

RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

P.O. Box 3040 Langley, B.C. V3A 4R3

NEWSLETTER

WED. JUNE 17TH, 1992 AT 6.30 P.M. OR AS SOON
THEREAFTER AS YOU CAN MAKE IT! -

~~PICNIC AT WILLIAMS PARK, LANGLEY. WILLIAMS
PARK IS OFF 70A AVENUE, APPROXIMATELY ONE MILE
FROM THE JUNCTION OF 232ND AND 70A AVENUE (70A
AVENUE IS QUITE CLOSE TO THE JUNCTION OF NO.
10 HIGHWAY AND 232ND, JUST SOUTH OF THE
FREEWAY). PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN CUTLERY AND
PLATES, ALONG WITH YOUR CHOICE FOR THE TABLE.
ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE CALL DIANE SCOTT (533-
4378) OR MELBA JOHNSON (581-5253). WE ARE
HOPING TO HAVE SOME MEMBERS OF THE VANCOUVER
SOCIETY WITH US - AND OF COURSE, WE EXPECT OUR
PIPER TO BE THERE.~~

JUNE 26th: - is the deadline for entries for the Fraser Valley 1992 Residential Garden Contest which covers North Delta, Surrey, White Rock and South Surrey, Mission, Abbotsford, Clearbrook and Langley/Aldergrove. We will have the application form which contains all the particulars available at the Picnic, or forms are available at any Real Estate Office.

SAT. JULY 25TH: The Haveman Garden , 30324 Sunset Crescent, Mount Lehman - 856-3064 will be open for the day - come see the Fuschias and Geraniums in full bloom.

AUG.21/SEPT. 7: P.N.E. We join the Lily Society for our Display in the Garden Section during the P.N.E. The Committee appointed in charge of this event is Chris Klapwijk, Chairman, with Harold Johnson and Les Clay as members. Del Knowlton represents the Lily Society. They will need H-E-L-P - especially during the P.N.E. when members will be asked to put in a few hours at the Display, but you do get entrance and parking paid.

WED. SEPT. 16TH: BILL STIPE who is the Manager of Meerkerk Gardens on Whidby Island (which is the Seattle Chapter's Test Garden, and which we hope to visit 'ere long) will be with us to talk on the operation and upkeep of the Test Garden. The Spring Journal 1991 contains a detailed report on the ratings of many well known rhodos growing at Meerkerk. We also note that W.A. (Bill) Stipe was awarded the Bonze Medal by the Whidbey Island Chapter - see Journal 46/2/92, p.75.

PLEASE NOTE: AS THE CHURCH REQUIRES THE HALL ON 21ST OCTOBER, WE HAVE TO CHANGE OUR OCTOBER MEETING TO THE MONDAY, 19TH OCTOBER, FOR THIS MONTH ONLY.

MEETING: ST. ANDREWS ANGLICAN HALL, 20955 OLD YALE RD., LANGLEY

FROM THE EXECUTIVE:

MEMBERSHIP: Chris Ballyn reports the following new members which we welcome:

IRWIN, Cy and Marty, 4069 West 35th Avenue, Vancouver, V6N 2P4 - 263-3195
 HARMAN, Rudy abd Lyn, 113-20117 56th Avenue, Langley, V3A 3Y3 - 5309743
 van de WINT, G.J.(Gerald) & Valerie, 13616 32nd Av., Surrey, V4A 2S7 - 535-9493
 HUFFMAN, Harry & Kay, 5710 Spruce St., Burnaby, V5G 1Y9 - 298-8055
 SCOTT, Scott & Danielle, 16258 78A Av., Surrey, V3S 6X3 -

Chris also reported that we now have 72 members. Anyone wishing an up to date Membership List will be able to acquire one at the Picnic.

A.R.S. FINANCES: Harold and Melba attended the Annual Convention of the A.R.S. in Long Island in May. Harold obtained some information from the Society's Treasurer clarifying the Society's finances, and an excerpt from a letter to Bill Dale from the Treasurer follows:

"Some background on ARS finances may be of some help. By far the major expense for the ARS is producing and mailing the quarterly Journal. This probably accounts for about two thirds of our budget. Unfortunately, costs keep going up, however it does not seem possible to keep raising dues to make up for rising costs. Someone has produced statistics which show that over the years, dues have gone from \$15 to \$8 in real dollar purchasing power. However when dues have been raised there has always been a significant loss of members.

