



# THE YAK

Volume 38, Number 03

March 2024

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**Silver Skies**

Fraser South Rhododendron Society  
is a chapter of the  
American Rhododendron Society

<http://frasersouthrhodos.ca>

Map : <https://goo.gl/maps/ZB1m1jnF9DP2>

In person meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on  
the third Wednesday of each month (excerpt  
June, July, August) at:

Langley Mennonite Fellowship Church  
20997 40<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Langley, B.C.

## Cover:



**Silver Skies**

**Predominant Flower Color:** Pink

**Flower/Truss Description:** Flower tubular funnel-shaped, 2" across, pale pink with deep purplish-pink edges. Held in flat truss with 15-16 flowers.

**Fragrant:** No

**Bloom Time:** Early Midseason

**Foliage Description / Plant Habit:** Leaves oblanceolate, revolute, apiculate apex, cuneate base, 4" long, glossy, dark bluish-green, heavy fawn indumentum, leaves retained 3 years. New growth is covered with heavy white tomentum.

**Height:** A very compact (2-3') evergreen rhododendron

**Cold Hardiness Temp:** -5°F (-21°C)

**Parentage: (Seed Parent x Pollen Parent):**

R. degronianum ssp yakushmanum 'Koichiro Wada' x Medusa

**Elepidote (E) or Lepidote (L):** E

**Hybridized or Selected by:** Fujioka

Sources: ARS: [www.rhododendron.org](http://www.rhododendron.org)

## Next Meeting

**Date:** Wednesday, March 20 @ 7:300 pm.

**Place:** Langley Mennonite Fellowship Church  
20997 40th Ave.  
Langley, B.C.

**Topic:** Annual General Meeting &  
Presentation by FSRS Director Rob Talbot

## Upcoming Meetings

**Date:** Wednesday, April 17 @ 7:30 pm.

**Place:** Langley Mennonite Fellowship Church  
20997 40th Ave.  
Langley, B.C.

**Topic:** TBA

**Date:** Wednesday, May 15 @ 7:30 pm.

**Place:** Langley Mennonite Fellowship Church  
20997 40th Ave.  
Langley, B.C.

**Topic:** Truss show & tell

## Upcoming Conference



**ARS 2024 Spring Convention**  
**Bellingham, Washington**  
**May 2-5, 2024**

Visit [ARS2024.org](http://ARS2024.org) for more information and to register.

## 2023 ELECTED OFFICERS

President:	Gerry Nemanishen	604-826-4660
Past Pres:	Colleen Bojczuk	604-826-4221
Vice Pres:	Jim Worden	604-541-4754
Secretary:	Vacant	
Treasurer(s):	Gerry Nemansihen	604-826-4660
	Colleen Bojczuk	604-826-4221
Directors:	Robert Talbot	604-720-0134
	Colleen Bojczuk	604-826-4221
	Aird Flavelle	604-870-4221

## Volunteers

Programs:	Vacant	
Membership:	Vacant	
Newsletter:	Maureen Worden	604-541-4754
Librarian:	Gerald Nemanishen	604-826-4660
Website:	Maureen Worden	604-541-4754
Hospitality:	Vacant	
BCCGC Liaison:	Vacant	

## Reminders - !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

**Vacancies** - Please consider contributing to the group by volunteering for the executive or very important volunteer positions. Contact a member of the executive for further information.

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**Submit articles, photos, or suggestions for the newsletter or else you will be stuck with the editors choices.**

## From the President



The cooler weather the last few weeks has slowed the blooming of bulbs in our garden. No daffodils or hyacinths as yet. I have a clump of crocuses just coming into bloom, but some critter found them too tasty. My forsythias have not bloomed but I have seen some in the lower elevations of Mission. I remember the adage that roses should be pruned when the forsythia blooms. I do not have any rhododendrons or azaleas blooming.

This month is our AGM and would encourage as many of you to attend as possible so that we have a quorum. We need the minutes to file our membership renewal as a society. We will be meeting at the Church in person. Rob Talbot will give a presentation on tools for pruning. I encourage those who come to bring items for our raffle table.

