



The Yak

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRASER SOUTH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

VOLUME 30 NUMBER 05, MAY 2016

R. hippophaeoides



R. tricanthum

This Month's Meeting

Date: Wednesday, May 18th, 2016 @ 7:30 pm

The Justly Famous Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show

2016 Officers

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<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- 40th-Street
Langley BC



Quick Hits

This month is the time in which we dust the cobwebs from our favorite beer containers, or extract the contents from some new ones, in order to carry the glory of our gardens to the Fraser South Justly Famous Beer Bottle Truss show. We shall start earlier, at 7:00 pm, in order to fill out our entry cards. Bring one truss or bring boodles as there are many categories available to enter and they are all listed inside on page 7. Beer bottles are the favoured display vessels of choice, but some displays may require something either larger or smaller to better hold the truss. There are no demerits for alternative vases.





Past President's Remarks

As President Evelyn is currently indisposed, I have been seconded to fill this space with a few words.

Field Trips: The proposed bus trip to UBC Botanical Garden has been cancelled due to inadequate sign ups. The tour is still on, of course, but members will have to make their own way to UBC by car pool, bus or bicycle. Tour starts at 5:30pm and ends at dusk on Thursday, May 19.

I am advised that there is adequate parking.

The day trip on Saturday, May 28 to the Chilliwack area will start at Chris Byra's garden on Chilliwack Mountain, followed by Minter's Nursery (and an audience with Brian – bring your questions!) and PNW Propagators in Rosedale. This trip could also be done by bus, with pickups in Langley and Abbotsford. Those interested must bring a cheque (\$20 pp) to our upcoming meeting on May 18, made out to FSRS. A minimum of 20 buskers are needed to justify the bus rental. PNW Propagators are a wholesale nursery specializing in acers, other tree species and shrubs. They will sell at wholesale prices, but only on orders of at least \$500.

The just-completed ARS convention in Williamsburg, Virginia was a joint effort by the ARS and ASA. That's the American Azalea Society, not to be confused with the pain killer.

Williamsburg is at the heart of colonial America, and a charming town, full of history. The convention offered some excellent talks by knowledgeable rhododendron and azalea-holics, and a slew of interesting garden tours. As expected, we saw far more azaleas than rhododendrons. Eight of us made up the District 1 cohort.

The big news was that our Executive Director, Laura Grant, has officially retired after serving 12 years. Katherine Sterner is our new Office Administrator. She's based in Great River, NY, lives on farm and has oodles of experience with non-profits. Her duties will be membership issues (including renewal cheques) and chapter support. She can be reached at member@arsoffice.org, phone 631-533-0375. Assistant Editor Sonja Nelson is now taking care of all JARS support including missed or damaged copies. E-mail: sonjan@wavecable.com, phone 360-757-6957. ARS Treasurer Dave Banks will be responsible for all bills and payments other than membership checks. Contact Dave for details at arstreasurer1@gmail.com, phone 757-258-8632. All this will save money, but still not enough to balance the books without dipping into the Endowment Fund.



Katherine Sterner,

Laura Grant

Linda Derkach (secretary)

And I finally got to meet Norman Beaudry, the dedicated individual behind the ARS seed exchange. He reports that the 2016 seed catalog is available on the ARS web site with nearly 500 rhododendron, azalea and companion seed listings. 8,000 individual seed packets have been pre-packaged and seed pricing remains \$3.00 per packet. It appears to be the only segment of ARS that is operating in the black.

Chris Hodgson



FROM THE EDITOR

was concise, and provided a holistic picture of the climate change problem, including both the scientific and human dimensions. She explained the basics of the climate system, climate models and prediction, and human and biophysical impacts, as well as a few strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing adaptability, and enabling climate change governance.

This was a short introduction to an urgent and controversial issue of understanding climate change. I personally left this lecture feeling an urge to be a constructive participant in the human response to climate change as the world is clearly changing in a way unparalleled to any scientific evidence of past climatic trends. We were encouraged to plant more rhododendrons to offset and combat the exorbitant daily CO₂ emissions, but it will take a joining of society to come up with a collaborative solution in order to make any significant impact towards reducing emissions and beginning a global combat against climate change.

Kirsten Martin



This Month:

is once again the Justly famous Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show. Please find your way to page 5 for the rules of engagement. As in all previous years, biting and hair-pulling will be frowned upon.

