

# Indumentum

## Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

**May General Meeting:** Thursday, May 19, 7:00 p.m.,

At the UBC Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research

**Program:** A Walk in the Garden With Douglas Justice,

Associate Director, Curator of Collections and Research Scientist



Vancouver Chapter

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### A Walk in the Garden With Douglas Justice

Anyone who has been on walk in the garden with Douglas knows that his walks are an expedition into the world of plants. He has a way of making you stop and taste the Decaisnea or feel the indumentum, so the walk becomes more of a multi-sensory experience than just a walk.

Douglas is the Associate Director and Curator of Collections at the University of British Columbia Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research. His primary responsibility is for the living plant collections, which includes more than 8000 taxa from around the temperate world. As a research scientist, (notwithstanding his affinity for rhododendrons and maples) he works as part of the new plant introductions and industry extension team. He also teaches students and the public from his botanic garden classroom.



He began his horticulture training at a large wholesale nursery before moving on to work as a gardener in Vancouver. During his time as a gardener, Alleyne Cook urged Douglas to go to England and train. So in 1990 Douglas travelled abroad and landed in Windsor Great Park where he trained under John Bond, the Keeper of the Queen's Garden. The English training in horticulture at one of the greatest gardens in the world had a profound effect on Douglas' direction in horticulture.

Douglas holds a Bachelor's degree in Horticulture and a Master's in Botany from UBC. For his Masters thesis Douglas chose of all plants to study, the Rocky Mountain Maple (*Acer glabrum*). Truly, there is no other Maple so unworthy of study than *Acer glabrum*. However, Douglas forged ahead and collected or sampled dozens of live plant specimens and herbaria from across the north western USA and British Columbia to produce his Masters thesis entitled "The Systematics of Rocky Mountain Maple, *Acer glabrum* Torr."

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*Title Photo of East Creek valley, by  
Adrian Dors, at [www.wildernesscommittee.org](http://www.wildernesscommittee.org)*



His Masters thesis, 157 pages of light bedtime reading, offers keen scientific observation into leaf mechanics, chemistry and adaptation. The work also provides passages that allow us an insight into his psyche. Such as the following quote describing his affection for leaf alignment, "I believe that the compound (ternate) leaf is better adapted to high incident radiation than a simple palmatifid leaf of comparable surface area. Not only are such leaves inherently better radiators, but simple relaxation of the petioles (the nastic mechanics may not be simple) aligns the leaflets vertically, significantly reducing light exposure to the blade surface. This alignment is analogous to the way that fragile newly emerging leaves are angled away from the (i.e., parallel to) the sun's rays." Who else but Douglas could see such beauty in a Rocky Mountain Maple leaf.

Before moving to UBC Douglas worked as a teacher of horticulture at Kwantlen University College. Douglas is able to challenge his students into thinking in practical and science based ways.

I once watched Douglas train a student to use a pH pen. The student was familiar with pH pen use, yet Douglas was able to point out the obvious which the student had overlooked during years of pH pen usage. While the student was preparing to test a sample of soil, Douglas noticed the student frantically looking for a vessel to put the testing solution in, so



Douglas calmly leaned over and said to the student "why don't you just use the pH pen's lid?" The student who was awestruck at the simplicity and practicality of the suggestion, stood silently and pondered for a minute, then said to Douglas "why didn't I think of that?", and proceeded to finish the pH test. Douglas continues to mentor students and helps to guide them on their path toward horticulture and scientific discovery.

Douglas is a member of the International Plant Propagators Society and the Great Plant Picks Committee. He is also active as a participating member of the Canadian Botanical Gardens conservation efforts to protect native plants and build a national seed bank for Canada.



He is an active member of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society, a founding member and past-president of the Native Plant Society of BC and a founding member and a North American vice president of the North American branch of the Maple Society, as well as and a past-president of the Desert Plant Society of Vancouver. Among his many contributions Douglas sits on the board of the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society, and conducts tours at the annual "Treefest" event held by the Riverview Horticultural Society.

I have met very few people who have the passion, dedication and depth of knowledge that Douglas has for his work. He is widely known and respected by students,



members of industry and the public alike. We are indeed fortunate to have him among us as a Society member. We are particularly fortunate that he is willing to take time out of his busy schedule to walk us around the David Lam Asian Garden (photos on this page). We are sure to see many fantastic rhododendron and other exotic plant material, all amongst the cathedral like setting of lush coastal forest by the ocean.



