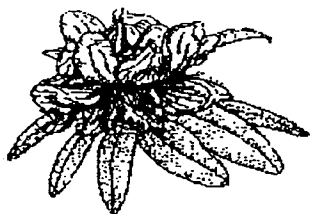


Fraser South Rhododendron Society



a chapter of the ARS

# The Yak

Volume 11

Number 7

September 1998

## Fraser South Rhododendron Society



meets - third Wednesday of the month  
Place - St. Andrew's Anglican Church Hall  
20955 Old Yale Rd., Langley

September Programme: September 16th 8.00 P.M.

*COME AND BE SURPRISED  
by what our programme  
committee have in store for you!!*

✿ Sept. 16, FSRs regular meeting

✿ Sept. 23, FSRs diectors meeting, @ the Warners

❖ October 4-5, 1998  
A.R.S

Western Regional Convention  
Florence Oregon

✿ November 18, 1998  
FSRS 10 year anniversary  
**BIRTHDAY BASH**

N.B. Number 4 of the Rhododendron and Azalea Electronic Newsletter will have been posted on the web by the time you receive this. Address is :  
<http://members.aol.com/RandANews/news.html>

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## Editor's Notes

Was that a picnic - or what?!?!?? We had a turn out of 60 plus ! - and as far as I have heard since, everyone had a super time. Lots of interesting, valuable and or fun things from the raffle - and I do think every person went home with something. If nothing else, we all went home with well silenced appetites - many thanks as usual to our meat chefs - Lillian and Melba; to those bringing scrumptious desserts, not to mention all the salads, vegetables and ????. We are also very grateful that Mike Bale has such interesting hobbies, and so generously shares the fruits thereof. I understand that the picnic was such a success that Doreen and Trev have been informed that we will continue to hold it at their Rhodo Ranch.

How have your plants fared in this warm summer we are experiencing? Just now I find that I will lose at least one - maybe more - just didn't look soon enough. I try to NOT water, but many plants are beginning to look stressed.

You do remember that we are ten years old this Nov.? Watch this space for exciting developments as we plan our celebrations..

### **FRRS Executive, 1998**

President: Les Clay 530 5188

Past Pres.: Bobby Ogdon 583 7434

Vice Pres.: Don Selman 533 4980

Secret.: Janet Warner 857 0788

Treas.: John Warner 857 0788

Directors: three years

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two year -

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one year -

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## From the President

Well here we are at the beginning of another Rhododendron year. The summer has passed very quickly. A hot summer with unusually hot temperatures which has tricked many of our Rhodos into blooming again. Some we have in flower now are Bob's Blue, *R. impeditum*, Cheer, George's Delight, Surrey Heath, Seychelles, White Water, Tottenham, Bambi & Curlew.

Last spring, I traveled east to the 53rd annual Convention at Niagara Falls, ON. This is the first time the convention has been held in consecutive years in Canada. It was well organized but attendance somewhat disappointing. The Sheraton Fallsview Hotel was situated just above the Canadian Falls giving an exquisite view. Speakers were great, I especially enjoyed presentations by John Riley speaking on the flora and fauna of the Niagara Escarpment, Dr. Douglas Larson on Cliff Ecology, Dr. Peter Tigerstedt speaking on Breeding of hardy Rhododendrons and Azaleas and Dr. Thorsteinn Tomasson on Introduction and Growing of plant species in Iceland. He asked the audience a question :

Q. - What do you do in Iceland when lost in the forest?

A. - Stand up. (The forests in Iceland only grow to about 4 feet.)

As usual I bought some more Rhodos. These were: Changeable You, Our Friend, My Sin and Pure Sex. I thought they would go in an interesting planting with Hallelujah.

Remember to invite your friends and relatives to partake in the friendship of the ARS.

Les Clay



"ON THE EDGE"

ARS Convention at  
Niagara Falls 1998.