As you will read in the Yak, it is with sadness that we note the passing of Les Clay, a long-term member and supplier of potted rhododendrons to our plant sales. We are planting garden visits for the end of April and we are thinking of visiting the Langley Arboretum. Les had donated a number of his rhododendrons and azaleas to the Arboretum. We will announce the details of the tour in April.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerald Nemanishen, President

## *From the Editor*

Well, in my opinion the three *Marmota monax* (groundhog) prognosticators AKA Shubenacadie Sam, Punxsutawney Phil, and Wiarton Willie made an error in calling for an early spring this year. One has to wonder how climate change has affected their forecasting.

While springtime gardening activities have not yet officially commenced this year, unofficial and unsanctioned ground level pruning is underway. The novice gardener has been busy. The “Jolly Egg” is the current favorite toy that has a tendency to get stuck under shrubs and rhododendrons throughout the yard. When this happens whatever branch(es) are prohibiting forward or reverse movement is removed by biting, chewing, and yanking. This is done regardless of whether thorns (as in the case of roses) are present. The junior gardener sometimes manages to lure the novice gardener away from this activity and the chase is on. It won't be long before the young one can keep up on the chases. Unfortunately many of the daffodils throughout the yard that are starting to grow/bloom have been flattened either by the late snow falls or “Jolly Egg” activity.

“In The Garden” returns this month with only a couple of pictures due to the weather. It remains to be seen what will bloom well this year, not bloom at all, or have a sparse bloom. Stay Tuned!

Now that the weather is settling down, I'm expecting to see the first male Rufous hummingbirds at the feeders shortly. The Annas as always have stayed active throughout the winter and are busy with courtship activities. The daily bird visits by the juncos, chickadees, bush tits, downy woodpeckers, and finches continue and new visitors should be arriving soon. I'm thinking of buying stock in the bird store. I don't remember a winter when I've gone through so much seed and suet!

A sad loss with the passing of Les Clay. I've attempted to gather some information in this YAK on Les' contribution to the Fraser South Rhododendron Society from old documents and newsletters to share with the group. I've also include a newspaper article that was published on his passing. Many of you will have lots of memories of Les far beyond what I've documented and I encourage you to share them with the group at the next meeting.

This month we return to in person meetings (wasn't it nice to have Zoom available during the winter weather!) with the Annual General Meeting. A great time to reconnect in person and enjoy a presentation by Rob Talbot. As a quorum is needed for the AGM, I encourage you to attend.

We're coming to the end of our feature “Rhododendron of the Year Plant Awards” for our neck of the woods. Only 2024 remains so if anyone has an idea for a new feature, please send me a note.

The official start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere is next week (March 21<sup>st</sup>) and an early Easter is coming up quickly on the calendar. I hope everyone has a chance to enjoy the spring like weather they are promising us this weekend and whether you are gardening or sitting back soaking in the rays ENJOY!

*Maureen Worden*









The following article originally appeared in the Fraser South Newsletter, April 2014 by Sean Rafferty

## *Rhododendron spinuliferum*

(Epithet: Bearing spines)

Père Jean Marie Delavay discovered *R. spinuliferum* in 1891 above Tonghay, southern Yunnan, China, but its introduction into European cultivation is owed to Maurice de Vilmorin, a French seed merchant. Vilmorin received the seed in 1907 from Boanerges F. Ducloux, a French missionary and botanist in Yunnan. From these seeds plants were raised in Vilmorin's garden with the first flowering in 1910 and subsequently sent to Kew Gardens.

The distribution of *R. spinuliferum* in the wild is limited to central, south and northeast Yunnan and southern Sichuan, amongst pine woods and

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



*R. spinuliferum*

Illustration by Valerie Price

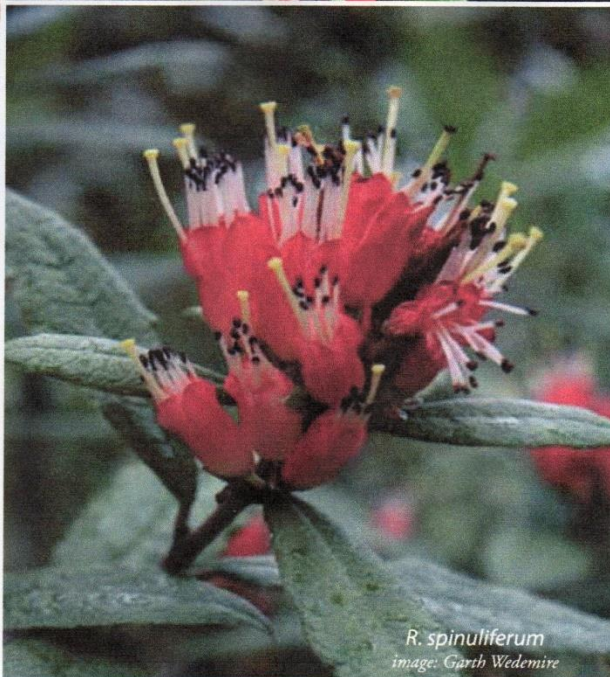
Curtis's Botanical Magazine

shady thickets at elevations of 5,500 to 8,500 feet. Coming from such low elevations it is recommended that the plants be sited carefully and protected from the worst of winter frosts, although there are some forms which are surprisingly hardy.

