



a chapter of the ARS

# The Yak

Volume 11

Number 8

October 1998

## Fraser South Rhododendron Society



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

October 21, 1998, 8:00 P.M.

**DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR GARDENING VIEWS ARE GETTING A**

**WEE BIT NARROW????**

**LET US TRY TO BROADEN THEM. !!**

**Speaker Mr. Paulus Vrijmoed**  
of Linnaea Nursery

**" Native Plants as Companion Plants for Rhododendrons "**

\* October 21 FSRS regular meeting

\* October 28, FSRS directors meeting, @Trembaths

\* November 18, 1998  
this was to have been  
FSRS 10 year anniversary  
**BIRTHDAY BASH**

now it seems we may have to delay the celebration for a bit. You will be informed as soon as possible - don't despair - there IS a birthday party coming up I promise.



### INSIDE

Notes and News.....	2
From the President.....	3
Remembering.....	4
Westridge Farm Tour.....	5
FSRS 1998 officers& directors.	6
A Rhododendron Primer.....	7
Rootstalk.....	8

## September Meeting



Roger Low was his enthusiastic self. He speaks with such a wealth of knowledge about bonsai that it is a

wonder we are all not trying it out ( maybe we are ! ) He showed slides of bonzai collections to demonstrate the varying types and patterns as well as magazines with beautiful examples. Roger also brought some of his own plants to illustrate the stages of bonsai development

Our attendance was not full, but those attending enjoyed the programme. You also missed a sign-up sheet for a tour to Westridge Farms; growers of Native and Ornamental Grasses. Only five from Fraser South showed up for a guided tour Sat. Sept. 26/98. Very interesting. See Joan's report Page 5

---

---

### Dues

Memberships are now due. It is important to renew early - not only does it save wear and tear at this end, but also at ARS headquarters. I am hoping to have an enclosure with details - to make it easy for you. Your executive has again decided to hold the line on fees - so they will remain the same as last year. ( Surely the loonie can't stay submerged indefinitely ) In actual fact - this means that your club is subsidizing your membership - by the time we pay exchange, and add the extra stipend required per member for District 1 the small amount of funds left for the club is in the red. This being so, we must do our level best to ensure that the few fund-raising events we plan are very successful - all of us must help.

Membership Secretary:

Vicki Neyedli  
3221 Main St.  
Balcarra, BC  
V3H 4R1

## Notes and News

Letter received from Lynn Watts, Western Vice President of the A.R.S.: species expert and nurseryman:

" After much thought we have decided to drastically down-size our Nursery, The Greenery.

Our target date is May 1999 and we will commence selling most of our larger rhododendrons and many smaller ones in early October 1998. We are in the process of re-inventorying the entire nursery, but to give you a rough idea we have several thousand plants ranging from dwarfs to mature specimens. Approximately half of these plants are species, the remainder consist of named hybrids, and natural hybrids grown from seed collected in the wild.

We have slashed our prices as we are desirous to place these plants with rhododendron collectors. Extra discounts will be given for quantity sales.

If you are interested you can contact us by mail, phone or e mail:

Lynn and Marilyn Watts  
14450 NE 16th Place  
Bellevue, Washington, 98007  
425 641 1458  
watts-greenery@msn.com "

---

---

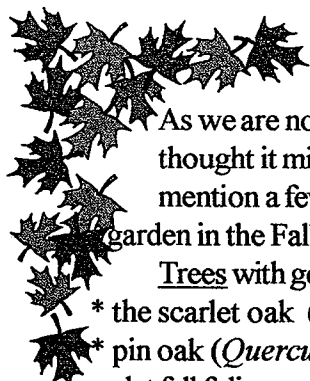
My husband came home with the following recipe - to discourage moles :

1/4 C Castor Oil  
2 Tablespoons liquid detergent  
Blend in 6 Tablespoons water

---

Mix 2 Tbsp of above in 1 Gal. warm water and wet down the mole hole.

[ I'd leave home, wouldn't you ? ]



### From the President

As we are now officially into Fall, I thought it might be a good idea to mention a few plants that enhance the garden in the Fall with excellent colour.