The 53rd Annual Convention of the ARS was held at Niagara Falls, May 27th to 31st. It was sponsored by the Rhododendron Society of Canada, Niagara Region, and other District 12 Chapters and Chapter 11 of the Great Lakes'.

Melba Johnson and I left the Vancouver Airport on May 26th and flew by Air Canada to Toronto. What a big airport! We felt like 'Babes in the Woods', but Melba with her usual foresight, had brought along her walking cane so had no trouble at all when asking for assistance. A little electric car arrived and transported us through the crowded airport to the 'airporter bus' terminal. The little bus soon loaded with passengers destined to locations in the Niagara Peninsula, as well as Niagara Falls. In the following two hours, passengers were unloaded at junction points until Melba and I were the last to leave the bus right at our hotel - the Fallsview Sheraton Hotel, the sight of the conference.

The theme for this conference was aptly chosen Growing Rhododendrons "ON-THE-EDGE" for we were

on the edge of a great precipice which stretched for miles, the great waterfalls taking up only a small portion of that area. Towns and villages with beautiful gardens and parks dotted the area, and we were treated to tours (of our choice) to explore and enrich our experience.

The speakers attending the conference had been chosen to talk on every aspect of Rhododendron growing from propagation to hybridizing, from growing in amenable soil to growing in formidable areas, from warm climates to the cold stony areas of Newfoundland and Iceland. Our own Les Clay was one key note speaker on Propagation.

Many speakers were from the local Niagara area but others were from the States and as far away as Iceland. They were nursery-men, hybridizers, naturalists and environmentalists, scientists and researchers. There was something for every interest; and for variety, a speaker team on Iroquois legends and stone carvings.

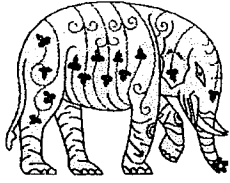
My first choice of the tours was the escarpment of the Falls. There were two guides on my bus, one of whom was a professor at the University, and the flora and fauna of the Gorge was his especial study. He told us that the Gorge was full of trees thousands of years old growing like bonsai. Amazing! The greenhouses in the Victoria Park had hydrangeas growing like tree roses. This tour also included the butterfly conservatory which was most interesting. And of course, I had to have my picture taken by the floral clock.

My second choice was a tour of larger gardens which were being developed from old farm lands. Particularly interesting here was the enclosed garden where the old barn had been dismantled but the old cement and rock foundation had been patched to make an enclosed area protected from winds where more delicate plants could be sheltered.

The last tour we could fit in, that of the smaller gardens, Melba and I took together. Some were very highly manicured and others were left quite natural and/or in the state of development. We visited the Brock University grounds where an area had been set aside for plants from the late Mr. Smith's garden. He was a well known and respected nurseryman and hybridizer from the Niagara region. At the end of May many of the blooms were finished but there were still sufficient to give us enjoyment.

One of the great pleasures of attending a conference is meeting up with old friends. There were quite a few from B.C. and from Washington State that we both knew, and Melba knew many from other states as well. As we said 'good-byes' on Sunday it was more "See you at the conference next year" and a wave of the hand. and it was all over.

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Lillian Emerson



## REMEMBERING

For many of us, our first association with a rhododendron group was with the Vancouver Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, as it was originally constituted. Let us meet some of the original members:

### **Desmond Muirhead** Vancouver Chapter's first President

Desmond Muirhead, after being demobbed from the RAF, emigrated to Canada, and attended UBC where he graduated in 1948 with a BSc in Plant Pathology. That same year, with Hans Fisher, Desmond started a practice in Landscape design, doing plans for residential gardens in Vancouver, West Vancouver, Victoria and the Lower Mainland area. From the start he was using rhododendrons and azaleas in the gardens he was designing for people like Lil and Bill Hodgson and Beulah and David Freeman in the Endowment Lands, and Sharon and Bill Flavelle in Coquitlam, and Norman Whittall in Whonnock, to name only a few. While taking some landscape design courses at the University of Oregon in Eugene he met several members of the Eugene and Portland Chapters of the then relatively new American Rhododendron Society. It had been formed in Portland in 1945. He met people like nurseryman Jock Brydon, John Henry - the first president of the A.R.S and Ruth Hansen, first Secretary of the A.R.S..