Last Month:

Sara Harris did a detailed and complex lecture on Global Climate Change. By the end of the presentation, the audience had excellent questions and we were all stunned by the remarkable data that was presented about the world's rapidly changing climate.

The presentation was filled with challenges involving complex data, deeply held values, and political issues revolving around our climate and its future. She

Next Month:

Will be the FSRS annual picnic and Silent Auction on June 4th at the home and garden of Gael and John Dodd. Details and directions to the garden will be in the June edition of *The Yak*.

The Business Stuff:

The American Rhododendron Society will be holding its spring 2016 convention in Williamsburg, Virginia, from April 20 - 24. To visit the convention website and register, please click [here](#).

There will also be a Fall Western Regional Conference in Newport, Oregon. September 30-October 2, 2016. I shall post their website as soon as it is up and running. The conferences organised at Newport are some of the best that I have attended.

Also, another convention you should make plans for is in California in 2017. Eureka Chapter will host The American Rhododendron Society 2017 ARS Spring Convention "Rhododendrons in the Redwoods". Mark your calendar now for April 27 through 30, 2017, for the American Rhododendron Society's annual spring Convention.

Rumour also has it that there may be a joint Convention with Germany in 2018, but it is not yet confirmed



Twenty-third Annual Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show

The world famous Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss Show will be held at our May meeting, Wednesday, May 15th. This is a fun event in which everyone can participate.

Here are the rules, beautiful in their simplicity:

1. Entry to the hall will be by bringing at least one truss. It is not necessary that it be a rhododendron.
2. There will be three areas for display:
 - a. competitive rhododendron trusses
 - b. non-competitive rhododendron trusses
 - c. companion plant displays, including bonsai
3. For the competitive event, participants will be allowed to enter only one truss in each class. Additional trusses can be displayed on the non-competitive table.
4. To assist in deciding which class to enter, an Advisory Panel will provide guidance and make any final decisions necessary.
5. All trusses must be in glass bottles. (Cans and plastic pop bottles are too unstable.)
6. Judging will be by member votes. Having given up on the too-sticky Smarties, we will be continuing with the counting beads used for the last few years. Just drop your bead in the receptacle in front of the truss you wish to vote for.
7. All entries to be rhododendrons (not azaleas) unless otherwise specifically noted.

CLASSES

Division I

Species Classes

- Class 1. Sub-genus 'Rhododendron' (lepidotes)
- Class 2. Azalea (deciduous and evergreen)
- Class 3. Sub-genus 'Hymenantes' (elepidotes)

Division II

Hybrid Classes

- Class 4. Any lepidote hybrid
- Class 5. Any deciduous azalea hybrid
- Class 6. Any evergreen azalea hybrid

Colour Classes (rhododendrons only)

- Class 7a: Red - (small)
- 7b: Red - (large)
- Class 8a: White - (small)
- 8b: White - (large)
- Class 9a: Pink - (small)
- 9b: Pink - (large)
- 9c: Pink - (really, really, large)
- Class 10a: Yellow & Cream (small)
- 10b: Yellow & Cream (large)
- Class 11a: Mauve & Purple (small)
- 11b: Mauve & Purple (large)
- Class 12: Orange
- Class 13: Bi-colour

Division III

Special Classes

- Class 14: "What's it Called" - best new non-registered hybrid - a special class for the hybridizer
- Class 15: Truss with the Best Fuzzy Foliage
- Class 16a: Best Blotched (small)
- 16b: Best Blotched (large)
- Class 17: Best Speckled
- Class 18: Most Lurid
- Class 19: Best Last Year's Truss
- Class 20: Most Elegantly Weevil-Notched
- Class 21: Best Hammerhead
- Class 22: Most Flaccid
- Class 23a: Best Miniature - under 6" (species)
- 23b Best Miniature - under 6" (hybrid)
- Class 24: Most Fragrant (Az. or Rh.)

Judged

Lionheart Award: best over-all yellow, any Class

Definitions: :

1. Small - 6" or under
2. Large - 6" to 10"
3. Really, Really, Large - over 10"
4. Blotch - each individual flower shows a solid colour mark on dorsal lobe (or three lobes), distinctly different from the base colour of the flower.
5. Lurid - most vividly garish
6. Hammerhead - an inflorescence which arises from more than a single flower bud
7. Speckled - distinguished from blotches by non-solid colour sprinkles and spots, either around entire flower, or at least on upper lobe(s) - e.g. 'Paprika Spiced'

Rhodies 101: How to identify rhododendron (and wildflower) species using a dichotomous plant key

Harold W. Fearing - www.fearing.ca

Dichotomous is not a word one finds on the usual breakfast food box. It means two-pronged, and a dichotomous plant key provides a systematic way of identifying plant species. Such a key works for rhododendron species. It also works for wildflowers, and in fact most of us will have much more opportunity to use it for wildflowers than for rhododendrons. Keying out plants is a lot of fun too, especially once one has enough familiarity with the system that it is not necessary to look up the meaning of every single botanical term.

