



*R. dalhousiae* var. *rhabdotum* RSBG  
Looking very much like Christmas bells

**This Month's Meeting**

**Date:** Wednesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015 @ 6:30 pm

**Fraser South Annual Christmas Potluck Party**

## 2015 Officers

President:	Chris Hodgson	604-541-2382
Past Pres:	Brenda Macdonald	778-528-3647
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
	Rosemary Prufer	604-466-4929
	Kirsten Martin	778-846-6732
Programme:	Rosemary Prufer	604-466-4929
Membership:	Ginny Fearing	604-857-4136
Newsletter:	Sean Rafferty	778-528-3647
Librarian:	Joan McGiveron	604-538-9347
Website:	Kirsten Martin	778-846-6732
Hospitality:	Nancy Moore	604 859 3690
BCCGC Liaison:	Rosemary Prufer	604-466-4929

<http://frasersoutherhododendron.ca/>

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:  
**Langley Mennonite Fellowship Church**  
20997- 40<sup>th</sup> Street  
Langley BC



## Quick Hits

Christmas Potluck Dinner: Wednesday, December 9, a week earlier than our normal meeting date. Setup at 6:15 pm, slightly later than normal due to the nursery school being in session until 6:00 pm.





## President's Remarks :

Frosty nights. Crisp, sunny days. It's starting to feel a lot like Christmas. Over at our place, with a last minute burst of energy before hard frosts arrived, we tucked the remaining transplants and raffle table winnings safely to bed, and moved our *R. edgeworthii* – mindful of Sean's comment about it being an annual at his former garden - to the garage for safe keeping.

I found last month's presentation by Douglas Justice very gratifying, if for no other reason than he confirmed all my garden prejudices: discard those pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers, recycle the annual crop of fallen leaves and develop a stable, self-sustaining ecosystem. Since we have mainly conifers on our lot, we've had to train our neighbours to give us their unwanted hardwood leaves. Loose leaves are mower-mulched, then go straight to the border gardens for winter protection, nutrition and weed and moisture control next year. Bagged leaves remain as they are to emerge as perfect garden

compost next spring. Course the neighbours all think I'm nuts (true), but I think they don't fully appreciate nature's generous bounty (also true). A write-up on Douglas Justices' inspiring talk is found elsewhere in this *Yak*.

Next up for FSRS is our Christmas party on Wednesday, December 9. As last year, the dinner will be a true pot luck: just bring your favourite dish. No upper management organization required. And as always, we shall have a ham (thank you Joan and Terry McGiveron), a turkey (thank you Sue and Chris Klapwijk) and our traditional punch and punchier (thank you Larry and Karen). For entertainment this year we'll have another deliciously devilish garden quiz by Art and Rose Prufer and a virtual photographic tour of some members' gardens to get us dreaming about our next year's garden possibilities. Additional very important advice on the Potluck is offered under "Quick Hits" in this *Yak*.

My term as president ends in January. I'm starting to think about what we have accomplished over the past two years and what still remains on my personal wish list. We've had a very good slate of monthly speakers and now have a new and attractive venue (without disruptions) at the Langley Mennonite Church. The Members' Table this year at the spring sale was a big success, bringing everyone together in a joint effort and filling what otherwise would have been a hole in our annual budget. We hope to make it even bigger next year. Our garden field trips have been very popular events. In my opinion a garden club without garden tours makes no sense. But as tour organizer I have one (self) criticism: most trips are crammed into the 30 days between mid-April and mid-May. As we all know, gardening here is a year-around affair. Even if our gardens are not at their showy best in late fall and winter, there's no reason not to hold garden tours in summer and fall. I'll try to do better.

Finally, it's appropriate at this season to talk about charity. FSRS is a non-profit organization, not a charity, yet I believe strongly that the club should provide support to worthwhile projects and individuals (such as students) directly involved with horticulture. It's good for them and it's good for us. It gives us a goal, a lot of satisfaction in seeing the results, a direct connection with the next generation of gardeners and, not least, publicity. Earlier this year your executive struck an informal committee to look into possible projects and recipients. So far none has met our requirements: it should be local, cost no more than \$500 and must make a difference. Such a donation might produce a temporary deficit in the club's annual budget, although our treasury is sufficiently robust to keep us afloat for several more years even without raising another penny. Any suggestions are welcome. To quote an unnamed sage, "Money is like steer manure. You've got to plow it back into the ground for it to do any good." I'll be prodding our next executive to pitchfork some manure in 2016.



