

Fraser South Rhododendron Society



a chapter of the ARS

# The Yak

Volume 9

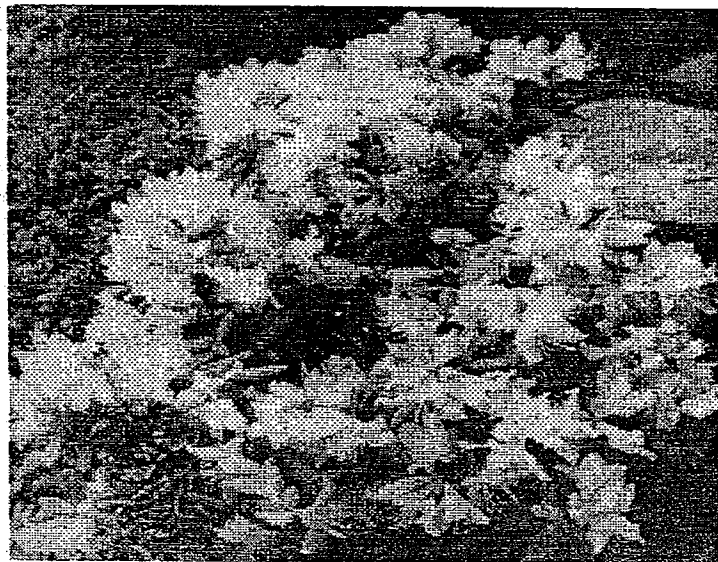
Number 4

April 1997

Wednesday, April 16, 8.00 p.m.  
St. Andrew's Anglican Church Hall  
20955 Old Yale Rd., Langley

**Glen Patterson**

Dwarf Rhododendrons For the Rock Garden



Glen, a long time member of VRS is a very knowledgeable collector of, especially, species rhododendrons. He has a beautiful garden on the shore of English Bay, one of sites to be visited by the Convention Tours.



## YAKALENDAR

- ◆ Sat. April 26, 1997  
**FSRS Annual Truss Show and Plant Sale**  
Willowbrook Mall, Langley
- ◆ Sun. April 27, 1997  
**MARS Annual Truss Show and Plant Sale**  
Parksville Community Hall, 10.00 - 3.00
- ♻️ **May 7 - 11, 1997**  
**ARS Annual Convention**  
Westin Bayshore Hotel  
Vancouver, BC
- ◆ **May 17 & 18**  
**MARS Annual Garden Tour**  
Nanoose, Parksville & Qualicum  
for more info. call Warren Moore, 250 725 5931
- ◆ **Wed. May 21, 1997**  
**FSRS regular meeting**

### March Meeting

In spite of miserable driving conditions in torrential rain, there was an excellent turn out. Some of our newer members were amazed to see the number, and variety of blooms brought in for 'Show and Tell' from the Finley's garden - some beautiful strigillosum crosses still being assessed, as well as dauricum, mucronulatum var. 'Cornell Pink', erubescens, Bodega Crystal Spring, Bo Peep and Cilpinense - all quite untouched by our bout of frost a few night before.

The high point of our meeting was the presentation of the ARS Bronze Medal to Wendy and David Sellars, in appreciation for their sterling work as newsletter editors and publishers, and David's work with the programme committee, not to mention their ongoing involvement with club activities. It is good to be able to show our appreciation to such deserving people.

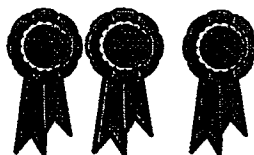
After seeing Brad Jalberts pictures of roses of beauty, and hearing his enthusiastic - 'there's nothing to it' hints on growing and pruning, and ,(if you select the right ones) NOT spraying - I'm almost convinced to widen my garden scope!

Altogether a most enjoyable evening. ( We missed you Bobby)

### April Meeting

In addition to enjoying Glen Patterson's presentation, April will be an Awards Night.

Newsletter Editor M.L. Trembath 25149 72nd Ave. Aldergrove, BC, V4W 1J1 Phone and fax: 604 856 7261 e mail :James_Trembath@mindlink.bc.ca
--



### FSRS Awards

We have felt for some time that we would like to acknowledge the faithful work done by many of our members. They are often taken for granted, and perhaps some members may not even be aware of their contributions. We also wished to honour three of our past members, each of whom played an important part in the development of FSRS. Memorial Awards have been named in their honour, and will be awarded at the April meeting.

Ella J. Crabb - a charter member of FSRS, and former editor of our newsletter. Ella gave generously of her enthusiasm, her time, her labour and her plants. She could be depended upon whenever help was needed, be it planting, or searching the literature for tid-bits of knowledge or interest.

Gerry C. Emerson - a charter member of FSRS. It was Gerry's generous donation of funds that made it possible for a fledgling club to survive its first critical months. It was important to him that the club began its existence properly. Gerry was very interested in propagation, and had begun working with meristem culture .

