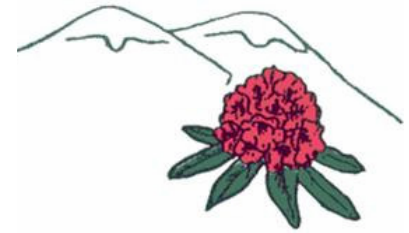


THE RHODOVINE

THE MOUNT ARROWSMITH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Volume 19, Issue 2

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February, 2007

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February Speaker

Ron Knight is, by now, a familiar face to MARS members. He was one of the judges at last year's Rhododendron and Plant Sale and a guest speaker a month later. As a confirmed rhodoholic, he enjoys speaking to garden clubs on the island, the mainland and on the Sunshine Coast where he makes his home.

A former president of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society, Ron and his wife Carla have created Caron Gardens at Pender Harbour, a one-acre lakeside garden where they display more than 500 different rhododendrons, sell plants and teach a variety of gardening courses. Ron is a retired biology teacher.

This month he will talk about Pruning with Confidence, a condensed version of a three-hour workshop, describing some of the basic science involved, as well as suggesting goals, techniques and timetables.

More information about Caron Gardens can be found at:
www3.telus.net/rcknight



MARS Meetings

Second Wednesday of the Month
7:30 pm
Qualicum Beach Civic Centre

February Meeting

Wednesday, February 14th, 2007

Speaker Ron Knight

Subject

Pruning with confidence

March Meeting

Wednesday, March 14, 2007
The very popular panel discussion centers on Rhododendrons of all Seasons. Panelists are Ann DeBrincat and Terry Richmond of Port Alberni, Dick Beamish of Nanaimo and Allen Campbell of Cowichan.

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President's Message

It's getting to be that time of the year again when we get very busy with our fund raising activities. In addition to being a lot of work these activities are a lot of fun.

The activities are:

April 21/07 – Plant Sale, Truss Show and Competition-Chairman is Bert Harding

April 28& 29/07– Oceanside Garden Show- Co Chairwomen are Marilyn Dawson and Barbara Kulla

May 12&13/07– Garden Tour – Chairman - Art Lightburn

A lot of plans are already in place for these activities. What now is required are volunteers to help make these activities as successful as they have been in the past. So either call or talk to the Chairmen/Chairwomen at our meetings and see what's available to help with that would be of interest to you. To be successful we need lots of volunteers.

May 9/07 - Nominations to replace the retiring Club Executives- Chairwomen is Brenda Moore

Rhododendron Earthquake Kit

The following is an article written by David Sellars that appeared in the Rootstalk, June 2001, which is the Fraser South Rhododendron Society's monthly newsletter. Maybe there is something here we could use in Oceanside

The Surrey City page in our local newspaper is an endless source of earnest advice for us lucky residents. We are still being asked to build bat boxes (it appears that demand for bat box kits is low and targets are not being met) and this month we are being encouraged to prepare a Pet Earthquake Kit. This would include bottled water for several days, a container to transport the pet, food, a flashlight and blankets. It struck me that worrying about pets, people and bats is all very well, but what we rhodo lovers need is a Rhododendron Earthquake Kit. On the tour to Washington State, Chris Ballyn and I brainstormed what the contents of such a kit would be.

Just like the pet kit, we would obviously need food and water. As we may be unable to get to Costco after an earthquake, we recommend storage of at least three 8-kg buckets of 10-8-6 fertilizer formulated for rhodos. Water is more challenging. Surrey wants us to install rain barrels on the low end of our downspouts but that would only supply a few rhodos for a week. You would just have to set a few priorities—save R. proteoides and let the R. 'Yellow Petticoats' fry in the post-earthquake sun.

The kit should include wire cables and stakes so that prized specimens that topple over can be righted and supported. The best preparation would be to install the staking system before the earthquake actually occurs but you could spend a lot of time tripping over wires in the meantime. Blankets for emergency mulch should be included so that prized plants do not get in a sulk about not getting the same attention as pets.

