



A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

Volume 13

Number 2

February, 2000

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
8:05 p.m

FSRS

Officers & Committee Chair Persons

for 2000

President: David Sellars 535 0763

Vice President: Trev. Badminton
856 0046

Past President: Les Clay

Directors: 1 yr. Colleen Forster
2 yr. Mike Bale
3 yr. Wenonah March

Secretary: Wendy Sellars

Treasurer: Les Clay

Chair Persons:

Coffee & Calories - Vern Finley

Hospitality - Phyl Anderson

Membership - Wenonah March
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Yakalenda



☼ **February 16, 2000 8:05 pm**
Fraser South Reglar Meeting
"taking a look at some of the
new hybrids"

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

☼ **April 19, 2000 FSRS meets**
Speaker : **Frank Fujjoka**

☼ **May 13, 2000**
Fraser South's First
Great Garden Tour

☼ **May 17, 2000 FSRS**
regular meeting AND
The Great Annual
BEER BOTTLE TRUSS SHOW

☼ **May 20-21, 2000**
Fraser South's
Van. Island Bus Tour

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

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

Rhododendron Sales and Shows

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

☼ **April 8, 10 - 3 PARS**
6th annual plant sale Elgin Hall
Crescent Rd at 142A

☼ **Saturday April 22, 10 - 3 FSRS**
Annual Plant Sale and
Display of Trusses
* **to be held this year at Langley**
United Church - 5673 200th St.
please note change of venue

☼ **April 29 & 30**
Vancouver R.S. Show and Sale
UBC Asian Gardens

☼ **May 7, 2000**
Fraser Valley R.S. Show and Sale
Whonnock Lake

Inside

Notes and News.....2
President's Notes.....2
Trips and Tours.....3
Rhodomorph. (another).3
Book Revue.....t.....4
Winter Thoughts.....4
Good Companions.....5
Remembering.....6
Rhododendron Primer
Book 2..... 7
Rootstalk..... 8

January Meeting

We have a few changes in our executive for the year 2,000. As you perhaps know, Janet and John Warner had asked to be relieved of their jobs as Secretary and Treasurer. The Warners have held these positions for several years, and we are most grateful for their excellent, cheerful and faithful performance of these duties.

Wendy Sellars will take over as Secretary. Les Clay has agreed to be Treasurer (since no one else would help him out here!) Our new Director, for the three year term in Wenonah March, and she and husband Alan have agreed to act as chair persons for membership.

Les gave a tutorial on the sowing of rhododendron seed, bringing with him a quantity of seed from *R. occidentale*, and *R. macrophyllum* - interested persons were urged to try their hand under Les' supervision and take home the results of their labours.

The slide presentation of pictures from the Valley Garden in Windsor Great Park was a beautiful tribute to an outstanding garden - many thanks to David Sellars for the photos and the 'travelogue'

More about Seeds

1. I apologize - I forgot to include the price of the seeds offered by Vic. Chapter - whose seed list appeared last month.

Price is \$2.00 per packet

2. Victoria Rhododendron Society has made the following addition to their seed list: *Arctostaphylos columbiana* - blue-leaved dwarf shrub, very drought resistant.

Question Box

A pretty question box will be available at the next - and following meetings. There is a neat slice in the top of it, so that you are able to write down - in secret - your innermost doubts for Uncle -----no no - so that any questions you may have, and are too shy to yell out, may be addressed by one of our gurus - either here in the Yak, or at a meeting. If requested strict confidentiality will be maintained.

For some months now, our parent association - the ARS - has been trying to have all chapters develop a list of rhododendrons that do reliably well in their area. Trev and Les have been appointed to gather this information for our locale. I think they plan to report to us next meeting - so think about it and be ready to let them know of any additions, or subtractions, that, in your experience, should be made.

February and March Meeting

When you are preparing for spring - instead of composting the 'extras' you have of divided perennials, or any other plant material - bring them along to the meeting for our \$1.00 table (One man's meat and all that.) Only one proviso - if it doesn't sell - THEN take it home to the compost bin. You might find just exactly what you want!



From the President

The sun is getting higher in the sky and there is a hint of warmth in the drenching rain. Spring is just around the corner and your Executive have been hard at work putting together an interesting program of garden tours. Mike Bale is spearheading a trip to Vancouver Island that will include visiting gardens on both the east and west coasts. It will conclude with a tour of Ken and Dot Gibson's famous rhododendron mountain in Tofino. Ken and Dot are members of Fraser South and they manage to make it to most of our annual picnics. Let's ensure a good turnout of Fraser South members for this tour so send Mike your deposit today!

