



NEWSLETTER
APRIL 2006



VANCOUVER
Rhododendron
SOCIETY

www.rhodo.citymax.com

GENERAL MEETING:

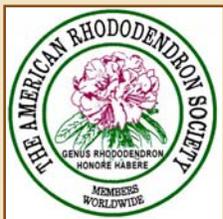
THURSDAY APRIL 20, 7:30 P.M.
VANDUSEN BOTANICAL GARDEN

LECTURE PROGRAM:

STEVE HOOTMAN
2005 SPRING EXPEDITION TO
YUNNAN, CHINA

GROWERS:

LES CLAY AND GIFFORD ROBB



Vancouver Chapter

Plant Hunting with Steve Hootman

Steve Hootman has become something of a household name at the VRS, coming as he does nearly every year with a fascinating account of his latest plant expedition to Asia. It is a general feeling among our members that we are most fortunate in his visits, and we welcome him back as our April speaker this year.

Repeating from last year's biographical sketch for the benefit of new members, Steve (photo right) is one of the major plant explorers in the world today, in the words of Keith White "an intrepid explorer along the lines of the great plant explorers of the early 20th century". I have spoken to no one among several people who have been on expeditions with Steve who didn't praise him for his special style of participation on these expeditions, his intrepidity, his great knowledge of plants, his value as a comrade and colleague. He also has the capacity to convey vividly the enthusiasm and excitement in undergoing difficult physical conditions and being rewarded with great plant discoveries. He has certainly been involved as much as anyone in discovering species of rhododendrons that hadn't been known before, and also adding to the gene pool of those already in cultivation.



Steve is Co-Director of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, located, as most of you know, in Federal Way, Washington, a drab suburb between Seattle and Tacoma. For the benefit of newer members, I should also mention that the many recent plant expeditions that have been carried out in Asia, by Steve Hootman and others, not only provide our gardens with beautiful new plants, but also contribute to the conservation of the species in their dissemination among gardeners, when they might otherwise be brought to extinction by destruction of their natural habitats. This is where the Rhododendron Species Foundation comes in.



Photo left, High altitude forests in NW Yunnan, by Mark F. Watson, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Website: <http://flora.huh.harvard.edu/china/mss/imghabit.htm>

See "Steve's Expeditions" Page 2

Steve's Expeditions: Steve has gone on as many expeditions as anyone, bringing back propagating material collected in the wild. All the plants introduced through the RSF are propagated and eventually offered for sale, with first choices going to RSF members. At the same time, especially beautiful clones of more familiar species are vegetatively propagated and distributed in a like manner, with similar benefits to the horticultural world. The RSF, and Steve particularly, also have much to contribute in the way of education about the natural species of rhododendrons. In fact, for the last few years groups of Canadian gardeners, some of them considered quite expert in their own rights, have been going down to the RSF regularly for a series of classes on rhododendron identification, conducted by Steve. These classes have become increasingly more popular. Steve is evidently an excellent teacher.

Finally, the RSF Garden is in itself not only educational, but also beautiful, and becoming more so under Steve's, and his Co-Director Rick Peterson's Directorship. It's always a pleasure for our members to welcome back this bright, young, articulate explorer, administrator and gardener, who the evening of April 20th will speak about his 2005 expedition to Yunnan: Yunnan, Spring, 2005.

By Joe Ronsley

Photo right, Tiger Leaping Gorge, Yunnan, Courtesy of Sierra College. Visit their website at : http://geography.sierra.cc.ca.us/booth/Physical/chp16_fluvial/booth_photos2.htm



Remembering Frank Dorsey

Frank was a man who put his energy, knowledge, and dry sense of humour into all he did. He passed on his immense plant knowledge in a memorable way, combining it with history and anecdote. This was displayed every month as he conducted the club raffle. He was rarely at a loss when describing the characteristics of the plants on the raffle table, and levity was always part of the production. Frank's grasp of the power the plant kingdom could have on people was shown at it's best when was guiding in the UBC Asian Garden. Frank was a regular tour guide at the UBC Botanical Garden and a long time FOG (Friend of the Garden). Those he took on tour, whether experienced or neophyte, were always in for an unforgettable experience. Frank was a long time member of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society and a Past President. He participated fully. All plant sales started and ended with his booming voice urging all to step right along - sweep harder, move a table.

