

Fraser South Rhododendron Society is a chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.  
Meetings are held on the third **Wednesday** of the month at .St. Andrew's Anglican Church Hall  
20955 Old Yale Rd., Langley  
\* 8:15 p.m

**FSRS**

Officers for 1999

President: David Sellars 535 0763

Secretary: Janet Warner 857 0788

Treasurer: John Warner 857 0788

Membership : Wendy Sellars

phone & fax 535 0763

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**NB New Rand A Newsletter:**

<http://members.aol.com/RandANews/news.html>

NB #2 - Our Christmas Decorations will include a basket meant to receive your toonies for the local Food Bank. Please be sure to see it and add this small share of Christmas good will

**December 15**  
Time for FSRS's  
Justly famous Christmas  
Celebrations

Once again Bev and Les  
Clay have invited us to  
their home

Our efficient organizers  
have been, or will be, in  
touch with each of us  
to ensure that not  
**EVERYONE** brings mince  
tarts or brusselsprouts.

Time : anytime after 6:00  
pm.

you are all welcome  
come prepared to have  
a good time !!

☼ March 15, 2000  
Speaker : Jim Greig  
"The Story of the Royston Nursery"

☼ Saturday April 1, 2000  
10:00 am - 4:00 pm  
FSRS Annual Plant Sale  
at Clay's Nursery, 224th St.

☼ April 19, 2000  
Speaker : Frank Fujioka

☼ Saturday April 22, 2000  
Annual Plant Sale and  
Display of Trusses  
to be held this year at St. Andrew's

☼ May 13, 2000  
projected date for the  
Great Garden Tour

☼ May 20-21, 2000  
projected date for Van. Is. trip

\* ARS Annual Convention  
Burlington Massachusetts  
May 24-28, 2000

☼ ARS Regional Conference  
Cowichan Bay  
Sept. 14 - 17, 2000



*Yakalendas*



☼ **January 19, 2000**  
AGM and election of officers  
(we'll make it snappy and  
hope to still have time for a  
programme)

☼ **February 16, 2000**  
Regular meeting FSRS  
Programme TBA

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### November Meeting

I found this a very interesting presentation - not only to see the plantings and planning done in Port Coquitlam but to be shown what Bill was accomplishing in his own garden. In a city sized lot there was room for so much diversity - for privacy, for almost continual colour, for great variety and interest architecturally in plant size, shape, textures and leaf colour and even the beginning of a small jewel of a pond and bog garden. I'm certain others have taken many fresh ideas home. Did you SEE that *Embothrium coccineum* !! - Wow )

### Rhododendron Species Foundation

You will perhaps remember that in the October Yak we reminded you of the advantages that are ours as supporting members of the RSF. This includes free passes to visit the RSF Garden. We have now received these passes - they will be placed in the library. Any one of you planning to visit the Garden ( a most interesting site to visit ) would be well advised to check the information in the Library about the garden and make use of these passes.

To those whose dues are still outstanding - Sorry this will be your last newsletter. Memberships may still be sent to:

Wendy Sellars  
16877 30A Ave  
South Surrey, BC  
V4P 2V7

Cheques to be made payable to  
Fraser South Rhododendron  
Society

Full Membership - \$40.00  
Associate Member - \$10.00  
Friend Of FS - \$20.00

# MERRY CHRISTMAS

## From the President

Fraser South is part of District 1 of the American Rhododendron Societ (ARS). District 1 includes all the clubs in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island. We are represented at the ARS Board meetings by the District 1 Director. You may be interested in the responsibilities of our representative so I looked them up in the ARS Board Policies.

The District Director has about twenty itemized responsibilities relating to coordination of District activities and liaison with the parent organisation. Some of the most important tasks are as follows:

- attend regular meetings of each chapter in the District as often as possible but at least once a year,
- call meetings of the chapter presidents prior to each meeting of the Board to assure each chapter an opportunity to voice its position on the agenda for the Board meeting,
- prepare a report of district activities,
- inform the chapters of pending and completed actions of the Board via the minutes of the Board and/or a personal newsletter,
- serve on committees of the ARS,
- supervise ratings and good-doer lists.