The purpose of this article is to show how such a plant key works, mention some of the pitfalls, and describe what is needed to get started.

In principle, a dichotomous key is laid out like a tree with many two pronged forks. We start at the base, and work up to the first fork, where a choice is made as to which way to go, based on some characteristics of the plant. We then move to the next fork, and make another choice, etc., until eventually we reach the end of a branch, which, if everything works correctly, should be the plant we are trying to identify.

To see how this works, consider the much simplified (and totally artificial) example, shown to the right, of a fragment of such a key and suppose that we have a tall plant with dark red flowers and 12 stamens to identify. We start with choice 1, and are led to 2 instead of 10, because the flowers are red. Choice 2 gives a choice between dark red flowers with 12 stamens and other. So Plant A is the answer. Rarely is it this simple, but we see the principle.

Sample Key		
1	Flowers mainly red, pink or white	2
	Flowers mainly purple, blue or yellow	10
2	Flowers dark red with 12 stamens	Plant A
	Flowers not as above	3
3	Leaves opposite on the stem	4
	Leaves alternate	5
4	....	...
5	....	...
10	Plants usually 2 meters tall, upright	11
	Plants spreading, less than 1 meter high	12
11	Flowers purple	Plant B
	Flowers yellow	13
12	....	...
....		
13	....	...
....		

Now suppose we have a tall plant with purple flowers. Again starting with 1 we now choose 10 because the flowers are purple. At 10 we choose 11 since the plant is upright and then at 11 we choose Plant B since the flowers are purple.

Alternate Sample Key		
1	Flowers mainly red, pink or white	2
2	Flowers dark red with 12 stamens	Plant A
2	Flowers not as above	3
3	Leaves opposite on the stem	4
4	....	...
4	....	...
3	Leaves alternate	5
5	....	...
5	....	...
1	Flowers mainly purple, blue or yellow	10
10	Plants usually 2 meters tall, upright	11
	11 Flowers purple	Plant B
	11 Flowers yellow	13
	13 ....	...
	13 ....	...
10	Plants spreading, less than 1 meter high	12
	12 ....	...
	12 ....	...

There is an alternate way of laying out the key, as shown to the left for our simple example.

Clearly either of these layouts work, as they both give a series of two choices. The first has the advantage that the two choices are always together, but then one jumps all around for the next set of choices. The second method can have the two choices separated by pages, especially early in the key. But one stays within a contiguous section of the key, which gets smaller and smaller as one progresses.

Once a result has been obtained, it is important to read the description of the plant carefully to see that all of its characteristics match, as often there will be distinctive features that didn't happen to be needed in the key. If there is an important mismatch, it probably means an error has been made.

We can see from the way such keys are constructed that every plant in the key must be described by a unique chain of characteristics. Thus if there are lots of plants, say because the key covers a huge area, the key can get very lengthy and complicated. On the other hand if we have a plant that is not included in the key we may follow through the key and come out with a result which doesn't correspond at all to the plant, based on the full description.

Thus the best keys are those that are as complete as possible but cover a restricted geographical area. Then you don't waste time eliminating choices that only occur far away from your location and you can be reasonably sure that you should be able to find the plant you have in the key.

Gotchas:

Like in any endeavor, there are good and bad practitioners, and there are good and bad keys. The keys are written by professional botanists, often ones working primarily from herbarium specimens. That introduces some limitations.

For example suppose the choice is a) leaves 2-4 cm x 5-9 cm versus b) leaves 3-5 cm x 7-11 cm and you have a plant with leaves mostly 3 cm x 8 cm. What this choice means is that the botanist who wrote the key measured a lot of herbarium specimens and found that on average the leaves of choice a) were smaller than choice b). But choices a) and b) overlap. In a perfect key one shouldn't have such situations. But with only one plant in hand what do you do? Basically you have to follow both branches. Usually for one branch or the other you will eventually come to a branch where both choices are clearly incorrect, which tells you which branch you should have chosen originally.