As you probably will never get around to bolting your bookshelves to the wall, it would be just as well to have duplicates of a few critical rhodo books in your earthquake kit. You would certainly need Greer's Guide because in the post-earthquake trauma you would have to quickly identify priority rhodos for care and attention.

Finally we would need a pamphlet as part of the kit, giving advice to rhodo lovers in the event of an earthquake. Maybe we can get a grant from Surrey City Hall to prepare it. It would include suggestions on whether to continue deadheading, if the earthquake occurs in the late spring, what to do if so much ground displacement has occurred that you can't find your plants and how to keep other people's pets out of the garden, jumping all over your toppled rhodos and drinking your water, because they had not bothered packaging up a Pet Earthquake Kit.

Ron McMaster

Morsels from Mars
(Flowering in Ken's garden right now)



Photographed by Ken Gibson from his Tofino garden

'R.ririei' (after Rev. B. Ririe of the Chinese Inland Missions and friends of E. H. Wilson)

s. Arboreum s. s. Argyrophyllum. 5', - 5F, VE, 3/3/3 This is an open, upright grower which might bloom as early as February if weather is mild. Oblong lance shaped leaves, up to 6" x 2", are glabrous bright matte green on top with a thin white or greyish indumentum on the undersides. Flowers to 2" long, broadly bell shaped, range from light to dull purple or smokey blue, with distinctive dark purple nectar pouches, and are carried in trusses to 10. (Description courtesy of Greer's Guide book)

How to Select a Rhodie at Your Local Nursery Jan D. Kelley. Drain, Oregon

Over 30 years ago I purchased my first rhododendron for a Mother's Day present. I still have a vivid picture of proudly presenting it to her on Sunday morning after selecting it the day before from a local nursery. Like most beginners I was looking for a big plant with lots of blooms that didn't cost any more than a 16-year old boy could afford. However, with the passing of time I now realize that I was fortunate to have purchased a quality plant without really knowing what I was doing. Today when I purchase a new variety several criteria come to mind before I make my purchase. As there are some readers of the journal who are new to rhododendrons, I will try to identify some of the things I look for when selecting a new plant for my yard. The following general topics are not necessarily in any specific order but seem to be worth consideration prior to selecting a plant:

Learn about climate. Get knowledge of local climatic conditions with special attention to the most extreme winter temperature in the last five years. This information is typically available from the local airport, radio or TV weather station, or local newspaper. This extreme cold temperature is critical as most all rhododendrons sold are rated for hardiness. The hardiness rating is a *generally* accepted temperature that the plant will endure and survive. Notice I said the plant and not the flower buds. The rationale behind plant hardiness is that you can afford to lose the buds on a given year, but not the plant. Rhododendrons are generally rated from H-1 (will survive to minus 25 degrees F) through H-6 (will survive at plus 30 degrees F). **Talk to local gardeners.** Talk with neighbors and rhododendron club members about varieties that they have had for several years. Discuss with them how frequently the plant flowers, when it blooms, and where in their yard they have it located, i.e., in the shade, in full sun.

(Continued on next page)

Read about rhodies. Background reading about rhododendrons in one of the several books that are available is helpful. Several of the books have many excellent color pictures. I would recommend any of the following authors as good resources: Van Veen, Greer, and Cox. Each of the authors provides good description of flowers, plant habit, bloom period, and hardiness in a very understandable form.

Visit nurseries. Visit several local nurseries, if available, to view their selection of rhododendrons. Find a rhododendron knowledgeable sales person and seek his/her opinions about varieties that do well locally. Generally, retail nurseries tend to sell "tried and true" varieties that have stood the test of local time. Frequently, your choice will be quite limited in the number of different varieties that are available. When you have all of the general information identified and are ready to make your choice - that one plant that is going in that special place in your yard - I suggest that you have the following in mind:

Ultimate Size. How large will the plant be at 10 years of age? Standard varieties are about 6 feet at 10 years. Semi-dwarfs are about 2 to 4 feet at 10 years of age and dwarfs are about 1 1/2 feet at 10 years of age.