Trees with good colour:

- \* the scarlet oak (*Quercus coccinea*) or
- \* pin oak (*Quercus palustris*) both have good scarlet fall foliage.
- \* *Ginkgo biloba* the Maidenhair tree, a pest free tree with fan shaped leaves bright yellow in fall.
- \* *Liquidambar styraciflua*, American Sweetgum, leaves turn to purple, red and orange.
- \* *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, Dawn red-wood, turns golden before needles drop.
- \* *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, Katsura tree, turns yellow to scarlet, the drying leaves give off a sweet fragrance.
- \* *Fraxinus* varieties (Ash) gives good fall yellow colour
- \* *Betula* the Birches - most produce good yellows
- \* *Acer rubrum* (Eastern red maple) selected forms turn brilliant red, as does
- \* *Acer ginnala* (Amur maple).
- \* *Acer circinatum* - the native Vine Maple ranges from yellow to red, as do
- \* *Acer palmatum* (japanese maple) from yellow to red with colour dependant on the cultivar.

As far as vines are concerned it is hard to beat the \* *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* or Virginia Creeper with its brilliant red foliage. We have one that covers a large Douglas fir.

Shrub Foliage For excellent red Fall foliage the

\* *Euonymus alata* (winged burning bush) is hard to beat.

Many of the \* *Vaccinium* varieties (blueberries, huckleberries & cranberries) produce good red foliage.

The \* *Amelanchier* produce yellow to orange foliage. The \* *Hamamelis* or witch hazel has foliage that turns bright yellow.

Many varieties of deciduous \* *Azalea* also enhance the garden with foliage shades of yellow to maroon.

The \* *Viburnum bodnantense* "Pink Dawn " gives good Fall colour and often produces some fragrant pink blossoms in the winter.

Berries Various \* *Cotoneaster* produce an abundance of red berries in the Fall.

\* *Pyracantha* - the firethorn produces copious quantities of yellow and orange berries. Also very colorful are the almost fluorescent purple berries on \* *Callicarpa dichotoma* profusion.

The snow white berries on the Snowberry -

\* *Symphoricarpos albus*, also gives colour to a somewhat shaded area of the garden.

Many of the ornamental grasses also produce colorful plumes in the Fall. This is only a few of the many plants that can enhance a Fall garden with colour.



Les Clay



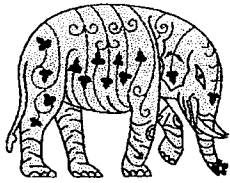
From the Sept. Oct., 1998 Bulletin of the B.C. Council of Garden Clubs

Did You Know That.....

" If one places a tiny amount of liquor on a scorpion, it will instantly go mad and sting itself to death "

**THIS BOGGLES MY MIND -  
DO YOU BELIEVE THIS ??  
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT ??  
HAS ANYONE TRIED IT ???  
CAN ANY ONE TRY IT ???  
SPEAK TO ME !!  
LET ME KNOW !!**

(your bewildered editor)



## 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:

### Len Living

Len Living was a Charter member of the Vancouver Chapter of the ARS. He had emigrated from the UK after the second world war, and started a landscape nursery in East Richmond, on the road that was the Richmond-New Westminster Queensborough boundary - on the panhandle of Lulu Island. I believe he had been a head gardener/estate manager in England, so he knew gardening, plants and landscape construction. Unlike many local landscapers and nurserymen who installed plantings at this time, Len could read, understand and estimate construction costs from blueprints: AND he knew rhododendrons

It wasn't long before Desmond Muirhead found Len, and gave him and his crew contracts to construct patios, fences, walls; to instal seeded lawns ( no turf in those days ) and to plant many of the gardens and landscapes Desmond and firm had designed. I acted as the firm's site supervisor on several of Len's contracts : the Allen residence on Southborough in British Properties - brick walls, brick patios and rhododendron and deciduous azalea plantings; downtown Scott's Cafe owner Peter Milos' house on Granville St. near 33rd - wood fences, concrete walls and rhodo plantings. Len was the first to introduce and propagate the then very new, semi dwarf clear pure red R. Elizabeth, named in 1939 for the then Queen consort of George VI, and now the Queen Mother. Len was also the first to grow and propagate the rugged, spreading, low evergreen, narrow leaved variety of the English Cherry Vancouver-hedge-laurel - Zabel's Laurel that would survive being driven over.