These are all important functions for a well-run society but it is a real challenge to find a volunteer with enough time and energy to accomplish all of the above. Our District Director has recently resigned because he felt he no longer has the support of the chapters. We now need to find another volunteer as dedicated as Everett Jefferson. If there is more than one candidate, an election must be called and votes cast by each ARS member in the District.

There have been comments made by some chapters that we should not fund the expenses of the District Director or even bother to send a Director to Board meetings because the ARS is unresponsive to our needs. { This sounds awfully like good old western alienation in Canadian politics. If those easterners don't do what we want, even though we are in a minority, we should take our marbles and stay home. } Any international organisation that is primarily run by volunteers is challenging to operate. My experience is that if you are really interested in influencing policy you have to be prepared to serve at the Executive level, not just as a District Director. Most of us do not have the time to do this, so we should be grateful to those who are putting in the time on our behalf, even if their decisions are not always what we would want.



### Millennium Garden Visit May 20-21,2000

Details are now being finalized for our visit to Vancouver Is. on the Victoria Day weekend. Tentative plans have been made to leave early Saturday morning and travel to Qualicum where MARS Chapter have graciously invited us to meet their members, and visit their gardens. We plan to spend the day visiting gardens in Qualicum and Parksville, and if time permits, possibly the site of the former Grieg nursery at Royston. Of course, most of the plants from this nursery have been moved, ( under the direction of Alleyne Cook ) to Victoria, and the Grieg Garden in Stanley Park, Vancouver. It is hoped that FSRs will have the opportunity and pleasure of hosting the MARS Chapter members next year on a similar tour.

We plan to leave Qualicum late in the afternoon and travel to Tofino where we anticipate a pleasant candle-light dinner at an appropriate restaurant. Saturday evening will be spent at suitable accommodation on the Pacific coast. Sunday morning, at the invitation of Ken and Dot Gibson, we will visit their exceptional garden and will enjoy their knowledge and unbounded enthusiasm. We will probably lunch in Tofino - in order to give time to see local sites, perhaps visit Roy Vicker's Gallery at the Long House, and gather souvenirs. In the afternoon, we hope to visit the rhododendron sanctuary at Stubb's Island. If time permits on our return journey, perhaps we might have a quick visit to the George Fraser Garden and Memorial site at Ucluelet and see some of the very earliest of rhododendrons to be established on the west coast.

Final details will depend on the number of persons participating. It is hoped that we will be able to travel by luxury coach which would leave Abbotsford, and pick up in Langley and at VanDusen then to Tsawassen for the ferry to Nanaimo ( Duke's Point)

The estimated cost is approximately \$150. per person, this includes : travel by luxury air-conditioned coach, ferry expenses, accommodation, food and beverage. It is anticipated that everyone will contribute to the entertainment!

Availability will be offered initially to Fraser South ( and spouses ), and will then be offered to our neighbouring chapters - Fraser Valley, Peace Arch and Vancouver. Reservations will be on a first come basis and depend on the forwarding to the undersigned a non refundable deposit in the amount of \$50.00 - payable to Fraser South Rhododendron Society as soon as possible. Final details will be announced as soon as precise numbers are known. Please forward names and deposit to :

Mike Bale  
33623 Wildwood Dr.  
Abbotsford, BC, V2S 1S2

## Garden Tour of the Century Fraser South Rhododendron Society Mothers' Day Weekend Garden Tour Saturday, May 13th, 2000

Details are now being finalized for our inaugural garden tour which we hope will be a successful fundraising venture for the chapter. It is obviously important that the first tour is a success and therefore we would like to encourage every member to participate and , where possible, allow their garden to be visited. The Mothers' Day weekend has been chosen for two primary reasons: firstly, many of the rhododendron gardens in the Fraser Valley are at their peak about this time, and secondly, it provides a golden opportunity for promotion and will, perhaps encourage visitors to bring their mothers with them as a special gesture.