Plant age. Know the plant size that you want to purchase: are you after instant landscape or are you willing to grow with the plant.

Location. Know that the variety you want meets the conditions of your location, i.e., full sun, semi-shade

Plant health. When you make the final choice the foliage of the plant you select should be dark green and vigorous looking. It should not have burned or spotted leaves. Burned leaves generally result from inadequate water in the summer or excessive cold in the winter. Leaf spotting typically results from some disease condition in the plant. The plant should be uniform and well branched. Stay away from lopsided or crooked plants. The leaves should be free of insect damage. Uniform notching around the border of the leaves generally indicates weevil activity. Other insect damage is evidenced by irregular holes in the leaves. If you want the plant to bloom in the coming season, look for large flower buds on some of the branch ends. I realize that initially all of the above takes a great deal of time, but your labors dramatically increase the chance of purchasing an excellent rhododendron. All too often we buy the plant with the big open flowers only to later realize that it was a mistake. Good Hunting!

Source: JARS V45:No.3:p136:y1991



[MARS San Francisco ARS conference draw.](#)

At the February 14/07 monthly MARS meeting we will conduct a draw for those members who have never attended an ARS convention but would like to attend one. The member whose name is drawn will then be eligible to be reimbursed up to \$400.00 by MARS to help with the convention expenses. To receive the \$400.00 after you return from the ARS conference in San Francisco this April, you will need to produce at least \$400.00 of conference expenses.

If you have any questions please ask them at the meeting before the draw.

MARS Minutes

General Meeting on January 10, 2007

MEETING called to order at 7:40 pm. More than 30 courageous souls braved the wintry weather.

WELCOME GUESTS: Gwen Wright, Stan Parkinson, Kathy and Guy Loyer

MINUTES of the last general meeting November 8, 2006 were approved as circulated.

BUSINESS ARISING: None

CORRESPONDENCE: SOS Executive Director Kevin Wilson writes to thank MARS for its Christmas Party donation.

2006/2007 Executive/Committee Chairmen: Ron McMaster reports that Jean Greig has agreed to be back-up librarian. MARS, however, still needs a volunteer meeting coordinator and Barbara Kulla still needs help with refreshments.

TREASURER: Tony Ansdell outlined briefly the annual report which shows we have a net gain of \$720.54 over the previous year. The current chequing account shows a year-end balance of \$3631.87. He had reports available for those interested.

WAYS and MEANS: Tonight's door prize was Courtenay Lady donated by Harry Wright; other prizes were Rhododendron Kalinka, evergreen azalea Hino Crimson and Rhododendron Lem's 121 and a 3kg package of Norm Todd's rhodo fertilizer as a substitute prize.

REFRESHMENTS: Goodies for the meeting were provided by Bill and Kay Burgoyne, Allen and Mary Gillespie and Anne Gutsche. Refreshment chair Barbara Kulla is now bringing a sign-up sheet to meetings so that members can pick a date for their cookie donations.

SUNSHINE: Maria Bieberstein sent cards to Ruth Harding, who underwent hand surgery, and Marlys Diamond who is in Edmonton for knee surgery.

LIBRARY: Judy McMaster received two new books for our collection. Ann DeBrincat donated *Jade Garden*, a UBC publication, written by Peter Wharton, Brent Hine, and Douglas Justice. MARS purchased *Plant Propagation A to Z: Growing Plants for Free* by Geoff Bryant.

GARDEN TOUR: Mark your calendar. The dates are May 12 and 13.

TRUSS SHOW and PLANT SALE: Bert Harding reminded members the show is on April 21 at the Parksville Curling Club, same as last year and stressed he would be seeking volunteers for all sorts of jobs, including cashiers and greeters.

MEMBERSHIP: Bert Harding's summary shows there is a drop in membership, down from 79 to 63. Sixteen memberships were not renewed, some because of illness, a move out of the area and death.

