



# THE YAK

Volume 39, Number 04

April 2025

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**Saffron Silk**

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 40<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Langley, B.C.

## Cover:



Saffron Silk

**Predominant Flower Color:** Yellow

**Flower/Truss Description:** flower broadly funnel-shaped, wavy edges, 3" across, inside light greenish-yellow with vivid yellow midribs, throat vivid yellow on dorsal lobe, outside brilliant yellow with vivid yellow midribs. Dome-shaped truss holds 14 flowers.

**Fragrant:** No

**Bloom Time:** Early Midseason to Midseason

**Foliage Description / Plant Habit:** Leaves elliptic, broadly acute apex, rounded base, down curved edges, 5 1/2" long, semi-glossy, dark yellowish green, retained 2 years.

**Height:** 6 ft

**Cold Hardiness Temp:** 10°F (-12°C)

**Parentage:** Nancy Evans x (Ode Wright x Crest)

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

**Hybridized or Selected by:** Frank Fujioka

Sources: [American Rhododendron Society](#)

## *This Month*

**This month's meeting will be replaced by a Garden tour.**

The garden tour date is tentatively set for Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Details will be sent out as soon as the plans are finalized.

## *Next Meeting*

**Date:** Wednesday, May 21 @ 7:30 pm.

**Place:** In person at Langley Mennonite Fellowship church

**Topic:** Truss show

## *From the President*

Early blooms are here. In my garden, PJM was the first to bloom this year followed by some blooms on a recovering "Snow lady".

Spring cleanup continues weather permitting. We had a laurel hedge die back last year and are gradually cleaning out the dead trunks. There is regrowth so hopefully we will achieve a lower hedge that is easier to manage. You can see the progress if you come to the garden tour.

That is planned for the end of the month. More details will be provided soon. We should have three or four gardens to visit from Surrey to Mission. This tour will replace our usual April meeting.

*Gerald Nemanishen, President*

## 2024 ELECTED OFFICERS

|               |                  |              |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| President:    | Gerry Nemanishen | 604-826-4660 |
| Past Pres:    |                  |              |
| Vice Pres:    | Jim Worden       | 604-541-4754 |
| Secretary:    | Lois Williams    | 604-535-0543 |
| Treasurer(s): | Gerry Nemansihen | 604-826-4660 |
| Directors:    | Robert Talbot    | 604-720-0134 |
|               | Aird Flavelle    | 604-870-4221 |

## Volunteers

|                |                   |              |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Programs:      | Vacant            |              |
| Membership:    | Aird Flavelle     | 604-870-4221 |
| Newsletter:    | Maureen Worden    | 604-541-4754 |
| Bookkeeping:   | Maureen Worden    | 604-541-4754 |
| Librarian:     | Gerald Nemanishen | 604-826-4660 |
| Website:       | Maureen Worden    | 604-541-4754 |
| Hospitality:   | Vacant            |              |
| BCCGC Liaison: | Vacant            |              |



**Gracie Seaborn** photo by Lois Williams

## *From the Editor*

It's hard to believe at times that spring has sprung with the rainy and windy days we've been having but the garden is gradually awakening and showing some of its colour. This month "In The Garden" finally have some blooms to share but what is interesting is that there appears to be a new blooming sequence this year. I.E some of the blooms out last April have yet to appear this year.

The annual early magnolia bloom sequence in the backyard has changed again this year with Royal Crown returning to 1<sup>st</sup> place with Eric Saville moving to 2nd by only a few days, Anna has dropped from 1<sup>st</sup> to its customary 3<sup>rd</sup> place. The remaining magnolias in the yard will come over the next couple of months.

The garden crew have been gearing up with the occasional sunny dry day and are chomping at the bit to spend more time outside chasing yard intruders and each other. The "crew" made their Zoom debut at last night's executive meeting as they were trying to get the head gardener outside for some play before nightfall.

Annual vegetable garden activities have commenced with the planting of the peas and potatoes. The garlic planted last year seems to be progressing and it won't be too long before additional goodies are added. With the price of some vegetables lately, I'm looking forward to having our own harvest.