Back in Vancouver in the early fifties there were very few nurseries selling even fewer hybrid rhodos. Rhodos like Britannia, Earl of Athlone, Unknown Warrior and some other Dutch hybrids that came by boat from Holland in the spring of each year, was about all there was. Hyland Barnes in Kerrisdale/Dunbar, Haberlin in Marpole and Layritz Nurseries in Victoria had some species like *R. augustinii* and a few of the choice red and non red English hybrids like Loderi King George, Loder's White and Beauty of Littleworth, that Desmond liked. Henry Eddie had some Deciduous Azaleas but no one except Jock Brydon in far off Eugene had any of the new Exbury Azaleas.

In 1953 when I started to work for Desmond, Hans Fisher had left, and Ray Brauner, a talented landscape designer and illustrator from Eugene was with the firm, now called Desmond Muirhead & Associates Landscape Architects. Desmond was already extolling the Rhododendron on the Sun Garden Page, and writing to Ruth Hansen in Portland about forming an ARS chapter in Vancouver. Two years later, in June 1955 the inaugural meeting was held in Desmond and wife Helen's home on Vine St. in Kerrisdale. More than half of the inaugural Vancouver chapter members were or had been Desmond's clients. At that inaugural meeting he was elected President, Bill Flavelle Vice President, and Ellen Hailey Secretary.

Desmond believed that a garden in the coastal Pacific Northwest had to have rhododendrons. Any garden that he designed it was mandatory to have them. Desmond's passion for Rhododendrons, combined with his knowledge about them, his enthusiasm and persuasive powers was such that many of his clients and employees became life long rhodo lovers and enthusiasts. However, this passion for plants, particularly rhodos, was resented by many of the nurserymen at the time, who felt that they were the only ones who should be recommending plants for the garden, and it certainly wasn't rhododendrons. Pointed conifers were in. These were cheap to produce, came in three colours - green, blue and gold, and in five neat and compact forms. Too, there were many people in Vancouver, coastal BC and environs, quietly, almost secretly, growing rhododendrons. It took Desmond Muirhead's championing of the genus, his initiation of the ARS chapter in the fifties to give the impetus for this appreciation and enthusiasm to the rich diversity of gardeners and hobbyists who now grow and enjoy the beauty and quality of the hybrids and species of Rhododendron. In Desmond's mind a garden without Rhododendrons lacked class, quality and character. I must agree.

**Clive Justice**



# A Rhododendron Primer



## M is for *mucronulatum*

Section Rhododendron, Subsection Rhodorastra

This is a small-leaved, deciduous rhododendron that is special because its early flower display occurs before the plant leafs out. This past year my own *R. mucronulatum* was in full bloom in February, although I expect to see it usually in March. The typical plant has purplish-pink flowers which make a welcome show in the early spring. There are some selected forms of *R. mucronulatum*, and my own particular favourite is Cornell Pink which has clear, true-pink flowers. An added bonus is the nice fall colour this species can develop before leaf drop.

*R. mucronulatum* is native to north east Asia and the islands of Japan. It is found growing at about the 300 meter level. The plant is listed as being reliably hardy to -26 C ( -15 F ) although the flowers may occasionally suffer frost damage at much higher temperatures because they bloom so early. *R. mucronulatum* typically reaches a height of 2 to 3 meters, however new, named varieties like Crater Lake are being selected for their dwarf habit.

This is an easy plant to grow. If possible try to locate it where the early flowers receive some overhead protection from hard frosts, and where the leaves receive partial sun in the fall to allow the best autumn colour possible.



