

Indumentum

Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

March Meeting:

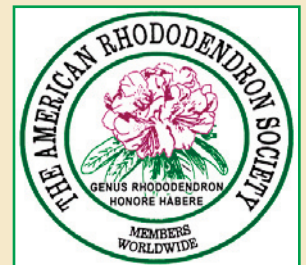
Thursday, March 17, 7:30 p.m., Floral Hall at VanDusen Botanical Garden

Program:

Alleyne Cook, His Years at Sunningdale

Plant Sales:

Diane Kehoe, Harold Fearing



Vancouver Chapter

2005 Executive

President: Louis Peterson

Vice President: Lothar Mischke

Past President: Ron Knight

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Alleyne Cook and His Years At Sunningdale Nursery

Only the very newest members of the VRS will not know Alleyne Cook, a founding VRS member and premier authority on rhododendrons in our area. Alleyne has kindly agreed to act as a substitute for Hank Helm, originally scheduled to speak on March 17th, who has had to cancel.

Alleyne was born in New Zealand, where he did his first apprenticeship with the famous nursery Duncan and Davies. He then went on for an advanced apprenticeship at another even more famous nursery, Sunningdale, in England. The experience at Sunningdale was evidently a determining one in Alleyne's career, leading him first to the Royston Nursery on Vancouver Island, which was something of a pioneer in the area in raising species rhododendrons, and owned by Ted and Mary Grieg, then to Stanley Park where an unusually enlightened Parks Director, Bill Livingston, recognized his extraordinary capabilities. As a result Alleyne created the Ted and Mary Grieg Rhododendron Garden, which we all know and value highly. In addition to this fine garden and collection, he is also known particularly for moving entire collections of large rhododendrons, to VanDusen Gardens, to the University of Victoria, and elsewhere. He is a kind of doyen of rhododendron culture, not only in this area, but in Canada and beyond.



R. Mrs. G.W. Leak

continued on page 2

*Photo of East Creek valley (above),
By Adrian Dorst, at www.wildernesscommittee.org*

But it was his work at Sunningdale, with its spill over to Towercourt, Ray Wood at Castle Howard, and Windsor Great Park, that still has major historical implications for international horticulture, and this will be the subject of his talk, entitled 'My Years at Sunningdale'. Alleyne has contributed slides to the archives at Windsor Great Park at the request of its present Keeper, Mark Flanagan (who will speak to us next October), and people are still talking about his superb lecture at the 1999 ARS Annual Convention in Bellevue, Washington, which also dealt with this important period in horticultural history. It was at this convention, too, that he received the ARS Gold Medal, to a standing ovation. But he has spoken widely, and we are most grateful to him for 'stepping briefly out of retirement' and into the breach in the VRS speakers' programme this March. British Columbia gardeners are fortunate to have him as one of us, and nobody should miss his lecture the evening of March 17th.



R. 'Damozel'

Joe Ronsley

Rhododendron of the Year Candidates for 2008

Your assistance is solicited in the selection of "Rhododendron of the Year for 2008". Some background may be helpful for those of you who have not been involved in this process previously. Starting in 2002, we have selected, with ARS membership input, rhododendron of the year in the following categories: Elepidote, Lepidote, deciduous azalea, and evergreen azalea. The past selections are:

	Elepidote	Lepidote	Deciduous Azalea	Evergreen Azalea
2002	Ken Janeck	Ginny Gee	R. schlippenbachii	Hino Crimson
2003	Taurus	PJM	Homebush	Purple Splendor
2004	Percy Wiseman	Dora Amateis	Arneson's Gem	Fascination
2005	Horizon Monarch	Ramapo	Nifty Fifty	Hilda Niblett
2006	Pt. Defiance	Wee Bee	Washington Centennial	Silver Sword
2007	Nancy Evans	Blaney's Blue	Cecille	Mitsuki

You are requested to select a person in your chapter who will poll the membership for candidate rhododendrons in each category and provide me with the results. The following criteria should be used in making their recommendations:

1. Foliage should have good green color and retain leaves for at least 2 years, (except deciduous azalea).
2. Plant should flower and perform well in your region 4 out of 5 years.
3. Full, compact plant.
4. Plant must be cold hardy, bud hardy, and heat tolerant in your area.
5. All plants must be registered with the ARS.
6. All plants must be easily propagated.
7. Plants must be easily grown in the average garden requiring low maintenance.
8. Plants should be resistant to disease.
9. Propagation material must be available for mass production and availability in 2008.
10. 2008 candidates cannot duplicate previous years selections.