It is a rather straggly shrub up to 8 feet in height, typically erect and rigid in habit with strongly bullate leaves. *R. spinuliferum* is similar to some forms of *R. scabrifolium* in foliage but with far fewer or sometimes lacking bristles on the lower leaf surface. The mostly terminal or sometimes axillary



*R. spinuliferum*  
image: S. Rafferty



*R. spinuliferum*  
image: Garth Wedemire



inflorescences are composed of 1 to 4 unusually shaped tubular flowers which are constricted at either end and filled with a watery nectar. The corolla colour ranges from pink, orange, peach-red, brick-red to crimson. Stamens and style both protrude from the corolla mouth. *R. spinuliferum* is an oddly un-rhododendron like plant.

Some years ago, I happened to be returning to Canada from the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden with a load of impulse-purchased treasure in my van and no phytosanitary certificate. I was just too giddy with pleasure over the gems that I was bringing home to have concerned myself with the important, importation legalities. Happily between the two front bucket seats sat a two gallon, fully bloomed *R. spinuliferum*, which offered a glowing smile to the Border Services Officer upon arrival to Canada. In answer to his enquiry, I informed him that I was bringing back rhododendrons and he then challenged me about the *R. spinuliferum*, telling me that it was certainly not a rhododendron. He was the first border guard that I had ever met who knew what a rhododendron was, let alone tell me what he thought one wasn't. I assured him of its identity and even showed him the invoice as proof when he came out from his booth to examine it more closely. Much to the chagrin of those cars lined up behind me, doubtlessly thinking I was going to be pulled over and offered some discomfort, he spent ten or fifteen minutes wildly enthusing over the plant and marvelling about a garden such as the RSBG wishing to grow all of the species rhododendrons possible. He was absolutely gobsmacked and cheerily sent me on my way with no further ado. Occasionally, but not often enough, one is smiled upon.

In the wild, *R. spinuliferum* forms a natural hybrid with its close relative *R. scabrifolium*. This natural hybrid is known as *R. scabrifolium* var. *pauciflorum* in the west or *R. x duclouxii* Lév in China, and usually has larger leaves and flowers than typical *R. scabrifolium*. I recall reading that the *R. spinuliferum* corollas, being filled with the watery nectar, might cause difficulties with pollinators and fertilisation, and that fertilisation might be a specialised affair,



*R. spinuliferum* (peach-red)  
image: Garth Wedemire



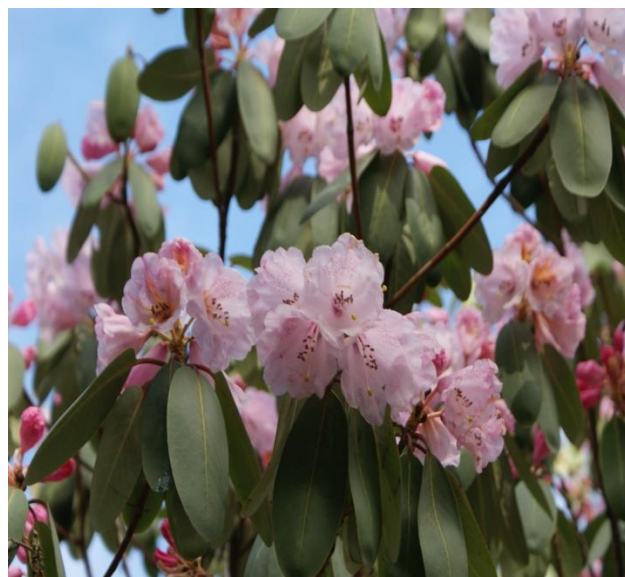
*R. spinuliferum*  
image: Coen Zonneveld

thus dissuading presumed hybridisers from tackling the species. I am unsure if there is any truth to that conjecture, but hybridisation of *R. spinuliferum* occurs naturally and abundantly in the wild in the northern part of its range, so pollination and fertilisation does seem to occur unimpeded by the constraints imposed by the nectar. Admittedly, not a great deal of hybridisation has been initiated with *R. spinuliferum* and much that has been accomplished is no longer in the trade, but there are small groups who are still working with *R. spinuliferum* or its hybrids. A few worthy *R. spinuliferum* hybrids grace the following pages.