CHRISTMAS PARTY: In Maria Bieberstein's absence, Ron McMaster gave a glowing account of the festivities. About 100 pounds of foodstuffs went to the Salvation Army and the "door prize" ticket sales sent \$130 to the SOS.

SEEDY SATURDAY: MARS will be handing out information on the club and care of rhodos on Feb. 3 from 10 am to 3 pm. Marilyn Dawson is looking for a volunteer or two for that period.

NEW BUSINESS: 1. MARS is shopping for a used digital projector that meets our specifications. Meanwhile we will continue to rent the one from the Civic Centre.

2. After hearing from Harry Wright and Terry Richmond on the subject of a district booth at the VanDusen Garden Show June 7-10, Ron McMaster decided the executive will discuss the subject again at the next meeting.

3. Port Alberni Garden Tour is on the same day as MARS' tour. Executive decided it will not be advertised in the Rhodovine.

4. Marilyn Dawson reported that the Friends of the Library are presenting an afternoon with Des Kennedy reading from his new book at the Echo Theatre, 2 pm on Feb. 24. Tickets are \$10 at the library.

RAFFLE: Don Bridgen won Courtenay Lady, Bert Harding got Hino Crimson and Mary Gillespie took home a pail of fertilizer.

(Continued on next page)

GUEST SPEAKERS: Harry Wright was the first speaker, talking about winter damage in the garden, dealing specifically with repairs to mature rhododendrons. To the delight of his audience, he brought to the meeting several well-launched seedlings, Courtenay Queen x R fortunei, which were there for the taking. Art Lightburn completed the evening, presenting a program on the rhododendron conference in Tasmania, where he and Susan recently visited. Susan's photographs of their visits to several gardens were stunning.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:30 pm
The next meeting will be February 14, 2007.

Acting Secretary
Marilyn Dawson
President
Ron McMaster

EVENTS

RE: SPECIES STUDY DAYS 2007

For the 6th consecutive year a comprehensive study session of the Rhododendron Species will be held at the Rhododendron Species and Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington on the following Saturdays.

April 7 April 21 May 19

The tuition sessions are personally directed by Steve Hootman who is the Co-Director at the garden and well known for his expertise and for his many plant expeditions and new plant introductions.

No prior knowledge of the subject material is necessary as the course begins with the fundamentals and progresses in detail at each session. The format will follow that of previous years but will introduce new material for the benefit of past participants. The majority of participants will be individuals from previous sessions who continue to attend for the positive experience that the sessions generate.

The sessions begin promptly at 10:00 a.m. and end at approximately 4:00 p.m. The mornings are generally spent reviewing various topics of botanical interest relative to the study of rhododendron species followed by instruction and keying of plant material which is currently blooming in the garden at that time. After a short break for lunch between 12:00 -12:30 the afternoon is spent touring the RSBG and identifying and discussing the wonderful collection of rare and exotic plants. The course fee is \$35.00 for each session x 3 and the entire proceeds are used to provide a stipend for instruction and a donation to the garden. A nominal sum of \$5.00 is charged for lunch for those wishing to participate.

In past years, participants from Vancouver Island have traveled to the mainland on Friday evening prior to the session and stayed with a host overnight returning Saturday evening.

It has been our collective experience that it is desirable to cross the international border before 7:00 a.m. en route to Federal Way in order to avoid any delay at the border resulting from a change in the custom officers and also to avoid the early morning Seattle traffic. This has usually permitted a leisurely drive to Federal Way with arrival at about 9:15 a.m. and plenty of time for breakfast at the location of choice, but for most of us at the Old Country Inn. Arrangements for car pooling will be made. The facilities for instruction at the RSBG are limited and a maximum of 28-30 people can be accommodated. It would be helpful to confirm your interest as soon as possible and to forward payment to the undersigned. Should unforeseen circumstances arise that prevent an individual from attending a specific session, a refund will be issued.

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