

INDUMENTUM

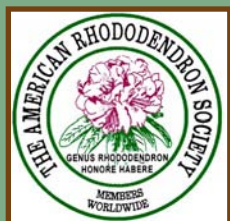


VANCOUVER
Rhododendron
SOCIETY

WWW.RHODO.CITYMAX.COM

GENERAL MEETING:
OCTOBER 19, 7:30 P.M.
VANDUSEN BOTANICAL GARDENS

LECTURE PROGRAM:
SEAN RAFFERTY AND
BRENDA MACDONALD
PRESENTING:
"VRS MEMBERS ON A SECOND
TRIP TO CHINA"



Vancouver Chapter

A Trip to China

Sean Rafferty and Brenda Macdonald are well-known members of the VRS. Sean is a landscape designer and a member of the VRS Executive, Brenda the newsletter Editor for the Fraser South Chapter as well as being an active member in ours. Last year, in the spring of 2005, when Steve Hootman, Director of the Rhododendron Species Foundation, took his first group of RSF members, non-professionals but enthusiasts, on an expedition to Yunnan to see rhododendrons and other plants in the wild, Sean and Brenda were with him. Garth Wedemire wrote up the trip in the new RSF yearbook *Rhododendron Species*, while Sean and Brenda gave an illustrated report on it to the VRS last February. (Photo above *R. yunnanense* at Yak Meadows in Yulong Yunnan by Garth Wedemire). While VRS members were impressed with their talk, they themselves were evidently so impressed, both with what they saw and with the leadership of the tour, that they went again on the second trip in the spring of 2006. It is on this trip they will report the evening of October 19th: 'VRS Members on a Second Trip to China, 2006'.



By Joe Ronsley

The Lamont Gardens, the location of our VRS Picnic on June 11, 2006, seem to have existed for a very long time, given the varieties of mature rhododendrons and companion plants in the carefully planned and tranquil landscape. In fact, the Gardens are less than a decade old. Around the year 2000, Dr. Keith and Marilyn Lamont were seeking a place somewhat more manageable



than their 3 acre property in Langley, but with good gardening (rhodo) potential. They found a likely spot in the Clayton Hills area of the City of Surrey. Their son Mark, with his newly minted Horticultural Certificate from Capilano College, was called upon on a cold, austere day in January to vet the site. Following his approval, it was not long before he and



his wife Glenda Powroznik were diligently and energetically involved in transferring many of the mature plants from Langley to Surrey (no border restrictions applied!). The Clayton Hills overlook the sweeping lowlands of the Fraser Valley, a fertile alluvial plain created by the meanderings of the river in days gone by. The elevated Hills presumably stem from an earlier geologic period, stubbornly resisting

erosion by the river. The Hills themselves have a shallow mantle of soil, overlying clay-like hardpan impenetrable to Mark's pick and shovel. Establishing the Gardens presented some challenges! "You have to give oxygen a chance", says Mark. As good fortune would have it, Glenda had observed the technique of raised bed plantings advocated by Clive Justice in gardens at Deer Lake Park, Burnaby. The intrepid gardeners did the same at the Surrey home, creating visual effects with height as well as depth. The knowledgeable and experienced horticulturist brought in soil with the proper qualities for the plants they had in mind. The original cedar and bamboo hedges, and a rose garden were retained. Now winding paths lead



the visitor from one garden room to another, each with some distinctive feature of its own. Here and there are ponds, with busily quiet fountains. The winding path among the tall and canopied bamboos provides a transition into quiet coolness, augmented by the rustling of leaves as a gentle breeze passes through. Carefully placed seating allow for the quiet enjoyment of each different close-to-nature setting.

Photos this page by Glenda Powroznik, showing before and after growth of the garden. Before pictures taken in year 2000, after pictures taken in year 2006.

Continued See **"For Rhododendrons"** on Page 3

For rhododendrons, Mark and Glenda chose plants that would bloom in overlapping succession throughout the seasons (starting as early as March and ending in July), providing “waves of colour” and fragrance. Root booster was used in the transplanting with much success, and plants were clustered for maximum effect. As there are over a hundred varieties of rhododendrons and azaleas in this garden, the following is very short list which includes pinks (Cheer, Christmas Cheer, Cynthia, Anna, Nova Zembla, Graf Zeppelin, fortunei), purples and blues (Blue Boy, Blue Peter, Purple Splendour, Ramapo, augustinii), reds (Elizabeth, Scarlet Wonder, Jean Marie de Montague, Red Walloper), yellows (luteum, lutescens, Hotei), oranges (Whitney’s Orange, Amadeus, Golden Gate), orange-yellow (Papaya Punch, and Les Clay’s excellent new hybrid Graf Zeppelin x King of Shrubs) and whites (Dora Amateis, Chinoides, Catawbiense Album).