I invite everyone to join us and enjoy a Walk in the Garden with Douglas Justice, Associate Director and Curator of Collections for the UBC Botanical Garden. Please meet at the UBC Botanical Garden entrance, 6804 SW Marine Drive, Vancouver. The walk will start at 7:00 p.m.

Article and photos by Todd Major



## Identifying the Ted and Mary Greig Azalea Walk



The Ted and Mary Greig Azalea Walk ( photos left and below) in Stanley Park is of considerable historic and horticultural significance to the regional gardening community. This fabulous collection of Azalea and other ornamental plants maintained by the Vancouver Park Board, provides a breath taking colour feast for visitors. Based on an initiative by Bill Herbst, the Vancouver Park Board has agreed to a Special Project, in collaboration with the Vancouver Rhododendron Society. The VRS hopes to identify and label the deciduous azalea in this collection to achieve greater appreciation by the public.

**Numbering the Azaleas** in the collection during April - May 2005. This portion of the work will be done to create a future reference for identification and correlation. Ninety percent of the numbering was completed as of April 30, 2005.

**Photographing leaves, blooms and the Garden** during May until November 2005. This phase of the work needs the assistance of our members who are photographers to help to document the collection during the seasons. We need the collection as a whole photographed to capture the "sense of place" in this extraordinary landscape. Members can undertake this work at their convenience. Pictures from this phase of the work may be used for publication and the photographic record will be invaluable in future.

**Identification of the plants** during April until May 2005. Once the collection is individually numbered, any member can visit the project on their own to identify and photograph plants, then submit their I.D. and photo information to Bill Herbst.

**Taking cuttings** during June until August 2005 / **Propagation of cuttings** 2005 onward. This part of the project is critical and timing will be important. We ask our growers to help with this part of the project to propagate from the collection. Collection timing for taking cuttings will be coordinated and correlated. Preservation of the collection is a primary goal as well as our wish to disseminate the propagated plants to our members and the public.

**Preparation and publication of an illustrated record of the plants** to be sold as a fundraiser for our Society. It is hoped the publication will be of historic interest to the Vancouver Park Board, the regional gardening community and visitors of Stanley Park.

To bring this worthwhile concept to fruition, volunteers are needed and welcomed, please join with the Executive on various aspects of the Project. Contact Director, Bill Herbst at 604-942-1749, email Bill at [hort999@shaw.ca](mailto:hort999@shaw.ca) ; or contact VRS President, Louis Peterson at 604-921-7260, email Louis at [lpeterso@sfu.ca](mailto:lpeterso@sfu.ca)



A Golden Anniversary Commemorative Project by  
the Vancouver Rhododendron Society in Cooperation  
with the Vancouver Park Board

The Vancouver Rhododendron Society 1955-2005

Photos above by Todd Major  
Photo left from the Vancouver Park Board  
Website for Stanley Park at [www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/parks/stanley/#gardens](http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/parks/stanley/#gardens)





Here is a synopsis of the gardens that will open for your touring pleasure this spring. I hope you, the membership, will take every advantage of the opportunities made available by gardeners and organizations dedicated to the advancement of knowledge not only of Rhododendron but of gardens and the Art of the Garden itself. The gardens are open during the times indicated but are best viewed with the guidance of the owner. If you require more information please do not hesitate to e-mail me, at: [cindymischke@aol.com](mailto:cindymischke@aol.com). Also refer to our District 1 web site: [www.rhodos.ca](http://www.rhodos.ca) for links to other chapters and to find scheduled events and tours.

Have a great spring and enjoy your outings!

Lothar Mischke

**MAY 12, 5 PM - 8:30 PM**

Judy Williams and Rachel Mackenzie  
6365 and 6389 Elm Street, Vancouver. Two delightful urban gardens back to back in the heart of the Kerrisdale area of Vancouver.

**MAY 14, 11 AM - 3:30 PM**

Bill and Suzanne Spohn,  
2950 Palmerston Avenue,  
West Vancouver. A wonderful collection of Rhodos, Magnolias and Maples in the idyllic setting of "old" West Vancouver.

