

The Yak

FRASER SOUTH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY
A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

January 1997

In The Garden



In Rhododendron land the bulk of the rain falls in the summer, sensibly enough; that is when the plants are active and thirsty. In our own land rain falls at almost any time except in the summer. Under the circumstances it is very sporting of Rhododendrons to put up with these conditions.

F. Kingdon Ward

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Wednesday, January 15, 1997
8:00 P.M.

St. Andrews Anglican Hall
20955 Old Yale Road, Langley

Annual General Meeting and

Guest Speaker: Norma Senn
'BONNY GARDENS OF SCOTLAND'

Norma will take us on a visit to gardens near the Oban area—Arduaine, Brodick Castle, Younger Botanic Garden, Coille Daraich, Torosay Castle, Baravalla, Inverewe and other gardens on the west coast of Scotland.



Norma Senn is Past-President of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society and has been a member for 8 years. She has degrees in horticulture and botany from the University of Wisconsin and her Ph.D. thesis was on the uptake of calcium and magnesium in beets. She is the Director of Agriculture at the University College of the Fraser Valley, Chilliwack campus.



YAKALENDAR

❖ FEBRUARY 19

Fraser South Chapter Meeting
Speaker: David Sellars
*Construction of a Pond and
Stream for a Rhododendron
Garden*

❖ MARCH 19

Fraser South Chapter Meeting

❖ APRIL 6

Fraser South Plant Sale
Clay's Nursery, Langley

❖ APRIL 16

Fraser South Chapter Meeting

❖ APRIL 26

Fraser South Truss Show and
Plant Sale
Willowbrook Mall, Langley

❖ MAY 7-11

ARS Annual Convention
Vancouver

Christmas Party Report

Once again Diane Scott and Melba Johnson organized a great party. Unfortunately Diane came down with the flu on the day of the party so she missed out on all the fun.

We had a good selection of delicious dishes—lots of vegies, ham and turkey and then there was the dessert table—yummy trifle, chocolate, chocolate, and more chocolate. As always the food was scrumptious.

David Sellars introduced a new and more challenging level to last year's game of Rhodolot. It turned out to be a big success and the first hybrid group to get together was Babylon with praevernum and calophytum.

And then down to more serious stuff with Les Clay's annual Name that Rhodo contest. (At this point many of us headed to the kitchen to do the dishes!) Congratulations to Vern Finley for being able to name more than half of the slides. Those of us who have participated in this game have great respect for anyone who can name more than three of the 25 slides.

A hearty thanks to the set up, kitchen and clean-up crew who did a terrific job.

New Newsletter Editor

David and I have been the FS Newsletter Editors for the past four years. It's been great fun and an interesting endeavour—but we think it's time to turn it over to someone else. We are pleased that Mike Trembath has very kindly agreed to be the Editor as of the February issue. We know she will do a great job.

Volunteers Needed for ARS Convention in Vancouver

At our January meeting there will be a sign-up sheet for those wishing to volunteer at the ARS Convention. If you are not able to attend the meeting but you would still like to sign up as a volunteer, please contact Joan Bengough, Convention Chair at 596-1788. She will be pleased to hear from you!

Reminder to help out

Chapter meetings just don't happen—the chairs and tables need to be put out, the coffee, tea and goodies organized, the library book case wheeled out, raffle tickets sold, audio-visual equipment set up for the speaker, etc. and at the end of the meeting, everything cleaned up and put away again. We need more members to participate in these activities.

Goodies for our meetings are brought on a volunteer basis and we would greatly appreciate more volunteers!

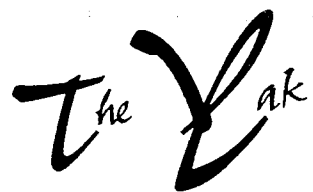
New Members

Fraser South is pleased to welcome Sandy and Rod Armitage of Surrey.

Executive Elections

At the January meeting elections will be held for the following positions:

- President
- Vice-President
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Director—3-year term



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Wendy and David Sellars

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Unconventional Rhododendron Tour Part II

(continued from November 1996 Newsletter)

Two days to do laundry and reorganize bags, (and catch our breath) and we head southward.

First stop—Hadrian's Wall. The wind was howling the usual gale, and the wind chill factor must have been well below zero. Me—been there, done that—I stayed in the car. The intrepid travellers returned in shades of blue and purple with a true sympathy for Roman sentries and their chill blained knees—come to think of it I don't recall any sympathy expressed for the poor naked barbarians who stormed the wall clad only in their coats of woad.

Over hills and dales to the Lake District—intermittent rain and almost snow, and too cloudy to appreciate the scenic view from the pass between Ullswater and Windermere. We poked around Windermere town, took the short cruise on the beautiful steam yacht Gondola on Conniston water. S.Y. Gondola has an elegantly shaped black hull, gilt figurehead of serpent (? or dragon), and red plush furnishing in the cabin. She travels in awesome silence. Despite it being a dull day the lakeside views were lovely. While based in Windermere we shot across to admire Muncaster Castle gardens and the collection of owls they maintain, visited the Steamboat Museum, and then decided the weather was better for travelling than garden visiting, so off we went via motorway—for Wales. We stopped briefly at Chester—or rather just outside the city, and got lost in a very large nursery complex which appeared to cater to every aspect of horticulture, and aquaculture—there was even a 'tea room' of which we availed ourselves.