*R. edgeworthii*  
Yaping Pass, Yunnan

*Chris Hodgson*



## FROM THE EDITOR

### This Month:

Friend Garth, from up north Island way, sent me this [link](#) of *R. ponticum* flaunting its ability to embrace huge swaths of land in The Vee, County Tipperary, Ireland. Poor *R. ponticum* is much maligned for vigorously layering itself and becoming an invasive scourge throughout the British Isles. So much so that there has been talk of the E.U, attempting to [ban](#) the planting and growing of all rhododendrons in Britain. It is interesting to note that no rhododendron other than *R. ponticum* have been documented as a problem.

DNA studies point out that many of the troublesome plants tested are complex hybrids of the Spanish and Portuguese *R. ponticum* which have been crossed with *R. catawbiense*, *maximum*, *caucasicum* and other hardy hybrids. These plants were grown abundantly on the great estates of Britain for their ornamental value and as cover for game birds. It was from these estates that the plants escaped to inflict their damage.

Personally, I would select *R. ponticum* over the *Cytisus scoparius* (Scotch Broom) of Vancouver Island

### Last Month:

The Fraser South Rhododendron Society enjoyed a special treat at its November meeting. Douglas Justice, Associate Director and Curator of Collections at the UBC Botanical Garden spoke to Fraser South on “The Importance of Biodiversity in the Rhododendron Garden”. Before his talk he gave us a floral bouquet of current blooms in the Botanical Garden, always a popular monthly event at VRS, his home chapter.

Moving on, Douglas gave a stimulating PowerPoint presentation on why diversity is so important in a garden.

Every garden is a disturbance to the ecosystem, but how then is stability achieved? The rules are ones which gardeners have known for ages but have rarely had them so clearly laid out. Plant diversity is the most important rule since diversity increases resilience to pests and diseases. We were reminded that every plant is food for more than one organism and every pest and microbe in turn has a predator. Chemical fertilizers are to be avoided as they create imbalance and, like any drug addiction, require constant “fixes.” On the other hand, natural composts such as leaf mulch can reactivate soil health by improving texture and by providing long-lasting nutrition. Nurse logs from a recent or ancient blow-down should be prized assets in any garden, providing habitat for both plants and insects. Bare dirt is bad. Covering the ground moderates soil temperature, reduces erosion and crowds out annual weeds. Developing and recognizing different habitats in our gardens is vital, and we should plant “what grows best where it grows best”.



In short, diversity (i.e., complexity) in the garden will lead to development of a natural ecosystem requiring few inputs (after the initial planting) and will be essentially self-regulating through a natural system of checks and balances. With minimal outside help, garden problems will be sorted out naturally and those nasty critters controlled. A lively question session followed.

*Margaret Hodgson*

**This Month:** is the Christmas Potluck Dinner Party. Set-up is at 6:15 pm and sit down at 6:45-7:00 pm. It is a true pot luck and please bring a dish of your own choosing that you feel others may enjoy; bring a dish adequate for eight persons: . Also please bring your own vessel to drink from, dinner plate, dessert plate and cutlery. As always, we shall have tea, and regular and decaffeinated coffee. Larry and Karen will kindly provide their traditional punch and punchier to put us in the Christmas spirit. Feel free to dress festively and prepare to be merry.

And a reminder to all: this is your last chance to send your favourite garden photos to Chris Hodgson at [chodgson@telus.net](mailto:chodgson@telus.net) for showing at our Christmas dinner party. They should be at least 1,000 kb (1mb) in size to show well. Chris requests you send multiple e-mails with no more than 3-4 photo attachments per e-mail to avoid freezing up his In-box.

