



a chapter of the ARS

# The Yak

Volume 11

Number 4

April 1998

## Fraser South Rhododendron Society

meetings held every third Wednesday, 8.00 pm St. Andrews Anglican Church Hall Langley

Executive, 1998

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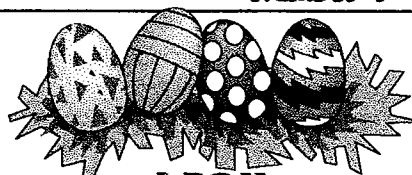
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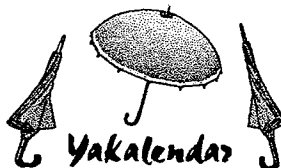
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## APRIL

is the cruelest month  
says T.S. Elliot in The Waste  
Land  
for FSRS - if not the cruelest,  
at least one of the busiest.



## Yakalendar

- April 4, 1998 -FSRS 'tour up the valley ' hope everyone had a good time !
- April 5, 1998 - FSRS Plant Sale - at Clay's Nursery
- 7.00 - 8.00 p.m. April 15, 1998. Work Party for Ella's Garden
- April 15, 1998, 8.00 p.m. Regular Meeting FSRS. Speaker : Gerry Gibbens : " VanDusen's Himalayan Garden"
- April 18 - proposed bus trip to the Species Foundation
- April 21, 1998. - Tues. 5.30 - work party to Williams Park - details at meeting.

- April 25, 1998 FSRS Annual Sale and Truss Display - Willowbrook Mall - (be ready to answer the call for helpers please - this is one of our Main Events)
- May 2, 1998 visit to The Glades, and Dartshill
- May 2&3, 1998 Tenth Annual Burnaby Rhododendron Festival - Deer Lake Park.
- May 9, 10 1998 V.R.S. Main Show VanDusen Floral Hall
- May 20, 1998 FSRS Regular Meeting: Our own spectacular Truss Show, and Awards Night.
- May 27 - 31 ARS Annual Convention Niagara Falls, ON
- June 17 - FSRS Annual Picnic - at Trev. and Doreen Badminton's Rhodo Ranch

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### March Meeting

I am feeling very sorry for myself!  
The meeting was one I was anticipating with delight - I always enjoy Clint's presentations, and also am excited to see what special things he may have brought with him ( I've found some real dandies over the years of previous visits - things like *R. quinquefolium*, & *R. hypenanthum* for example: Hill's Bright Red , that cute little Irish Mist ).

Everyone to whom I have spoken seems to have enjoyed the evening very much - pictures, and comments. Guess it was a bit long - but after all the subject matter was a bit large too ! I gather that a large number of you were smart enough to attend ! - good for you all.

### Work Parties

**FRSR is fortunate to have two "Memorial Gardens" and we have agreed to see that they are maintained in continued health and beauty**

**April 15, 1998 - We plan to come to the meeting early - 7.00 p.m. . Many hands will make light work of a bit of weeding, general cleaning up, and feeding the beds of Ella's Garden at the Church.**

**April 21, 1998 - Tues. evening at 5.30 - tentative plans for a work bee at William's Park to refurbish the surroundings of "Harold's Bench" The Park will supply mulch etc., but it seems that some plants may need to be added , and secured if possible. Les will have more information at the meeting as to who, and how many of us might be required - for what.**

Please welcome Dr. Norman Todd of Chilliwack as a new member of FRSR. It is to be hoped that some of you were able to take advantage of the opportunity to view his garden - a wealth of special material.

FRSR has a birthday celebration coming up !!!!! We are ten ( 10 ) years old - can you believe it. I would like you all to scan back in your memories, and think of what fun things we may have accomplished, and the fun people we have met and worked with. If each of you has a special memory - pass it on to me and perhaps we could compile a little booklet with notes, and special pictures etc. Think about it - OK ?  
Ed.

( concluded from Page 3 )

Before he died in his 90th year, having fulfilled the dreams of the young boy from County Moray, and having made an indelible mark in the world of horticulture, George Fraser could contentedly say he did not particularly care what happened to him now because his heaven had been here on earth.