Frank was always in demand to do club auctions, and every year was a major force in raising a significant sum at the Alpine Garden Club for the CKNW Christmas Fund. His marvelous sense of humour showed at its best at these times as he coaxed higher bids from the crowd. It made for a splendid evening of fun. Today as I write this, the UBC FOGs had their Spring in-house auction in his memory.

One of Frank's great interests in the early years was in plant propagation. He was especially interested in dwarf rhododendron species and his plants were beautifully grown. He also was a keen exhibitor, and always had a sizeable number of trusses on the show bench. It always amazed me that his quite small North Vancouver garden could produce so many entries for our shows.

Frank in time went on to join the Alpine Garden Club of B.C. where he again participated fully in their activities. His usual expertise was soon evident and he was a regular exhibitor at the monthly shows.

Frank thoroughly enjoyed passing on his knowledge and sharing his plants with every group he joined. The love of the mountains took him hiking and the Grouse Grind was a regular workout for him. He often got together with a few friends to go further a field. His keen enthusiasm for our native flora combined with his great knowledge made him a wonderful companion for those sharing his hikes. Glen Patterson tells the story of a hiking trip to Mount Townsend in Washington to view the alpiners. Glen had invited Frank to accompany him and help with the driving. Here they were joined by Piet Oudolf and Roy Lancaster. After a long morning hike up to the peak, Frank sat down for lunch. At this point he casually remarked how surprising it was that no one had noticed the double form of *Potentilla fruticosa* which was beside him. This caused quite a stir, not only because no one else had spotted it, but because this was the first time a double form had been found. Roy Lancaster jokingly said that he must tell the Queen about this discovery. Cuttings were taken and the plant is now in cultivation.

This remarkable man who brightened the lives of all who met him, will not be forgotten.

By Margaret Charlton



Rhododendron hybrids available locally for BC coastal gardens in the post World War I period. By Clive Justice

In the 1920s when amateur rose breeder Fred Blakeny developed his red rose that was to be selected some forty years later for Canada's 1967 Centennial and named *R. 'Miss Canada'*; roses and rockeries, not rhododendrons, were the in thing in Victoria, Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland gardens. There were only two nurseries, both over on Vancouver Island that had rhododendrons for sale: Layritz Nurseries in Victoria (now Saanich) and George Fraser in Ucluelet.

Layritz Nurseries' Price List for 1921-22 listed them under the heading: "BROADLEAVED EVERGREENS" subheading "RHODODENDRUM"(sic). There were two categories, "New Sorts" and "General", while "HARDY AZALEA" (sic), was a separate listing as they were probably considered to be deciduous plants.

In 1925 George Fraser published a list of named plants grown by him that included a separate listing for "Azalea" and "Rhododendron, Named Hybrids with an additional listing "Rhododendron, Large specimens." There were three on the Layritz list of "New Sorts." The first was: 'Pink Pearl', a large flower truss with a glossy pink. It was hardly new even in the 20s, this 25% *R. griffithianum* and *R. catawbiense* hybrid had been introduced in the 1880s by John Waterer in England; while *R. 'White Pearl'*, a *R. griffithianum* x *R. maximum* cross made in Holope, Belgium was introduced into England in late 1890s.

Third on the "New Sorts" list was 'Strategist', a hybrid with 50% *R. griffithianum* had blush pink flowers with deep rose petal edges and yellow spots in the throat of each flower. It was a hybrid made by John Waterer before 1900. The price for these three with "many flowers, from \$3.00 and up." Quite a high price in those days. Few buyers of these plants would have known that these hybrids with larger flowers in a more pointed topped looser truss, had in their makeup the genes from one of the rhododendron species that Joseph Hooker brought back from Sikkim in 1848. Layritz's "General" listed fourteen hybrid rhodos, two still available and sold today are :

R. 'Boule de Neige' and *R. 'Cunningham's White'*. The perfectly round small compact truss of pure white flowers is aptly named in French for snowball. It is a *R. caucasicum* x *R. catawbiense*, hybrid made by nurseryman Oudieu in Belgium. It, is very hardy and had been around since the 1870s, as has *R. cunninghami*, this caucasicum species? Natural hybrid? Or man made hybrid? It is still used extensively today as understock in Europe to give root hardiness to hybrids in places like Sweden, Finland and Estonia. The remaining dozen listed were noted as "Strong plants to flower immediately, with from 4 to 30 flower buds."

Those in the "General" list with the writer's additional comments, were:

R. 'Blandianum' a misspelling of 'Blandyanum', rosy crimson, a Standish and Noble, 1848 creation, containing genes of *R. arboreum*, *R. catawbiense*, and *R. ponticum*, made before any plants flowered from Hooker's seed could be able to be used in hybridizing.