I will need your selection by March 15th. Please provide the number of individual votes for each candidate so we can determine the final winner for our area (Districts 1,2,3). Please contact me if more information is needed. E-mail is the best method for contacting me and providing the final results.

Bill Stipe
ROTY Committee
wstipe@whidbey.com

President's Notes, March 2005

Two special features at our February meeting are worthy of note. One was the re-introduction of the "Early Bloomer" show (at one time called the "Parlour Show"), where Richard Mossakowski, Karen Shuster, Jim Hall, Margaret Charlton and Charlie Sale treated us to displays of delicate and colourful trusses that many of us rarely see – whites, yellows, rose, pinks, crimson, reds – all refreshingly cheerful in the dark days of late winter / early spring.

Anyone interested in early blooms might wish to consult the "Mossakowski Collection" (some 28 different rhodos have flowered since mid-December, or are currently in flower!) – *R. dauricum*, *R. Ledebourii*, *R. moupinense*, *R. mucrolatum*, *R. scarbiflorum*, *R. Sichotense*, R. 'Bo-peep', R. 'Bric-a-brac', R. 'Lee's Scarlet', *R. nobleanum album*, *R. 'Olive'*, R. 'Quaver', R. Seta, R. Tessa and R. Bianca. Examples of *R. lutescens* and *R. spinulferum* were also on show. Details pertaining to early bloomers can be found in Greer's guidebook or on the ARS website at www.rhododendron.org.



Members with early bloomers are again invited to bring trusses for display at our March 17th meeting.

The second feature was a most interesting revival of the "Francisca Bouquet" by Douglas Justice – a highly educational presentation of the plants that are already in or about to bloom at UBC Botanical Gardens.

Many thanks to Barbara Forsyth, who volunteered to help Jackie Clayton with refreshments, and to Ian Forsyth who will assist Jasbir Gill with library duties.

The Chair of District 1, Mr. Harry Wright, reminds us to update our "Proven Performers" list before October 1, 2005. Please send your list of "Performers" to John Priestman, or bring your list to our meetings. This information, prepared from data provided by nurserymen and members of the various chapters, is useful to both the novice and expert. See "Proven Performers" for District 1 on the ARS website at www.rhododendron.org. Only two of the nine chapters have provide lists, and the VRS, Chapter 1, is one of them!

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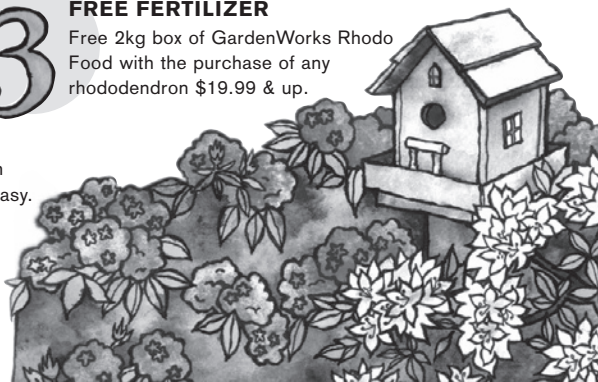
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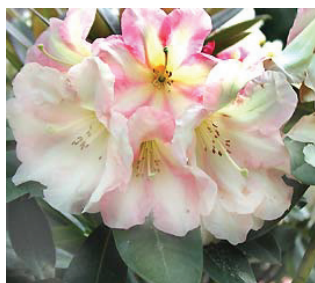
John G. (Jack) Lofthouse, His Rhododendron Legacy

The Rhododendron world, in particular those of us who garden in the Pacific Northwest, will miss pioneer hybridizer, John G. (Jack) Lofthouse, Past President of VRS (1968), VRS Bronze Medalist (1979) and ARS Silver medallist (1999), who died on January 3rd 2005 in his 90th year. Born and raised in Vancouver he began plant hybridizing early but only turned to rhododendrons in the late fifties, creating his first hybrid, a crossing of two post-war-introduced Dutch hybrids 'Jan Dekins' and 'Brittania'. It first bloomed in 1964, a frilly full truss of pink flowers that Jack named '**Pink Petticoats**'. Jack had a way with evocative alliteration in naming, that aptly describes each of his many rhododendron creations.