Another situation which arises as a consequence of developing keys from herbarium specimens is more amusing than disastrous. Suppose you want to separate two plants. One, Plant A, is 2 meters tall, upright with red flowers. The other, Plant B, is low and spreading with purple flowers. In the key you may find the choice which is to separate these two plants to be something like: hairs on the ovary are gland tipped or not gland tipped. This may be a perfectly valid distinction, and one visible in dried herbarium specimens. Herbarium specimens do not preserve colors very well and things like height and aspect of the plant can be determined only from the collector's notes, which may not be complete. Hence characteristics which are obvious when the plant is in hand may not be obvious in herbarium specimens.

What does one need to get started?:

One needs a key of course for the plants and geographical area of interest. A small 10 power magnifying glass is essential. Tweezers and a metric ruler are useful too.

A good glossary of botanical terms is very helpful, though it doesn't take long to learn most of the common terms. Such glossaries can be found online, or one can just look up terms online as needed. Start by looking at the parts of a flower and the names for leaf shapes, and for rhododendrons some of the different kinds of hairs and scales which appear. Most everything else will come with a little practice.

Most of all though one needs an inquiring mind, a mind that likes to look at the details of plants, which are often just as beautiful and interesting as the more flashy aspects of the plant. One also needs to like the intellectual challenge of solving a puzzle, and being able at the end to say "I know and can name that plant."

Useful keys:

For species rhododendrons:

The classic keys are in the Notes from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Vol. 39 No 1 by J.Cullen and Vol. 39 No 2 by David Chamberlain. These lay out the Cullen and Chamberlain revision of rhododendrons, which lumped a number of species together, but which is more or less accepted now. The main disadvantage of these is that they are 35 years old and out of print, and probably hard to find.

A somewhat abbreviated version of these keys appears in Hardy Rhododendron Species by James Cullen, Timber Press, 2005. This reference has detailed discussion with illustrations of the different types of scales and hairs relevant to rhododendron identification.

For the many newly discovered species, Flora of China Vol. 14, Missouri Botanical Garden Press, 2005 is useful, though it includes only rhododendrons that can be found in China.

For species azaleas:

The most useful keys for azaleas seem to be those in Rhododendron Species Vol. 4 - Azaleas by H. H. Davidian, which contains detailed descriptions and line drawings of most azalea species. Vols. 1-3 of this series are useful also for other rhododendrons, though Davidian was a "splitter" and recognizes many species which now have been lumped together.

For wildflowers:

The classic key for wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest is Flora of the Pacific Northwest by C. Leo Hitchcock and Arthur Cronquist, University of Washington Press, 1973. This is a condensation of a five volume work published from 1955-1969. It covers Washington and parts of Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia. It is useful in that it has a lot of small illustrations showing the distinctions between many of the choices. It doesn't have a lot of description of each plant other than what is used in the key however so one often can't check the result of the key by comparing additional features with the plant in hand. Furthermore it covers such a large and varied area that there are many plants which would never appear in any more restricted part of the range. Also there have been many changes in nomenclature and much new information obtained in the 45 years or so since this was written, though apparently a revised and updated version is in preparation.

The most useful key for our area of coastal southern BC is Plants of Western Oregon, Washington and BC by Eugene N Kozloff, Timber Press 2005. It seems to be very complete for the region it covers, has good keys, line drawings illustrating some of the distinctions in the choices and some 700 color pictures of the plants. It is also a relatively modern book, incorporating nomenclature changes since Hitchcock and Cronquist.

Flora of Mount Rainier National Park by David Bick, Oregon State University Press, 2000 is very good for its restricted region, with good keys and descriptions and information on locations within the park where the plants can be found.

Further afield, Flora of Alberta by E.H. Moss, 2nd ed. by John G. Packer, University of Toronto Press, 1983 is good for Alberta and specifically the mountain parks, Banff and Jasper.

The above article and other useful information on rhododendrons may be found on the [Fearing's Farm Nursery website](#).