R. 'Chevalier Felix de Sauvage', fine red, dark spots. By the Belgian, Sauvage, about 1870.

R. 'Fastuosum flore pleno' double lavender. Really semi-double, created by Gebr Francoisi of Ghent Belgium before 1846. The name has been changed to *R. 'Fastuosum Plenum'*.

R. 'Garibaldi', firey red, An Anthony Waterer introduction before WWI. Named for Giuseppe Garibaldi, (1807-82) Italian Patriot and soldier who fought in South America and helped to unite Italy.

R. 'Gomer Waterer' blush, fine. Actually, it opens white and is pink in the bud, A John Waterer introduction made before the turn of the 20 century.

R. 'Kate Waterer' light red. Actually pink with yellow centre spot. One of the many John Waterer; 50% *R. catawbiense* 50% unknown crosses that the Waterer's successive string of nurseries introduced.

R. 'Madame Maison' white, yellow centre. This is a real 'blooper'. The correct spelling of the name is *R. 'Madame Masson'* and was probably named for the wife of Frédéric Masson, a French historian whose unabashedly laudatory works on Napoleon were translated into English. Developed by Pierre Bertin, (1800-1891), a Belgian nurseryman. One of the first hybrids owned by the writer and given to me by pioneer Vancouver nurseryman Hyland Barnes.

R. 'Michael Waterer', bright red, this 50% *R. ponticum* 50% unknown cross is magenta red, again made by John Waterer and named after one of his many family members. Introduced in 1894.

R. 'Monsieur Thiers', brilliant rose, Named for Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877) French statesman, journalist and historian. He negotiated the preliminary Peace of Versailles with Otto von Bismark that ended the Franco-Prussian War. He also commanded the troops that brutally suppressed the Paris Commune of 1871. The hybrid was created by J. McCoy, little can be found on him or the hybrids he created.

R. 'Lady Clermont', rosy scarlet, Actually light red with a dark blotch. One of the very early 50% *R. catawbiense* 50% unknown crosses by the Waterer clan of Victorian nurseryman, by Anthony Waterer. It received an FCC in 1865.

R. 'Prince Camille de Rohan', rosy, crimson centre. A cross made by Hellebuyk [Waelbrouk, in Salley & Greer], in 1855 and introduced by Ambrose Verschaffelt ,(1825-1886), nurseryman of Roygem near Ghent, Belgium in 1865. A 50% *R. caucasicum* 50% unknown cross. The writer found this old hybrid rhodo (introduced in England more than 140 years earlier) in the lower terrace of Hycroft, the Women's University Club, McRae house in Shaughnessy.

See the May issue of the **INDUMENTUM** for part 2 of this article.

VRS Sale and Show

The VRS Executive has already begun planning for the annual Sale and Show. This year we are holding our annual fundraiser at the Park and Tilford Gardens, in North Vancouver. The annual plant sale is a very important fund-raising event and the revenue generated provides our Society with the resources to provide the benefits that members enjoy.

Please note that the **sale poster** on **page 9** is designed for all members to **print off and distribute** in their neighbourhood to help promote our Sale and Show. Please help promote our VRS Sale and Show!

Thank you,
Todd Major

Volunteers Needed for the Sale and Show

Our annual SALE & SHOW on May 13th is at the Park & Tilford Gardens in North Vancouver from 10 am to 4 p.m. VOLUNTEERS are needed for the following positions, training is provided:

Cashiers:

- 4 people from 9:30 to 11:30
- 4 people from 11:15 to 1:30
- 4 people from 12:45 to 2:30
- 4 people from 2:15 to 4:15

Membership, Raffles, Teddy Ball and Card Sales Table

- 3 people from 9:30 to 11:30
- 3 people from 11:15 to 1:30
- 3 people from 12:45 to 2:30
- 3 people from 2:15 to 4:15

Volunteers are also needed for rhodo SHOW duties on Friday evening, as well as set up on Saturday morning and take down Saturday evening. We need members to contribute flowering trusses to make the show beautiful and interesting for the public. Please contribute a truss or two, just for Show, not for competition.

If you can help, please let me know which positions you would like to participate in. A sign-up sheet will be available at the April meeting, please look for it and sign up for your preference. Refreshments are provided for those who assist in the Sale & Show. Your help on the Golden Anniversary Sale & Show would be appreciated.