**MAY 19**

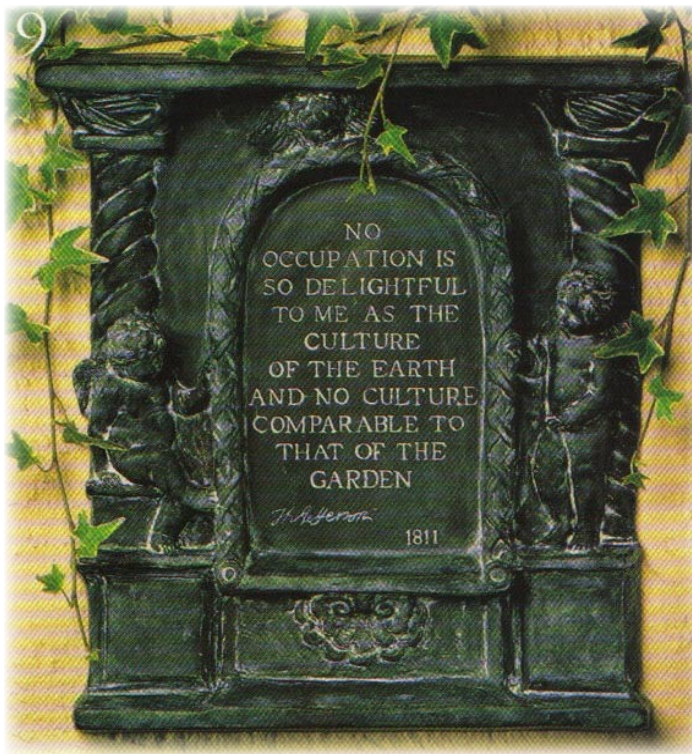
A walk in the David C. Lam Asian Garden at UBC, guided by Associate Director and Curator Doug Justice. Meet at the Garden entrance, 6804 SW Marine Drive, 200 meters northwest of the intersection of 16th Avenue, Vancouver.

**MAY 21, 10 AM - 3 PM**

Lions Bay Open Garden Day: Joe and Joanne Ronsley, 250 Ocean View Road, Richard and Heather Mossakowski 155 Highview Place, Tony and Valerie Cox 90 Cloudview Place. Magnificent gardens on the western slopes above Howe Sound combine incredible Rhododendron collections with terrific "West Coast" views.

**MAY 22, Starting at 3 PM**

Darts Hill Open Garden: Francisca Darts, Corner of 170th Street and 16th Avenue, South Surrey. No superlatives exist which can adequately describe this treasure and all members are invited to celebrate Francisca's 36 years with the VRS.



**MAY 23, 11 AM - 4 PM**

Caron Garden: Ron and Carla Knight, 4622 Beaumont Road, Garden Bay, Pender Harbour. Past VRS President, Ron's Sunshine Coast hideaway retreat in a woodland setting, complete with nursery and teaching centre. Caron Garden Open House Day will feature Rhodo enthusiasts from the surrounding area, a Master Gardener to give advice and Ron's expertise regarding propagating and growing Rhododendron. For more information see the web site at: [www.3telus.net/rcknight](http://www.3telus.net/rcknight)

**JUNE 12, Starting at 3 PM**

Pot Luck Picnic and Garden Tour: Joe and Joanne Ronsley have kindly offered to host our annual Pot Luck Picnic this year. In addition to a congenial gathering of VRS members is the added benefit of an early summer look at Joe and Joanne's woodland paradise.



## NEWS AND NOTES

### Show and Sale

The Annual Show and Sale was an impressively colourful display in the Port Coquitlam Recreation foyer. The colour was greatly praised by many visitors that I met.

The Growers filled the sales area with fine examples of the products of their labours. They graciously donated excellent plants to the raffle table, a value of about \$200 - \$300!!

The Membership table was busy during the first part of the day. Many people received our membership promotional materials to take home and were exposed to the strange mix of MCM Cards, Shovels and 'Teddy Balls'!

The 'Kitchen Staff' (Jackie C., Barbara F. and Barb S.) did a magnificent job of provisioning for our flagging energies, and those of the growers, from early until late.

The PoCo Rec Centre was an excellent venue, colourful, bright, spacious, relatively easy setup, overnight security, a great kitchen facility, good for crowd movement and visibility to non-rhodo-ists and well liked by the growers.