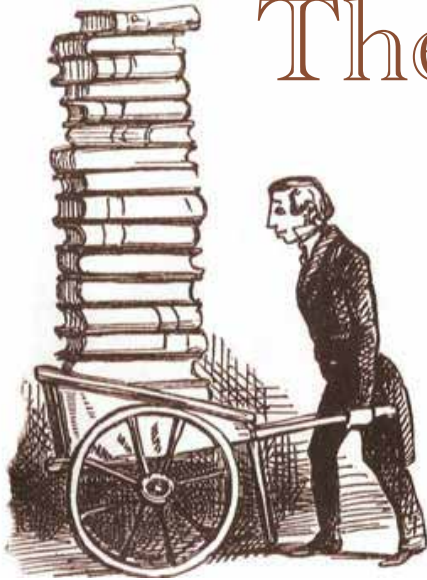
THE CALENDAR:

Wednesday, May 18 7:30 pm Langley Menonite Hall	Fraser South Rhododendron Society The Justly Famous Beer Bottle Truss Show
Thursday, May 19 5:30 pm UBC Botanical Garden	Vancouver Rhododendron Society Douglas will lead us through the UBC Botanic Garden with a focus on the Carolinian Forest.
Saturday, June 4 Gael and John Dodd's Garden, Langley	Fraser South Rhododendron Society Annual Potluck Picnic and Silent Auction
Wednesday, June 8 7:30 pm Van Dusen	Alpine Garden Club of BC Robin Magowan: Building a rock garden in Sante Fe, New Mexico
Sunday June 12 3:00 pm	Vancouver Rhododendron Society Annual Potluck Picnic at the home and garden of Jill Newby, 3567 Creery Ave West Vancouver
Sunday, June 26 12:30 pm - 4:30 pm Van Dusen	Vancouver Rose Society 64th Annual Show and Sale



R. 'Sekidera'

The Book Cart



Rock Garden Plants, A Color Encyclopedia by Baldissare Mineo, Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, Copyright, 1999, 284 pages, 236 pages of colour plates, in alphabetical order, with identifying photos, Appendices of Families of Rock Garden Plants, Hardiness Zone Maps, and Index of Common Names and Synonyms. Hardbound. ISBN 0-88192-432-6 (hardcover)

Baldissare Mineo, in the preface of *Rock Garden plants, A Color Encyclopedia*, mentions that even his teacher laughed when he told his Grade 3 class, at the tender age of eight years, "My favourite summer activity was watching my plants grow". The author grew up in California and went on to California Polytechnic State University where he trained as an architect. His love of plants continued and he became the managing owner of Siskiyou Rare Plant Nursery in Medford, Oregon, which included extensive display gardens with ponds and waterfalls and was to become one of the

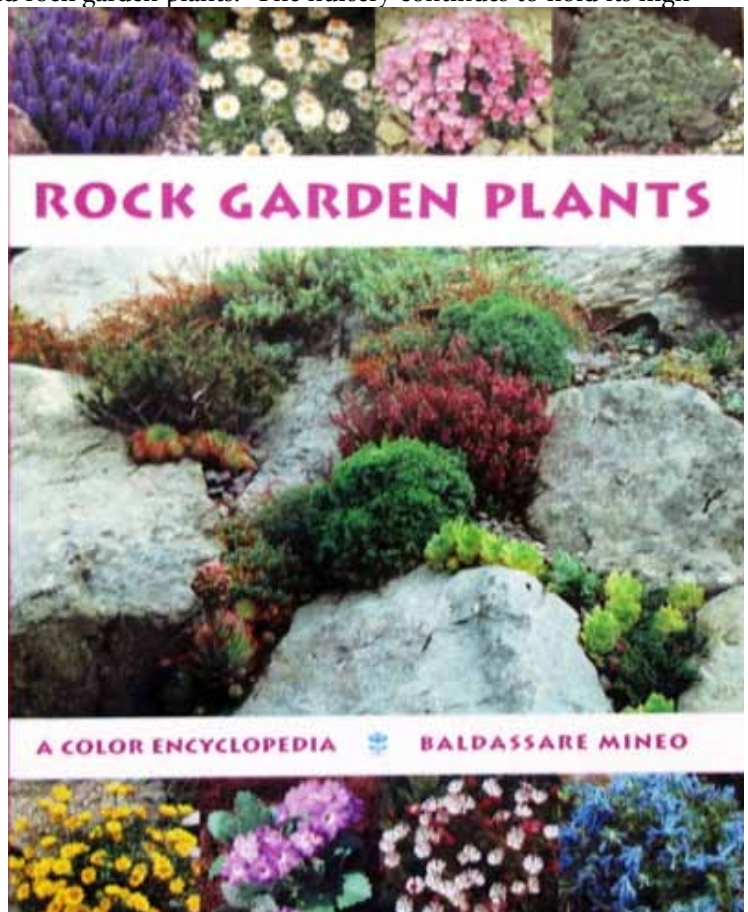
outstanding nurseries around the world for alpine and rock garden plants. The nursery continues to hold its high reputation, but I believe is under new ownership as of 2006.