Len was a Bisley small bore rifle champion. He and daughter Joan were both top Longbow archers. In the plant world Len was a propagator and budder extraordinaire. After he sold his landscape contracting business to Peter Jeck, Len

went to work as head propagator for the Vancouver Parks Board at their Sunset Nursery on South Main Street. He continued with the VPB until he retired at age 65 in 1975. He died a year later. There is a fine rhododendron in Stanley Park named for him. A pair of them are located at the northeast corner of the Sepperley Tennis Courts across from the Pitch and Putt Course It is an early blooming dark pink - the cross made by Hjalmer Larson of Tacoma using R. sutchuenense. It comes into bloom with the Japanese Cherry 'Akebono'. R. Len Living is a fitting tribute to one of Vancouver Chapter's charter members and a great Vancouver pioneer plantsman .

### Clive Justice

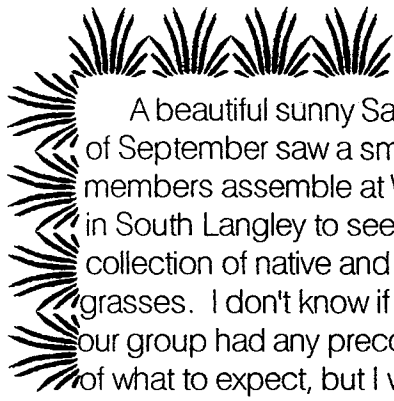
---

I met Len in the late 1950's and made many a pleasant exploratory trip to his nursery on Lulu Island. In fact, any time I could scare up the price of a rhodie I went visiting! I learned a lot from Len. I learned to appreciate some of the less flamboyant rhodies. He was rather disdainful of those he called "the big Dutch cabbage heads".

Appropo of the R. Elizabeth - Len was very careful to point out that the clone he grew was the 'Wisley Form' - which he felt was preferable to other clones in the trade.

When Len was going out of his nursery business, I was thinking of beginning one, and I was able to buy many of his 'stock' plants - these included many named Exbury azalea hybrids, several clones of Naomi, Pride of Leonardslee, Lady Bessborough, Queen Mary, as well as 'liners' of many varieties.

I also introduced the Finleys to Len - but that's another story, and not mine. ! (Editor)



A beautiful sunny Saturday at the end of September saw a small group of FSRs members assemble at Westridge Farms in South Langley to see a marvellous collection of native and ornamental grasses. I don't know if any of the rest of our group had any preconceived notions of what to expect, but I was not prepared for the scope of the gardens.

Westridge Farms is owned by Robbie Archer who, until 1995 was a successful breeder and racer of Thoroughbred horses. Seeking something a little less strenuous, she retired and decided to raise grasses on her 30 acres. Judging by the immaculate condition of the property and buildings, her current occupation is anything but 'less strenuous'.

But, we came to see the grasses; so gathering our group and about half a dozen other visitors together, we were escorted on a wonderful tour by Eva. We started in a field where a large circle of Buffalo Grass was planted in the middle, surrounded by a very tall grass ( whose name escapes me !) I was fascinated to learn that Buffalo Grass has both male and female plants, one is 4" tall, the other 6" with flowers. Neither need mowing - they grow no taller, but they do go brown in winter. Not going to make you too popular with your picky neighbours if you live on a city lot, but maybe worth considering for pathways in the garden instead of bark mulch.

From there, we climbed to the top of the property by the house, and there were stunned ( I was, anyway ) by the number of varieties on display. Large beds were laid out with several varieties of grasses, all labelled with Latin names only. It was very difficult to: write the whole name, take in our guides comments, try to not miss anything and keep up with the crowd. Westridge tries many different grasses to test their suitability for local horticulture: the results are there in the

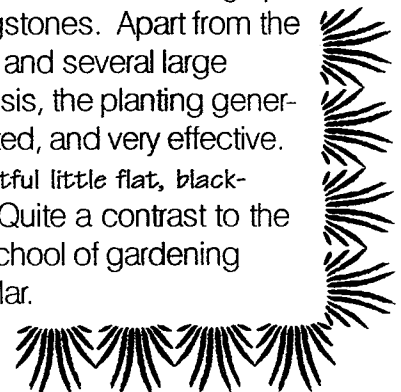
beds for all to see. Surprisingly some individual plants of a variety or species were more than thriving, while others were not so happy. Not unlike our rhodies I guess.