Although revenue and attendees were down from last year, we fulfilled an important part of our purpose as a Society, which is the somewhat intangible: "to encourage interest in and disseminate information and knowledge about the genus rhododendron". See the June Indumentum for a full report on the show.

Well done!

By Louis Peterson



### Membership

Welcome to our new member, TRISH HOPKINS of Vancouver, who joined us at the April meeting. Please look for Trish at the next VRS meetings, including the May 19th UBC walk and the Annual Picnic June 12th.

Guests are always welcome at our meetings. Please join us at a meeting and check out our friendliness and enthusiasm for gardening and rhodies. See the 2005-2006 Program on line at the website [www.rhodo.citymax.com](http://www.rhodo.citymax.com).

Renewals are still being accepted. Membership rates are \$25 for VRS membership; \$50 for ARS/VRS membership (includes 4 journals a year) \$10 for Associate membership (must be a member of another Chapter). NEW Members receive 20 months for the price of 12!

For information, please contact the VRS website or Membership Chair, Carole Conlin, 604-921-7260; Email: [conlin@sfu.ca](mailto:conlin@sfu.ca).

Carole Conlin

### Contact Your VRS Executive by E-mail

President: Louis Peterson - [lpeterso@sfu.ca](mailto:lpeterso@sfu.ca)  
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Directors:  
John Priestman - [johnpriestman@shaw.ca](mailto:johnpriestman@shaw.ca)

### Golden Anniversary

As this is our Golden Anniversary Year, announcements of Commemorative events will soon be coming your way. You may have noticed the recurring Golden Anniversary feature in the Indumenta.

Louis Peterson



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# 50TH GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

## EARLY RECOLLECTIONS OF THE VANCOUVER RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

By Dr. Bob Rhodes, April 2005

I joined the parent body of the ARS about 1959 as a member at-large through Gerald Charlton, who was a Charter member of the parent body in Portland. I met Gerald, who had grown up in Maple Ridge, and was then a landscape architect in Portland, when he returned to Maple Ridge to visit his mother who was my patient.

My first recollection of the Vancouver Chapter of the ARS is around 1960 when I went with Gerri and Eric Langton (Charter members from Maple Ridge) to a chapter meeting in Dunbar. At that time Ellen Hailey seemed to be running the organization. She sent out monthly notices telling where the meetings would be held and ran them for a busy lawyer who was the president. She was very knowledgeable as she was Dr. McKee's medical secretary and he was one of the first people in B.C. to grow rhododendrons from seed which he obtained from the Dexters in New York. His property was in Abbotsford and



R. Bob's Blue

The next memory I have is a meeting at Ellen's home to meet Deitrich Hobbie, the famous German expert and developer of rhodos for colder climates. At the next meeting I attended elections were held, in which Jack Lofthouse was elected president and Mike Trembath became secretary.

This opened the chapter to more democratic processes involving more of the members. I was given the job of program chairman and was told by Lillian Hodgson to phone Alleyne Cook to do a program, as he was a charter member and most knowledgeable as he had worked with rhododendrons in the U.K. But Alleyne said that he "no longer believed in single plant societies" and had moved on to the Alpine Society. We also met other people who grew rhododendrons but were not active in the Society, such as Dr. Marcellus who had a large collection of plants in Mission. About this time Fred Collins and Lloyd Smith became active in the chapter. Both were very active when we did the first International Conference of the ARS in 1970.



R. Lillian Hodgson

During all this time we had our meetings and shows in many unlikely places, Westburn Community Centre, Simon Fraser U., the Red Cross Blood Bank Centre, Dueck on Broadway Showroom, the Unitarian Church. The first Spring Show was in Surrey at Bear Creek Park and the '74 Show was in Maple Ridge to help celebrate their Municipal Centennial. We finally settled down in the Floral Hall once VanDusen Garden became available.

Our contacts with the people in the early Chapter (which became the Vancouver Rhododendron Society) have always been fun and stimulating. Both Jean and I enjoyed our involvement, holding various offices, getting up at dawn to cut trusses, setting up shows, starting the first lending library in a rhodo club, etc., and though the rewards of bronze medals are great, the friendships are the greatest reward.