The garden tour will also provide a good opportunity to recruit additional members to the ARS, when they are able to see first hand the reason for our eccentricity and enthusiasm. The regular chapter 'plant suppliers' will have rhododendrons and other companion plants available for sale at several of the gardens.

Members whose gardens are 'non-participating' will be requested to 'pair up' with one of the host gardens to assist in the preparation prior to the event and then hopefully to be available on the day of the garden tour to assist with greeting visitors, checking the validity of tickets, and encouraging membership. In this way it is hoped that the entire chapter membership will be involved in an exciting event which will enlarge our membership as well as our club finances.

**IMPORTANT:** If you are willing to participate as a host garden please contact Mike Bale as soon as possible at 853 8839

Welcome to new member  
Margaret Yeltman  
10245 159 St.  
Surrey, BC, V4N 2M9  
504 930 8446

## Autumnal Musings



It seems that autumn is here, and for all those well organized gardeners that means 'getting your garden ready for winter'. I read of these super souls - in newsletters and magazines, making lists for turning their impeccable sites into even more impeccable winter landscapes. Even when I was 30 ( or more ) years younger, and filled with fervour, I still managed to be at least one season behind. Leaf raking and gentle pruning and tidying are not for me - too bad. But then, I have never claimed gardener status. In spite of massive and repeated efforts on the part of some of my respected gurus I remain a simple collector. A collector primarily of rhododendrons and their friends still known to me as azaleas, and to a lesser extent, of trees, and of clematis ( what the heck is the plural of that ? clemates, clematises ??)

My dearly beloved, and long suffering spouse, also not a gardener, likes the bizarre. I have even bought him a little 'monkey puzzle' tree, (surely this displays the epitome of spousal fondness). Actually said tree fell victim to my ungardening skills and was not de-potted into the garden in time - and succumbed . I have been very careful to hide Sir Harry Lauder's Walking Stick from his eyes - to have that in my environment would be more than I could bear. One thing I have nurtured for him is his *Gunnera*.

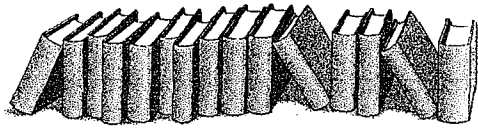
Seen first, ( and extravagantly admired ), at the end of The Lake at The Glades while Murray Stephens was still building his garden there, we were permitted to plant a piece of said *Gunnera* axed off the original plant. Murray always spoke of this as *Gunnera chilensis*. It seems this is now called *Gunnera tinctoria*. - (Unless -of course - the one I have is *G. manicata* - - I lean toward it being *tinctoria* based on the flower description) The

*Gunnera* seemed perfectly happy in our garden, ( and so it should after the loads and loads of compost and rotted manure Murray insisted we dump in the HUGE planting hole ) Seed gathered from its massive flower spikes proved viable, and produced seed from which the Finley's grew further plants.. It was a desperate blow to leave it when we moved. Many years later I saw a few poor plants stuck in old oil buckets in a nursery - and in spite of a ticket price that shocked me in view of the apparent plight of the plants, I bought one - to bring the garden back into my husband's interested eye. Cosseted and admired it thrived in its new location.

For several years I dutifully raked leaves to tuck around it, and cut it's own leaves for a covering blanket, all held secure against winter winds by chicken wire, and the long, cut off stems. Last year I didn't do such a good job, and come spring there was quiet misery as my husband peered hopefully at the dark, dull, hay-stacky mounds, showing no sign of growth. I was quite certain it must have survived, had to survive. I was persuaded to come join the mourning. But - behold - little spots of pink appeared - not on the main mound but in the surrounding areas. As spring developed, so did gunneras- some surely from seed . We were able to pass along a few "starts" to interested people ( including your own Dr. M. Bale ) and so this year my husband undertook to put the *gunnera* to bed himself - I'm uncertain what is over it - it might even be an electric blanket.