## Next Month:

Is the FSRS annual General Meeting and Just desserts Extravaganza and members slide presentation. Please bring along your favourite dessert to share with everyone else and help make the AGM a palatable affair.

### THE CALENDAR:

<b>Wednesday, December 9 6:30 pm</b>	<b>Fraser South Rhododendron Society Annual Christmas Potluck Party</b>
<b>Wednesday, December 9 7:30-10:00 pm Van Dusen</b>	<b>Alpine Garden Club of BC Howard Wills: Sempervivums and Related Plants</b>
<b>Wednesday, January 13 7:30-10:00 pm Van Dusen</b>	<b>Alpine Garden Club of BC AGM and Members Slide Night</b>
<b>Wednesday, January 20 6:30 pm</b>	<b>Fraser South Rhododendron Society AGM and Annual Dessert Extravaganza</b>
<b>Thursday, January 21 7:30 pm Van Dusen</b>	<b>Vancouver Rhododendron Society AGM and Members Slide Night</b>

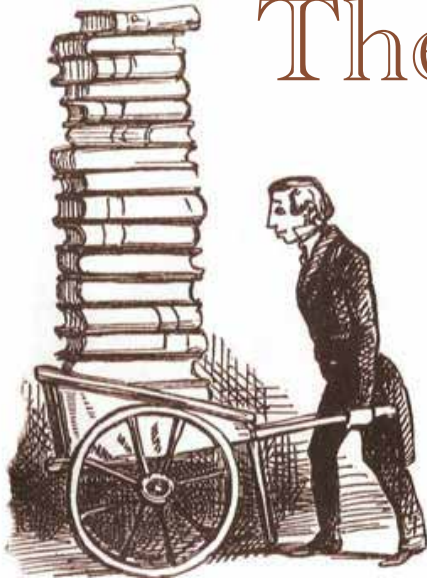
### The Holly and the Ivy (and the mistletoe?)

We are into the Christmas season as everyone is well aware – this year even before Halloween! The chestnuts of Christmas music are starting to drift through our heads as we attend the multitude of Christmas concerts. Having grown up in a very cold climate where holly certainly did not grow, precious little ivy and mistletoe not at all, I always wondered when very young what these plants looked like that we would see on so many Christmas cards. What were the associations to Christmas? The holly, ivy and mistletoe were all used in pre-Christian times in Western Europe during the celebration festivities of the Winter Solstice, mainly to ward off evil and to encourage good healthy growth in the coming season. As Christianity took hold in Western Europe, new meanings became attached to these symbols, but there was often a ban on using these items inside the home. This did not happen in Germany or in the British Isles and the symbols became entrenched with Christian meanings. The holly, also called the “Christ Thorn” in many countries, came to represent the crown of thorns placed on the head of Christ at the crucifixion and the red berries, the drops of blood on His brow. Ivy, tenacious plant that it is, when grown on the exterior of buildings particularly on churches was believed to give protection against lightning strikes. Mistletoe, a tradition that dates back to the time of ancient Druids, was believed to possess magical powers to bring good luck to households and to protect them from evil spirits. It was also a sign of love and friendship in Norse mythology which explains the “kissing under the mistletoe” tradition. Kissing boughs or wreaths (from the Old English word – writhen – “to twist”) often included evergreen boughs, rosemary, bay leaves as well as the holly, ivy and mistletoe.

