



THE YAK

Volume 37, Number 3

March 2023



R. sutchuenense

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

<http://frasersoutherhododendron.ca>

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

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

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

Cover:



R. sutchuenense

Elepidote

Sub Genus: Hymenanthes

Section: Ponticum

Sub Section: Fortunea

Height: 4.6-10m, usually a large umbrella-shaped shrub or small tree.

Leaves: coriaceous, margins recurved, up to 30 x 7.7cm, oblong-lanceolate to narrowly oblong-oval, retained 1-3 years; lower surface midrib with +/- loose indumentum.

Flower/Truss Description: c.10-flowered, usually open at top. Corolla widely campanulate with 5-6 lobes, 5-7.5cm long, pale pink, pale pinkish-lilac to pale mauve pink with red spotting but without blotch; calyx disc-like, +/- glabrous; stamens 13-15; ovary and style glabrous; stigma reddish.

Bloom Time: February - April

Distribution: w. Hubei and E. Sichuan 1,500-2,400m (5,000-8,000ft) in woods among evergreen oaks and bamboo.

Sources: *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species*, by Peter A. Cox & Kenneth N.E. Cox

This Month

Date: Wednesday, March 15 at 7:30 pm.

Place: Via Zoom

Title: Annual AGM and "Fragrance in the Garden" by Nancy Moore

The best gardens aren't just a feast for our eyes; they are a treat for our other senses as well. Incorporating plants with fragrant flowers or foliage into our gardens creates another dimension and expands the way we enjoy our gardens.

This presentation will give you ideas for plants to add to your garden to provide fragrance (and beauty) throughout the year.

Upcoming Meetings

Date: Wednesday, April 19 at 7:30 pm.

Place: Langley Mennonite Fellowship Church

Title: Rhododendrons along the Pacific oceans ring of fire by Philip McDougall

Philip is a semiretired RN with distant study in botany and plant biochemistry. He has a keen interest in woodland plants, focused on members of the Ericaceae and Berberidaceae.

Typically his vacations have been spent hiking through temperate biological hotspots. Tonight's talk highlights the Rhododendrons along the Pacific oceans ring of fire, outliers from the main areas of Rhododendron diversity yet some of the most effective and common plants of this genus used in our gardens.

2022 ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Gerry Nemanishen 604-826-0166
Past Pres: Colleen Bojczuk 604-826-4221
Vice Pres: Jim Worden 604-541-4754
Secretary: Barbara Mathias 778-580-6404
Treasurer: Vacant
Directors: Robert Talbot 604-720-0134
Colleen Bojczuk 604-826-4221
Vacant

VOLUNTEERS

Programs: Vacant
Membership: Vacant
Newsletter: Maureen Worden 604-541-4754
Librarian: Gerald Nemanishen 604-826-0166
Website: Maureen Worden 604-541-4754
Hospitality: Vacant
BCCGC Liaison: Vacant

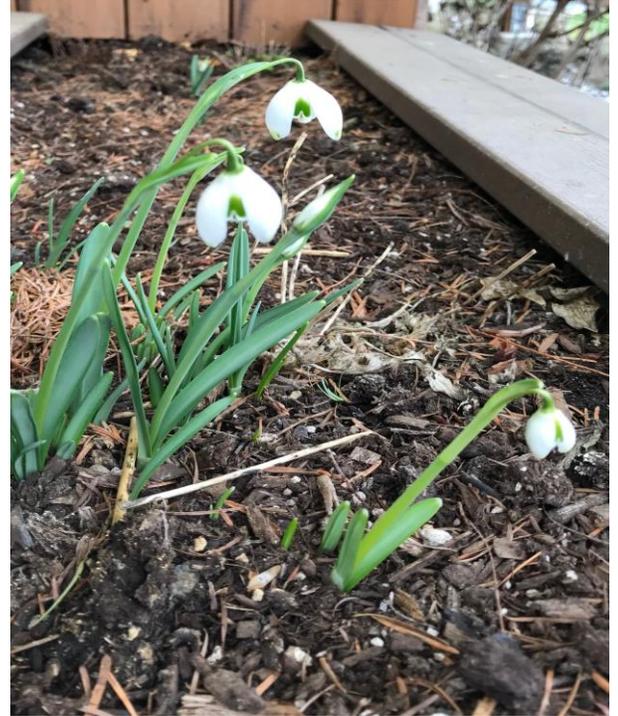
Reminders - !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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

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

From the President

This month I include a pic of snow drop, "Little Wonder". It's in a protected area that wasn't hit by snow. All the other snow drops looked quite sad during the cold weather. More bulbs will pop up once the snow has gone.