### The Yak for 2000

- √ do we need a face lift ?
- √ our regular column from Indumentum will continue
- √ we hope to continue our popular Rhododendron Primer Series
- √ we are adding a new feature "Good Companions"
- √ although it has sputtered a bit, I hope to renew our series on 'early' movers and shakers of the rhodo world in BC
- √ we need your input on the plants - both species and hybrids - that do best in your garden. A list of such plants for each area is being developed by the ARS for new growers.



Six new books were added to the Library shelves last month, some by request, and some by my own choice. At the moment there are no new books on Rhododendrons available, so the additions are all geared towards the other things we have in our gardens - or might want to have.

Steve Whysall ( Vancouver Sun Garden writer ) has written a real little gem: 100 Best Plants For The Coastal Garden. The Book covers many more than the one hundred plants it claims, and for each entry gives planting advise, how to care for it once planted, and suggests companion planting. In many cases, the entry is expanded to cover other varieties ( in case you want to start a collection ).

The Woodland Garden, Planting in Harmony with Nature, by Roy Forster ( retired Curator of VanDusen Botannical Gardens ), and Alex Downie, ( Curator of Bloedel Conservatory in Queen Elizabeth Park ), is another book full of good ideas and information, and lots of lists to sort out the information for you. This book was extensively reviewed in the Journal of the ARS Vol. 53, No.3, Summer 1999. It is very gratifying to have three of our own local writers and gardeners producing such excellent books.

Other books new to our shelves are :

A Gardener's Guide to Hydrangeas

A Gardener's Guide to Lillies and

A Gardener's Guide to Penstemons

All excellent books, and all the plants covered grow in the same conditions as our beloved rhododendrons, and bloom after the rhodies ( most of them ) are finished. Acquiring some of each would be a real plus for all but the purist rhododendron grower.

The last book is The Explorer's Garden a book of Rare and Unusual Perennials, by Dan Hinkley, co-owner of Heronswood Nursery in Kingston, Washington. Dan Hinkley's nursery is a mecca for anyone wanting the unusual, particularly as most of the plants he acquires on his expeditions are first produced and grown on in Washington, guaranteeing their hardiness for our locations.

Be sure to check out all these books at the next meeting - as well as many other excellent volumes that have been acquired or donated since the club's inception. As Librarian, I am impressed with the quality of our acquisitions in the last ten years.

Joan Bengough, Librarian



Looking for a special gift for someone  
How about seeing our Librarian  
for a copy of Greer's Guidebook to Available Rhododendrons. A very  
useful reference book which won't totally  
capsize your Christmas Budget. Available for  
only \$23.00,

#### Further Rhodomorphisms

##### **Bill Clinton**

Rhododendron nudiflorum

It comes from Eastern U.S. It is very hardy and easily layered in cultivation. One authority says that it is stoloniferous; another says it is not, indicating the presence or absence of this characteristic seems to depend on the affiliation of the observer. It is not easy to propagate vegetatively although the capsules ripen early and split open easily. The stigma are very long being three times the length of the corolla. It does best in full exposure, in fact languishes if not in full light. Some hybrids of *nudiflorum* and *alabamamense* ( geographically close to Arkansas ) have a yellow streak.

##### **Glen Clark**

Rhododendron "Solidarity"

A fairly recent plant of super hardy parents. It thrives in abusive conditions but resents competition from other plants, especially *magnolia cambelli* but will accept grass roots encroachment from red fescue. The flowers are red at first but fade with age especially if stressed. It loves aged horse manure.

##### **Judy Tyabji**

Rhododendron "Airy Fairy"

This is an early bloomer. It looks delicate but is really quite resistant to the vicissitudes of garden culture. It is showy when in flower but can be overlooked when not. Half of its lineage - *lutescens* - was a Wilson introduction. It tends to be leggy.