Jack employed modern scientific propagating technology: heat lamps, timed misting and air circulation with his closed case "Lofthouse Propagator." With it he was able to root his cuttings very quickly and force cuttings to bloom equally quickly, in order to produce a bank of pollen for his crosses. Jack gave full detailed plans for building it in Vol 41 of the ARS journal in 1987 and it really did work.. All told, Jack registered and named 46 crosses over 4 decades of hybridizing. His hybridizing goals paraphrased from The Pacific Coast Rhododendron Story :“ . .perfect fuller trusses. . .ruffled flowers of substance with large same colour calyxes. . . tall conical trusses. . . longer blooming periods and better foliage.” These aims were all achieved in some measure by Jack's hybrids.

Jack achieved many of these improvements by his innate ability to see in hybrid parents the characteristics he wanted to combine for his own hybrids. He was particularly taken with the big bold and beautiful complex hybrids developed by Pacific Northwest Washington state hybridizers: Seattlite, Halfdan Lem's Walloper group '**Point Defiance**,' and '**Lem's Cameo**'; Bainbridge Islander, Ben Nelson's bright yellow '**Hotei**' and Tacoma hybridizer, Hjlmar Larson's '**Mrs..Horace Fogg**'. Jack used them as seed and as pollen parents to create his hybrids. Jack's hybrid '**Arnold Piper**' ('**Anna**' X '**Marinus Koster**') was the same cross that also produced the Halfdan Lem's Walloper Group.

Jack used '**Hotei**' as a seed parent with '**Lem's Cameo**' pollen to produce '**Butter Brickle**' with '**Point Defiance**' pollen to produce '**Canadian Beauty**'. With '**Lem's Cameo**' pollen again he produced '**Sunrise Serenade**' and from an unnamed hybrid's pollen, to produce '**Canadian Gold**'. From '**Hotei**' and pollen from a hybrid in the '**Juanita**' group he got '**Supergold**', which is indeed super! '**Hotei**' as seed parent was also used with pollen from an unnamed hybrid that was a cross of Jack's own hybrid '**Pink Petticoats**' with *R. wardii*, to create '**Fried Petticoats**' and '**Yellow Petticoats**' with a sister '**Golden Moments**' (syn: Golden Days) and with pollen from an unnamed hybrid of '**White Wedding**' and *R. lacteum*, Jack registered '**Lemon Float**'. He did the same using '**Mrs. Horace Fogg**' as a seed parent to produce with '**Point Defiance**' pollen to create '**Sierra Beauty**', '**Lady of Spain**' (syn: 'Flamenco') and '**Canadian Beauty**'. With '**Lem's Cameo**' as seed parent combined with pollen from '**Point Defiance**' he registered '**Excalibur**'; with pollen from an unknown hybrid cross '**Crest**' unknown, came '**Coral Skies**', and '**One Thousand Butterflies**'. With pollen from a '**Dido**' X '**Crest**' unnamed hybrid, he created and registered '**Tofino**'



(photo left) and with pollen from Jack's own hybrid '**Pink Petticoats**' he came up with '**Viennese Waltz**'.

Jack possessed a romantic streak in naming his hybrids and an irreverent one in naming some others. When using the Wada selection of *R. yakushimanum* as a seed parent with pollen from his '**Pink Petticoats**' he created a hybrid, named it '**Ooh-la-la**', and gave it the equally brazen synonym '**Hot Pants**'. For another hybrid from the same cross he turned to Ballet for the greatest of the ballet dance steps '**Pirouette**'. With *R. yakusimanium* again as seed parent and pollen from Oregon hybrid '**Cary Ann**' (a coral red 17 flower truss) registered in 1962 by father and son Oregonians the A.A Wrights, he produced and registered '**Snowstorm**' in 1973.

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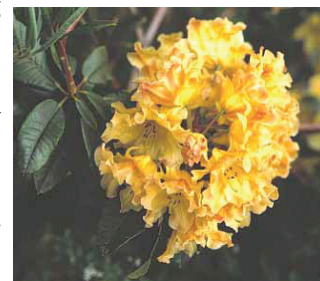
Lofthouse Legacy Continued

Jack again used *yakushmanum* Exbury Form as seed parent with pollen from narrow leaved *R. makonii* to produce a hybrid he registered as **'White Wedding'**. Jack used it as seed parent crossing it with pollen from a form of the *R. elliotii* that Oregonian Del James had named and registered as **'War Paint'**. The cross produced a heavily indumented, narrow leaved plant with opening pink fading to white flowers. Jack registered it as **'Truly Fair'**.