As predicted the male Rufous hummingbirds showed up just before St. Patrick's day and the females arrived shortly after. I've found that the trick to averting the worst of the feeder wars between the visiting Rufous and the resident Annas is to ensure that the feeders are on the full side near dusk. Any suggestion that a possible shortage of nectar may occur results in guarding of the feeders and fighting.

*Maureen Worden*

# From the Archives



The following article originally appeared in the Fraser South Newsletter, April 2012 by Sean Rafferty

## *R. calophytum* (Epithet: beautiful plant)

As the specific epithet informs us *R. calophytum var. calophytum* is certainly a beautiful plant; a densely compact shrub or tree standing tidily and cleanly in the landscape. *R. Calophytum*, to my eye, always seems well groomed with very little out of place, even when grown quite large. Grown under optimum conditions, *R. calophytum* may grow to fifty feet in the wild, at least according to Davidian in "The Rhododendron Species Vol. 11", while Cox and Cox, in "The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species" peg its height at thirty feet. Either way it is always an impressive plant in the landscape.

A native of Sichuan, growing from 10,000 to 13,000 feet, *R. calophytum* was first described by the French plant hunter, Adrien Franchet, in 1886, and later introduced into cultivation by Ernest Wilson in 1904 and reintroduced in 1908 and again 1910. This striking, long-lived plant is one of the hardiest of the big leaves, and boasts long leaves from seven to fourteen inches in length and one and a half to three inches



*R. calophytum*: painting by Carlos Reifel from "The Rhododendron" vol. II, Edited by Leslie Urquart

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

wide. In keeping with the plants stature, the inflorescence consists of 15 - 30 flowers upon a long and very striking, scarlet pedicel. The corolla is widely campanulate, white to pink, rose, rosey-pink or purple with a deep red blotch and spots. The flowers have 15 - 21 stamens, a stout style and an incredibly large stigma which is one of its defining and identifying characteristics.

Another relative of *R. calophytum var. calophytum* is *calophytum var. openshawianum*, introduced in 1995, but this species is given rather short shrift by Cox and Cox as being an inferior form of *R. calophytum* with smaller leaves and only 5 - 10 flowers to the truss. Its other drawback is that it grows at low elevations, 4500 - 10,400 feet, on Wa Wu Shan, Sichuan and is therefore not generally hardy in cultivation and certainly not a reliable or worthy candidate for hybridising.

There is really no need for another variety of *R. calophytum* to enter the world of the hybridiser since *calophytum var. calophytum* is able to shoulder the load alone. It is hardy, with huge leaves, drop-dead gorgeous early blooming flowers, terrific size and habit, and an incredible 'wow' factor. The hybridisers must have salivated at the possibilities when they first encountered this plant. They did not seem to waste very much time creating new hybrids as they appear to have initiated their work at least as early as 1920. Work with *R. calophytum* appears to have been relatively unrestricted geographically as registrations occurred throughout Europe and the British Isles and across the Atlantic on both coasts of North America and on to New Zealand in the Southern hemisphere. There have been some interesting partnerships brought to this dance over time, from *R. Loderi* and many of the big leaf species to the small and prostrate *R. forrestii repens Group*.

While the *R. forrestii* pairing, at first blush, seems somewhat ludicrous. I find the offspring to be a very attractive.

Sean Rafferty



Above: *R. calophytum*, Maple Ridge, BC. Image courtesy of *Garth Wedemire*

Below: *R. calophytum*, UBCBG. Image courtesy *Sean Rafferty*





*R. 'Avalanche'*: L. de Rothschild 1934  
*R. 'Loderi Group' x R. calophytum'*  
Image: courtesy *Garth Wedemire*



*R. forrestii repens x R. calophytum*:  
Unknown.  
Image: *Dick 'Red' Cavender*



*R. 'Babylon'*: Reuthe, 1955.  
*R. calophytum x R. praevernum*  
Image: *Garth Wedemire*

*In The Garden*



*R. pseudochrysanthum*



PJM



*Osanthus Delavayi*



*Camellia*



*Camellia*



*Silver Skies*



*Top: Magnolia "Anna"*  
*Bottom: Magnolia "Royal Crown"*







*Magnolia "Eric Savill" (Top: under grey skies, Bottom: in early morning sun)*



## **Marcellus Rhododendron Garden:**

*Note from Gerald:* This is an article about a visit to Dr. Marcellus' (a passed physician) garden in Mission. It also mentions Dr. McKee and ties in to a presentation previously done by Aird. Source: Diana Murtig



**Lifetime Learning Centre Society**

April 21, 2008

These notes come from a tour of the Marcellus Rhododendron Gardens in Mission, British Columbia. The tour of the gardens was given by Dr. Jim Marcellus. (notes by Diana Muntigl)

The garden is located on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, between Stave Lake and Mary Street, by Fraser River Heritage Park. South portion of the garden borders onto the Lougheed Highway and can be seen from the road.