We are trying something new this year with tours of ten Fraser South member's gardens open to the public on Mother's Day weekend. As well as being a lot of fun, this will be a fund raising venture and an opportunity to attract new members. Watch the Yak in the coming months for more information on this exciting initiative.

Mike Bale found this bright gem of wisdom in a consultant's report and felt it should be shared:

"Nothing has been shown to decrease (cardiac) risk, or improve overall well-being as much as doing something every day"

GARDEN TOURS

Mother's Day Weekend
Saturday, May 13

Plans for this, our first ever Garden Tour Day are well in hand. Tickets and brochures are ready to be printed, gardens have been organized, now all we need is to publicize and sell tickets. Ticket prices are to be \$ 15.00 or two for \$25:00 To get as wide an exposure as possible we hope to interest some of the local garden clubs in selling tickets. As well each of our members will be expected to become expert sales persons - much of the success of this venture will depend upon our ability to get the word out and get the tickets sold.

Host gardens include : Trevor & Doreen Badminton, Mike Bale, Dr. and Mrs. F. Banford, Lillian Emerson, Don and Louise Martyn, Allen and Evelyn Morton, Bobby Ogdon, Arnim and Mary Reoske, David and Wendy Sellars, Dr. Norman Todd.

This gives a marvelously good coverage geographically for our area, and a great variety in size and type of garden.

At many of these sites plants will be available for sale, and there will be information available about rhodo culture and of course about membership in our Club.

BUS TRIP

Vancouver Island - Here
We Come (We hope)

Despite the enthusisic initial response from Chapter members, we have yet to cofirm sufficient participants to book the bus.

In order to finalize the details it is necessary to have a firm committment from interested parties so that the bus can be booked and paid for.

In order to do this- it is necessary to have a \$50.00 non-refundable deposit per person so that increased financial burdens will not be placed on participants in the case of possible late withdrawals. Accommodation and food arrangements can be cancelled at the last minute, but arrangements for the bus cannot. Deposits for the trip will not be cashed until it is clear that we have enough 'takers' that the tour is on.

The total cost per person is \$150.00 Places are now open for members of Fraser Valley Chapter, PARS, and Vancouver. Members of MARS Chapter have been very generous in their willingness to participate and we all know that Dot and Ken Gibson could not be more enthusisic or gracious hosts. Please give me a call at 604 853 8839 and send your cheque (payable to Fraser South Rhododendron Society) **ASAP**

Mike Bale

(Come on guys - hate to see this fizzle out we need your commitment soonest)

GARDEN VISITS

You remember last year - we invited the other Chapters in the Fraser Valley to join us in visiting some of our member-gardens. This was so well received, that it was decided to continue it as a yearly event, taking turns among the chapters to act as " host " This year Fraser Valley Rhododendron Society has organized the following visits:

Sunday April 23

Tour Parkinson's Garden
Sunday April 30

Tour Hemminger's Garden
Sunday May 14

Tour Dempster's Garden
Sunday May 21

Tour Ladd's Garden
Sunday May 28

Tour Herriot's and Gray's
Gardens.

I am sure we will have further details to include addresses in an upcoming newsletter.

Another Rhododmorphism to
make your day

Monica Lewinsky

Rhododendron "Sappho"

Monica is not related to "Mrs. T. H. Lowinsky" which is a fine plant suddenly fallen out of favour. The name Sappho evokes different images with different people. For some it is poetic - for others it has a more salacious connotation. It has a beautiful flower but a terrible growth habit and if grown should be placed in the back of the border. I now prefer the more compact "Peeping Tom"



The Explorer's Garden *

David J. Hinkley

Reading The Explorer's Garden is like talking to a knowledgeable gardening friend. Dan has that special ability to generate excitement about a plant even though you may not have seen it, and may never have the opportunity to do so. His sense of wonder and excitement as he discovers something different, whether in exotic places or in someone's garden is, as described by Roy Lancaster in the Foreword, "almost childlike". To read his book, one would think he had never seen anything new before, yet his constant explorations in China, Korea, Nepal, Chile and remote parts of North America have provided him with more than 9,000 different plants in his own home and nursery.