It was probably an unnamed hybrid of Halfdan Lem's **'Fabia'** crossed with *R. yakushmanum* that Jack used as seed parent with pollen from a hybrid of a *R. bureavii* hybrid "crossed with a **'Crest'**, to create and register the hybrid **'Sunup-Sundown'** with the synonym **'Sunrise-Sunset'**. Beside registering this hybrid he also used it as the seed parent with pollen from **'1000 Butterflies'**, an unnamed Bill Whitney yellow hybrid pollen, and **'Lem's Cameo'** pollen to create **'Sierra Stars'** and **'Silver Trumpets'**. With the **'Lem's Cameo'** pollen on **'Sunup-Sundown'** came individual plants that Jack registered as **'Sierra Sunset'**, **'Southern Skies'**, **'Painted Skies'**, **'Enticement'** and **'David Lam'**. The last name is for a gentleman who is a keen gardener. Hopefully there is a Rhododendron **'David Lam'** in the garden of the Lieutenant Governor's Residence in Victoria, as the Honourable David Lam served there from 1988 to 1995 as our Provincial Lieutenant Governor.

Jack used Dutch hybrids **'Jan Dekins'** (a), **'Elsie Straver'**, Gold Medal Boskoop 1966, (b) Rothchild's **'Lady Bessborough'** (c) and **'Lem's Cameo'** (d) as seed parents. He crossed these with pollen from Lem's **'Point Defiance'** (on a), **'Roman Pottery'** (on b), an unnamed hybrid of **'Souvenir of W.C. Slocock'** X *R. dicroanthum ssp apodectum* (on c), and unnamed **'Crest'** X unnamed hybrid (on d) and pollen from his own **'Pink Petticoats'** also on **'Lem's Cameo'** (d) on all in that order, to create and register his 'C' group (a) **'Castanets'**, (b) **'Cherry Custard'**, (c) **'Copper Kettles'**, and (d) **'Coral Skies'** and sister **'Chorus Line'**. The **'Lem's Cameo'** as seed parent when crossed with pollen from Fort Bragg Californian, Dr. Paul Bowman's hybrid **'Ruby Bowman'** created a 15 flower Carmine rose truss with red petioled griffithianum foliage that is bronze when new. Jack named it **'Party Package'** when he registered it in 1984.

Using his **'Butter Brickle'** as seed parent and pollen from a cross of **'Lem's Fabia'** with **'Lem's Early Orange'** he created and registered **'Rainbow's End'**, red in the bud, changing into an orange yellow, each flower with a large same colour calyx. Many of Jack's creations came from the mating of hybrids that were never named or had complex parentage.



R. 'Butter Brickle'

However, he did do several crossings of species. One was *R. strigosum* X *R. arboreum*, to produce **'Promise of Spring'**, *R. arboreum alba* X *R. lacteum* to produce **'Jeda'** (syn: Endeavour/87) and *R. catawbiense album* X unknown hybrid gave **'Peach Perfection'** (syn: Peach Parfait).

In some ways the hybrid he created, named and registered as **'Lofthouse Legacy'** begins to reflect the inheritance he has left us. It is a cross between two of his own creations **'Butter Brickle'** and **'Viennese Waltz'** ('OneThousand Butterflies'). The description is as follows: "Fls vivid orange in bud, opening light orange-yellow center, darkening to light orange at edges, outside light orange; calyx light orange. The Ball shaped truss of 30+flowers is 8" wide by 8" high. Leaves, are elliptic, flat apiculate at apex, cuneate at base, 4" long and 1 3/4" wide, glossy and hairless. The plant is very floriferous, blooms mid to late April, is 2' high and 1 1/2' wide in 6 years from seed, and has an upright growth habit."

However, should we be able to create a park or garden where we can display all 46 of his hybrid creations and be able to observe them over several years we may find that Jack Lofthouse has left us a much greater inheritance than we ever knew.