The companion plants augment the garden, various forms of aucuba (including Picturata), hostas, honeysuckle, hydrangeas (Bluebird, Nigra), fragrant lilies (such as Casablanca, Dizzy, Kiss Proof, Tom Pouce, Stargazer), numerous varieties of magnolias, skimmia, solomon’s Seal, pieris, dwarf phlox (three feet tall, the soil is so good!), viburnum, wisteria and too many more to list. And for eating there are apples, blueberries, grapes, raspberries, strawberries, tomatoes.

Feathered and four-footed friends like the place too. Raccoons enjoy an occasional dessert of four varieties of grapes. The owners have been known to find a confused duck no doubt in search of a wetland respite, taking a rest on their swimming pool. At other times a forlorn and disappointed heron has found nary a fish in these same waters. Birds, butterflies and hummingbirds frequent the garden to feast.

Thank you to the Lamonts and to Mark and Glenda for a most enjoyable and instructive opportunity to visit your garden and share in your creation. Article based on conversations with Mark Lamont and Glenda Powroznik, August 19, 2006.

By Louis K. Peterson,

Photos this page by Glenda Powroznik. Photo top taken in year 2000 all other photos taken in 2006.



NEWS AND NOTES

Win (and donate!) A Gift for the Door Prize

To help defray a portion of the costs of the rental of the Floral Hall for our meetings (\$185.00 per meeting), please donate an occasional gift (anything from \$5 to \$50!) to our reserve of Door Prizes. As our Gaming Licence has expired, we are offering Door Prizes instead of raffle prizes. To obtain a ticket for the draw (you might win!), please "donate" generously for a ticket (\$2.00 and above is suggested).

Thank you to those making donations in September.

Louis Peterson

Other Priorities

Dr. Quentin Cronk Spoke to our society at the September meeting. His talk entitled "Rhododendron - the anatomy of an obsession" was insightful and offered an unusual perspective on why people grow rhodos or any other plant to the point of obsession.

Personally I enjoyed his talk, and it was a rare chance to hear one of the most important plant researchers in Canada, speak in person.

However, I was very disappointed and embarrassed by the pitiful turnout of our membership, with less than 30 people attending Dr. Cronk's presentation.

While I realize that everyone is busy and we all have many other priorities in life; if VRS members are not going to bother participating or attending high profile presentations like that of Dr. Cronk, then I see no point in offering high calibre speakers at all. We should just save the expense and the effort and hand out cookies and tea instead.

Anonymous

Just For Interest - Rhodo tree in a Bhutan Forest



Mary Comber Miles - Paintings of Southern Hemisphere Plants

Mary Comber Miles is represented by Harrison Galleries, 901 Homer Street, Vancouver, British Columbia (Tel 604-732-5217; web www.harrisingalleries.com) and by Gala Gallery, 2432 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, B.C., (Tel 604-913-1059; web www.galagallery.ca) VRS members are welcome to visit a two-week Exhibition of Mary's paintings at the Harrison Galleries,

New Books to Buy

Now available a new book on Health and the Environment by the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE).



CAPE's Book on Health and the Environment Edited by founding president of CAPE, Dr. T. Guidotti and expert contributors, and sponsored by CAPE, The Canadian Guide to Health and the Environment provides a quick overview for anyone interested in the environment and health. It is written for the general public, but will be a useful resource to physicians and other health care providers. Topics covered include climate change, drinking water, pesticides and other pollutants, air quality, and

food quality and diet. The book can be ordered online. It is also available free with a Supporter level CAPE membership.

CAPE is a group of physicians, allied health care practitioners and citizens committed to a healthy and sustainable environment. As an organization composed mostly of physicians, CAPE brings its health expertise to environmental issues and is an important voice for environmental health in Canada. CAPE addresses issues of environmental degradation by educating health care professionals and the public, through advocacy and in close cooperation with partner groups.