Rhododendrons on this page were hybridized by Dr. Bob Rhodes



## ARS MEDALS

### Gold Medals

Ted & Mary Greig 1966  
 Evelyn (Jacks) Weesjes 1970  
 Alleyne Cook 1999  
 Clive Justice 2000  
 Evelyn Jack Weesjes 2000



### Silver Medals

Harold Johnson 1989  
 Ken & Dot Gibson 1997  
 Jack Lofthouse 1999  
 Dave Dougan 2000  
 Norman Todd 2003



### Bronze Medals

#### South Fraser

Dave & Ella Crabb 1993  
 Dave & Wendy Sellers 1997  
 Diane Scott 1997  
 Pat Dahl 1998  
 Les & Bev Clay 1999  
 Mike Trembath 2000  
 Mike Bale 2001  
 Lori & Dalen Bayes  
 (Komo Kulshan) 2003  
 Sue Klapwijk 2004  
 Colleen Forster 2004  
 Norma Senn 2004



### Bronze Medals (continued.)

#### Fraser Valley

Milton Wildfong 1989  
 Ted & Ken Ladd 1990  
 Gerry Heriot 1996  
 Garth Wedemire 2001

#### Mt. Arrowsmith

Everett Jefferson 1995  
 Pat Jefferson 1996  
 Jim & Jean Greig 1996  
 Sam & Martha Cosco  
 1998

Bob & Carol Hickman 1998  
 Bill & Kay Bourgoyne 1999  
 Mary Parker 1999  
 Diane Pertson 2003  
 Marleen & Dave Crucq 2003

#### Nanaimo

Ward & Donna Porter 2000  
 Craig Clarke 2002

#### North Island

Joann Foster 1995  
 Harry Wright 1995  
 Mary Palmer 1996  
 Gwen Wright 1997  
 Len & Madeleine Simmons  
 1998  
 Pauline & Richard Bonney  
 1999  
 Barbara & Bill Rozel 2000  
 Bernie Guyader 2000  
 Marelene & Dave Crucq  
 2003  
 Don Law 2004  
 Paul Wurz 2004

#### Peace Arch

Giff Robb 1999  
 Jim & Elfriede DeWolfe 2004

#### Victoria

Dr. Stuart Holland 1986  
 Bill Dale 1990  
 Alec McCarter 1990  
 Evelyn (Jacks) Weesjes  
 1990  
 Norman Todd 1990  
 Margaret Buffam 1992  
 David Dougan 1992  
 Leslie Drew 1992  
 Herman Vaartnou 1995  
 Judy Gordon 1998  
 Norma Buckley 2001  
 Dora Kreiss 2003  
 Joe Harvey 2004



#### Vancouver

Ed Trayling 1972  
 Jack Lofthouse 1977  
 Lillian Hodgson 1977  
 Bob Rhodes 1977  
 Clive Justice 1981  
 Ed & Francisca Darts 1982  
 Melba & Harold Johnston  
 1983  
 Vern Finley 1984  
 Horace West 1987  
 Leslie K.C. Clay 1988  
 Jean Rhodes 1988  
 Frank Dorsey 1988  
 Alleyne Cook 1989  
 Alice & Robert Mann 1989  
 Garth Wedemire 1989  
 Ruth & Rex Merritt 1990  
 Mike Trembath 1990  
 Claire Bennett & Arthur  
 Rempel 1991  
 Susan Baker 1991  
 Margaret Charlton 1992  
 Len & Joan Bengough 1997  
 Roger Lowe 1999  
 Glen Patterson 1999  
 Karen Shuster 1999  
 Cy & Martie Irwin 2000  
 Mary Dorsey 2001  
 Ron Feicht 2002  
 Joanne Ronsley 2002  
 Joe Ronsley 2004