This is a real dilemma because of the economics of publishing. With a print run of about 6000, about half of the costs are in the nature of setup (editor, typesetting, colour separations, etc.). Thus if we were printing for 10,000 members, the unit cost would be about 80% of current, while for 4000 members, the cost would be 25% greater. The net result has been that dues increases tend to be counter-productive in covering increased Journal costs.

For this reason the Directors have been very reluctant to increase dues. The only other option is to cut the costs of the Journal, which would make it smaller, fewer issues, or of a reduced quality. This has been equally unacceptable with the directors since, for many members, the only contact with the ARS is the Journal. For some time it has been the fond hope that the membership be increased significantly and that would be our salvation, but this has not happened. Not surprising then is the fact that ARS is having trouble making ends meet."

The letter goes on to say that the next issue of the Journal will have a full accounting of the ARS funds.

TREASURER'S Report: Larry Chase reported that although our bank account had been on a downward trend for the past 2 months, we would probably be receiving upwards of \$1800 from the recent plant sales.

DISPLAY GARDEN: Chris Klapwijk reported on the walkaround at Williams Park, and before anything more can be done, Chris would like to know just how many plants are to be available for planting at Williams Park - Plants should be at least 3 feet tall and on the mature side - Those with plants available for this project, please see Chris at the Picnic, or call him at 888-0920. This is to be Display only - the Test Garden will come later.

APRONS: Diane Scott has a few Aprons available for members at a cost of \$12.37 including all the taxes!

PRESIDENTS' MEETING: The Powdery Mildew matter will be brought up at the next Presidents' meeting in September at which Les Clay will be presiding as District Director and Chris Klapwijk will be attending as our representative.

MISCELLANEOUS

THANK YOU to Barry Peters for his gift of Fertilizer to Harold, which will be on the raffle table for the next few months. This is really appreciated, as are all raffle table donations.

DON MARTYN has been designated to prepare a questionnaire for all members in an effort to get our members' ideas, beefs, etc., and also to get more of you involved, so be prepared, and if you wish, contact Don with any ideas you may have please.

FOURTH ANNUAL BURNABY RHODODENDRON FESTIVAL: This should NOT come under "Miscellaneous". Burnaby City has adopted the Rhododendron as its flower. We have just returned (May 31) from this year's Festival where we saw Gordon and Vern Finley receive the top award for their entry of a plant of Leona x Etta Burrows, which will now be registered as "BURNABY". This program started over 3 years ago with rhodo hybridizers entering 3 plants of each entry which were then placed, one at UBC, one at Van Dusen and the third at Burnaby Century Gardens. The appointed Judges assessed these plants a couple of times per year, and today the winners were announced. Receiving awards also were Gene Round and John Lofthouse, and our Carol Locken was also in there along with Ken Gibson of Tofino. We apologize for omitting having this advertised ahead of time, as apart from the Awards, with all the Government officials appearing, they had a full program for the day, mostly on rhodo culture, with a show of trusses by Vern Finley, and tee shirts, plant sales etc. and of course, plenty of stalls for the cold drinks. Harold Johnson was also in attendance with his tubs and Les Clay with his plants.

Next executive Meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 25th at the Crabb residence, 5319 234th Street, Langley at 7.30 p.m.



HAVE A GREAT SUMMER



WHAT MAKES RHODODENDRONS AND AZALEAS SO SPECIAL

(By Austin C. Kennel, Waynesboro, VA)

For over twenty years, I've grown rhododendrons - big plants, little plants, new hybrids, old favourites, hardy ones, small-leaved, large-leaved, species, and hybrids. I've grown azaleas - evergreen, deciduous, and native. My plants came from Oregon, Pennsylvania, Scotland, England, Japan, Washington, New York, Maryland, Ohio, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Virginia. I've grown them in Maryland, West Virginia, and two locations in Virginia. I moved over 500 plants a distance of better than one hundred miles, not once, but twice.

I've lost plants to frigid winters, sweltering summers, late frosts, early frosts, ice, drought, falling trees, bugs, diseases, floods, winds, voracious animals, thieves, and just plain stupidity. I've bought and studied many "how to" books, subscribed to various magazines, and countless articles about rhododendrons and azaleas. I've talked to experts and listened to amateurs.