Clive Justice



R. 'Canadian Beauty'



R. 'Viennese Waltz'

NEWS AND NOTES

2005 Show & Sale



It's that time of year again to start thinking about this year's Show and Sale. It will take place on April 23rd at the Port Coquitlam Recreation Centre located at the corner of Kingsway and Wilson Avenue. This year will mark several changes to our format with the most notable change being a one day only event on the Saturday.

Set up for the growers and truss displays is scheduled on Friday, April 22nd from 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm or Saturday, April 23rd, from 7:30 am - 10:00 am. For those people who wish to set up on Saturday keep in mind that the Sale and Show officially opens to the public at 10:00 am.

Mini Truss Show for March

We are hoping to start noncompetitive truss shows for the general meetings. All members who grow some of the earlier flowering species are welcome to bring in a few trusses for the March general meeting. Please bring your own vase or container and label your truss so they can be displayed for everyone to enjoy.

Volunteers Needed

This year's Show and Sale at the Port Coquitlam Recreation Centre on April 23rd. Several changes will be made at the Show this year. The Show and Sale is changing, with new classification and a one day opening. The Show and Sale is our major fundraiser at this time, to maintain the high standards for which the event is known, it is vitally important to double our effort and make this year's event a success in its new venue. Please consider volunteering your time for this great cause and make your membership truly worthwhile.

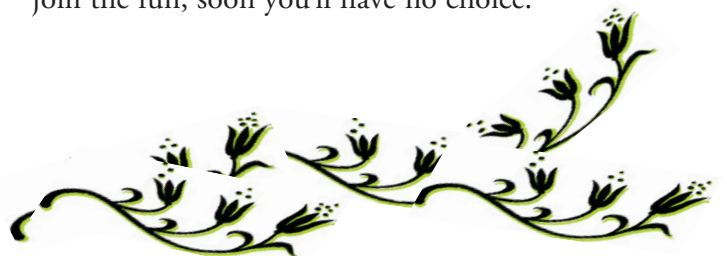


Our Library

Check us out! We not only have many books on Rhododendrons and Azaleas but a wide range of books covering other categories such as Alpines, Bonsai, Rhododendron Companion Plants, Propagation, Trees & Shrubs, Succulents, and more! Talk to Jasbir Gill, our Librarian and she will help you find the right book for your needs.

Where's the Library Book?

New incentive this year, VRS members who have overdue library books automatically qualify for volunteer status at the annual Sale and Show, come join the fun, soon you'll have no choice.



Contact Your VRS Executive by Email

President: Louis Peterson - lpeterso@sfu.ca
Vice President: Lothar Mischke - cindymischke@aol.com
Treasurer: Barbara Sherman - barbaras@sfu.ca
Secretary: Bill Spohn - wspohn4@aol.com
Membership: Carole Conlin - conlin@sfu.ca
Newsletter: Todd & Shannon Major - stmajor@shaw.ca
Directors:
John Priestman - johnpriestman@shaw.ca

Letters to the Indumentum

Rhododendron subsect. *Ledum*

The Vancouver Rhododendron Society has very fine web pages indeed! Concerning the names of the previous *Ledum* species when treated in *Rhododendron*, I wish to remind of two names which are mostly cited erroneously (the latter due to a nomenclatural error which unfortunately was approved and thus made very widely distributed through an authoritative compendium of the genus).

1) According to the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature, *Ledum palustre* is *Rhododendron tomentosum* Harmaja.

2) According to the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature, *Ledum decumbens* is *Rhododendron subarcticum* Harmaja.

However, if you wish to treat *Ledum decumbens* at the subspecies, variety or forma levels (in *Ledum* or *Rhododendron*), you have to use the epithet 'decumbens' (and not e.g. 'subarcticum') according to the nomenclature rules. Of all synonymous epithets, 'decumbens' was the first that was used at the subspecies, variety and forma levels (no matter of which species or under which genus). But I am convinced that *Ledum decumbens* / *Rhododendron subarcticum* is worth of the specific rank: it differs from *L. palustre* / *R. tomentosum* in morphology, chemistry and distribution, at least. Below you will find links to two of my papers on subsect. *Ledum*.