##### **Bill Gates**

Rhododendron ponticum

Now a very widespread and domineering plant. It will support almost any kind of elepidote graft but will grasp any window of opportunity to overcome the 'parasite' This species was the basis of the recent huge expansion in the popularity of the genus rhododendron. Now considered a threat to other plants, especially apples, in some gardens. Some forms are protected by patent.

## Stratification

A long word that most people can't spell let alone explain what it means. It refers to the process by which certain dormant seeds can be made to germinate. The problem arises particularly with the seeds of many wild plants. By contrast, the commonly sold vegetable and flower seeds have no dormancy, or have had the trait bred out of them during domestication

The problem of dormant seed is much misunderstood. You sow some seeds, they fail to come up, so obviously it was bad seed - problem solved. Many people have thrown out pots of such seed only to have them come up on the compost heap next year.

The advantage to the plant of delayed germination is that it prevents the seed sprouting in the summer or fall as soon as it is scattered. Germination is thus delayed until a more advantageous time in the spring.

The mechanisms causing delayed germination are various. Some are as simple as a tough seed coat which has to decay before the seed can germinate. For instance, the tough seeds of the dove tree (*Davidia involucreta*), can sometimes have their sprouting accelerated by giving them a good whack with a 2 pound hammer.

More frequently there is a physiological mechanism involved. For instance hellebore seeds are shed with the embryo at a very immature stage, but surrounded by a mass of endosperm (a nutritional tissue). If the seeds are kept moist and sown as soon as they are shed, the embryo will continue to grow, and the seed will germinate the next spring. However, if the seeds are dried, the embryos go into a state of suspended animation and when remoistened may take two years to germinate.

Most of the seeds from the north temperate zone with delayed germination require what is called **cold stratification**. This is achieved most simply by sowing the seed in the fall in a soil-less mix and keeping the pots cool over the winter. This usually does the trick. Sometimes it takes two winters.

One problem is that many people obtain their seed in the spring and then get annoyed when nothing comes up. The solution is to keep the pot until the fall and then keep it moist over the winter. There has to be cool temperatures and moisture.

There is some incredibly bad advise handed out on the question of cold stratification. I have heard over the radio, and seen in magazines that putting seed packets into the fridge or freezer for a few days or a week or two will aid germination. Well, the process as I said, is a physiological one so moisture has to be present. Putting dry seed into cold does nothing - except that keeping seed dry and cold is the best method of storing it.

The temperature at which cold stratification takes place is in the region of 4-6 degrees C. The vegetable crisper of the fridge is often used. The time period is **months**, not days. Three to five months in the fridge may be required, i.e. about the length of a winter. I have a lot of seed and a hostile wife, so I use one of our unheated outbuildings for the purpose.

The bad news is that some seeds may take two or more years to germinate. I have had Japanese Maples germinate the first spring, neglect to transplant the seedlings (a common failing of mine) and find the next spring that a whole lot more of the seeds have come up. As a biologist who studies evolution, I should point out that a delayed or irregular germination such as this will be an added advantage to a plant in that it spreads out the risk. The longest I have had to wait for seeds to germinate is five years. These have included violets, *Iris versicolor* and *Cyclamen rholfianum*.

I just sow my seeds in soil and wait. With over 200 pots on the go at any one time, each spring gives me plenty to do. For the less patient I can recommend putting seeds into a sealed plastic bag with a spoonful of moist Perlite. Throw the bags into the bottom of the fridge and inspect them every few weeks. At the first sign of germination put the seeds into a pot with seedling soil and bring into warmth and light.

In the seed list the seeds requiring stratification are marked "S"

Joe Harvey

(The above article, plus the Victoria Chapter's Seed List appeared in their Dec. newsletter, and are reproduced with permission. Unfortunately I just ran out of room to add the Seed List to this newsletter and so The Seed List will be printed in the Jan Yak Ed)

## A Rhododendron Primer



is for *yakushimanum* ( what else, considering the name of our newsletter? )

Genus *Rhododendron*, Subgenus *Hymenanthes*, Section *Ponticum*, Subsection *Pontica*, species *degronianum* subspecies *yakushimanum* (thought you all would really like to know this Bit of "trivia"..Ed.)