On a Sunday afternoon in May of 1944, George Fraser was buried in an unmarked grave in the Ucluelet Cemetery. Although it was war time, his passing did not go unnoticed by the legion of people whose lives he had touched and by those who recognised the invaluable contribution he made to the world of horticulture.

Diane Pertson  
MARS Rhodovine , Mar. Apr., 1998



George Fraser, 1907

**George Fraser**  
Dedicated plantsman. Canadian pioneer,  
early hybridizer, well loved citizen.

On an October day in 1854, about 40 miles east of Inverness, at Fochabers, County Moray, in Scotland, George Fraser was born. The eldest of four children, all of whom emigrated to Canada, he was destined to spend his life close to the soil. From the beginning, his dream was to have his own nursery.

At the age of seventeen, he served an apprenticeship at Gordon Castle. The following year he left for Edinburgh and worked on an estate while attending the Edinburgh Polytechnic over the next four years. Keeping to his goal, he gained experience at Mollance, then Hartfield House on the Clyde. In 1877, he was foreman at Craigflower, Fifeshire, when Sir James Hooker visited the gardens as the guest of Sir James Colville. His next position was at Auchmore, in Perthshire.

In 1883, George Fraser and his sister Maggie arrived in Winnipeg. His sister married a local rancher. George and a partner John G. Thomson, had a greenhouse operation for three years - in spite of the adverse climate and poor market. George Fraser headed west in 1888 and was listed as a "fruit and vegetable grower" in the Victoria Directory, farming the slopes of Mount Tollmie. In 1889, he worked as foreman for John Blair on the landscape planting of Beacon Hill Park. The old rhododendrons at Fountain Lake were planted at that time.

Ever searching for property for a rhododendron and heather nursery, he purchased 136 acres on the north side of Sproat Lake in 1889. This heavily timbered area was not climatically well suited, so he then purchased 236 acres at Ucluelet in 1892.

In 1894, Fraser left Victoria and built his little house in Ucluelet on an 18 acre parcel, then accessible only by sea. He cleared about four acres of forest, dressing the soil annually with seaweed from the inlet and towing cow manure from a farm up the inlet on a little flat bottomed scow behind his skiff.

All alone he cleared the rain forest, planted and cultivated hundreds of plants, carried on correspondence with many friends, gardeners and hybridizers, grew seeds from all over the world, produced a catalogue and handled the sales, digging and shipping - all this from this remote corner of the world.

Villagers were fond of this kind, soft-spoken man who played the songs of Scotland on his fiddle at their dances.

In time, his letterhead designated him as "Horticulturalist" and his catalogues as "Nurseryman" and "Grower of Azaleas, Heathers, Hollies, Roses and Rhododendrons". Butchart Gardens placed orders to come down the coast by steamship, and plants were shipped far and wide. He must have anxiously awaited the arrival of mail on boat day as the two or three sailings a month carried letters for him and pollen from England and the eastern United States.

He was known internationally for his horticultural successes which were reported in issues of the Gardener's Chronicle of London. Much of his voluminous correspondence with numerous rhododendron experts, plant explorers and botanists - such as Joseph B. Gable, E.J.P. Magor, C.S. Sargent and E.H. Wilson, and to The Royal Botanic Garden, Kew, and the Arnold Arboretum, Boston is preserved.

Vice-president of the Pacific Coast Association of Nurserymen in 1928, he was invited to make a presentation to the 29th Annual Convention held in Oregon in 1931.

The Vancouver Island Horticultural Association honoured him as the first Life Member, and presented him with a gold medal inscribed "to George Fraser, Ucluelet, B.C. in recognition of his Horticultural Achievements, 1936"

He was a charter member of the Ucluelet Athletic Club, and donated 11 acres of land for the Community Hall, still in use today. Ten of these acres were transferred to the School Board where the primary and secondary schools were built.

Hundreds of visitors journeyed up the road, or by Canadian Pacific Steamships from Victoria to see his beautiful garden and nursery. His generous nature and quiet humour endeared him to all

(Please turn to page 2).

