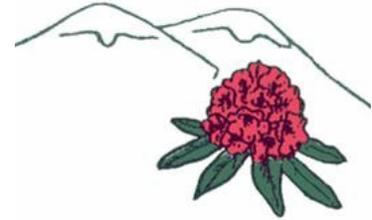


THE RHODOVINE



THE MOUNT ARROWSMITH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

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This month's speaker

Wednesday 9th April

On the West Coast, Wanda McAvoy is well known as the grounds keeper and head gardener for the District of Ucluelet, a job she has held for more than 20 years. She also wears another hat, Special Projects Coordinator for Parks and Public Works.

Wanda first became interested in rhododendrons in the 1980s when the late rhodo propagator Bob Sinclair invited her to visit his nursery Misty Garden. She was hooked and eager to learn more. Then in 2000 she joined Mayor St. Jacques and Dave Godfrey on a committee to honor the legacy of George Fraser.

When Dave and Noni moved to the Courtenay area, Wanda became chairman where she and a small group of volunteers have propagated a few plants of Fraseri and John Blair from the original plants in Ucluelet. Her talk this month will be on the George Fraser rhodos.

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MARS Meetings

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

May Meeting

Wednesday 14th

David Rowe is well known in gardening circles for his work in bonsai. He will be talking to the club on his passion, a chance to relax after the hectic Garden Tour weekend.

Want Ads

Volunteers Needed

Plant Sale & Truss Show

19th April

Contact Marilyn Dawson

752-3694

PARS visit to Qualicum

22nd -23rd April

Contact Mary Parker

7541981

Oceanside Plant Sale

26th & 27th April

Contact Marilyn Dawson

752-3694

Garden Tour

10th & 11th May

Contact Linda Derchack

752-3545

President's Message

"The first of April is the day we remember what we are the other 364 days of the year."

- Mark Twain

Winter departed 20 March and a sense of 'milder weather to come' prevailed- then spring arrives and it feels like 'early winter' once more! Nevertheless, our genus rhododendron blooms on, cool temperatures notwithstanding. Currently, my 'Arctic Pearl' is looking just like an apple tree in full May blossom... and speaking of May...

MARS is about to enter its busiest two months of the year, April and May. Beginning with the Truss Show and Plant Sale on 19 April, then one week later the Oceanside Garden Sale in Coombs, swiftly followed in May by our Mother's Day Garden Tour, these three events need considerable volunteer manpower. Without these events our club would not be able to financially support and subsidize many of its activities, beginning with our mandate to promote knowledge of the genus rhododendron, to area student academic support through bursaries and end of season gatherings and Christmas parties.

Recognizing that we do not have the membership numbers that we enjoyed ten years ago (ca. 60%), it becomes more important than ever that each member do his or her 'bit' for the club. The volunteer jobs are many; however, none of them is onerous and can be easily accomplished by all, from new members to old. So please, when you are asked, give a little extra time for the wellbeing of the club. Remember, the social aspect of our club, how we interact, is as important as learning about our favorite genus, rhododendron.

See you all on the 9th April.

John England

Photographs in this issue are taken by Susan Lightburn, except for those in the 'Rhodo's rediscovered.'

Member' Corner

Garden Tour Volunteers needed 10th & 11th May

Remember - you get a free ticket to the garden tour for your volunteer effort.

Many thanks, Linda Derkach 752-3545

Gardens requiring sitters, please consider one of these gardens:

1180 Ganske Road - Sunday 10 to 1, or 1 to 4

931 McFeely - Sunday 1 to 4

424 Mill Road - Sunday 10 to 1

228 West Crescent - Sunday 10 to 1, or 1 to 4

Valdez/Primrose Street - Sunday 10 to 1 or 1 to 4

1271 Winchester Road - Saturday 1 to 4

or Sunday 1 to 4

2261 Grafton Road - Sunday 10 to 2 or 1 to 4

1061 Harlequin - Sunday 10 to 1 or 1 to 4

Lorne Hepting 3925 Island Hwy Sat 10-1



'Snow Lady' Leucapis x ciliatum

30" -5deg.F E 3-4/4-5/4

White compact flowers in shade

Organic Farm Awareness

By Judy Mc Master
Vendor Co-ordinator for our
Truss Show and plant Sale.

