



JANUARY 1995

The Yak

A CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 1995 MEETING

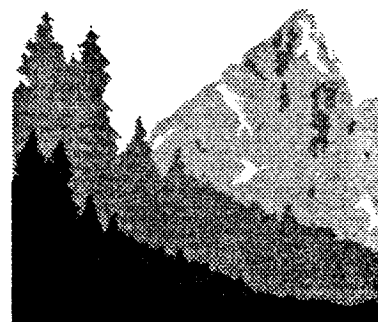
8:00 P.M.

St. Andrews Anglican Hall
20955 Old Yale Road, Langley

'REFLECTING NATURE IN OUR GARDENS USING RHODODENDRONS'

GUEST SPEAKER: GLEN PATTERSON

Glen Patterson will present his philosophy of garden design using rhododendrons. He suggests that our garden design style should reflect the natural beauty of our mountains and lakes, particularly for those of us who grow rhododendrons. The natural setting of rhododendrons is in the mountains among rocks, streams, pools and trees. Glen will show slides of wild rhododendrons from his travels in Sikkim, Japan and Korea and draw comparisons with some rhododendron gardens in the Pacific Northwest.



Glen is a professional forester and has been growing rhododendrons for about 20 years. He has a collection of dwarf species in his garden in West Vancouver, which was recently featured in the book by Marjorie Harris, *The Canadian Gardeners' Guide to Foliage and Garden Design*. We hope that Glen will also include some photographs of his garden.

Annual Elections of Officers

Nominations have been given to Don Martyn for the following positions:

Vice-President
Treasurer
Secretary
Director

Voting by the membership will take place at the January meeting.

Our Thanks to Loyd Newcomb

Loyd Newcomb was the guest speaker at our November meeting on the topic of 'Sex in the Rhododendron Garden'. Loyd showed beautiful slides of hybrids he and his wife, Eddie have developed and close-ups of the hybridizing process. There were lots of questions from the members and Loyd was delighted with the keen response.



One of the great things in growing 'species' (as opposed to hybrids) is that we at once become more conscious of the beauty of the entire outline of the plant, the poise of its blooms, the grace of its stems, and above all the value and individual beauty of its leaves. There are of course exceptions, but it will be acknowledged that where the flowers and leaves remain in nature's original proportions, a greater value is attached to the latter".

—Graham Stuart Thomas

Book Review

COLOUR IN THE WINTER GARDEN

—GRAHAM STUART THOMAS

First published in 1957, this book has been re-released in a paperback edition and is a remarkably comprehensive guide to plants with interesting flowers, leaf texture and bark colour for the winter garden. Graham Stuart Thomas, often thought of as a 'rose specialist' has been described as 'the Last Renaissance Man' and perhaps the label is justified as I know of no other garden writer who writes intelligent prose on all aspects of horticulture and illustrates his books with his own line drawings and water colours.

Recently published gardening books focus most of their efforts on sumptuous photographs and do not seem to worry too much about the quality of the writing. This is particularly apparent in our rhododendron literature so it is a delight to discover a whole chapter in Thomas' book devoted to rhododendrons because they 'compete in beautiful leaves and bark with the best of the shrubs described in this book'. The erudite descriptions of rhododendron foliage are nicely balanced by the author's excitement at seeing early rhododendron flowers: 'I well remember visiting Tower Court and Exbury in a favourable February and being astounded by the brilliant spectacle given by early *R. arboreum* forms, towering aloft in leafy pyramids, splashed with vivid crimson and pink flowers to 30 feet or more'.

This is an excellent book for identifying rhododendron species with the most interesting foliage and for summarizing the qualities of early flowering species and hybrids. Thomas describes rhododendrons I have never heard of such as *R. ponticum* 'Foliis Purpureis' which has dark plum-coloured leaves in the winter months. This book has good ideas and is a pleasure to read during these long winter evenings.

—David Sellars

A Gallant Lady

Ella J. Crabb, nee Paul, wife of David, formerly of West Vancouver, Langley and lately Qualicum Beach passed away November 24, 1994. Ella died as she had lived—bravely—her concern more for those near and dear to her than for herself.