I don't have any rhodos in bloom as yet. Earliest in our garden are "Snow Lady" but they are covered in snow.

Reminder of the presentation by Nancy Moore on March 15, 2023. This will be preceded by a short AGM. We are still looking for volunteers for the executive.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerald Nemanishen, President

From the Editor

Welcome to March! Now that the latest cold snap has finished, outside cleanup tasks have finally commenced. There's a lot to do given the number of wind storms and snow events we've had over the last few months.



In February, *r. praevernium* was just starting to open as pictured in the February YAK. I managed to capture this picture prior to the freeze. Needless to say that after a couple cold nights, the blooms no longer looked like this.

"In the Garden" this month is showing archival March pictures as there are no in garden rhododendron blossoms to share. The buds on *r. oreodoxa* and *r. ririei* are just starting to show a hint of colour. My perennials are starting to show signs of life and the daffodils and tulips are above ground. A walk around the property shows the signs of things to come everywhere you look. Having the sun out for a few days in a row certainly helps the vitamin D quota and helps us get back on track ... weather wise that is.

The springtime Annas hummingbird wars (between the males of course!) are happening on a daily basis now that more females seem to be out and about. No sign of the Rufous males yet but they should be here in the next couple of weeks provided of course that we're done with the Arctic air for the season. The house finches have joined the throngs at the bird feeders and I saw a couple of crows yesterday gathering twigs for nest building. Hope they don't choose a tree in our yard!

This month we finish the Jim Barlup hybrid rhododendron series. We started this series way back in the January 2021 YAK and highlighted 12 rhododendrons a month. Next month we'll be started a new series and of course there will be more rhododendrons.

Also this month, Nancy Moore has provided a snapshot of some happenings (plant wise) in her garden and Barb Mathias provides some atmospheric pictures and shows the importance of lighting. Thankyou ladies!

Following what Gerald promises to be a short AGM, we have one of our own, Nancy Moore presenting on "Fragrance in the Garden". We've been fortunate over the years to have Nancy share her gardening expertise through presentations to the FSRs. I know this will be educational and suggest you have pen and paper handy to jot down the names of plants that you'd like to add to your garden.

I'm actually looking forward to the time change this weekend. The gardening crew never did adjust to standard time and have continued on with daylight savings time throughout the winter. Even though we have an early start to our days due to the head gardeners job, this carry over has made some mornings VERY challenging. I'm only hoping that they don't decide to take up some other time zone following the switch. Take care and remember to change the clocks this weekend.

Maureen Worden



Hamamelis 'Arnold Promise'



Jasminum nudiflorum



Pulmonaria rubra



Eranthis hyemalis (winter aconite)