These rhododendrons are examples of many journeys which have begun in different parts of the world and have come together in Mission.

### **Hummingbird-Fortune Cross Rhododendron:**

This plant started its journey in Chenkiang in eastern China, at an elevation of 3000 feet. In 1843 a botanist named Robert Fortune came to China looking for new plants and took these large, pink, hardy shrubs back to the Royal Botanical gardens in Edinburgh. Seventy-five years later, in the 1930's, a retired doctor who lived on Sumas Mountain, just across the river, traded his collection of British Columbia alpine plants for cuttings from the Fortune Rhododendrons in Edinburgh. Dr. McKee lived near the present location of the Ledgeview Golf Course, and some of these plants can be seen in that area today; others are in a Test Garden at UBC. Incidentally, Dr. McKee was distinguished for having been the first doctor to have introduced diphtheria immunization into British Columbia.

In 1953, Dr. Marcellus met Dr. McKee and bought many of his plants for his garden in Mission. Dr. Marcellus began to experiment with hybridization and crossed the **Fortune** with a hybrid named **Hummingbird** (williamsianum x haematodes). The result was an exceptionally fine early large pink,

often scented, with copper-coloured new growth and dense, attractive foliage. The plant blooms in April, at the same time as the stunning blue **Augustini**.

#### **Blue Augustini Rhododendron:**

This plant has small leaves and is sometimes confused with azalea. It is a cross between **Augustini** which also came from eastern China and a brilliant blue hybrid named **Blue Diamond**. This cross won the prize for the best new hybrid in the Vancouver Rhododendron Show of 1973.

#### **Caitlin Rhododendron:**

In 1998, one of the **Hummingbird-Fortune** crosses was registered with the Royal Horticultural society and given the name "Caitlin". This plant was given to Dr. Trembath of Langley and was in her garden until its relocation to Mission circa 2006/7

These crosses are seen in gardens all over Mission, particularly in the area surrounding Fraser River Heritage Park. They are also in the Medical Group garden adjacent to the Mission Memorial Hospital and near the Anglican Church and can be spotted in many private gardens in the community. Sixty plants from this garden were donated to the Fraser River Heritage Park in 1986.

The Caitlin Rhododendron was presented to the District of Mission by Communities in Bloom on April 2, 2007 and became Mission's official flower.

#### **The Story of the Azaleas**

A fascinating illustration of the theme of the journeys of plants, their story began in 1690 when a sweet-smelling species was imported into England from the American colonies. By the early nineteenth century England, Holland and Belgium had become the great gardening centres of Europe, and other azaleas were imported into northern Europe from China, Japan, Indonesia, and the western USA. There were hundreds of important crosses developed from these exotic strains.

The most successful of all the crosses are these that came out of the Exbury Gardens in England.

The gardens were developed, in the 1930's by Lionel de Rothschild and many of the crosses were made under his direction. Rothschild was the English member of the wealthy Jewish banking family whose passionate interest in gardens has been said to be a result of the Jews having been forbidden entrance to public parks in eighteenth century Europe. These plants were nearly lost during the war when Exbury was taken over by the British Navy, but enough survived that during the fifties British nurseries were able to export them to the United States. These plants were brought into Mission in 1955.

The Exbury crosses combine all the best features of their ancestors; they have large flowers, brilliant colours, hardiness, and, quite often, beautiful scent.

Additional notes are available from interviews with Dr. Jim Marcelus recounting how Rhododendrons came to the Fraser Valley and the start of his garden as well as the process of hybridization that led to his plants and many of those in and around Mission

Garden Tour photos:

Photos by Diana Muntigl C

Taken at the Marcellus Garden, Mission, BC