In the Introduction to *Rock Garden Plants, A Color Encyclopedia*, the author gives the description of what plants are a good representation of the genera of rock garden plants. He points out that "alpine" plants are usually rock garden plants; rock garden plants are not necessarily "alpines". He also discusses Mediterranean plants, dryland plants, woodland plants, peat plants and plants for special areas of cultivation. The author has compiled nearly 1400 choice plants which serve many types of rock gardens.

The plants in the *Colour Encyclopedia* are arranged by scientific name, genus and species, the application of scientific names being governed by the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature. A typical description appears as follows: *Allium cernuum*, lady's leek, nodding or wild onion.

Cultivate in sun in well-drained soil. Flowers in summer, rose purple, pink, or sometimes white. Grows 12-18 inches (30-45 cm) high and wide. Zones 3-9. Canada to Mexico. (Accompanied by a photograph)

The book is arranged alphabetically by scientific names. The appendices, which can be extremely useful in a book, are excellent in this one, not only for the wealth of information given about the Families of rock garden plants, but also for the extensive section dedicated to plants for specific purposes and locations. For example, the author gives a long list of alpine and other saxatile plants which are perfectly suited to grow in, around and on stone walls. There are other suggestions for moist soil and bogs, or sandy soil, heat and drought. The lists are endless. The Hardiness Zone Map is a must in any book and the Index of the common names and synonyms to the scientific names is so very useful. The photographs are outstanding.



Margaret Hodgson

R. lepidotum (Epithet: Beset with scales)

R. lepidotum first appeared in **Nathanial Wallich's Catalogue** in 1824 and later in **J.F. Royle's Illustrations of Himalayan Plants** in 1835.



R. lepidotum

By Walter Hood Fitch: Curtis's Botanical Magazine

deciduous; var. *obovatum* which Hooker found in Sikkim has large obovate leaves, a corolla which is purple, dark red or deep rose, and is generally a more robust plant than the other varieties.

Seeing great drifts of *R. lepidotum* covering vast expanses of hillside in Sikkim was a lovely experience for me but I am also fond of seeing it alone in cultivation. The flower is intriguing and curiously attractive, very much like its harder to grow cousin *R. baileyi*. This garden worthy plant takes up very little space and every garden should be able to afford to offer it a home.

more images page 12 and 13

Rhododendrons of Sikkim



R. lepidotum

J.D. Hooker collected it in Sikkim in 1848 and it was later collected by many others in Nepal, Bhutan, Assam, south-east Tibet, Upper Burma and north-west Yunnan. *R. lepidotum* has an incredibly vast range and grows at elevations from 8,000-16,000 feet. It grows in all areas of Sikkim on cliffs, rocky slopes, among scrub, open pastures, by streams and exposed, well-drained areas. As its name implies, the plant is densely scaly. The branchlets are moderately scaly, the leaves are densely scaly and there are scales on both the calyx and corolla. The corolla can be pink, purple, rose, scarlet, crimson or yellow. An identifying feature of the plant is the style which is short, stout and deflexed.

R. lepidotum is variable in its habit, growing from 2 inches to 3 feet or sometimes as tall as five feet. It blooms late in the season, well into June and July.

The variability of *R. lepidotum* has led botanists to give many varietal names to this species which have now, thankfully, been reduced in synonymy with *R. lepidotum*. It may be useful, however, to note that the formerly named variety *R. lepidotum* var. *eleagnoides* is deciduous or semi-deciduous. I have grown several var. *eleagnoides*, in pots, over the years only to find them discarded over the winter when one failed to realise that their leafless appearance was not an indication of lifelessness.

Aside from *R. lepidotum* var. *eleagnoides*, H.H. Davidian in *Rhododendron Species Volume 1 Lepidotus* listed several forms of *R. lepidotum*: var. *album*, is a white form of the species, introduced from Nepal; var. *minutiforme*, also from Nepal, has minute red or crimson-purple flowers and like var. *eleagnoides* is also

Sean Rafferty



R. lepidotum



R. lepidotum