The book starts with a general discussion on nomenclature - (don't try to keep up with it) - briefly discusses exploration ethics, goes on to hardiness, - (Zones Schmones) - and general cultivation notes, then moves right on to the plants. Each chapter includes personal stories, anecdotes about other people involved whom Dan has met and been helped by along the way, and always wonderful descriptions of the plants with much information on the conditions under which the plants are growing. There is nearly always suggestions about other plants in the same genus whose growing conditions might be more attainable in your own garden. Each plant under discussion always has hardiness, cultivation and propagation information at the end of the chapter. Almost every page has at least one superb photograph, taken by Dan Hinkley or Lynne Harrison. There is also a list of mail-order sources of plant material in the USA, the U.K. and the Netherlands.

In his own words Dan Hinkley gives his reason for choosing certain plants: " Rather than obscurity, rarity, or breathtaking beauty, the quality that I find most appealing in a plant is possession of unique character ". I am sure that you too will find it a joy to read about many of his plants "of unique character ".

Joan Bengough, Librarian

(* available in our library)

Winter Reflections

People keep complaining about the sameness, or dullness of pure rhododendron gardens when out of bloom. Well, mine is just about that - almost entirely given over to rhododendrons (I haven't got room for much else thanks to my compulsive collecting habit) and I don't find it at all bland. In fact there is great variety - even now as I gaze out the windows of my office.

Opposite my second story windows as I turn my head to the left (I even have to look up a bit) is a bank of "Loderi's" with "Beauty of Littleworth" trying to outdo them in height. Although I confess I cannot distinguish "Loderi King George" from "Loderi Venus" by foliage, there is no mistaking "Beauty of Littleworth" for a "Loderi". The "Loderi's" with their purple stained petioles, and smoky purple buds are a far cry from the rather hard green leaves of Beauty of Littleworth whose shorter petioles lead up to the yellow-green buds. If I look downward a bit, I can see my poor *R. brachycarpum*, leaves slightly recurved, yellow midrib leading into yellow petioles and thin sharply pointed new growth buds. I say poor *brachycarpum* because I planted it - years and years ago - when it was very young and precious - under the protection of "Loderi King George", and unfortunately never removed it to a place where it might shine, so it is spindly and bent, and unmoveable - at least for me. The same fate has befallen "Blue Jay" which is trying to shoulder its rough way through the "Loderi's" - again the ponticum type foliage separates it from its neighbours.

If I move my chair a bit closer to the window - I can see "Virginia Richards" - whose dark green leaves show the secondary veining so prominently, and whose pale green buds are already full and fat. If I move a bit, I can see "Bow Bells" - lovely rounded leaves and deep red buds, and beside it is a sister seedling of the newly registered R "Caitlin" ("Hummingbird ' X fortunei) whose flat foliage is also nicely rounded and whose buds are red-purple. Who says rhodies are dull in winter ?- this is just a 90 degree arc from one window !!

Here is the first instalment of what we hope will be a monthly feature in *The Yak*.

You are invited to, not only read, enjoy, and learn, but to tell us about your own favourites, that they may be included.

ACERS

Rhododendron gardens need trees for the dappled shade that makes best living and growing conditions for many rhododendrons, for the change in level in the garden, and for texture and colour variations.

With its myriad sub species and varieties the maple (acer) has much to offer. Here are but a beginning few:

Acer buergeranum: "Trident Maple". - an upright, well shaped small tree with bright green three-lobed leaves turning brilliant shades in fall. Native to Eastern China.

A. capillipes: "Snake Bark Maple" - green bark with silver striations. The young growth is coral turning green, then tinted red in fall

A. circinatum: "Vine Maple" var "Monroe" is a dwarf form of our native vine maple with multi-dissected leaves. Good fall colour.

A. davidii: "David's Maple" A round-headed small tree with rather oval leaves. The bark is striated green and white. Good fall colours - yellow and purple. The green fruits are often attractively suffused red and hang all along the branches in autumn.

A. ginnala: "Amur Maple" - a small tree with round-headed canopy. Three lobed leaves of light green change to brilliant crimson in fall.

A. griseum: "Paperbark Maple" - 'one of the most beautiful of all small trees' according to The Hillier Manual of Trees and Shrubs. Leaves trifoliolate, well coloured red and scarlet in autumn. Old bark on the trunk and primary branches flakes and curls back to reveal the shiny cinnamon-coloured underbark:

A. japonicum "Aconitifolium" - leaves are deeply cut and divided. Brilliant red fall colours.

A. japonicum 'Aureum' - "Full Moon Maple" A slow growing, compact tree with yellow-green foliage that requires some shade. *



Andromeda polifolia

"Blue Ice"

Family: Ericaceae

Here is a marvelous new sport of dwarf bog rosemary!