Thank you,
Carole Conlin
VRS Membership Chair
(Phone: 604-921-7260; Email: cconlin@alumni.sfu.ca)

Fearing's Farm - Open Garden

We would like to invite all our rhodo society friends to visit our garden which will be open Saturday and Sunday, April 22 and 23 from 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m. We are located at 5376 Ross Road on the west side of Abbotsford. If you need directions please phone us at 604 222 1467 or 604 857 4136.

As many of you know, three years ago we moved many plants from a 20 year old garden in Vancouver to our new place in Abbotsford. Thus the garden is still very much a work in progress. However the rhodies are beginning to get re-established and there should be a number of things in bloom.

Harold and Ginny Fearing

Francisca Darts just celebrated her 90th birthday. Happy Birthday Francisca! Photo below of Francisca at work in her Dart's Hill garden in the 1960's



Photo right
Magnolia
'Atlas', by
Bill Spohn.





The Fraser South Rhododendron Society Presents:

The American Rhododendron Society (ARS) Western Regional Fall Conference Highlighting Rhododendrons Around the World

The 2006 ARS Western Regional Conference is to be held at the Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa from Friday, September 22 to Sunday, September 24.

The town of Harrison Hot Springs is renowned for its breathtaking scenery and for the natural hot springs. It is situated at the southern end of Harrison Lake which runs for a total length of almost 48 miles. The view from the town is spectacular with the surrounding mountains bordering the entire length of the lake.

The Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa (photo right and bottom right) is a luxury hotel with many superior facilities. The resort hosts five hot indoor and outdoor pools, each fed by the natural mineral hot springs (photo below) that have remained a primary attraction for visitors for more than 100 years. The resort has its own golf course and many other outdoor recreational facilities. The Healing Springs Spa was built at a cost of \$2.2 million dollars and is a recent addition which was opened in 2001 and provides state of the art therapeutic equipment and treatment rooms. The



dining facilities are superior and include the world renown "Copper Room." The Conference reception and plant sale will be located in the Exhibition Hall adjacent to the hotel and the lectures and banquet in the Conference Centre. The reception area for the lectures and banquet will be located in a magnificent room affording panoramic views along the entire length of the Harrison Lake.



This conference features some top notch speakers from Canada and the U.S. Speakers include Des Kennedy, Steve Hootman, Dalen and Lori Bayes, Collen Forster, Glen Jamieson, Don Martyn, Charlie Sale, David Sellars and Norma Senn.

Tours are available of the following attractions: Bridal Veil Falls, Minter Gardens, Ferncliff Gardens, Westminster Abbey and the Harrison Lake Boat Tour. There is also the town of Harrison close by for sightseeing and shopping.

Members from all B.C. rhodo chapters are most welcome to invite relatives, friends, neighbours and especially other gardening enthusiasts to attend the ARS Fall Conference at Harrison Hot Spring Resort & Spa. Membership in the ARS is not a pre-requisite. This would be a golden opportunity to expose individuals to our passion and recruit more members for all Chapters.

The \$40.00 registration fee offers great value and affords full participation in most activities at the Conference including the Bonsai & Ikebana Demonstration, the Wine & Cheese Reception, attendance to the keynote and all the lecture presentations including the Sunday morning session on hybridizing and Rhododendron Species. Also provides access to the video displays, photo exhibition and the plant sale. The plant sale includes Rhododendron species, Vireyas and many special companion plants. Full conference details are available at the www.arsfallconference2006.com/, or www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth/index.asp or www.rhodos.ca, or phone 604 853 8839. For Harrison Hot Springs Resort information go to www.harrisonresort.com.



NEWS AND NOTES

President's Call to the Members

Spring is here, our gardens are calling us, and it is time for the gardening gloves!

I hope that all members are finding value in our Society, in the lectures, slide shows, mini-shows, education components, **INDUMENTUM**, website, discount benefits from nurseries, and of course the opportunities to meet with like minded people. Suggestions about how to enhance our programmes are always welcome.

Should you wish to become involved in assisting the executive, in ways large or small, to maintain an interesting and financially healthy Society, we would greatly appreciate hearing from you. The Society needs volunteers in the following areas:

- A member is needed to replace John Priestman's vacant Director's position on the executive.
- A new **INDUMENTUM** Editor will be needed when Todd steps down in December.
- The **INDUMENTUM** regularly needs the contributions of members. Send photos, stories, news or anything else that may interest our readers.
- Show & Sale support is needed to advertise the event (May 13) to ensure a good financial return, as well as to promote interest in Rhododendrons.
- Help distribute sale posters in April and early May. See the last page of this **INDUMENTUM** for a sale poster you can print off and distribute.