Yours sincerely,
Harri Harmaja, University of Helsinki, Finland
harri.harmaja@helsinki.fi
www.helsinki.fi/people/harri.harmaja/
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New Versus Old Classification

I am one of the three individuals primarily responsible for the VRS Show classification that you are discarding. Although I may be mad, and may claim distant English heritage, I cannot claim to be a botanist, as some of your new classification experts may be. May I make the following observations while peering between the stalactites and stalagmites of my Asian cave:

1. I LOVED the classification and was thrilled with its elegance.
2. However, having suffered as a 'set up' and placement person for many years at your shows, I do realize that the classification was far too cumbersome for regular use. Were we a group of only knowledgeable enthusiasts eager to immerse ourselves in the 'developing' taxonomy (which triggered the show classification) it might have been different, but most of our members could care less.
3. In a way, I am sorry to see you 'regressing' to an older, lumped type of classification, but your efforts to 'streamline' the classes will be, I am sure, greeted with whoops of joy by placement personnel, and no doubt by exhibitors as well.

I wish you well, and will now return to my long, stony sleep.

M. L. Trembath

HELP GROW THE INDUMENTUM

Send your letters to the Indumentum, contact Todd or Shannon Major at stmajor@shaw.ca. We welcome all commentary, questions or submitted articles. Please submit in Microsoft Word, do not lock in any protection or formatting, this makes editing more difficult if not impossible in some cases. If you wish to submit a photograph, graphic or line drawing, the larger the file size, the better the resolution on screen and in print. Small picture and graphic files do not reproduce well. We hope members will enjoy and help grow the Indumentum.



Back to Basics

Rhododendron is a plant for all seasons and locations. But which plant? When you're at that in-between stage in life, where you no longer are satisfied with buying something on the basis of big red flowers and feel it's time to start selecting your plant based on discriminating criteria, you might be tempted to throw in the trowel. Do not despair, dear reader, but consider the following helpful hints to start you on the way towards developing a collection that in a few short years you'll proudly be showing slides of to all your friends and relations.

Rule #1: flowers last but a few short days and you will be looking at the plant itself for many, more. Go for a good-looking plant. You can't go wrong with a *R. yakushmanum* or any of the hybrids in its family, *R. 'Pirouette'*, *R. 'Coral Velvet'*, *R. yak. x 'Corona'*, *R. 'Yaku Fairy'*. What's more, they all have pretty terrific flowers. The noble *R. 'Sir Charles Lemon'* has beautiful foliage and eventually becomes a lovely small tree. Others worth looking for are *R. 'Golfer'*, *R. pachysanthum*, *R. pseudochrysanthum* and, as one noted grower puts it, the Rolls Royce of foliage, *R. campanulatum aeruginosum*.

Rule # 2: keep it simple. Don't set your heart on a plant that isn't available locally or is a known prima-donna. There are so many others which would make you even happier. *R. 'PJM'* is a do'er, a medium-sized plant with aromatic foliage and bright flowers, it always looks good. Another easy-to-grow plant is *R. 'Dora Amateis'* - a vision in white. If you'd like a larger-growing plant, 'The Honourable Jean Marie de Montague' is a good solid red. For something smaller, try *R. impeditum*, a tight bush of vibrant blue.

Rule #3: do some research, it's fun. A combination of walks in a well-labelled garden and browsing through books will do the trick. For the former, VanDusen Gardens, UBC's David Lam Asian Garden and Darts Hill Garden Park are the obvious winners. Then get yourself at the very least a Greer Garden's catalogue, preferably a Greer's Guide. The Cox books are the next step up and well worth it, being more scholarly and with carefully considered evaluations and make use of the [VRS library](#).

A note for the new century - use the internet. Good local sites include the Vancouver Rhododendron Society at www.rhodo.citymax.com, and the Fraser South Rhododendron Society www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth/. Of course there's the American Rhododendron Society at www.rhododendron.org.

Rule # 4: ask the experts. Gardeners like to talk about their plants even more than they like growing them! So go to the VanDusen Plant Sale, [Rhododendron Society Show and Sale](#) and Master Gardener clinics. They provide opportunities to learn from those in the know and perhaps also acquire some choice specimens.

Rule # 5: indulge your fancy. Don't think that there is some ultimate criteria for what's the 'right' plant to grow. If you like purple, grow every shade of it, try *R. impeditum*. For fragrance, try *R. 'Loderi King George'* and other Loderi hybrids.

Rule # 6: if something does well in your garden, get more like it. If you have nothing but sun, go for azaleas rather than the broad-leafed rhododendrons, which prefer some protection. If a *R. williamsianum* hybrid flourishes in your soil, it has enough friends and relations (*R. 'Wilbrit'*, *R. 'Linda'*, *R. 'Bow Bells'*, *R. 'Karin'*, *R. 'Moonstone'*, etc.) that you can appear to have lots of variety while staying within a narrow range.