This fine species is native to the Japanese island of Yakushima where there are now efforts to preserve the remaining native plants. It's no wonder they have been extensively collected from the wild as the "yaks" are wonderful species additions in their own right, as well as contributing their genes to many wonderful garden hybrids.

The "yaks" have a natural compact, rounded growth habit; new foliage is covered with white "felt", and as plants age, beautiful cinnamon-brown indumentum develops on the undersides of leaves. Plants are reliably hardy in the Fraser Valley.

*R. yakushimanum* flowers freely in early May. The plants have full rounded trusses, each with about 10 flowers per truss. Typically, buds are dark rose pink and as flowers mature, they fade to soft pinks and whites.

Some of my favourite selections of yaks are 'Ken Janeck', 'Mist Maiden' and 'Yaku Angel', but there are many other forms. I always think of Dave Dugan (ARS-Victoria Chapter) whenever I think of *R. 'Ken Janeck'*. Dave told me once that when he gets to heaven, there had better be *Rhododendron 'Ken Janeck'* growing there, or he's not staying. If you ever get the chance to see his garden, watch for his 'Ken Janeck', it is outstanding!

Norma Senn



is for "YETI"

[("Fawn" x "Crest")X("Fawn" x "Crest")] unregistered hybrid of Dr. Carl Phetteplace  
Grown from seed distributed at the ARS Convention, San Francisco, 1972

Height 5 feet - 10 years. Blooms late May

Grown in the sun this plant is well branched and rounded. The leaves are oblong and medium to dark green. The large trusses, which cover the entire plant, are composed of flat-faced, pure white flowers. Hardiness rating is as yet undetermined.

The plant sets bud early and reliably, at one - two year from cutting.

Vern Finley



# DOOTS STALK



BY INDUMENTUM

It's that time of the year when everyone is scratching their heads for something new to give their gardening loved ones. In the spirit of the season here are Indumentum's recommended stocking stuffers.

You may have noticed that it rains a lot at this time of year. Those who insist on staying out in the garden really need a good rain hat. Mountain Equipment Co-op sells a Goretex rainhat which acts as a small umbrella on your head. It sheds the rain, is very light and as it is windproof, it also keeps your head warm. It will stuff nicely into any sized stocking.

For those frustrated with finding a good garden stake that won't break on first use, the answer is to give up on wood. Home Depot sells a green metal "T-bar" that is six feet long and can be driven into any garden soil, even clay. It will last a lifetime so the \$5 price tag is worth it in my view. Ideal for staking peonies and for making tomato and pea fences in the vegetable garden. Needs a large stocking.

Book lovers need to look no further than Marianna Kneller's "The Book of Rhododendrons". Beautifully illustrated by watercolours rather than the usual glossy photos it does a marvellous job of distinguishing the botanical parts of different species. Each species is described by a different author and the enthusiasm of many of the contributors is evident. For those who hang out a fairly large stocking.

Small stocking hangers also need consideration. What better gift than a membership in Van Dusen Garden or the UBC Botanical Garden. Both have excellent rhododendron collections and the annual membership cost is less than a few garden visits. The rhododendron flowering season in these gardens is from early winter (*R. niveum*) to summer (*R. auriculatum*). If you only go once you will miss many of the excellent species in flower.

Having trouble knowing when it's time to come in for lunch? Buy her a hand bell for Christmas. The sound travels a long way, it is a lot easier on her voice than shouting and much better than having to come out in the rain and find you.

Finally for those who hang very large stockings, there is always the six foot pry bar I enthused about last month. It turns out that Arnie Roeske has been using one for the past forty years and it is the tool he uses most often. Definitely a real gardener. Arnie says they are available at Home Depot.