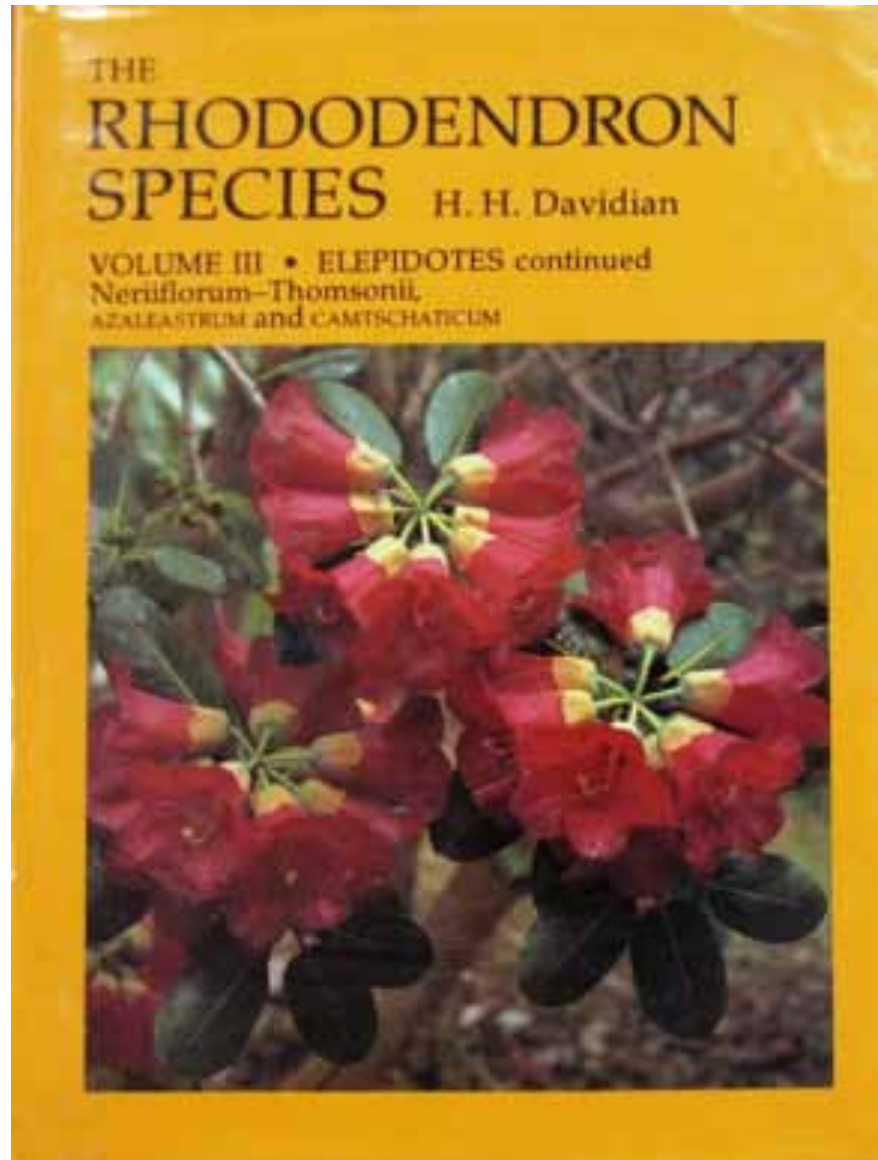


*Margaret Hodgson*

# The Book Cart



*The Rhododendron Species, Vol III, Elepidotes – Neriiflorum – Thomsonii, Azaleastrum and Camtschaticum* by H.H. Davidian, B.A., B.Sc. (Hons.) Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, Copyright 1992 by H.H. Davidian. 381 pages, 161 colour plates, 8 pages lack and white photographs, 18 line drawings, plus numerous maps. Glossary. Hardiness Zone maps. General Index, and Index of rhododendrons. Hardbound. ISBN 0-88192-168-8 (hardcover) As in Volumes I and II of the *Rhododendron Species*, H.H. Davidian, widely recognized as one of the leading authorities on the genus rhododendron, has continued to offer complete and detailed descriptions of the Elepidote Rhododendrons which were partially covered in Volume II. Volume III of this illustrated study is Mr. Davidian's synopsis of Elepidote Rhododendrons as a continuation of Volume II, along with new taxa.



Again, the organization of this volume is very similar to Davidian's other major works in the study of the rhododendron species, providing excellent drawings and descriptions of leaf shapes, flower shapes, scales, seeds, and rhododendron hairs before moving into the list of elepidote rhododendron species and varieties in their Series. The author then moves to Keys and Descriptions. Again the Glossary at the beginning is very useful, as is the General Index and the Index of Rhododendrons. The Synopsis of the Elepidote Rhododendron Species, Varieties and Synonyms after the descriptions are included. Another major work which we have in our library.

*Margaret Hodgson*