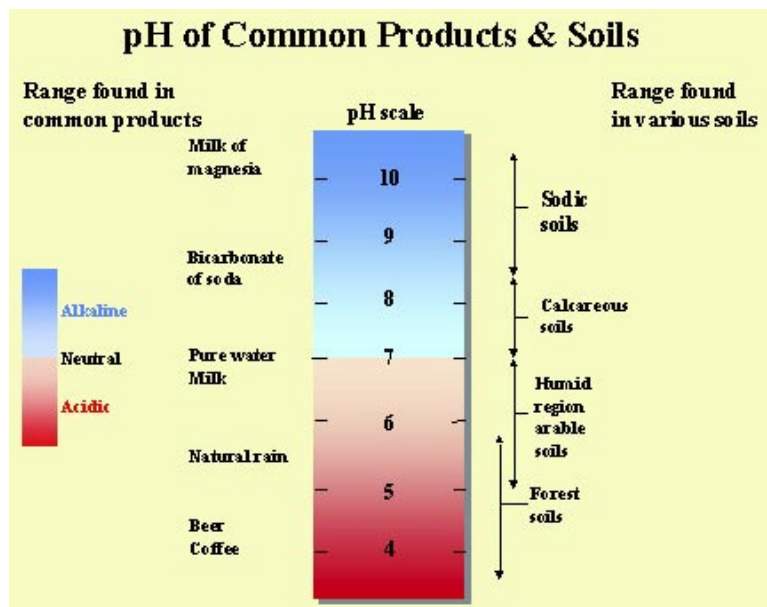
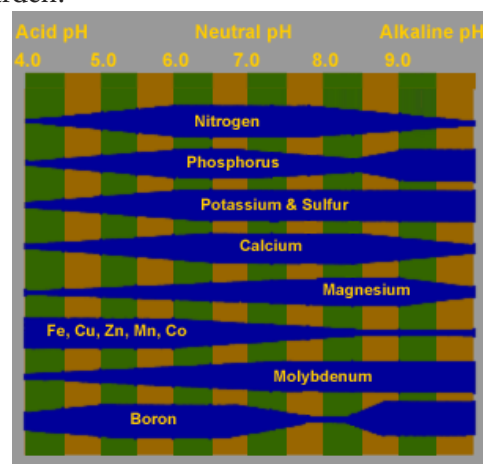
## Members asked the Indumentum, “Why is soil pH measurement important?”

When I first started growing rhododendrons, I planted them in equal parts of mulch, topsoil, and peat moss, mixing these materials with the native forest soil in the few pockets where it occurs on my rocky property. I fertilized the plants twice each spring with 10-8-6 rhododendron fertilizer and they seemed to look reasonably healthy. However, I wondered if my rhododendrons were actually reaching their potential in my garden.

I discussed this concern with Todd Major who recommended that I check the pH of my soil. He explained that if the soil pH is not between 5 and 6, rhododendron can suffer from micronutrient deficiencies even though they receive regular feeding of a balanced fertilizer.

I later learned that although micronutrients are needed in very small quantities, they perform major functions in plants. For example, copper and zinc are required for protein production. Iron is essential for chlorophyll manufacture, and boron facilitates movement of sugars. Even one micronutrient in short supply can limit normal plant growth.

Between pH 5 and 6, the micronutrients required by rhododendrons can be absorbed in the ideal amounts for healthy growth. Outside that range however, some micronutrients become less available while others are unable to function as required. In short, if the pH is wrong, rhododendrons can be starving for micronutrients, even when those molecules are present in the soil.



Having convinced myself that soil pH measurement was important, I took up Louis Peterson on his offer to loan a pH pen to any Vancouver Rhododendron Society member. These expensive (over \$100) digital, battery-operated devices measure pH accurately to the nearest tenth unit and work far better than pH paper, pH test solutions, or little green pH meters with the metal rods sticking out the bottom.

Using the pH pen, I measured each of the components of my amended soil mix separately. The results were surprising! For example, my forest soil's pH was as low as the pH of pure peat moss (4.5). My topsoil was 5.5 but the mulch was neutral (pH 7). However, when I combined equal amounts of topsoil and mulch, the resulting pH was 5.8.

Finally, I mixed various proportions of mulch, topsoil, and peat moss and found that a 4:3:1 ratio gave me a pH reading of about 5.5. Those are the proportions I now use in my rhododendron planting mix. As a result,

I'm confident that my rhododendrons are able to absorb all the micronutrients they require. Moreover, I've been able to decrease considerably the amount of peat moss that I use in my garden.

Have you measured your own soil's pH? If not, borrow Louis's pH pen and spend an hour gathering your own data about the pH that results from the unique materials that make up the soil in your garden. Without doing that, you can only guess about the ability of your rhododendrons to absorb the micronutrients they need.

By Ron Knight