I've sprayed, dusted, misted, and watered. I've fertilized and I've mulched. I've planted trees to get more shade - and cut down trees to get more light. I've paid too much for some plants - and not enough for others. I've pruned, pinched, and deadheaded. I've dug big holes and little holes. I've hauled sawdust, top soil, pine bark, manure and leaves. I've shovelled, troweled, swung a pick, operated a tractor, run a chain saw and used my bare hands. Yes, and I've cursed at times and prayed at other times.

Now, you would think I would have learned something about rhododendrons and azaleas from all this. Well, I have! I've learned what it is about these plants that makes them so special. All my plants have it - and it is the only thing about them that is not affected by soil, weather, moisture, or any other factor.

The one thing I've learned? The thing that makes rhododendrons and azaleas so special --
PEOPLE!

When anyone asks me what it is I like so much about rhododendrons and azaleas, my reply is invariably, "The people who grow them". It is my deep conviction that these plants are only grown by a very special and wonderful breed. I really don't know why except that maybe the traits it takes to grow plants - patience, understanding, and a deep love of living things - are also the traits that makes fine human beings.

When I look at my plants, I see far more than foliage or flower. I see something in every one that forever makes that plant something special to me. I see the friend who gave me the plant or cutting - or I see someone who started out as a stranger but who shared his or her friendship as we shared plants. Some plants stir memories of walks - and talks - with others in the sun - and in the rain, too - and of kneeling beside a plant that we might better share its beauty. Some of my plants are monuments to friends who are no longer here but who will never be forgotten.

My plants have brought me friends from far-off places - from just down the road - and from radically different walks of life. My plants conjure up memories of telephone discussions, priceless correspondence, plant sales and auctions, truss shows, chapter meetings, garden tours, slide shows, and articles in the Bulletin.

It's truly amazing, but my plants are also endowed with very discerning taste as they've never introduced me to anyone I didn't like.

(This is a reprint from the A.R.S. Bulletin Vol. 35 Summer 1981 #3)

1992 EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES:

President: Les Clay (530-5188)
 Vice-President: Chris Klapwijk (888-0920)
 Treasurer: Larry Chase (576-9782)
 Secretary: Colleen Rodgers (594-6380)
 Directors: Harold Johnson (581-5253)
 Christopher Ballyn (857-0253)
 Don Martyn (823-4853)

Membership: Chris Ballyn
 Library: Pat Dahl (534-5200)
 Programs: H. Johnson & Les Clay
 Publicity: Diane Scott (533-4378)
 Hospitality: Mrs. Phil Anderson, Dorothy
 Griffin and Pat Glennie
 Bulletin: D. & E. Crabb (534-4884)

Confessions of a Crosser
or
Beware the Backyard Breeder
or
It's a Good Plant

Some years ago the Arabian horse was rare and much prized in the west; only the rich and famous could afford to acquire him. But over the years ownership became less exclusive until even the likes of you or I could become owners. If the Arab in your little stable was a mare, it was inevitable that you would want her to enjoy the delights of motherhood. Next year a perfectly precious little foal arrives, a colt foal and you find him so dear and sweet that you can't bear to have him gelded - (after all Arab entires are nice natured and easy to handle.) Then you realize that you have an Arab Stallion and your friend down the street would like her mare to have a foal - - so what if your dear colt is a little cow hocked, or off at the croup a smidge, or a mite ewe-necked - - his great-great-granddaddy was in the Royal Stud of Abu Dhabi (or somesuch).....and so a race of "Arabs" is begun with lovely pedigrees but less than perfect conformation - and in losing good conformation they lose the beautiful Arab gaits-----. How much easier it is to breed rhododendrons than horses.

No gentle reader - I am not suggesting that you abstain from putting pollen to stigma - the temptation is far too great to resist. I'm not even going to suggest that you do great pre-pollenizing studies, the frivolous mating provides as much delighted expectancy as the most carefully conceived conception (and has almost as much chance of producing an exciting result). What I am suggesting is that you:

1. Do a careful job of making the cross (if you are in doubt about the precautions to take - ask one of our experts) so that you can be reasonably certain that the seed you collect is a result of your cross.