Rule # 7: don't ever get discouraged by adversity. The experts lose plants occasionally, you will too. Look upon these losses as an opportunity to acquire a new plant.

Rule # 8 - don't throw good money after bad. If *R. 'Purple Splendour'* dies on you twice, forget it. Some plants don't do well in certain gardens. Try something different.

Rule # 9: take a chance. Take the opportunity to get young, inexpensive plants at the [VRS Show & Sale](#) and grow them along. They'll have a better chance of making it if they do their growing in your garden. If they don't turn out to be what you had in mind, they're easily disposed of. Some 'Unknown Warrior' might turn out to be the love of your (gardening) life!

Karen Shuster

Photo above by Ron Knight at his Pender Harbour Paradise



50TH GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

Of special significance this year is the Golden Anniversary of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society. Fifty years ago, at a time when rhododendrons were much less well known, in fact considered unsuitable for the Pacific Northwest, their potential was recognized by various local horticulturists. The inaugural meeting establishing the VRS as a Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society was held on June 22, 1955. The early and subsequent history of the VRS may be found in a timely article "The Vancouver Rhododendron Society History", written by Clive L. Justice, available on our website www.rhodo.citymax.com. Your executive wishes to commemorate the 50th year of the VRS, a success that comes from the dedication and commitment of many members. Send your welcomed suggestions to Louis Peterson.

Time Checking friends who have been VRS members since the early beginnings of the Society as of the dates indicated below:

Rhodes 1959,
Otto 1963, Tremblath 1964
Finley 1966, Weesjes 1967,
Clive and Wanda Justice 1968,
Francisca Darts 1969. Morton 1970,

Early days with The VRS By Margaret Trembath

I moved to British Columbia from Ontario in 1954 and was immediately impressed by the wealth of plant material available to even a fledgling gardener. Dr. J. A. Marcellus of Mission City was a colleague of my husband. He was (and is) an enthusiastic rhododendron grower. I caught the disease from him, and have never wished for a cure. I learned of people like Dr. McKee, the Greigs of Royston, and the group in Vancouver who became a chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. It wasn't until our family move into Surrey that I began to visit the early shows put on by the Vancouver Chapter.

Continued top of next column

The first display I saw was in a Dunbar auditorium (I don't know the exact site or designation). Filled with trepidation, I neared the site – and was absolutely 'blown away' by a plant of "Fabia" at the entrance. I had never imagined such a beautiful colour was available in a rhododendron. I think I managed to actually speak to Ellen Hailey !!

Eventually, I became brave enough to become a member of the group. At this time the Vancouver Chapter was managed by Mrs. Ellen Hailey, ably assisted by her friend and competitor Mrs. Lillian Hodgson. Ellen was Secretary-Treasurer of the group, and other members of the executive were, it seemed to me, only for show or political 'clout'. (In fact, this arrangement lasted for several years). At this time, the group had no regular meeting place, in fact I think it met rather sporadically, and not necessarily each month. I do recall one meeting held at Mrs. Hailey's Dunbar home, where we were privileged to meet and hear from Herr Deitrich Hobbie. One of the pictures he showed was of a plant he named as R. soulei. Each corolla had lobes that were split, making them look like petals and the overall effect was of a bush covered by groups of white stars.

The chapter arranged displays, or shows of cut trusses. One of these was held at the Oakridge Mall (seems to me that Malls were very new then!!). This was the first showing of the group of yellow hybrids developed by the late Murray Stevens, creator of "the Glades". Murray sat behind a table of these flowers, - R. wardii x R. caloxanthum, and revelled in the excitement of the viewers. Now, these would not be considered as hybrids, but as selections of R. wardii itself. The best of them had a colour that was as good as the "Hawks" beginning to come out of England, and almost the equal of the best yellow of the "Hawks" – "Hawk Crest".

Over the years Mrs. Hailey's strangle hold on the club was loosened, and Vancouver Chapter grew, becoming a society in its own right, as well as a Chapter of the ARS.

There were growing pains, of course, but the strength of VRS still lies in its dedicated members, and their continuing determination to further the knowledge of this most entrancing group of plants.