Some of the grasses that I liked especially :  
*Molinia caerulea* 'Moorflamme' - a 30" beauty for sunny locations,  
*Stipa gigantea*, a grass with short foliage and tall oat-like flowers. ( all *Stipa* said to be drought tolerant )

several *Ophiopogons* - ( at least one *Ophiopogon* with black foliage.)  
*Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Moudry' and *Pa.* var. 'Hamela' ( lovely black seeds of these stuck to the clothing of us who were wearing knits )  
They may turn up in the raffle one of these days.

Perhaps one of the most stunning displays was a long sweep of four grasses beside a path. - In front was *Festuca cinerea* 'Elijah Blue', behind this was the bronze foliage of *Carex buchanani* a bit taller came *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light' which has a thin white stripe edging each leaf, and a white rib, giving it an almost luminous green colour. At the back was the taller *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracilis' with its darker green foliage. One end of this sweep was punctuated with a large clump of *Coreopsis*, the other with a spread of *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Moudry' with its tall tassles of black flowers.

The gardens around the house were another delight. , with small quantities of exquisite things carefully placed around a large pool bordered with flagstones. Apart from the massed grasses, and several large clumps of coreopsis, the planting generally was understated, and very effective. ( I noticed a delightful little flat, black-leaved clover. Ed.) Quite a contrast to the 'English Border' school of gardening currently so popular.





Our next destination was the 'water garden', which is at the bottom of the property - so down we went, past a large slope which has been planted with rambling roses. The roses are to be permitted to 'do their own thing' and will then have clumps of tall grasses planted between them. Must go back to see this in a year or two.

The water garden again has many different grasses, different heights, different colours, some growing IN the water, some growing in bog conditions. A native grass - I didn't catch the Latin name for this one - known as Squaw Grass was very attractive; tall heads of foamy flowers in a rich maroon colour.

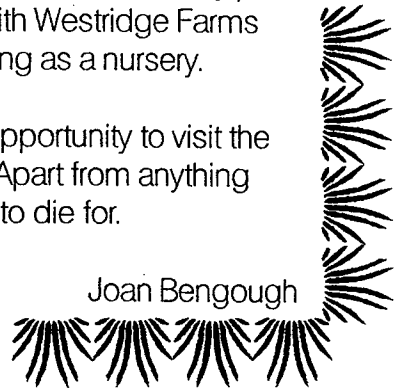
The meadow leading down to the water garden has been planted with a mix (so-called 'no-mow' mix) of prairie grasses - about 4" tall. This is the first year of this trial, so the new plants have been watered. From here on they will be on their own - it will be interesting to see of the varieties will stand drought as well as our winter wet. Definitely worth watching for.

Finally we went partly up the hill again to the old stables, where refreshments were being served. The stables were as immaculate as the rest of the property, and I am sure we could have eaten off the floor had we not been given chairs outside in the sun. The stable now contains an office at one end, sheltered by a trellised 'sun-room' where we were able to admire an interesting collection of sedums in pots, and a wide variety of tender pot plants including a Papyrus - the first I have seen. Everywhere here were pots of plants in the most tasteful arrangements. There was even a display of unusual containers - an old suitcase, a watering can, a rusty pot, and an old bucket - all with marvelous fall flora and foliage spilling out. We could

detect the sensitive hand of Randal Atkinson (of Meadowsweet Farms Nursery). He has been involved with Westridge Farms since its beginning as a nursery.

If you have the opportunity to visit the garden, do so. Apart from anything else, the view is to die for.