Sean Rafferty



## *In The Garden*



*Unknown Rhododendron "tree" during and after the most recent snow storm*



*R. sutchuenense*

## Leslie Kenneth Conrad Clay

30 MARCH, 1932 – 5 MARCH, 2024



The FSRs executive recently learned of the passing of Les Clay, one of the founding members of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society.

On November 18, 1988 a meeting was held at the home of Les and Bev Clay with the hope of beginning a new Chapter of the ARS based in and around Langley. Les along with Harold Johnson (at the time the ARS Director for District1, and Carol Fisher worked tirelessly to get FSRs off the ground.

In 1989 Les was elected as the first president following the acceptance of Fraser South was accorded by the American Rhododendron Association. Les continued on as President until 1993 when he became Past President, and the in 1994 took over Programs with Dave Sellars. In the early years of the group Les and Bev hosted many meetings and Christmas parties at their home.

At the 1997 ARS National Convention held in Vancouver, Les received a Life Time Achievement award

In 1997 and again in 2016, Les was presented with the Harold Johnson Memorial Award and in 1999, Les along with Bev were awarded the ARS Bronze Medal.

*'Les' has been a diligent member of our chapter as well as serving on the executive committee in several capacities. We have counted heavily on his expertise as a grower, as a source of knowledge about plants and people, as a generous donor of plants, and as a host for many rhododendron sales.*

As the owner of Clay's Nursery, Les held propagation workshops and nursery tours for group members over the years. Les selling his plants was a yearly occurrence at the Fraser South annual garden sale and over the years he participated in the plant sales at local rhododendron conventions.

Over the years, Les participated in the annual Fraser South Beer Bottle Truss show and always brought an abundance of trusses to the show which contributed to the friendly rivalry between members for the most category wins and selection of the coveted Lion Heart winner.



# *Rhododendrons of the Year Plant Awards*

NW USA / Canada Region (2022)



## **Elepidote Rhododendron: 'Chemainus'**

Flower opens inside deep purplish pink with deep red spots on upper lobe becoming solid near throat; outside deep pink, color fades with age, funnel-campanulate, wavy-edges, 3" across. Dome-shaped truss holds 18 flowers. Blooms early season. Leaves elliptic, broadly acute apex, rounded base, 6" long, glossy, dark bluish green, retained 3 years. Orange bronze indumentum on underside of leaves and slight silvery tomentum above. Dense growth habit. Grows to a height of 4 ft. in 10 years. Plant is hardy to at least 10°F (-12°C), buds to 5°F (-15°C). Hybridized by Fujioka.



## **Lepidote Rhododendron: 'Wren'**

Flower pale yellow, unmarked, openly funnel-shaped. When in bloom flowers almost completely cover the plant. Blooms midseason. Leaves elliptic, about ¾" long, leathery, re-curved, glossy, dark green. Bronze colored in winter. Prostrate, mounding plant habit. Height: slow-growing, typically 2 ft. in 10 years. Cold hardy to 0°F (-18°C). Earned the RHS Award of Merit in 2013. Hybridized by Cox.



## **Evergreen Azalea: 'Frosted Orange'**

Flower white with strong reddish orange edges, funnel-shaped, single, 3" across. Blooms late midseason. Leaves narrowly ovate, leathery, dark green. Mounding plant habit. Grows to a typical height of 3 ft. in 10 years. Hardy to -5°F (-21°C). Hybridized by Harris.



## **Deciduous Azalea: 'Chetco'**

Flower vivid yellow with an vivid orange yellow blotch, reverse of tube strong reddish orange, 3½" across, widely funnel-shaped. Blooms midseason. Leaves elliptic, medium green, deciduous. Upright plant habit. Grows to a height of about 5 ft. in 10 years. Cold hardy to -15°F (-26°C). Hybridized by Slonecker.

Photos (top to bottom) by Frank Fujioka, Ken Cox, Tijs Huisman, Tijs Huisman.