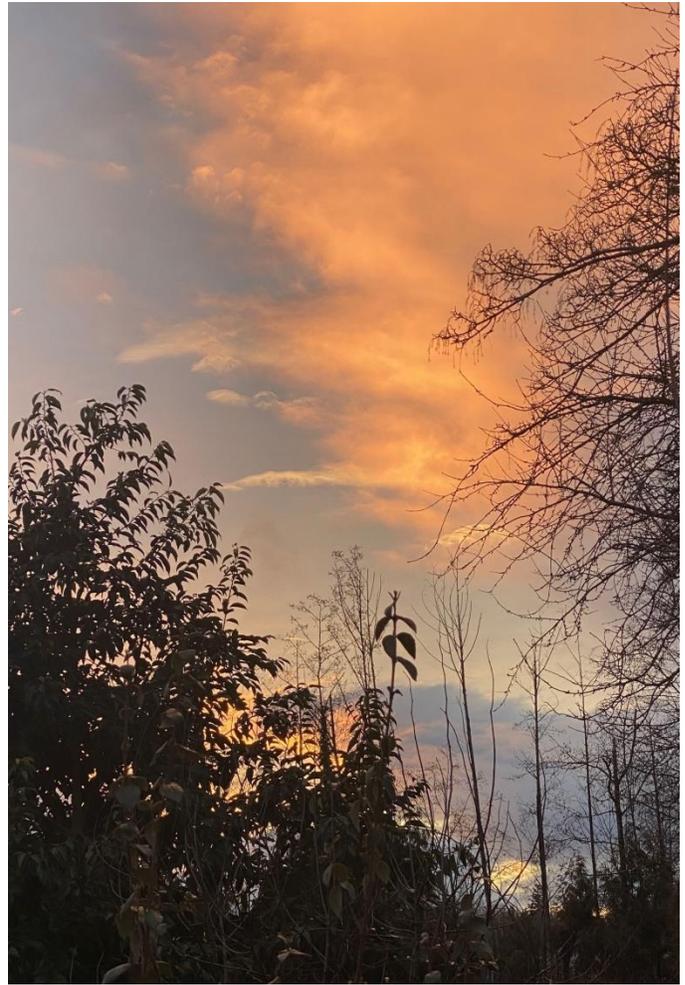


Sarcococca hookeriana var. humilis



Helleborus foetidus

Picture credit : Barb Mathias





The following article originally appeared in the Fraser South Newsletter, March 202006 by Norma Senn



In spite of the blasts of Arctic winds in mid-February, we've had very good winter flower displays this year. Late winter-early spring blooming plants certainly help brighten up our dreary weather while offering the promise that spring will come.

As I write this, one of my all time favourite plants is in full bloom. Cornelian Cherry Dogwood (*Cornus mas*) is a true harbinger of spring. The flowers are a soft chartreuse green/yellow, and while the individual flowers are small, they appear in clusters that cover the tree in clouds of bloom. The flowers are tough and able to tolerate the season's chancy weather. This year is the earliest I've seen *Cornus mas* in bloom, with the flowers out fully in mid-February; I usually expect bloom in the first week of March.



This small tree offers year-round landscape interest. The leaves are bright green, opposite in arrangement, with the typical dogwood venation pattern and they develop good fall colour. *Cornus mas* also produces brilliant red fruits in mid to late summer. Birds love the fruit, but if you're able to beat them to it, the fruit can be used to make jelly (a word of warning though, the fruits are small with a large seed, so

Up the Garden Path with Late Winter and Early Spring Shrubs

it takes a lot of fruit for even the smallest batch of jelly). In winter, the plant has attractive bark.

This is an easy to plant to grow from seed, with a stratification treatment usually needed for germination. However, I often find seedlings popping up in my garden, and I suspect the digestive juices from the birds are providing enough scarification to allow germination. I've read that Cornelian Cherry Dogwood can be hard to establish, is fussy about soil pH and that it takes many years before it starts to flower, but I don't believe any of it. I've found it to be an easy grower, tolerant of my heavy garden soil, and flowers from about age 5.

This winter, my Wintersweet (*Chimonanthes praecox*) had lots of flowers. Fortunately I took the time to go out



and look at the plant carefully, as the flowers are small, dull-coloured and unassuming from a distance (how's that for an inducement to grow a plant?). But this plant has fantastic fragrance and even a small branch will perfume the entire house with a scent reminiscent of cloves and cinnamon. Wintersweet tends to be a "green blob in the landscape plant" for the rest of the year. That is, it has nice enough green leaves, but doesn't really offer anything else of great landscape interest during other seasons. However, I haven't seen any disease or insect problems on my plant, and it tolerates a difficult growing site including heavy clay soil, so with the winter fragrance it offers, it's definitely a "keeper".

Viburnum bodnantense is one of my all-time favourites and a plant I'd always want in a garden. I grow 'Pink Dawn' as

continued on page 5

well as a white form, but 'Pink Dawn' is definitely the showier, hardier plant and the form I'd recommend. 'Pink Dawn' starts to bloom in the late fall and continues with sporadic flowering throughout the winter as long as temperatures are near freezing. If it gets very cold, the plant sits, but then resumes flowering as temperatures rise. Then, in late winter, the 'Pink Dawn' puts on a good, final flower display.