2. Keep good records, not only in a stud book, but in the garden.

Seeing the first bloom on your very own creation is a heady experience, even if it fails to come up to your expectations. And this brings up my next plea - GIVE IT TIME. For example - fourteen years ago (!) I made a cross between Exbury Naomi and Canary with the obvious hope of getting good Naomi type foliage and flower texture with the strength of colour of Canary. Of the original not very many seedlings, I have four growing. The first two to bloom have Naomi foliage alright, and size of growth, but the flowers are a disappointing pale cream in a rather open truss. The third is also cream, but a full rounded filled truss that is quite a pleasant plant - but not what I was hoping for of course. The fourth plant demonstrates my very first point - a speck of pollen other than Canary was involved here I'm afraid, for the flower is a bright, rather harsh rose with a mauve cast (a colour I dislike). The truss was composed of about four fairly large florets making a smallish ball truss. I was tempted to grub it out at once, but I'm better at talking than doing, so it stayed, and I was surprised that the flowers withstood the sun, wind and rain without any blemishes, and fell off when ripe still unmarked. This is its fourth year of bloom - it is about six feet high now and is fighting with an apple tree - and behold this year most trusses have ten florets, the bloom is quite showy (I still don't like the colour - but some people do!). The moral to this story is - don't chuck things out too soon. This particular plant is not really a commercial proposition - at least in my eyes - it's too big a grower, and probably too plain.....but it might be worth trying it out in different gardens as a

background plant - a good garden plant because of the heavy flower texture and durability. The other aspect of GIVE IT TIME is the converse - sometimes first blooms are just what you hoped they might be and you are thrilled into registering, propagating and distributing before the plant has been tested under varying garden conditions. However much you want to honour Aunt Sally by naming the plant she adores after her, I would beg that it be grown on for at least ten years, and in more than your garden. Only by such testing can you truly know how the plant behaves - growth habit, relationship of structure to weight of bloom, foliage over the years - and all things that make up a superior plant worthy of being registered.

And how is the hobby hybridizer going to assess how good his pet plant really is? This does pose something of a problem - presumably one does ask for assessments from other growers, one makes an effort to familiarize oneself with as many plants as possible in as many areas as possible - and here we perhaps suffer from the lack of a test garden, tho' there are numbers of fairly large rhodie collections in private gardens not too far away. And you try to be objective about it - does it fill a niche in time of bloom and or colour; is it different enough in appearance or habit to warrant producing more; would it perhaps serve as a basis for further crosses to improve some features such as colour, size, foliage or plant habit. Just because you may not like the plant much yourself doesn't mean it is worthless - people (thank heavens) have different tastes. I am reminded of a race of hybrids raised by an old friend (in fact the person who inoculated me with rhododendronitis) some thirty years ago. Even then we were looking for yellows, and he was using as one parent a cross of litiense x scyphocalyx that came from Royston. I don't recall what the other parent was, but the resulting flowers had a good intensity of colour and a waxy texture - but they carried streaks or rims of red and we dubbed them the 'kidney disease' plants and went no further - obviously some people like the combination- I have actually seen Ring of Fire in some gardens!

I grow a large number of unnamed crosses - of my own and of friends, and my garden is much the richer for them. Many I consider excellent garden plants - for foliage, time of bloom, or form or flower. Others take up space because I'm loath to destroy living plants.....however much I despise that little bi-colour I produced years ago (looking for something else of course) and sitting in the very back of the bed where I hope it will be choked out and disappear - someone comes along and sees it and exclaims over the dear dainty little thing.....grrrr - it's still there because the 'dainty little flowers' are on a plant too big to tell the admirer 'take it, take it'. And this brings up another point -

We have presumably left behind the 'grex' habit - that is naming the cross not the individual plant, but it is easy enough to have 'sister seedlings' escape into cultivation - look at Virginia Richards for example - there are at least three plants in the trade from the cross - Leverett Richards and two forms of Virginia - one much pinker than the other. It is certainly conceivable that the plant or plants of your own cross which were admired by your neighbour and you generously gave him, might be considered by said neighbour to actually be a plant of the highly advertised new hybrid you just registered, because it is the same cross. Short of keeping all the plants under control, and then destroying all but the registered one, confusion and disappointment are likely to continue.

Maybe it is my advancing age that makes me crotchety - but it seems to me that there have been swarms of new hybrids coming on the market, many of which are either similar to those already being grown, or similar to each other. (This seems to be particularly true of the Yak hybrids - how many are better than the parent plant?) We are perhaps gulled by rave notices on new plants which are indeed special in the areas for which they have been developed - cold hardiness or heat tolerance - but are no better or perhaps not even as good as those we already grow. How fortunate we are that our climate lets us grow so much good material.

(Written by Dr. Mike Trembath May 1992)