Barbara's letter below creates a kind of gently-forced sensitivity to those who grow our food. I started vegetable gardening a few years ago, but after losing bumper tomato and potato crops to blight and a growing addiction to rhodos, gradually that gardening dwindled to lettuce only. Soon my raised veggie beds were filled with rhododendrons!

Now I hope to travel to Nanoose, or elsewhere, to buy farm-grown organic vegetables, except for lettuce. It is sad for growers like Barbara and Lorne to see the percentage of local produce sold decrease. Perhaps our members should, as people who enjoy growing plants too, promote buying local produce, not only for the obvious advantages, good healthful food for all members of our community, but to patronize those in our area who contribute to the enrichment of this beautiful part of the world. This is not to say that many of us are not doing so now, but we can sharpen our awareness of the realities that farmers face. Reading her letter may be enlightening for some of our members.

“We will be attending your spring sale, not because we think it will do the farm income any serious good but because we are members of this community.

If I asked professional advice whether we should attend they would definitely say no.

The net income for farmers on this island for 2006 was -\$20,000. I'm sure you are aware that all your friends like to garden, but when it comes to purchasing produce they go to their local supermarket and purchase imported product. Currently the percentage of local food produced for Vancouver Island is about 5% or less.

It is sad for Lorne and me that we have worked our heads off for the past 22 years, only to see that number fall.

I am telling you this because I think the executives of gardening clubs and organizations should take a leadership role in changing that reality, either by growing their own produce, or making sure they purchase locally.

Otherwise we farmers may as well pave it and forget it.

I am sending this message to all gardening clubs and organizations who request our support for their community events, so you need not feel that you are being singled out.

Barbara
(Lorne and Barbara Edbell are owners of Nanoose Edibles Farm.)

MARS Oceanside Plant Sale 26th & 27th April

(Bradley Centre, Coombs)

Barbara Kulla chairman of the plant sale is still looking for donations of plants and can supply pots for those who need some more. So when the snow goes check out your gardens and see if some of your beautiful plants can be divided or donated.



‘Eider’ 18”, -ve 5 deg, E-EM, 4/4/4
Flowers are compact little balls.
Tight plant with spreading habit.

General Meeting Minutes

Wednesday March 12, 2008

MEETING AT: 7:30 pm. at Q.B. Civic Centre.

Minutes of the February meeting appeared in the Rhodovine. They were accepted as presented.

GUESTS: Geoff Ball, Colleen Craig, Vickie Knight.

CORRESPONDENCE: Newsletter from Cecil & Molly Smith Garden in St. Paul, Oregon.

REFRESHMENTS: Bernie Schmidt, Sandra Hemsworth, Don Bridgen.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Tony Ansdell's February statement reports an overall total of \$5088.74. Income included \$197 from the joint venture with Nanaimo; expenses were for MARS insurance, membership dues to the ARS, speaker's expenses including wine glasses as speakers' gifts.

GARDEN TOUR: Chairman Linda Derkach said there were 14 gardens on tour for the Mother's Day Weekend. The board was set up at the back of the room for volunteers to sign on as sitters. She said Milner Gardens has agreed to sell the tickets which will include a discount coupon, offering \$2 off admission to the gardens. Milner members will be allowed to use the discount elsewhere in the gardens, said Geoff Ball, who was on hand signing up members at a special rate.

TRUSS SHOW: Bert Harding said the Truss show plans are moving right along and the signup board was also at the back of the room. Chris Southwick and John Denisiger from Nanaimo would be the judges and members were encouraged to bring lots of blooms. The categories were basically the same except for one: foliage will have a large-leaf and small-leaf ribbon. He reminded the audience that there was a novice category open to members who had not been members for more than three years. He asked for help in the final stages of mounting the show because of his imminent surgery. He expects to be able to consult but needs an organizer and supervisor; also two pickups were needed to transport shopping carts to and from the stores.

MEMBERSHIP: Bert Harding said there were now 56 memberships, 91 members in all. He has found a name tag supplier of metal tags which will cost more than the old tags. Permanent cards will cost new members \$5 if they want them. Interim cards in clear plastic will be available.

WAYS AND MEANS: Susan Lightburn listed the raffle prizes: R.Hachmann's Belona, the door prize, R. Sonatine, R. Carmen, a trillium and some dahlia bulbs.

NEW BUSINESS: 1. John England reminded members that the Peace Arch members were visiting us April 23

and 24 and MARS visit to White Rock was scheduled for May 21 and 22.