The foliage is bright, emerald green with good fall colour. The leaves also have an interesting scent – reminiscent of green peppers to me. *V. bodnantense* needs full sun for best growth and regular renewal pruning helps promote young flowering wood. 'Pink Dawn' ultimately becomes a very large shrub, easily up to 15 feet tall, so give it lots of room.

Sarcococca hookeriana var. *humilis*, the Himalayan Sweet Box is a small, well-behaved, broad-leaved evergreen shrub that is particularly useful for foundation plantings. It needs shade, even moisture, acid soil and protection from cold, dry winter winds. The dark green foliage is glossy and neat, but *Sarcococca* is especially known for its small, white, intensely fragrant flowers that appear in February and March. Under good conditions, this species produces small black fruits, but they aren't particularly showy. If the growing conditions are appropriate, this is a good choice to plant near a doorway so you can appreciate the fragrance. *S. ruscifolia* is equally nice, but reputed to be less hardy than *S. hookeriana*. *S. ruscifolia* has bright red berries and is taller than *S. hookeriana*.

Daphne odora is another broad-leaved evergreen shrub that offers fragrant flowers in late winter. Like many Daphnes, this species has a reputation for being difficult to grow, but worth the effort. *D. odora* prefers well-drained acid soils, where plants receive some shade. They tend to be resentful of fertilizer, and I've found in my own garden that the plant I now have is happy enough when I just leave it alone (it took me a couple of tries before I really learned this lesson). There are a number of varieties of *D. odora* available, but I prefer the variegated forms because the foliage is so appealing in winter. Depending on the weather, flowers may appear as early as late January and continue through February. Flowers range from

white to pinky-purple, depending on variety.

Among our most popular winter bloomers are the Hellebores, in all their forms. These tough perennial plants are often evergreen in our area although some species are deciduous. Flowering times vary with species, but in mild years, some start to flower in January, while others flower later



into the spring. The nodding flowers are saucer-shaped and come in colours ranging from pure white through pinks and purples. Many are now selected for their speckled petals. If you like to cut Hellebores for bouquets, mulching around the plants will help protect the flowers from being splattered by soil during our rainy winters. Plants don't like to be disturbed, so the usual recommendation is to plant them where you want them and then leave them alone. Once established, they are reasonably tough, but grow best in partial shade in soils rich in organic matter. They benefit from being watered deeply during the driest part of summer.

I had the chance to get to Van Dusen Gardens just ahead of, and just after, the mid-February cold snap. On my first visit, several species of Rhododendrons were in full bloom, including *Rhododendron rivei*, *R. barbatum*, *R. strigillosum* and *R. stewartianum*. After the cold, the only one still looking good was their *R. barbatum*, and I suspect it survived the cold because it had better overhead protection than the other species. Of course, other lovely early Rhodies include *R. cilpinense* and *R. moupinense*, but these plants also need frost protection for their flowers.

There are many other winter treasures to enjoy, for example *Hamamelis mollis*, *Lonicera fragrantissima* and *L. x purpusii* come to mind, as well as the lovely early bulbs. Hopefully by the time this issue of *The Yak* arrives, spring will be in full swing, but in the meantime, isn't it nice to have such a wealth of winter blooming plants to enjoy.

Norma Senn

From The Garden Archives

Due to the inclement weather this month the garden is currently without rhododendron blooms, so this month we highlight "From the Garden" March blooms from previous years. In March 2019, like this year we were also coming out of a freeze so no blooms for March 2019.