# Watts In A Name?

Lynn Watts, Western Vice President, ARS

## RHODODENDRON NOMENCLATURE, PART 2.

A second group of epithets (geographical) refers either to the region where a species is naturally found (indigenous) or to the place where it was first discovered. Example: *R. hongkongense* was first discovered in Hong Kong but it is also found in Guangdong Province. *R. yunnanense* was first discovered in Yunnan Province by Abbe Delavay but later sightings by other explorers indicate that it has a very wide geographical distribution and is found also in Sichuan, Guizhou, Burma and Tibet. One cannot assume, however, that the geographical distribution of species extends beyond the boundaries suggested by the name. Example: *R. taiwahaipinum* is strictly limited to the alpine regions of the Island of Taiwan and *R. formosanum* is also endemic to (confined to) Taiwan. The wonderful world of plant names is not without its subtle traps as in the name *R. formosum*. Here the name means beautiful and is not a geographical reference to Formosa.

Many of the geographical second names of rhododendrons are state, province or country names given Latin endings and are easily recognized and need no translation or explanation: *canadensis*, *californicus*, *oregonum*, *americanum*, etc. Besides the preceding more or less precise terms, several geographical epithets are more general in their meaning: *australis* (southern), *borealis* (northern), *occidentale* (western) and *orientalis* (eastern).

The very common adjectives *canadensis* and *missouriensis* must not be interpreted in their modern sense. Many species labeled *canadensis* appear widely throughout the United States; at the time they were named, "Canada" meant almost every place west of the Appalachians. Similarly, *missouriensis* often referred to the vast territory watered by the Missouri River. Even "Louisiana" was often taken to include most of the country west of the Mississippi, as "upper Louisiana".

A third group of rhododendron names (epithets) describes the sort of place where the plants grow. Example:

<i>oreotrophes</i>	=	of the mountains
<i>alpicola</i>	=	of the mountains
<i>bryophyllum</i>	=	moss-loving
<i>drumonium</i>	=	of the woods
<i>niveum</i>	=	snowy
<i>paludosum</i>	=	marsh loving
<i>ripense</i>	=	on the river banks
<i>rupicola</i>	=	among the rocks
<i>silvanicum</i>	=	in the woods

Yet another group of epithets describes or designates color:

<i>albiflorum</i>	=	with white flowers
<i>aureum</i>	=	golden
<i>canescens</i>	=	with white hairs
<i>cerasinum</i>	=	with cherry colored flowers
<i>cyanocarpum</i>	=	with blue fruits
<i>dichroanthum</i>	=	with different colors
<i>flavidum, luteum</i>	=	yellow
<i>sanguineum</i>	=	red

Words that describe the shapes and margins of the leaves:

<i>acuminatum</i>	=	tapering to a point
<i>ellipticum</i>	=	elliptic
<i>orbiculare</i>	=	circular
<i>lanceolatum</i>	=	with lanceolate leaves
<i>obtusum</i>	=	blunt
<i>ovatum</i>	=	egg-shaped

Words that describe the surfaces of leaves and/or stems:

<i>barbatum</i>	=	bearded or barbed
<i>ciliatum</i>	=	with hairs (cilia)
<i>hirsutum</i>	=	with coarse hairs
<i>lanatum</i>	=	wooly
<i>molle</i>	=	with soft hairs
<i>rubropiliosum</i>	=	with red hairs
<i>scabrifolium</i>	=	with rough leaves
<i>vellereum</i>	=	fleecy
<i>villosum</i>	=	with long hairs
<i>viscidifolium</i>	=	with sticky leaves



# A Rhododendron Primer



is for *R. jasminiflorum*



Does the species name of this Rhododendron conjure up images of lush, tropical jungles? Well, you are on the right track: *R. jasminiflorum* is native to Malaysia. This lovely species vireya has pale pink to white flowers with long, tubular throats, reminiscent of jasmine. The flowers, as well as being beautiful, are also fragrant.

This species has been known in the west since the 1850's, but like many of the vireyas, when first introduced was not thought to be in the genus *Rhododendron*. In the new book on vireyas, this plant is recommended for either containers or for use in hanging baskets.