2. For visitors to the west coast, he said Stubbs Island was open Victoria Day weekend and well worth the trip; the garden was created in the 1800s.

3. Members of the Nanaimo club will be visiting the gardens of Lorne Hepting and Anne Gutsche this spring...

4. He asked for a volunteer to act as a nominating committee of one.

DRAWS: The door prize was won by Joyce Ansdell and the prizes went to Bernie Mazur, Lorne Hepting and Bert Harding.

GUEST SPEAKER: Bill Stipe from Whidbey Island presented "Rhodos 101: A Brief Introduction to Growing Rhododendrons, covering taxonomic classification, our West Coast species, hybrids, care and potential problems. Lots of practical information and although he called it an introduction, there were still plenty of interesting tidbits for "old pros".

MEETING ADJOURNED AT: 10 PM



Bill Stipe and Art Lightburn checking out the Rhodos.

Editor's Corner

Due to all of our activities, this is the most busy magazine of our year.

Thank you to all those members who contributed to make this month's magazine possible.

Send **your magazine contributions** to Ann Robertson.

752-5997 annierobertson@shaw.ca

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Show

Truss Show Regulations

1. Eligibility.

Exhibits will be accepted from members of MARS and non-members in the area.

All members of a household will be considered to be 1 exhibitor.

2. Entries

All entries shall have been grown by the exhibitor for at least 6 months and primarily cared for by the competitor. Only 1 entry of each name in each category per exhibitor. In other words, R. macabeanum, for example could be entered in the species category as well as in the appropriate color category. Extra blooms are encouraged and will be for display only.

All entries should be **taken from plants grown without artificial protection.**

3. Definitions

- 1) **Species:** Botanically identified plants originating from seeds or cuttings.
- 2) **Hybrid:** Plants resulting from crossbreeding of more than one species, hybrid, or combination thereof.
- 3) **Truss:** a single rachis. i.e. all florets coming from one bud
- 4) **Spray:** Multi-stems emerging from a single stem
- 5) **Hammerhead:** Truss with multiple rachis emanating from a single terminal
- 6) **Special exhibition table** for Vireyas, Madenii and other tender Rhodos.)

4. Exhibitors

Shall make an effort to identify the exhibits.

Entries will be accepted from 7:00 to 8:45 am at the Parksville Curling Club.

Entries and ribbons should be removed between 2:00 and 3:00 pm.

5. Preparation of Trusses.

Blooms should be selected when they are at the peak of their development.

Trusses should be cut from well watered plants during the coolest part of the day.

Trusses should be carefully groomed. Damaged or dead twigs, leaves, bud scales and flower pips should be removed. Cleaning or washing of leaves is advised but no artificial polishing is allowed.

Prepare the cut end of the truss or spray so that water is taken up readily.

Use suitable containers to retain water during transportation to the show.

The use of chemical additives to preserve bloom freshness is approved.

Guide for Participants

Entry of Trusses will take place from 7:00 am to 8.45 am

1. Register

When you enter the curling club, go to the registration table and speak to a registrar. You will be assigned a competitor number and given a number of dots with your number on them, one for each Truss you are entering.

Go to the Labelling Table and give them your list of Truss names.

You can enter as many trusses as you wish in one category but they must be of different names

2. Put Trusses in bottles.

The Registrars will direct you to a table to work on. Nearby is a table with bottles and corks. Take one bottle for each Truss, put one of your dots on the bottom of each bottle (Don't turn the bottle over, it's full of water), put a Truss into each bottle using the corks to secure the Truss if you need to.

3. Label Trusses

Leave your Trusses on the Work Table and go to the Labelling Table. There, you will be given a label for each Truss on your list. Take your Trusses and labels to the Holding Tables at the exhibition level.

4. Position Trusses in their categories

Take your Trusses, one or two at a time, from the Holding Table and place them in the appropriate categories. Put the labels on a stand in front of each Truss. All categories will be clearly labeled. There will be people available to help you choose the correct category for your Trusses. Entries in the wrong category such as a white rhodo in the Red Category) will not be judged. Return to the Holding Table and get your next Trusses. Repeat until all your Trusses are in place. All Trusses must be in place by 8:45 am so that judging can start on time. Trusses that are not in position by 8:45 am will be for exhibition only.

Catagories.

Best in Show, large leaf; Best in Show, small leaf; Blue Collection, (includes purples);

Colour Collection

(includes colours not covered elsewhere);

Foliage, large leaf; Foliage small leaf;

Lax Truss; Pink; Species; Spray; White.