Joan Bengough



**Fraser South Rhododendron Society**  
Executive, 1998

**President:** Les Clay 604 530 5188

**Past Pres.:** Bobby Ogdon 604 583 7434

**Vice Pres.:** Don Selman 604 533 4980

**Secret.:** Janet Warner 604 857 0788

**Treas.:** John Warner 604 857 0788

**Directors:**

*three years - Colleen Forster 604 534 1840*

*two year - Michael Neyedli 604 931 1199*

*one year - Trevor Badminton 604 856 0046*

**Committees:**

*Programme - Trev. Badminton*

*Ways and Means - Diane Scott*

*Library - Pat Dahl and Janet Warner*

*Kitchen, coffee and calories -*

*Melba Johnson, Lillian Emerson*

*Hostess and Greeter - Phil Anderson*

*Security - John Anderson*

*Membership - Vicki Neyedli*

*Newsletter editor -*

*M. L. Trembath - 604 856 7261*

*fax - 604 856 7261*

*e mail - ve7hv@planeteeer.com*

# A Rhododendron Primer



is for *niveum*

Subgenus Hymenanthès  
Section Ponticum  
Subsection Arborea



*R. niveum*  
at The Lost Gardens of  
Heligan  
May 1, 1996

I first saw *R. niveum* in bloom at the truss show in Oban, Scotland, and then saw this wonderful species in bloom throughout the gardens we visited during the conference tours. I just fell in love with it: it has beautiful, ball-shaped trusses of soft lavender-blue flowers, with any-where from 20 to 25 florets per truss. Each truss is symmetrical. I particularly remember a 'hedge' of *R. niveum* in full bloom at Inverewe. I took lots of slides of *R. niveum* while in Scotland, but never could get the blue flower colour to turn out properly in my pictures.

The species name, *niveum*, means 'snow-like' and refers to the dense white indumentum found on the new growth. The plant is large, reaching a possible height of 6 to 7 metres, and has a rounded habit. It is listed as hardy to -14C, but it can suffer leaf damage when exposed to cold dry winds. It flowers in early to mid May. I know of a few plants of *R. niveum* on Vancouver Island, but have not seen any in bloom in the Fraser Valley, so it may be marginally hardy here.

According to P. Cox, *R. niveum* is native to bamboo and hemlock forests of Sikkim and Bhutan, from the 3000 to 3700 metre level. It is a threatened species in Sikkim.

Norma Senn



is for *Naomi*

Naomi ( grex ) Aurora X fortunei  
Lionel de Rothchild 1926



*Naomi Paris*  
at Exbury April 1996

An extremely successful cross, and many clones have been named. Naomi Exbury - a beautiful, classic rhododendron hybrid, large, sturdy, well branched and well clad with large, dark green leaves, rounded on both ends.

The flowers, cascading freely over the entire plant, are large, open faced and fragrant. They appear to have an opalescence through the delicate mauve-pink with yellow and orange undertones. Green filaments and style add interest to this lovely blossom.

Vern Finley

# ROOTSTALK

BY INDUMENTUM

Landscaping with rhododendrons should be easy. After all, they are evergreen so they form a nice solid shapely mound all year and they have a stunning flowering season. The problem comes when you want to grow a lot of them and you have limited space. There is always the option of growing them in rows, a staple of commercial landscaping. Alternatively, crowding them in together may satisfy the plant collector but it isn't really landscaping.

Most think of rhododendrons as a woodland garden plant, from the tradition developed by the great estates of Britain. This certainly suits the large leaved rhodos that need plenty of shade. In a typical garden we don't have much room for many of the larger rhododendrons so it is generally better to select smaller varieties. Landscaping is then easier as you can work on a smaller scale and also have many more plants! The natural habitat of smaller rhododendrons is typically on open mountain slopes, not in woodland, so a rock garden can provide a pleasing setting. Throw in a few small trees to provide pools of shade, and with a selection of companion plants, the effect is complete.

Rhododendrons in a landscaped setting generally look better from a distance so open spaces should be planned. Narrow winding paths among the rhododendrons can provide close-up opportunities but they should not be the only way of viewing the plants. Open spaces can be lawns, wide grass paths or ponds. Rhododendrons should be planted on raised beds, ideally sloping upwards from the open areas. This gives the effect of a mountain side and the root balls will have good positive drainage. The open spaces form valleys between the rhododendron beds and can be connected together to make garden paths and form drainage courses for both water and cold air. Smaller rhododendrons should be planted at the front of the bed and larger plants at the back to give the plants more light and increase the number of plants that can be seen. This also makes the slope look steeper which accentuates the mountain effect.

A good local example of this type of planting is the Rhododendron Walk at VanDusen Garden. The path is wide, the beds are raised and sloped upwards and there is a wonderful selection of trees, groundcover and bulbs among the rhododendrons. The most pleasing rhododendron landscaping I have seen, however, is the Valley Gardens in Windsor Great Park in England. The rhododendrons are planted on massive ridges with deep grassy valleys in between. It feels like you are in the mountains of Nepal and it is far more spectacular than the adjacent Savill Garden which is crowded with plants.

Once the general layout is in place you can start thinking about colour combinations and companion plants. I'll leave these issues for a subsequent article.