sichuan, China and later by other collectors in the same region.

Belonging to Subsection Triflora, it is a shrubby lepidote species with a typically tall and bushy upright habit, although a few are more mounded and compact. Subsection Triflora is divided into three groups; the Yunnanense Alliance, whose members are very closely related, quite variable, intergrade in the wild to a large degree and include *R. yunnanense*, *R. davidsonianum*, *R. rigidum*, *R. siderophyllum* and *R. tatsiense*; the Augustinii and Triflorum Alliance consisting of *R. ambiguum* and all of the remaining Triflora except for *R. oreotrephes*, which is in its own Alliance and appears to bridge Subsection Triflora and Subsection Cinnabarina. The Augustinii and Triflorum Alliance generally has yellow to lavender or purple flowers, although they may be sometimes pink or white. I am informed that purple and yellow flowers are virtually interchangeable at the chemical/ chromosome level.

According to Cox and Cox, in the *Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species*, most of Subsection Triflora are often found growing in dry areas which allows for a better tolerance of poor or heavy soils in cultivation than most larger-leaved species.

The flowers of *R. ambiguum* are widely-funnel shaped to one inch in length, greenish-yellow to pale yellow with green spots, and are lepidote outside. The flowers are reminiscent of *R. lutescens*, and while not quite as showy as *R. lutescens* are much hardier and later blooming on a very floriferous plant. The leaves are up to three inches long and one inch wide, having a dark green, lepidote upper surface and glaucous lower surface with dark brown, unequal-sized yellowish, brown and black scales.

The plant is dense and compact and may grow to eighteen feet in the wild, where it grows in thickets, rocky exposed places and forests at elevations of 8,000 - 14,000 feet. *R. ambiguum*, along with its closest relative *R. concinnum*, from whom it differs only in the latter's purple flower, are the hardiest of all the Subsection Triflora.

I am unable to discern the relevance of the epithet (Doubtful) to this species and as a cursory search of the usual resources has been unyielding, I feel free to formulate rash and untested assumptions. If the above noted assertion respecting the colours purple and yellow and their exchangeability is true, one might assume that a forest of *R. ambiguum* could comprise of specimens in varying shades of purple, lavender or ruby along with the familiar yellow. I only recognise *R. ambiguum* as the yellow I have in our own garden, and have seen elsewhere in cultivation and on a couple of mountains in Sichuan. It is also the only colour described by the Coxes in *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species* and by Davidian in *Rhododendron Species* vol. 1, although both authors note the propensity of *R. ambiguum* to hybridise in the wild; lonely plants doing what lonely plants do when found in close

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



*R. ambiguum*  
images: Garth Wedemire  
in Mike & Patti Bale's garden



proximity. However, while conducting a search in the [Flora of China](#) I found images of what is called *R. ambiguum* in a variety of hues. I have no idea if these might be varieties of the same species, different species, natural hybrids or a



*R. ambiguum*  
 image: Garth Wedemire  
 in Mike & Patti Bale's garden



*R. ambiguum?*  
 image: David Boufford  
 Sichuan, China



*R. ambiguum?*  
 Fanjingshan, Guizhou, China  
 image: S. Rafferty

hybrid swarm. Perhaps, Wilson was confronted by such a forest, even though his collection, described by [William Hemsley](#), was yellow

On a trek up a mountain in Guizhou, China, named [Fanjingshan](#), a couple of years ago we encountered an old and vast forest of Subsection Triflora. These plants were fifteen to twenty feet tall with muddy pink flowers which were just past peak bloom. We were informed that this forest had been identified as *R. ambiguum* by the Royal Horticultural Society, the first horticultural group to have been allowed to visit the area

since the reopening of China to the West during the nineteen eighties. They were certainly unlike any *R. ambiguum* that I have seen, either in colour or gestalt. A plant description which, to me at least, seemed ambiguous indeed.

If you followed the [Flora of China](#) hyperlink to view the David Boufford images and read the notes that suggest that *R. wongii* (also found by Ernest Wilson in 1904) be treated synonymously with *R. ambiguum*, it should be noted that Cox and Cox in *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species* claim that *R. wongii* is almost certainly a hybrid of *R. ambiguum* x *R. flavidum*.

Hybrids of *R. ambiguum*, in cultivation, benefit from a hardy and worthwhile parent, which can even survive some of the harshest eastern North American climates.

The first three images of hybrids on page 10 are all seedlings resulting from the same cross made by Dietrich Hobbie in 1970.

Sean Rafferty



Seedling

*R. ambiguum* x *R. cinnabarinum* ssp *xanthocodon* Concatenans Group



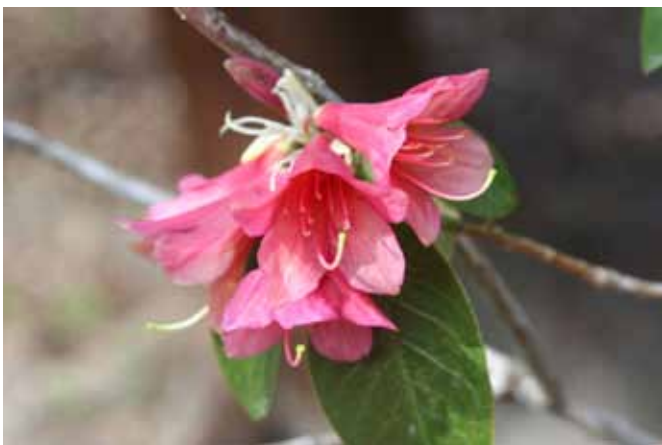
Seedling

*R. ambiguum* x *R. cinnabarinum* ssp *xanthocodon* Concatenans Group



Seedling

*R.ambiguum* x *R. cinnabarinum* ssp *xanthocodon* Concatenans Group



*R. wongii*

*R. ambiguum* x *R. flavidum*



*R. 'Eroica'*

*R. unknown* x *R. ambiguum*



*R. "What a Dane"*

(*R. ambiguum* x *R. cinnabarinum* Concatenans Group) x *R. cinnabarinum* ssp *cinnabarinum* Nepal'. Jens Birck, 1983



images: [hirsutum.info](http://hirsutum.info)