Hammerhead; Novice; Popular Choice;

Please bring as many extra trusses for the exhibition table as you can. They make such a great show .

Rhodos Rediscovered: Rhododendrons By Kathleen Friemond

As a young surveyor in a Royal Canadian Air Force construction unit based at Ucluelet during the Second World War, Bill Dale, much like every other young man at the base, was immersed in the day-to-day news from Europe and the support requirements of the seaplane base in the village. Gardens were probably the farthest thing from his mind. However, had he wandered into the village and chanced upon the property owned by George Fraser, he would likely have been as captivated with the garden as was one-time resident Marion Crossley, who later wrote: “Many ornamental trees: plums, cherries, almonds, several varieties of oak and birch as well as numerous less common deciduous ones grew in the garden. There were also monkey puzzles, green and variegated hollies, a Japanese umbrella pine, a magnolia, and many varieties of evergreens, both the ones that were indigenous to the region and species from elsewhere. During the summer the garden was enriched by masses of annuals and biennials. Sweet peas climbed up the shed wall. There were great quantities of foxgloves, hollyhocks, brilliant patches of marigolds and zinnias, cosmos, geraniums, nasturtiums, lupins, delphiniums, ageratum, poppies and fragrant lilies. In shady corners were beds of tuberous begonias which added to the kaleidoscope of colours.” But George Fraser’s main focus was not on the colourful beds so vividly recalled by Crossley but rather the thousands of rhododendrons he nurtured on the property. Hybridizing became his passion and he was one of the earliest rhododendron hybridizers in North America.



R. Fraseri

R Albert Close

R George Fraser

R Mrs Jamie Fraser

Fraser died in 1944 near the end of the Second World War, and in 1948 his property was subdivided into building lots. The memory of his contribution to the genus faded over the years until Bill Dale, along with the late Dr. Stuart Holland (former chief geologist of B.C.) and Frances Gundry, an archivist with the provincial archives, researched his legacy. Bill, Stuart and Frances, all members of the Victoria Genealogy Association, first collaborated to research the history of John Blair, who designed and landscaped Beacon Hill Park in Victoria in the late 1880s. Blair hired a fellow Scot – George Fraser – as his foreman. Many of the shrubs and trees planted by Blair and Fraser can still be seen in the park – probably the most striking is a group of four *Rhododendron* ‘Cynthia’ near Fountain Lake. The 6-m (20-ft.) plants are covered each spring with a mass of red-pink blooms. (Fraser would later name one of his most beautiful hybrids for his friend Blair.) Following their research on Blair, the trio decided to focus on Fraser. They walked the streets of Ucluelet to track down rhododendrons planted by the pioneer, and interviewed residents of Ucluelet who could still remember the old man who taught local children to play the fiddle and gave sprigs of white heather (for good luck) to visitors to his garden. They unearthed reports on his work in early gardening publications and found correspondence between Fraser and the noted hybridizer Joseph B. Gable of Stewartstown, PA, as well as with the curator of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Although Fraser’s work had largely been forgotten when they started their research, they found he was well-respected by his peers during his lifetime. Fraser wrote: “In 1925 I was made a corresponding member of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, an honour reserved for those preeminent in horticulture.” Three years later he was elected first vice-president of the Pacific Coast Association of Nurserymen and in 1936 he was honoured as the first life member of the Vancouver Island Horticultural Association.

While Fraser was an enthusiastic hybridizer, relatively few plants were named and unfortunately all his botanical and horticultural notes were destroyed by a fire after his death. His most well-known hybrids include the following: *R. 'Fraseri'* – Fraser crossed *R. canadense* with *R. japonicum*. The cross bloomed in 1919 and was named *R. 'Fraseri'* by William Watson, curator of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, and the Arnold Arboretum in Boston. *R. 'Fraseri'* is fairly widely grown in gardens on southern Vancouver Island, and in the Ucluelet area there are plants estimated to be over 50 years old.

'Albert Close' – In 1914 Fraser began hybridizing *R. californicum* (now called *R. macrophyllum*) with *R. maximum*, *R. catawbiense* and *R. ponticum*. A cross between *R. macrophyllum* and *R. maximum* resulted in a hybrid described as "straggly" with bright rose-pink blooms "with the throat heavily spotted with chocolate red." This hybrid was named by his friend Joseph Gable after the chief propagator at the U.S. Department of Agriculture plant introduction station at Glen Dale, Maryland.