We drove through Llangollen and on to Corwen—our headquarters for a couple of days. Wales—green mountains, black slate quarries, rushing rivers and narrow twisting roads, the bright fun of Port Meirion the massive grey of Caernarfon (to give it its Welsh spelling), the wide boulevards of the Victorian resort town of Llandudno, the panorama view from Great Ormes Head with its tram line from Llandudno, the sands of Conwy, St. Asaph and its small cathedral—and of course Bodnant. I was happy to see again the two huge cedars that now dwarf the reflecting pool. Camellias and magnolias were in beautiful bloom,

and of course fields of daffodils. Although a fair number of rhodies were in bloom, the most exciting ones failed to display name tags ('twas ever thus I guess).

Through Shrewsbury, and Ludlow, we visited Stokesay Castle where scars from the Civil War are still apparent. Having read all of Ellis Peters books regarding Brother Caedfal and the Benedictine Abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul at Shrewsbury (13th century), it was fun to view the site, the remnants of the Abbey (being restored) and the reconstructed herb garden where Brother Caedfal might have held sway.

Eastward across the country, skipping Birmingham, we "lit" at the King's Head at Wadenhoe on the river Nene, then on to Cambridge for Lillian to spend a day with her grandson. The rest of us made off to Anglesy Abbey. My how I wished for an ATV to cover the huge park—large plantings (relatively young) of conifers, avenues of old plane trees, with pools of scilla at their feet, daffodil dells, an ancient wisteria (I think!) espaliered on the Abbey wall, gardens enclosed by walls of shrubbery. The circular hyacinth garden, was almost completely enclosed by a clipped hedge. As one approached the 'doorway' the perfume was strong enough to almost cause respiratory arrest! The garden itself was laid out in geometric patterns of white and blue, a bronze statue in the centre, and bronze urns around the periphery. London: unfortunately it was the weekend of the London marathon, and the place was still edgy after bomb attacks, so our site seeing was somewhat limited. Paul gave us a tour of some of the London boroughs, we shot down to view the Weald of Kent and the reservoir, dropped in to Chartwell—now under the National Trust. We spent a lovely day in Kew Gardens—and failed to see half of it as usual. The same was true of Wisely—lots of rhodies out here—again, not all labeled, and although it was drizzling rain—they were watering the newly planted areas, and we kept getting doubly wet.

Then it was time for our canal boat cruise—and we boarded Rose and Castle for five days on the Basingstoke Canal. The hotel narrow boats are indeed

narrow. Lillian swears she needed a shoe horn to get in and out of her cabin. The boats travel in tandem—a motor towing the butty—and are breasted up when stopped—and one can cross from one to the other. We were well and frequently fed—early morning tea (or coffee), breakfast, elevenses, lunch, tea, dinner, and snacks. Travel was leisurely—we stopped to raft up for official meals, and one could walk along the tow path and be picked up later if one wished. There were clumps of violets and primroses along the banks; swans, ducks and their families, and little grebes to watch. We crept under low bridges, crossed highways on aqueducts, and locked through a few level changes. A relaxing interlude.

Back to the touring—first stop Exbury. Many blooms to admire—Rh. Lionel's Triumph was outstanding. Heading west for Cornwall we switch-backed down to the shore to see the spectacular dark red sandstone cliffs at Babbington Bay. We walked through the grounds at Barrington Court—it was early for these gardens. As we left from dinner at a riverside pub we heard the melodious screeching of a peacock—went hunting it and finally saw it silhouetted against the sky sitting on a chimney pot! Our B&B this night gave me the willies—I couldn't get out of it fast enough (the hostess told us it wasn't haunted?)

I'll leave Cornwall until another installment—it's worth a whole article itself!

Mike Trembath

ROOTSTALK

BY INDUMENTUM

Snow in the garden is a marvellous event. The stark winter scene allows a complete appreciation of the garden structure with tree branches etched against the snow and sky. When the temperature drops well below freezing, the blanket of snow provides comforting insulation for the roots of tender plants and discourages frost heave. If the snow is wet and heavy it can break branches which is not always a bad thing for it prunes out weak twiggy growth. Snow also helps keep us indoors, to catch up with the garden diary and rhododendron inventory.

In 1991 we cut down a native birch tree that was robbing our rock garden of moisture and nutrients and planted an *Acer palmatum* 'Seiryu'. This is the only Japanese Maple with a dissectum leaf that grows into an upright vase shape. The other dissectum maples prefer to squat around the garden like cloaked goblins.

With loving care and attention the Seiryu grew to be our favourite tree in the garden. By careful pruning, the two main branches were trained to be huge tropical ferns, one arching over a grass path with that highly desired romantic look that the Head Gardener appreciates so much. The Spring growth is magic, the summer leaves are a delicate green tapestry and the fall foliage is a mellow orange, the colour of warm blankets.

After planting, it seems to take two years for a tree to really get going, probably because the plant is busy establishing a solid root system, Then it takes another three years to build a strong branch structure and grow a thick trunk. Five years after planting, a tree starts to make a significant contribution to the garden landscape. At this age, a tree has not yet come to dominate the surroundings but is large enough to be a beautiful plant in its own right.

The heavy wet snow a few days before Christmas broke the Seiryu branch that had been arching romantically over the grass path. Five years of effort, mostly by the tree, now ready for the bonfire.

The Seiryu now looks grotesque and the split is so long that the tree may not survive. Gardening books often talk about the winter being a season of renewal. It is also a season of setbacks, sometimes as much as five years.