Courtesy of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. Visit their website at www.cape.ca

Membership Report

Please join me in welcoming new members Ginny Planes and Richard Schaber of Delta and Mary Berg of Abbotsford.

As we go to press, thirty-nine members have renewed their membership for 2007. Thank you for doing your renewals so promptly! Renewal information was mailed in September and you can drop off your renewals at the Membership table at the October general meeting. Please remember to tick the box on the Membership Renewal form that authorizes your name to go in the Directory that is distributed to Members.

The annual fees for 2007 are:

\$50 ARS Members - receive 4 ARS Journals per year (must be renewed by November 20th to avoid journal jeopardy)

\$25 VRS Members - no journals, please borrow them from the Library.

\$10 Associate Members - must be a member of another ARS Chapter

The website (<http://www.rhodo.citymax.com>) has Membership application and renewal forms along with the Benefits of Membership. Guests are always welcome at our general meetings.

Questions about membership? Call me at 604-921-7260 or email me at cconlin@alumni.sfu.ca.

Thank you.
Carole Conlin
VRS Membership Chair.

Do You have some News or a Picture of Interest!

Letters to the **INDUMENTUM**, news, pictures and anything rhodo or otherwise, can be emailed to Todd & Shannon Major at stmajor@shaw.ca. If you wish to mail us an article or some pictures (which we will return to you) please give us a call at 604 941 7507 to obtain our mailing address. We need pictures! 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

Nominations for the VRS Executive

At this time of year some thought has to be given to continuing the governance of our society, and as chairman of the nominating committee, I wish to advise the membership that the nominating committee already has some nominations to fill the vacancies for President, Vice-President and a Director. Under the bylaws of the society, the remaining positions of Secretary, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Membership Chairman and Programme Chairman are elected for one year but have no limitation as to tenure. At the present time all of the incumbents in these positions are willing to continue for a further year, with the exception of Membership Chairman. Any member willing to make suggestions for the latter position, or indeed any of the positions now or in the future, may do so in accordance with the constitution printed below.

Iain Forsyth
Nominating Committee Chairman
Mailing address
2939 Mathers Avenue West Vancouver,
V7V 2J7

Excerpt from the VRS constitution regarding nominations: "A Nominating Chairman shall be appointed by the Board of Directors in June of each year, and such person shall add two members to form a committee. However, the President and Vice-President shall not be eligible to serve on this committee. Members may suggest to the nominating committee the names of any paid-up members as candidates for the offices to be filled. The Nominating Chairman shall present recommendations to the Board of Directors by November; the slate of proposed candidates shall be mailed to the members in November; and the election of the Board of Directors shall be held in January, unless decided otherwise by the Board of Directors. Additional nominations may be submitted to the Nominating Chairman in writing by October 12. Such nominations must be accompanied by the written agreement of the nominee and must be signed by at least 5 members of the society. No one shall be nominated for President until having served a minimum of six months on the Board of Directors."



BACK TO BASICS

By Ron Knight

Members have asked the Indumentum: Are there any native B.C. rhododendrons growing wild in the Lower Mainland?

Most rhododendron club members have heard about the Pacific Rhododendron, *R. macrophyllum*, growing wild in Manning Park and on Vancouver Island. However, few people realize that several native rhododendron species live in British Columbia. Doug Justice provides the following summary: "The closest macrophyllums are on the Sunshine Coast. *Rhododendron albiflorum* is common on all of the coast mountains. *Rhododendron lapponicum* is native to BC, but only to the extreme north. Two Labrador Tea species are also native. You may know these as *Ledum groenlandicum* (common locally) and *L. palustre* (Manning Park east, at elevation). They are now also classified in Rhododendron (as are the Fool's Huckleberries, including our native *Menziesia ferruginea*, though this is not widely recognized yet)."

Ledum groenlandicum I can remember collecting on a biology field trip when I was in grade 11. Since then, I have had first-hand experience with two more of our native rhododendron species. *Rhododendron albiflorum*, the Cascade Azalea, grows on Hollyburn and Grouse Mountains above North and West Vancouver (Photo below). It has also been given the common name "Mountain Misery" by hikers who have experienced difficulty wading through vast thickets of the plant. The species is generally found in coniferous forests in sub-alpine regions throughout the Pacific Northwest and east to Montana.