With icy blue foliage and small clusters of soft pink blooms in spring, it's a perfect foil for our dark-leaved rhodos.

Completely at home in the moist (not wet) humus soil of a woodland border, it will also thrive in the sandy loam of a half-shaded rockery.

It spreads by suckers and layers into a lovely small thicket of stems 10" tall + 2 feet across.

With protection from strong winter winds, it will delight the eye in any of our gardening zones.

Want it. Find it. Need it!

Coleen Forster

*(Les Clay's article on acers will continue next month. Ed)

REMEMBERINGS

Dr. C. S. McKee



One of the earliest rhododendron growers in on the mainland of BC was Dr. C.S. McKee. Dr. McKee was born in Ontario, received his medical degree from the University of Toronto, and practiced medicine in Baillieboro, ON for a time before moving to Chicago to work with a pharmaceutical firm. From Chicago the family moved to British Columbia, Dr. McKee establishing himself in pathology and bacteriology and this in turn led him to be one of the very strong proponents for the pasteurization of milk in the province.



Dr. McKee's enthusiasm for the genus rhododendron may well have begun during his medical service overseas in WWI. While invalided from service in Flanders, he visited the Royal Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh. He met George Forrest, already known as one of the world's foremost plant explorers. After returning to Vancouver, Dr. McKee was in receipt of rhododendron seed from the UK and this was the beginning of his rhododendron collection.

In 1920 he received a large collection of seeds from Edinburgh. These included *augustinii*, *californicum* (*macrophyllum*), *caucasicum*, *catawbiense*, *cinnibarinum*, *decorum*, *diaprepes*, *discolor*, *falconeri*, *fargesii* (*oreodoxa*), *fortunei*, *giganteum* (*protistum*), *heliopsis*, *maximum*, *oreotrepes*, *pseudoyanthinum* (*concinnum* Pseudoyanthinum Group), *strigillosum*, *sutchuenense*, and *thomsonii*. Plants from these (and doubtless other) seeds were grown in their thousands, originally in Vancouver. Breeding and selection was left entirely in the hands of Mother Nature.

Dr. McKee had purchased acreage north east of Abbotsford, part of which was, for a time, a dairy farm, managed by his son. The rhododendron plants were transferred from their beginnings in Vancouver to a sloped site on the Abbotford property. It seems that Dr. McKee did little, if any, deliberate hybridizing, nor did he attempt to select superior plants. He was uninterested in the hereditary background of his plants, and so kept no real records. The plants were lined out to fend for themselves, without much protection, mulch or fertilization.

It is almost certain that the seed he obtained was open pollinated to start with, so that many of the plants he grew

were hybrids and tho' purists may object, Dr. McKee was only interested in growing plants he enjoyed and found beautiful. He grew further seeds (open pollinated) from these plants and did propagate some of his plants from cuttings. The result of his benign neglect was a group of plants which, though they may be confusing as to parentage, are hardy for the area with good foliage and, on the whole, of good appearance..

There was to have been an effort from Vancouver Rhododendron Society in the 1960's to select and propagate some of his material. I believe that Milton Wildfong propa-

gated a "McKee's White". There is a lepidote hybrid locally available called " McKee's Blue " - not very blue but a delightful small plant. I fear not a lot came of VRS efforts. Cookey reminded me that a truck load of these of plants had been sent up to Nelson to an enthusiastic grower there. This gentleman, whose names now escapes me, carried on a correspondance with the Vanc. club for several years - some of his plants were established on an island - and he used to row out to care for them. I remember him having problems with deer. Recently I tried to discover whether any of these plants had survived, or if anything was known of them - but without success.

Then in 1993, Fraser South was urged to do something about the McKee rhododendrons - still at their Abbotsford site - but now facing extermination as the property was sold for developemnet. Several of us - Mike Bale, Don Martyn, Vern Finley, Ella Crabb and myself made trips to the site. (I was surprised to find that we had information from the following visits in 1993-April 4, May 9, May 23 & June 6) We tried to number specific plants, describe them and even photograph some of them, with a view to returning later to take cuttings. Unfortunately, our numbers were removed, or altered so that we did not have a correlated series. Plant material was propagated by the Finleys (one selection of a lepidote - now blooming and probably mostly yunanense !) and many more cuttings were taken under the direction of Dr. Bale. Interest in these efforts has been zilch from the club, and these plants are now set out in Mike's garden. Many have reached blooming age, and it would seem that we might try once more to assess what we have tried to save.