Harold Johnson - FSRS owes it beginnings ( along with other chapters in Division 1) to the gleam in Harold's eye. A 'hands-on' grower and propagator himself, Harold's enthusiasm made him the ultimate ambassador for genus rhododendron.



# Literary Landscapers

## Part I

*Alexander Pope 1688 - 1744*

Great poets are often great gardeners. Shakespeare wrote enough lines about flowers that Shakespeare Gardens are created frequently, a notable one being at the Huntington Botanical Garden in San Marine, California. But Shakespeare himself probably never planted a garden till he retired, being too busy on the London Stage. Two other great poets of English literature, however, did actually spend a good deal of their time landscaping and gardening their properties: they are Alexander Pope and William Wordsworth. Pope was the supreme poet of the Enlightenment, and Wordsworth of the Romantic 19th Century and though the two are very different writers, they share a love of Nature.

When Pope was a child, he contracted tuberculosis of the spine, and in adult life was never more than about four feet high.. "little Alexander that the ladies laugh at." Nevertheless, he was a prodigy and became a powerful man of letters, a friend of Swift, Gay, Addison, and Steele. Because he was a Roman Catholic he could not, according to the laws of the time, own property within twelve miles of London ,yet his villa and garden became a meeting place of those interested in literature and politics.

"Consult the Genius of the Place in all"

This was Pope's advice to his friend Lord Burlington

in 1731, and Pope himself had practiced his theories at his own five acre property outside of London, called Twickenham ,since 1718, when he was 30 years old and already the creator of one of his greatest poems, The Rape of the Lock. After he had completed his translation of the Iliad two years later, he become famous and financially independent ,the only important writer of his generation to accomplish that. Then he could live the life of a country gentleman and pursue his obsession with his house and garden

There is a vast amount of scholarship describing Pope's gardening , and many engravings, especially by William Kent. Pope's modern biographer, Maynard Mack, says:



Before the house lay a well-cropped lawn sloping to the Thames, which gave easy access by water...Besides a small vineyard and an orangery, [the garden] held hothouses for the experimental culture

pineapples, still an uncommon and highly prized fruit; a small orchard containing at least fig trees, both espaliered and standard,

in addition to many varieties of French pear, and a large kitchen garden, where he grew broccoli, fennel, and asparagus (scarce at this date)... He also seems to have grown "Jamaican strawberries"—at least in the fall of 1731 he planted some, "which are to be almost as good as Pineapples"—and to have kept bees. (Maynard Mack, Alexander Pope, A Life pb. W.W. Norton Press, Yale University, New Haven, 1988, P.361)

For Pope's wider vistas, there were straight avenues, and interlaced paths, with much attention paid to forms and textures of foliage; there was a wilderness area, a shell temple, a bowling green, and a small hill with a bench on top where one could view the panorama. Horace Walpole wrote of it, was a singular effort of art and taste, to have impressed so much variety and scenery on a spot of five acres."

The main London/Hampton Court road ran across Pope's property, and Pope devised a unique attraction to reach the shell temple on the other side... a grotto. The walls were encrusted with shells, and bits of mirror, and over the years he developed it so that it appeared to be a natural mine, with ores from different parts of the world. There was a central lamp, flanked by mirrors which reflected glittering rays when the doors of the Grotto were shut. By 1747, he had further developed the place so that he had fountains and cataracts sprouting from stones at one's feet. Not very practical in the English climate, and Maynard Mack speculates it could only have been habitable on warm days. Poor Pope was never in good health...he wrote of "this long disease, my life" in one of his poems... so the grotto on which he lavished so much money and attention must have appealed to his imagination, reminding him of famous caves in Ovid and Homer, and poetic underworld passages. Like all gardeners, his garden was a reflection of his inner life.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Janet Warner  
\*\*\*\*\*

Janet Warner is our capable and conscientious secretary. She is Professor Emerita of English from York University, Toronto

## NOTABLE NOTES

*We wish to thank Fraser South for honouring us with the A.R.S. Bronze Medal at the March meeting.*

*It has been great fun being involved in the Chapter and we recognize that Fraser South is very fortunate to have many wonderful volunteers with whom we have enjoyed working these past four years.*

*We look forward to helping the Chapter continue to flourish.*

*Sincerely*

*Wendy and David Sellars*

---

"The Hardiness Committee of the A.R.S. is in need of data regarding the hardiness of rhododendrons. This data can be obtained only through the participation of members evaluating the hardiness of the rhododendrons that they grow and submitting that information for inclusion in the database. The task is not difficult or excessively time consuming. This is especially true if one has a list of their plants. No narrative description of your weather or the plants is necessary, but strict conformation to the criteria for plant qualification is necessary. If you are willing to participate in this program please contact Herb Spady, Chairman of the Hardiness Committee at 9460 Sunnyview Road N.E., Salem OR 97301-9060, Phone: 503-585-2427, FAX: 503-585-4816 or Email: spadherb@AOL.com for additional information."