Fraser South Rhododendron Society has lost a charter member; Vancouver Rhododendron Society has lost a long-time member; and Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society has lost a newer 'tho' active member. We are all very aware of our loss. Ella was one of those most valuable people without whom organizations fail to prosper. She was ready to help whoever, whenever, and wherever help was needed. She and Dave edited the F.S.R.S. newsletter for several years, keeping us up-to-date with club happenings along with information from other chapters and articles of interest gleaned from newsletters and garden journals. They had recently taken on this job for the M.A.R.S. chapter. Ella and Dave were awarded a bronze medal by F.S.R.S. for their generosity in sharing their garden, their knowledge, their plants and for their yeoman job as newsletter editors.

Ella's enthusiasm for her plants was infectious, although it occasionally led to a frustrated howl from Dave—"Ella...where have you put...?" and the reply would come—"Well it didn't look happy there, so I moved it." The Crabb garden in Langley was a mecca for all rhodoholics and we were all welcomed, rain or shine, toured and coffee'd or tea'd, and toured again. There was an incredibly large collection of rhodies in that garden, each known and cherished.

Ella took delight in her animal friends, the dogs Rhodie and Sam, the cat Buffy, the birds and the wild birds they encouraged and fed—even the squirrel who stole from the feeders and sent Rhodie into paroxysms of barking. There always seemed to be a chuckle behind her voice, as though she was amused by the vagaries of us all.

I can hardly bear to think that I will never again pick up the phone and hear the very definite voice say, "Mike, how are ye? Mike what do you know about..."

As the ballad says, "Sad am I without thee".

—Mike Trembath

OUT OF THE CLOSET • • • • •

Yes Virginia, there is a propagator. Under the carapace of age and fat there beats the quaking heart of a hopeful hybridizer; one who finally overcomes the fear of rejection of the favoured offspring, and sets it afloat in the discriminating world of rhododendron lovers.

Meet the newly registered—**R. 'Lionheart'** (fanfare please). The cross—'Rimini' x 'Mrs. Lamont Copeland'—is a warm yellow with brick red buds, a frilled calyx and a bloom time of June 1-14.

Did I hear you snort in disgust and say—but everybody makes crosses? But of COURSE they do. It is so easy one cannot resist. Whether the crosses be carefully researched, or frivolous (even to using open pollinated seed from a favourite plant), I warrant every grower has done it. I usually keep the results in decent seclusion in my own garden—mourning over many, quietly pleased over some, tolerating others, and hexing a death wish on a few. Lionheart pleases me. It makes me happy to look at it—maybe because of the lateness of the bloom, or perhaps because of its rich, warm colours, or the layered look it has when in bloom—from the rather flat topped trusses—it is a smiling plant. When Vern Finley agreed that she too liked it, I decided to register it, and asked Fin to propagate it hoping to try it out in other gardens.

Lionheart dates from the sixties. At this time everyone was searching for buttercup yellow rhodies. The Hawks were available—only just—but 'Crest' was not easily acquired. When E.J. Trayling brought a truss of Larsen's 'Mrs. Lamont Copeland' to a show we held in the Cowan Centre in Burnaby we all drooled over it. The Traylings were, at that time, neighbours of the Finleys, and Vern was able to get some pollen from Mrs. L.C. With great enthusiasm we rushed about putting pollen on any bloom showing even a hint of yellow in both our gardens. We divided seed—and grew on hoards of plants. Most of these

were bitter disappointments, of course—tending to be bicolours which faded out to cream—or unpleasant (to my taste at least) mixtures of orange with greeny-yellow throats and edged in red—yuck! I do have one plant of the many we grew of 'Inamorata' by Copeland that is just now coming into its own. It is a good clear yellow, florets large with reflected edges in a round truss—it lights up my whole back garden when in bloom—BUT—it is a big garden plant.

Registration was easy. Not so easy, at least for me, was checking the colour against the R.H.S. Colour Chart (indoors in a north light!!) and trying to be accurate about nuances of colour in bud, and opening calyx...I sent my registration application directly to the R.H.S. (I have been told since that I should have gone through the A.R.S.??). Since this is probably the only one I will register I asked for a certificate of registry and plan to frame it!