My father was an avid collector of vireyas and he always recommended they be handled much like orchids. Vireyas need excellent drainage and should be grown in very porous mixes. Dad used straight fir bark and fertilized them frequently throughout the growing season with a weak solution of water soluble fertilizer. Plants in fir bark will need frequent (even daily) watering, especially when they are outside for the summer, but it does offer the advantage of reducing the risk of root rot. Vireyas simply hate standing in water, remember, they are often epiphytes in their native habitat.

The best growing conditions are like those for some of the tropical orchids too: excellent light, good air movement, warm temperatures and high relative humidity. Vireyas can be grown outside in the summer, and after some acclimation to higher light, can even go into direct sun, although some high overhead shade is beneficial. Our big problem in growing them is our winter growing environment. Vireyas have no frost tolerance, so must be brought inside once night temperatures start to drop in the fall, but they still need excellent light. For best success, they should be grown in a greenhouse or very bright sunroom.

If you have room for a couple of vireyas, you really should try them. The flowers are exquisite, and have the advantage of appearing sporadically throughout the year. There are many to choose from, but *R. jasminiflorum* is an easy one for beginners. Vireyas can be ordered through speciality nurseries, and if you really get "hooked" you can subscribe to newsletter, "The Vireya Vine".

Norma Senn



is for *Jean Marie de Montague*

(yeah, yeah, I know she's 'The Honorable' - but every one calls her Jean)

A griffithianum hybrid produced by C.B. van Nes and Sons about 1921.

This is the first and only rhodo in our collection that I got to recognize by foliage alone. Beautiful thick, shiny dark green oblong leaves turn up slightly from mid rib to edge. Fat, light green buds were forever being 'plucked' by the hordes of children that frequented my garden. Eventually, we were lucky enough to actually see some flowers bloom - a stunning sight of large scarlet crimson flowers - 10 to 14 per rounded truss.

The plant is rather slow growing, wider than tall, very floriferous and well clad with foliage. It is sun and heat tolerant, but will bloom in some shade. Pruning may well be required to curb the spread.

Perhaps the standard 'red rhodo' - it is well known, used frequently, and definitely has its own niche in many gardens.

Vern Finley

# DOOISTALK

BY INDUMENTUM

Spring has arrived early this year and I had the opportunity last weekend to visit British Columbia's best kept secret, the garden of Priscilla Shrubsall on Vancouver Island. Priscilla is one of British Columbia's top garden personalities and has been often featured on these pages. She trained as a leaf sweeper at Wisley in England and worked her way up to become Head Gardener and President of the RHS. She founded the Royal Botanic Gardens at Medicine Hat and has led 34 expeditions to remote regions of China in search of rare plants to impress her legion of followers. She is the author of the well-known book 'Hard to Find Plants and How to Remember Where You Put Them' which is packed with glossy photos of obscure and non-descript perennials.

Her garden is nestled in a snug valley, wafted by warm breezes from the Pacific Ocean and washed by gentle rains. The design successfully combines the horticultural styles of the English, Italian and Japanese schools in one harmonious work of art that transcends the imagination. The result is what Priscilla calls the true West Coast Garden Style. The themes are built around focus points including a collection of jolly looking gnomes for the English style, an ornate fountain for the Italian and a Japanese lantern. That these disparate objects can work together in one work of labour of love is a testament to Priscilla's design talents and eye for that special plant.

We stopped beside a greasy green sort of bell-shaped growth. Priscilla, who is a leading authority on plant identification, said it was a ***Ranunculus astilbe*** 'Totally Awesome'. It is only available at a very hard to find nursery in North Carolina, is extremely expensive but has one particularly redeeming merit. None of your friends will have it (or perhaps would even want it).

I asked Priscilla what new and exciting trends she saw coming in the gardening scene. She said all the new trends would be things she was doing ten years ago. For example she predicted a trend to include more native plants in the landscape as it cuts down on the weeding. I observed that most gardeners viewed weeds as somewhat undesirable. Priscilla looked me up and down and said that most gardeners don't know what they are talking about and they had better get on and read her books. Realising I had overstayed my welcome I quietly retreated and was happy I had enough material to fill another page.