---

From an email newsletter from Meerkerk:  
Soil temperature of 55 degrees F is the perfect time to apply beneficial nematodes for root weevil control.

Trade names (American) of beneficial nematodes are Bio Safe and Exhibit. Nematodes are also effective control for June beetle larvae, billbugs, cutworms, army worms, fungus gnats, borers and fleas. They are harmless to pets, beneficial insects, birds, bees earthworms and humans. Unused portions can be stored in the refrigerator for fall application.

(Can be obtained from local suppliers - some members have tried them. Will not overwinter here)



## A Rhododendron Primer



### is for *augustinii*

If you like blue or lavender flowers and want a well-mannered, small leaved Rhododendron, then consider planting *R. augustinii*. This beautiful species, native to Hupeh and Szechwan provinces in China, was first introduced to the west in 1899 by E. H. Wilson. It was named for Augustine Henry, a medical officer in the Chinese customs service during the later part of the 19th century.

The flower colours of plants in cultivation vary from deep blue to palest lilac, although the literature reports a much wider range of colours in the wild, including many shades of pink. Flowers are borne in clusters of two to six. Plants have relatively small, dark green leaves about 4 cm. long, and each has a soft velvety feel due to the presence of hairs on the upper leaf surface.

The hardiness range for *R. augustinii* is listed as -15 to -20 C (+5 to -5 F). According to the literature, the selections with the darker coloured flowers are the most tender while paler forms are the hardiest within the range.

In my own garden, I find the *R. augustinii* does best if grown in sites where there is protection from the hottest part of a summer's day. But other than that, they seem to be tough garden plants. My soils tend to be a bit higher pH than many Rhodies tolerate, but *R. augustinii* seems to grow well anyway. My experience is supported by comments from Kenneth Cox in his book, A Plantsman's Guide to Rhododendrons, that *R. augustinii* is more tolerant of a wider range of soil pH than many other species.

If I had the space, I think a hedge of *R. augustinii* would be elegant. As is the case with many other members of the triflorum series, *R. augustinii* is particularly well suited for massed planting. However, these neat tidy plants look good even planted alone.

*R. augustinii* is easily grown from seed and can be started in late winter under fluorescent lights with good success. Sow seeds on the surface of or a peat/perlite (or sand or pumice) media and water in gently. Cover the pot with a piece of clear poly until germination occurs, then gradually allow more air circulation around the seedlings. Pot on as soon as seedlings are big enough to handle. Harden off gradually and move to a cold frame or other sheltered location until large enough to transplant to the garden. *R. augustinii* comes into bloom within a few years when grown from seed.

If you would like a selected form, look for *R. augustinii* 'Barto Blue' which has deep blue flowers. Because of its beautiful blue flowers, *R. augustinii* has been used in breeding programs since its introduction. One of its most famous offspring is 'Blue Diamond'.

Norma Senn



### is for *A. Bedford*

Arthur Bedford, introduced by T. Lowinsky and named for Lionel de Rothschild's Head Gardener, AM. (RHS)1936. F.C.C.(RHS)1958.

This is an attractive plant of *R. ponticum* parentage. It is a vigorous, upright grower and is free flowering. The leaves, 6 - 10 inches long with slightly recurved edges are a dark glossy green, with maroon petioles. The flowers are carried in an upright, dome-shaped truss of 16 open funnel shape florets, pale mauve in the tube to lavender blue on ruffled lobes with dark rose madder to nearly black throat markings. Bloom time late May, early June.

Vern Finley

The Yak

April 1997

Page 5

# ROOTSTALK

BY INDUMENTUM

Last week, I was back in the Cloverdale Public Library looking up back issues of the Ganges North Maple Society. One of the latest issues had a column on 'Rhododendron Problems', graciously provided by Mustapha Notherplant, the famed Nepalese plant explorer and maple aficionado. For the April 1997 edition of The Yak I have selected some highlights from his column:

Q.: I have a rhododendron that has yellow leaves and never flowers. What should I do?

A.: Your plant is probably a laurel bush. You should continue whatever you are doing as laurel is superior to rhododendron anyway.

Q.: The buds on one of my rhodos freeze every winter. Is there a cure?

A.: This is not a disadvantage. You can appreciate the foliage in the spring and don't have to put up with all those gross coloured flowers. Plus you save on deadheading. Looks like a win-win-win to me.

Q.: What causes notches on rhododendron leaves?

A.: These are made by a large virile weevil that has made a conquest of a pre-feminist female weevil. Each notch is a new conquest. Stay away from this one.

Q.: What is the best time to move a rhodo?

A.: At the dead of night. Most people are not aware that rhododendrons move around at night in search of food. If you go out in the early Spring night with a flashlight and catch it on the move, you can shoo it over to where you want it.

Q.: I have a rhododendron with leaves that have turned brown and wilted. What should I do?

A.: Take this as an opportunity to rip it out and plant something better. I recommend Acer 'Mustapha's Celebration'. If it is a really crowded spot a really useful plant is Acer 'Nota Notherplant'.