March 2018



r. strigillosum



r. pachytrichum

March 2020



r. barbatum

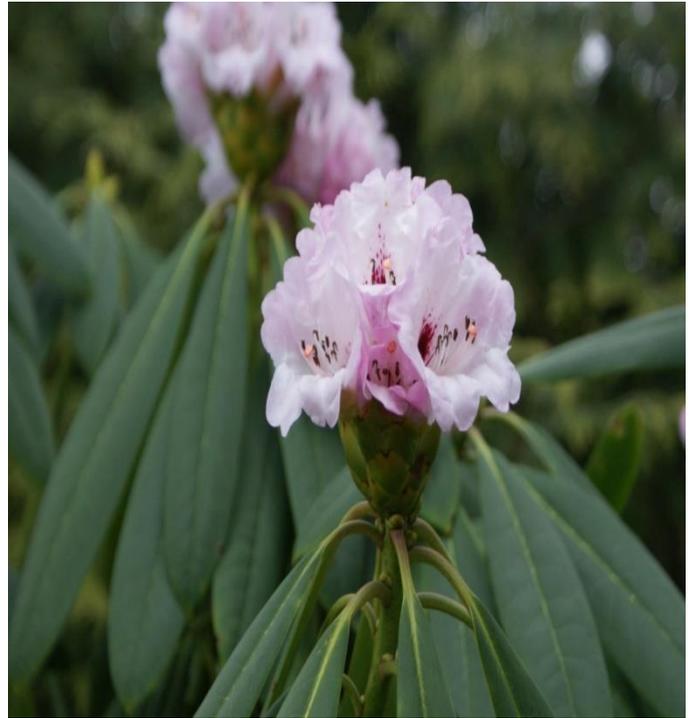


r. seta

March 2021



r. argipeplum



r. praevernium

March 2022



Bo Peep



r. ririei

Garden Friend - Mason Bees

Blue orchard mason bees (*Osmia lignaria*) are a native species to the West Coast of Canada and have the ability to fly in our weather conditions and at lower temperatures than other bees. They are efficient, hard-working spring crop pollinators.



The mason bee is smaller than the honeybee, with a metallic blue/black body and two sets of wings. The smaller males have longer antennae than the females, and have hairs on the underside for carrying pollen

Mason bees are called mason bees because, in a sense, they do masonry work. The bees do not build wax comb as in the honey bee colony. Instead, the females look for small (8mm) tube-shaped holes around the size of a pencil.

They create sections within the tube, first collecting pollen and placing it in the tube, then they lay an egg. Following this, they section it off with mud. Then they fill the next section with pollen, lay an egg and more mud. She repeats this pollen, egg, mud pattern until the tube is filled (about five to six eggs). A female will lay around 15 to 20 eggs in her lifetime. Female eggs are laid in the back of the nest and male eggs toward the front. Mason bee larvae hatch just a few days after the eggs are laid. They munch away on the food that's been stored in their cell, which usually lasts them about 10 days. Then the larva spins a cocoon and pupates. By autumn, the insects look like an adult bee, but they remain inside their cocoons throughout the winter. When the weather warms in the spring, the males break through first; the females emerge several days later.

More Facts:

- Mason bees are solitary bees, unlike the social honeybee that relies on a complicated relationship within the colony with each bee having specific jobs etc. The mason bee works alone. Each female is her own queen and worker. She mates with a male, lays her eggs and dies about 10 weeks later.
- Mason bees are some of the first bees to emerge in the spring. They can tolerate temperatures down to 55 degrees. For much of North America, this means that mason bees will be active beginning in late February to early April.
- Mason bees do not make honey. They eat pollen and nectar throughout their lives as they forage. There is no need to create stores of food as the adult bees die before the weather gets cold and the species overwinter as pupae. The pupae will emerge when the weather warms in the spring.
- Mason bees are excellent pollinators. They collect nectar and pollen at the same time by lighting on the flower, taking nectar by tongue and collecting pollen using their rear and middle legs. A single female mason bee will visit nearly 2,000 blossoms a day and a smaller home orchard can be adequately pollinated by 40 – 50 bees. Ten mason bees will pollinate thousands of blossoms making them important for home garden pollination. For pollination to occur, orchards need less mason bees per acre than they would honeybees. Mason bees have a 95% pollination rate, where honeybees have a 5% pollination rate.
- Mason bees make their nests about 300 feet from the best selection of flowers, whereas honeybees forage much further (up to two miles). This shorter range of forage gives the beekeeper more control as to where pollination occurs. You can set up a mason bee house near the trees/plants you wish to be pollinated and should have great success.

Sources: keepingbackyardbees.com; gardeners.com

Jim Barlup Hybrids

Picture credit : Jim Barlup



Windwalker (Janet Blair x Lems Cameo x Brandts Tropicanna x Mary Drennen)



Winter Dreams (Independence Day x Snow Candle)



Winter Mist (Terra x winter Spice)



Winter Morn (Mrs JC Williams x r. yakushimanum)



Winter Song (Lemon Embers x Windwalker)



Winter Spice (Hachmann Charmont x Dreamland)