R. 'George Fraser' – A hybrid of *R. macrophyllum* and *R. maximum*. Only two original plants of *R. 'George Fraser'* are known to exist. One of these is growing in the original garden of Joseph Gable in Stewartstown, PA. The other was discovered in the Gable section of the rhododendron collection in the Tyler Arboretum at Lima, PA. A cutting from this plant was given to VanDusen Botanical Garden in Vancouver, and there are two others in Beacon Hill Park.

R. 'John Blair' – In 1924 Fraser crossed *R. arborescens* and *R. occidentale* (with *R. occidentale* the seed parent) to create this fragrant rhododendron, which he named after his friend John Blair. In the 1964-5 catalogue of Eddie's Nursery in Vancouver the John Blair hybrid is described as "similar in size and shape to *Mollis azalea*, flowers pure white and produced in late spring, to 7 feet." In 1990 Bill was given a *R. 'John Blair'* and he registered it with the American Rhododendron Society. This plant is now also flourishing in Beacon Hill Park. Currently *R. 'John Blair'* is not known to be available anywhere in the trade; however, there may be some specimens growing in old gardens in Vancouver. One example grows on a subdivision that was part of Fraser's original property and there are two other known plants, also in Ucluelet. *R. 'Mrs. Jamie Fraser'* is a cross between (*R. arboreum* x *R. macrophyllum*) and *R. arboreum*. In a 1930 letter Gable writes: "Fraser grows a hybrid that is so dark it is about black judging from the dried flowers he sent me. He claims it is the darkest shade he ever grew and calls it Mrs. Jamie Fraser." The hybrid was named after his sister-in-law (who later inherited his Ucluelet property). In 1935, Gable mentions it again in a letter as being "three quarters *R. arboreum* and one quarter *R. californicum*." The only specimen known to exist was identified in 1987 in a garden in Tofino. The owner of the garden salvaged the shrub from an old planting of Fraser rhododendrons at Wickannish Inn. Eighteen other hybrids are recorded in letters Fraser wrote to Gable, but none of these are known to still exist. Curiously, Bill says he was not particularly interested in gardening when he began researching Fraser. However, over the years he collected eight of the Fraser hybrids that flourished on his 3/4-acre Sidney property. When he sold the property recently, he donated the Fraser hybrids to Beacon Hill Park, where they are a living tribute to Bill and his passion for George Fraser's rhododendrons. Bill's personal reward for focusing attention on Fraser comes each May when the Ucluelet-Tofino Highway into Ucluelet is ablaze with the purples and pinks of 200 rhododendrons, donated by the five ARS chapters on Vancouver Island and planted by George Fraser Committee members and community volunteers. This roadway of bloom reminds residents and visitors of the contribution made by the 50-year Ucluelet resident, and Bill feels that the pioneer plantsman is finally receiving due recognition for his early work in hybridizing the rhododendron.

The information in this article was researched by Bill Dale, Dr. Stuart Holland and Frances Gundry.

Subsequently, Bill Dale became an advocate for the legacy of George Fraser and has strived to ensure that the early hybridizer's work is recognized and honoured.

Printed by courtesy of Garden Wise Magazine 2005/01/01

Editors note "We are proud to have Bill Dale as an associate member of our club."

Milner Gardens 7th Annual Spring Plant Sale

Apr 19 & 20, 10 am to 4 pm.

Admission by donation.

Add a piece of this Heritage Garden to your own garden.

Milner Gardens & Woodland

2179 West Island Highway

Qualicum Beach, BC V9K 1G1

Tel: (250)752-8573

Big Plant Sale at Linda Rehlinger's

(downsizing sale)

Saturday, April 12, 9:00 - 1:00

1271 Winchester Rd. (Just down the street from Butterfly World in Coombs)

Hundreds of pots of perennials and shrubs, many unusual and ... GREAT PRICES!

Eaglecrest Annual Plant ,Flower and Shrub Sale

Sunday, April 27, 10:00 – 1:00,

1093 Eaglecrest Drive



‘Rosevallon’ 2’ 5deg.F EM 3/5/3 Bright Red compact spreading, part shade, purple underside of leaves.

“Both these Rhodos would make lovely entries in the truss show.”

Cilpinense 3’,5 deg.F E, 3-4/3-4/3-4 Blush pink to deeper pink flowers, deep forest green leaves.