A Rhododendron Primer

Book 2



is for *arboreum*

SUBGENUS HYMENANTHES, Section Ponticum, Subsection Arborea

As the name implies, this is one of the tree-like species in the genus *Rhododendron*. *R. arboreum* is native to northern India and Nepal, where it forms forests in the foot hills of the Himalayas. It must be an amazing sight to see these beautiful plants in bloom. The most common flower color is brilliant red, but there are white and pink forms also. As a general rule of thumb, the red flowered forms are from lower elevations in their native range, and are less hardy than the white or pink forms. The dense floral trusses are conical in shape.

There are selections that remain shorter, but typically *R. arboreum* can reach a height of more than 10 meters, and is best grown with a single trunk. The handsome leaves are dark green above, with white to fawn colored indumentum.

As beautiful as it is, *R. arboreum* is not for everyone. It is not reliably hardy in the Fraser Valley, and even in Victoria, it does best when grown in a sheltered location. At the Finnerty Gardens (U. of Victoria), the best specimens are located with overhead protection from nearby Douglas firs, and in an area where there is protection from cold winds.

Norma Senn



is for "Avalanche"

"Loderi" X *calophytum* var *calophytum*

L. de Rothschild A.M. 1934 F.C.C. 1938

0 F (-18 C) Early Tall 5/4/3

A tall and handsome plant, openly branched and lightly clad in large, thick, dark green leaves held for one year.

Beautiful large white flowers have a ruby-red throat blotch, and are held in a huge, flat-topped truss. The flowers are very fragrant. The plant tends to alternate heavy blooming years with lighter ones. It is an eye-catcher in the garden in early spring.

A stunning plant which, since it can reach 20 x 20 ft. in size, requires a large garden.

Vern Finley

ROOTSTALK

BY INDUMENTUM

Gardening books can be quite intimidating. Before constructing a new garden you are supposed to have a detailed plan so that you know where everything is going to go. Real gardeners don't work like that and neither does the planning process.

A properly executed plan, whether for a garden or a massive engineering project, must go through a number of stages. The first and most important stage is to think of the concept. This should be really basic and can be simply an idea. For example, the original concept for the Sydney Harbour Opera House was five bent vertical lines on a piece of paper. Your garden concept could be rhododendrons in the back, a bit of lawn near the house and some perennial beds in between. Simple as it may seem, this is the proper way to implement a plan.

The second stage is to collect data. Data on how well things grow in your garden at different locations. Study the drainage in the Winter and the shade extent in the Summer. What type of soil do you have and is it acidic enough for rhododendrons? Will you need to import planting medium or is the topsoil on the site good enough? Clearly you can't do detailed planning until you have this information. It is worthwhile spending time observing how things grow in your garden and even what plants you like.

If you have the opportunity to start from scratch or you are brave enough to do a complete makeover, give serious consideration to renting a backhoe and shaping the land. It is much easier to landscape a garden with topographic features and your plants

will love you for it, especially the rhododendrons as they enjoy growing on slopes to keep their roots well drained. For this you will need a grading plan to give to the backhoe operator.

In a day with a backhoe, you can create hills and valleys, slopes and raised beds even on a flat site. Use the machine to remove the topsoil first. Create the relief in the underlying clay and then spread the topsoil. Dig the drains in the valleys at the same time and place perforated plastic pipe. Take this opportunity to get rid of the deciduous native trees. They are a real nuisance in the garden with their shallow greedy roots and brittle branches.

Now decide what ornamental trees you want to plant. Get them in first, especially in the rhododendron areas to provide shade. The best gardens are landscaped in layers and trees form the top layer giving the garden a three-dimensional look.

Finally you can now start the detailed planning for the plantings. However, rather than working with pencil and paper, it is more fun to experiment and discover what plants grow well and what plants you enjoy growing. You can always move plants around if an idea does not seem to work. Rhododendrons are particularly easy to move in their early years. As a result, our garden planning often consists of moving rhodos in the Winter and seeing how the colour and foliage balance works in the Spring. The process of trial and error goes on until the plants get too big to move. It would be a lot easier if rhodos didn't grow so much!