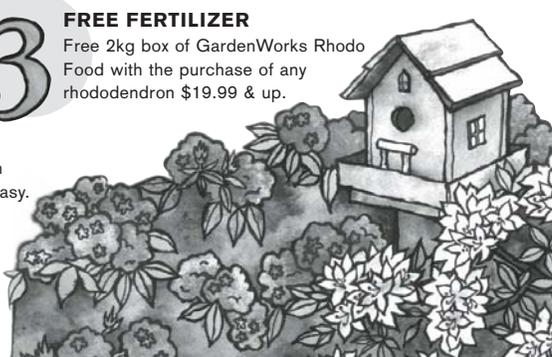
- Volunteer to staff a display/promotions table in a shopping mall the weekend of May 6 / 7 at Park Royal or Capilano Mall.
- Volunteer at a display/promotions table at the Park & Tilford Plant Sale on April 29th. This is a promotional event in advance of our Sale a week later.
- Volunteer to staff display/promotions table at the Alpine Society's Plant Sale on May 6th.
- Bring a rhodo truss to our May Sale and Show for the non-competitive display, to enhance this very spectacular feature of the event. The show is a valuable part of the event and a poor showing, well, doesn't show well, for the public. Your contributions are needed and appreciated. The number of trusses at our Shows has been declining in recent years, this is not good.
- Help on the day of the Show (setting up, membership table, cashiers table, helping customers, etc) is always welcome. See Page 5 for details.
- Support the fund-raising raffle at our regular meetings by bringing in a prize, anything, old bricks, ceramic pots, a plant or picture, etc.
- Come to our social Potluck/picnic and contribute a delicious dish and visit with your friends!
- Assist the VRS with public relations and promotions of our Society.

If members do not help grow the society, who will? All volunteerism is welcomed and appreciated, we will train you, so do not worry about being qualified.

Best regards,
Louis Peterson,
Ph: 604-921-7260. Email: lpeterso@sfu.ca

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What's Your Opinion? Have You got Some News or an Announcement? Send us a Picture of Interest!

Letters to the **INDUMENTUM** editor, news, pictures and anything rhodo or otherwise can be sent to Todd & Shannon Major at stmajor@shaw.ca. We need pictures too! The larger the picture file size the better the result on screen and in print. If you don't send something, then you will have to live with what WE print, so get involved!

Todd & Shannon Major,
INDUMENTUM Editors

New members asked the **INDUMENTUM**: Which are the Worst Rhododendrons to Grow?

By Ron Knight

I am absolutely certain about which are the worst rhododendrons. They are the ones that other people can grow, but I can't. One example is Royston Reverie (photo right) with its insipid yellow and pink flowers that never quite open for me, instead forming a mushy, bedraggled-looking truss. However, my complete list is far too lengthy to print. Therefore, I have polled several veteran members of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society and offer their suggestions instead. What follows, is a list of the dregs of the rhododendron world, the ugly ducklings, the armpits of rhodoland, the un-cool ones, - the eleven plants that your garden might be better off without:



R. 'Blue Peter'

"It's ravaged by root weevils if planted under cedar trees."
(Garth Wedemire)



R. 'Unique Cream'

"Rather than being cream, this plant is more like curd. It is gangly with age, displaying a washed out white flower that passes for a cream colour and is susceptible to powdery mildew, stem rot, cultural stress and cold wind. This plant is best shredded and used for mulch." (Todd Major)

R. daphnoides (photo below right)

"It's too fussy. It doesn't transplant well. The leaves show any nutrient deficiencies quickly. The blooms are hidden by the leaves." (Clive Justice)

"It almost never flowers but that's probably a good thing." (Douglas Justice)

R. praecox

"It has miserable foliage and early flowers that don't last long. It's subject to weevils."
(Les Clay)

R. 'President Roosevelt' (photo above)

"I hated it when I lived back East and was pleased to be asked (when I came to Vancouver) if I had every seen a worse rhododendron. To begin, the variegated foliage gives it an iron-starved look. Everything else is just too ordinary for words."
(Charlie Sale)

"It's very ugly in flower colour and variegated foliage and in the combination of the two." (Joe Ronsley)

"It's a wonderful two-tone but is not that hardy and has a tendency to revert to a solid green." (Garth Wedemire)

"When it's in bloom, the (flower and foliage) combination is horrible." (Douglas Justice)