From here on the story becomes more exciting. With the registration certificate came an acknowledging letter from Dr. A.C. Leslie—the Registration Officer—requesting a description of 'Rimini' and any information on origins, since it had "somehow missed the Register". I had acquired my plant from the late L.C. Living and I could not find any information about it in the books I had ('tho I was sure I had seen it mentioned somewhere). I thought it was probably a dichroanthum cross, and got the idea that it was an import from Britain. Then behold—a picture of 'Rimini' appeared in the 2nd edition of *Rhododendron Hybrids* by Salley & Greer (Plate 468) with the note "origin unknown". I decided to canvass some of the senior members of the V.R.S. who might have known Len Living's Nursery and his stock. First call went to Alleyne Cook—who knew Len and his nursery well. Cookie remembered hearing of

the hybrid, and said he would search his literature. I called Lil Hodgson—she also had heard of it, thought perhaps Ellen Haley had it at one time. (Those of you not as long in the tooth as I won't know of Mrs. Haley who was a leading light in the Vancouver Chapter in early years. She moved to the Island, and her plants, since her death, have been scattered about the Island chapters.) Lil suggested I speak to Clive Justice, and it was Clive who came up with the first clue: a mention in Keith Wade's book "Phenology of Cultivated Rhododendrons in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia" (published by the Botanical Garden of UBC in 1979). From this book we were able to find that observations on 'Rimini' had been carried out by Milton Wildfong at Silver Creek Gardens in Mission who listed it as 50% *apodectum*. After considerable searching for a phone number I was able to speak with Dave Shantz who is now operating Silver Creek Gardens. Asked about 'Rimini' he knew it at once and said it was still growing there, that Milton and he had received the plant from Ted Hendy of Abbotsford. Ted was a former member of the Vancouver chapter, but I had not seen him in years. The Abbotsford phone book showed an Edward Hendy so I tried the number—and it was Ted himself who answered. He also remembered the plant which he thought he had obtained from Mrs. B. Davidson of the Abbotsford area shortly before her moved to California. (Mrs. Davidson was another former member of the Vancouver chapter and a rhodie enthusiast.) Ted didn't know the parentage but thought he had seen something in the literature, and would search. Mrs. Davidson might well have got her plant from Len Living—so I was back to square one.

On Friday, December 2, Vern Finley and I braved the weather (it was hailing in Mission!) and went out to Silver Creek. We saw the plant—10 to 12 feet in both height and breadth, in fine fettle. But best of all—Dave—bless his heart had found Milton's accession record. Milton called it a Rothschild cross—*apodectum* x *discolor* and added "only found in Slocock catalogue". I am tremendously pleased to have arrived this far—but whether this parentage can be confirmed will depend on access to late 1950, early 1960 Slocock catalogues—and this I do not have. I could find no mention either by name or parentage in the Rothschild register as given in the Phillipps & Barbour book "Rothschild Rhododendrons" (2nd and revised edition 1979). This information has been sent to Dr. Leslie and I can but hope confirmation might be available.

—Mike Trembath

Christmas Party

The annual Christmas Party was held at Newlands Golf Club this year. Our thanks to Larry and Charlotte Chase for organizing a fine event and to Les Clay for putting on his annual 'Name that Rhodo' contest. As usual, it was too hard even though Les promises to make it easier every year. There were lots of great rhodo door prizes to make it a very festive occasion.

Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Executive and Committees

President:	Norma Senn
Past President:	Don Martyn
Vice President:	Mike Trembath
Treasurer:	Larry Chase
Secretary:	Lillian Emerson
Directors:	John Anderson Mike Bale Arnim Roeske
Membership:	Arnim Roeske
Programs:	Les Clay and David Sellars
Library:	Pat Dahl
Newsletter:	Wendy and David Sellars
Publicity:	Hedy Dyck
Hospitality:	Phil Anderson
Ways and Means:	Diane Scott

Footstalk

BY INDUMENTUM

We had a visitor to our garden pond in the early fall. It looked like someone's pet turtle had escaped and taken up residence in the stalks of the water lily. A quick check of The Peterson Field Guide to Western Reptiles and Amphibians revealed that it was probably a Western Pond Turtle, *Clemmys marmorata*, joining the other amphibious denizens of our small pond (mostly red-legged frogs, *Rana aurora*). The Western Pond Turtle is found in small bodies of water from Baja, California to extreme south-western B.C. This means that it was at the most northerly limit of its range. It must have been sent out of Washington to tramp up the shoulder of the I-5 to establish this northerly outpost in Canada. It is a great mystery how it found our small pond on the side of a dry stoney hill, 300 feet above sea level.

Rather like an explorer visiting the North Pole, having arrived, it soon got over the geographical excitement and turned around and headed back down south. For after that first sighting, we looked every day and never saw it again. Peterson's Field Guide indicates that the Western Pond Turtle is "found February to mid-November in the north; all year in the south". So we should have expected this behaviour and will look again for this itinerant American in the early spring with his carapace R.V. containing all his travelling needs.