Norma Senn



## M is for *Maureen*

*R. williamsianum* X Lem's Goal. Lem's cross registered in 1973

Said to be hardy to 0 degrees F. Height by 10 years - 3ft. Rated 3/3/3

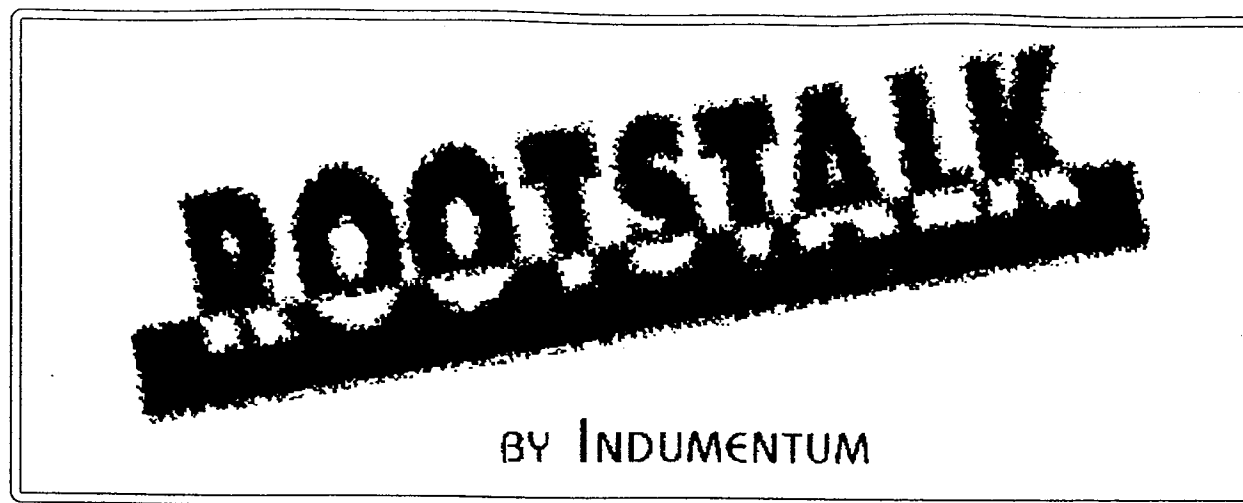
This is a very hardy, sun and heat tolerant, compact rhododendron.

The plant grows wider than tall, well covered with small (2"), ovate, dark green leaves. ( In the spring, the new growth is red.)

Flower buds are covered with red scales. The plant is very floriferous, covering itself with surprisingly large, bright pink flowers, which fade to orchid pink with a tinge of yellow in the throat.

An excellent rhodo for tub or planter.

Vern Finley



We have been gardening for about 10 years, yet there always seems so much to learn. We used to think that bark mulch was something that was used just to improve the appearance of the garden. This is a fairly common misconception and local mulch is often referred to as "Beauty Bark". We subsequently discovered that bark mulch for a rhododendron grower is like snow to a cross country skier. You just gotta have it to make things happen, particularly to ensure the right acidic and moisture conditions. Rhododendrons have shallow roots and the bark mulch keeps roots cool, moist and airy. When it rains, which was not often this summer, water infiltrates the mulch rather than running off to waste. So in our enthusiasm we put bark mulch on everything, even the rock garden.

Books on rock gardening tell you to use a layer of grit or small stones as a mulch to keep the necks of the plants dry, to blend in with the rocks and to give the appearance of mountain scree. Most of us don't have small stones lying around but we do have a pile of bark mulch. So why not use bark mulch for the rock garden? The appearance is not very mountain-like but it does keep the plants dry and suppress weeds. What the books don't tell you, however, is that most rock plants like a neutral or an alkaline soil, probably because many of the classic rock garden plants come from the Mediterranean area where there is lots of limestone. So many alpiners don't like the acidic conditions that bark mulch induces. We found that even tough plants like Arabis will not tolerate bark mulch.

So last weekend we broke down and ordered a few yards of "birdseye" from a landscape supply yard. It consists of uniform pea size gravel and makes a lovely mulch in the rock garden and no worries about pH. It will take a while to work through the rock pile, but who needs parking space for visitors anyway?