"It has no charm. It's the ugliest variegated plant I've seen." (Ron Feicht)

"Variegated leaves and flowers don't mix." (Jennifer Lamb)

R. anthopogon

"It blooms in September and then there's little left for spring."
(Martie Irwin)



See "**R. niveum**" on Page 7

R. niveum

"I don't like plum purple flowers." (Alleyne Cook)

R. ponticum 'Variegatum' (Photo below)

"The worst rhododendron? Without question that would be the hideous *R. ponticum* 'Variegatum'. The weird foliage is the result of a virus infection." (Douglas Justice)

"Variegated plants like *R. ponticum* 'Variegatum' should be on Mars. I love pure green. The edges of its leaves go brown. It can be invasive. It's OK in a formal garden. It's hardy and makes a good under-stock." (Peter Wharton)

"*R. ponticum* is such a weed! It makes very ugly hybrids." (Glen Patterson)

R. taliense 'Ruffum'

"It only has one branch left by the weevils." (Richard Mossakowski)

R. 'Shamrock'

"I don't like the acid-yellow-green flowers." (Jennifer Lamb)

R. 'Virginia Richards'

"She is a rather attractive specimen who bogs off with no notice whatsoever. She could be rather sensitive about drainage or too susceptible to Phytophthora. I don't know, but she makes me very nervous." (Sean Rafferty)



The above list of ne'er-do-wells doesn't seem to have any particular focus except for the passion behind the nominations. However, there are a few general principles that can be drawn from it:

First, the horticulturalists at www.greatplantpicks.org report that many purple rhododendrons, like *R. 'Blue Peter'*, seem to be particularly susceptible to weevil damage. They recommend that these plants be placed in the open, with supplemental summer watering. Many gardeners report that weevil damage is greater in rhododendrons that are growing under coniferous trees, especially cedar. In fact, some people think that the best use for cedar trees in any garden is for gazebos, fences, and pergolas.

Phytophthora is a fungus that causes "root rot" in rhododendrons. Many yellow varieties have been reported to be susceptible in areas where there is poor drainage. On the other hand, *R. 'Virginia Richards'* is most often avoided because she is easily infected by powdery mildew.

Other susceptible examples are *R. cinnabarinum*, *R. campylocarpum*, *R. Elizabeth*, *R. Unique*, the Loderi group, and many deciduous azaleas. The problem can often be remedied with increased air circulation and sunlight.

Variegated rhododendrons seem to incite the most passionate hatred in rhododendron aficionados. However, a good alternative to the two mentioned above is *R. 'Goldflimmer'* which is readily available in British Columbia. This rhododendron has dark emerald-green leaves which are nicely accented with yellow variegation. The flowers are medium-sized and mauve in colour. Foliage grows densely on the plant to form a thick

mounded shrub about 2.5 metres tall in ten years. In my own garden, I have not seen any problems with reversion or weevil damage on *R. 'Goldflimmer'*, despite the plant being purple, in full shade, and under a cedar tree.

Interestingly, despite all the disparaging comments from Vancouver Rhododendron Society members

about *R. ponticum* 'Variegatum' and *R. 'President Roosevelt'*, gardeners in general seem to have a love affair with variegated plants and both of these rhododendrons sell well.

Finally, to readers who are able to grow the disease-prone rhododendrons listed above: Congratulations. To those whose favourite rhododendrons were cited: My apologies. And to readers whose most-preferred flower colour is plum purple, curd, or acid-yellow-green, take consolation from the old saying: "If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so is ugliness."

Ron Knight is a retired school teacher and past president of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society.

Rhododendron Sale and Show



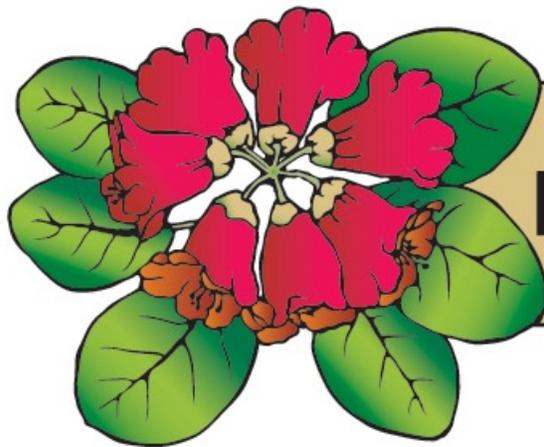
Saturday May 13th
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

At the Park and Tilford Gardens
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