**Elepidote Rhododendron: 'Starbright Champagne'**

Flower pale yellow with a deep red throat and prominent red spotting and streaking, broadly funnel-campanulate, 3" across, deeply-cut lobes with rather pointed tip. Dome-shaped truss holds 15 flowers. Blooms early season. Leaves oblong, flat, broadly acute apex, cordate base, 6" long, dull green, retained 2 years. Dense plant habit. Grows to a height of 3 ft. in 10 years. Plant is hardy to at least 10°F (-12°C). Hybridized by Fujioka.



**Lepidote Rhododendron: 'R. pemakoense'**

Flower pink to pale purplish-mauve, tubular funnel-shaped, 2" across. Truss has 1 or 2 flowers. Blooms early to early midseason. Leaves oblanceolate or obovate, up to 1½" long, lower surface scaly and glaucous. Dense, mounding, often stoloniferous plant habit. Low-growing, typically 1 ft. in 10 years. Cold hardy to 0°F (-18°C). Species found in the wild in China (SE Tibet) and in India (Arunachal Pradesh).



**Evergreen Azalea: 'Mother's Day'**

Flower strong red with faint deep red dorsal spotting, openly funnel-shaped, 2" across, hose-in-hose to semi double. Inflorescence 2-3 flowered. Blooms early midseason. Leaves 1" to 1½" long, bright green, tinged red. Spreading plant habit. Grows to a typical height of 6 ft. in 10 years. Hybridized by van Hecke.



**Deciduous Azalea: 'Irene Koster'**

Flower white flushed strong pink with a yellow blotch on upper lobes and brownish orange spotting, tubular funnel-shaped, wavy edged, 2½" across, fragrant. Blooms late midseason. Leaves elliptic, dark green, deciduous. Upright, open plant habit. Grows to a typical height of 6 ft. in 10 years. Hardy to -15°F (-26°C). Hybridized by Koster & Sons. Received the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit in 1993.

Photos (top to bottom) by Ken Cox, Hank Helm, Odo Tschetsch, courtesy of Monrovia Nursery.



# Langley man whose rhododendrons graced Buckingham Palace dies

Gardener, Rotarian, and volunteer Les Clay died at the age of 91

By Matthew Claxton, Langley Advanced Times



Les Clay (with daughter Barb Nelson) planted the first rose bush in the Beverly Anne Clay Memorial Rose Garden at the Derek Doubleday Arboretum named after his late wife. (Langley Advance Times files)

Les Clay, a Langley agrologist, nursery owner, and one of the key figures behind the creation of the Derek Doubleday Arboretum, has died at age 91.

Clay moved to Langley from Burnaby with his family in the spring of 1963, recalled his daughter, Barb Nelson. A UBC-trained agrologist, he grew rhododendrons and other species, creating new varieties from his nursery. "He loved gardening, and he loved his family," said Nelson.

Clay and his wife Beverly Anne travelled widely, including to Britain, for flower and nursery trade shows, taking with him samples of his rhodos from Clay's Nursery. Some of those were passed along to the gardener at Buckingham Palace, and found their way onto the grounds there, said Nelson.

Back in Langley, Clay was involved with the Township's Parks and Recreation committee for many years. "Les was a great friend and a mentor," Rudy Storteboom said, calling Clay "kind of a legend in our community." Clay was a Rotarian for more than 50 years.

“He would always take the time to listen,” Storteboom said. And then, when he responded, he would speak slowly, which made you listen to him, said Storteboom. And what Clay was saying was always worth listening to. He was an H.D. Stafford Good Citizen of the Year in 2013.

One of his biggest achievements was the creation of the Derek Doubleday Arboretum, the 38-acre park west of the Langley Regional Airport, between 56th Avenue and Fraser Highway. Over the years, it has gone from a grassy field with a stream and some scrubby trees to a park with numerous trails, a gardens, war memorials for Canada’s participation in Aghanistan and Korea, an interpretative centre, a demonstration garden, and the Beverly Anne Clay Rose Garden, in honour of Clay’s late wife. “The arboretum is where it is and what it is because of him,” said Nelson.

A celebration of life is planned for the United Churches of Langley at 21562 Old Yale Road, on Saturday, April 6 at 2 p.m., said Nelson.

The family is likely to suggest that in lieu of flowers, people donate to Rotary or the Arboretum and Botanical Society of Langley, which supports the arboretum.