A decade ago, a fellow teacher who owned a cabin on Hollyburn Mountain brought me down a specimen that had been growing wild in his back yard. I planted it on a semi-shaded hillside in my garden at Pender Harbour and watched it accomplish absolutely nothing over five years. Recently, it has improved its appearance somewhat and is now about half a meter tall. Theoretically, it might quadruple this height in the future, although I am not optimistic. *Rhododendron albiflorum* typically has an open, upright growth habit. At best, one can expect it to look presentable for only half of each year because it is deciduous. The leaves are rather sparse on my plant and are mainly clustered at the ends of branches. Although no blooms have appeared yet, my teacher friend tells me that I can expect a few unspectacular white flowers to open in late spring and give off a faint citrus smell. This shrub has definitely turned out to be the ugly duckling of my rhododendron collection. However, I'm comforted to read that the species is notoriously difficult to grow in any garden setting. Perhaps I should be thankful just to see it still alive. Anyhow, I will keep it for patriotic reasons.

Rhododendron macrophyllum has a similar horticultural reputation but is different in almost every other respect from *R. albiflorum*. It is a tall growing plant with fairly large leaves. Twenty or more flowers are held in beautiful dome-shaped trusses that vary from dark pink to white. The species' range extends from Southern B.C. to Northern California. I first learned about *R. macrophyllum* growing wild near my home on the Sunshine Coast from reading Dr. Ben Hall's article in the Winter 2006 issue of the American Rhododendron Society Journal (Volume 60, Number 1, pages 37-41).

Dr. Hall visited Mount Elphinstone a couple of years ago with local environmentalists, Joe and Joanne Ronsley, and Steve Hootman. Afterwards, he used leaf and flower bud samples to study the DNA of Elphinstone's *R. macrophyllum* population and found that it was a distinct genetic variation of the species that preferred to live near salt water. Apart from Dr. Hall's visit, however, the local environmental group refused to show anyone else the site, fearing that it would be destroyed by careless hikers. Fortunately, with the help of Erwin and Eva Diener, VRS members who also live on the Sunshine Coast, I was able to find a guide to take me to the Mount Elphinstone rhododendron grove last May at the peak of the bloom period.

Continued See **Northwest from Roberts Creek** on Page 7

BACK TO BASICS

We drove **northwest from Roberts Creek** for several kilometers along badly maintained logging roads and finally reached a clear-cut area containing a tiny island of forest about 300 meters wide and twice as long (Photo right). As we walked from the harsh sunlight into the forested area, I felt as if I had entered an outdoor cathedral. Under my feet was a thick carpet of yellow moss. Above my head, shafts of sunlight broke through the second growth Douglas Fir canopy like spotlights. And then, all of a sudden, the rhododendrons appeared in front of us (Photo below). They were gigantic, some over four meters tall! Many had side branches that extended an equal distance outwards (Photo below right). There seemed to be about a dozen individual specimens but it was hard to tell because many had layered new plants from low-growing branches.



All of the rhododendrons appeared to be in good health and sported vigorous new growth. Their leaves were glossy green with few weevil bites and no indication of fungal disease. Flowering was profuse, with magnificent light pink blooms appearing on every plant (Photo bottom left). Best of all, I found ten centimeter tall seedlings growing out of two well-rotted logs that were near the south-west edge of the grove.



After the expedition, I contacted a forester who works for the Sechelt Municipality. He told me that he had visited the Mount Elphinstone rhododendrons and assured me that his Sechelt Community Forest committee was prepared to protect the plants. This October, Dean Goad from the Victoria Rhododendron Society will be joining me at the grove to collect seed and cuttings. His Victoria Propagators Group will then use this material to produce hundreds of new plants. Some will be available for garden testing. Others will be

planted in the wild in a remote but already-protected forest area on the Sunshine Coast, hopefully to form a satellite population.

Next May I have offered to conduct a Saturday tour of the Mount Elphinstone site for the Sechelt Community Forest group and any interested members of the public. If the plans go ahead, I will put a notice in *The Indumentum* so that interested VRS members will be able to participate.



Ron Knight is a retired biology teacher and school administrator whose rhododendron collection is displayed at Caron Gardens on the Sunshine Coast. Ron is a past-president of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society and now serves as Alternate-Director for the American Rhododendron Society's B.C. Division.