

# INDUMENTUM



VANCOUVER  
**Rhododendron**  
SOCIETY

[WWW.RHODO.CITYMAX.COM](http://WWW.RHODO.CITYMAX.COM)

**GENERAL MEETING: NOVEMBER 16, 7:30 P.M.**  
**VANDUSEN BOTANICAL GARDENS**  
**LECTURE PROGRAM: DR. ROLF MATHEWES**  
**THE PLANTS OF THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS:**  
**PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE**

Dr. Rolf Mathewes is Professor of Biology and Associate Dean of Science at Simon Fraser University. He began post secondary education in 1965 as a Charter Student at SFU, graduating B.Sc. (Biology) in 1969, and Ph.D. (Botany) from UBC in 1973. He is an internationally recognized authority in the fields of paleoecology, paleobotany, and paleoclimatology, the “paleo” indicating his interests in the study of ancient things. While he works mostly in the area of palynology (study of ancient pollens and spores, the most abundant of all fossils), his knowledge and expertise also find numerous applications in the very modern field of forensic botany.

Most of Rolf’s scientific work has concentrated on western Canada, with particular emphasis on the vegetation and climatic history of coastal British Columbia. It is truly fascinating to reflect upon the perceptiveness of the trained eye of the expert botanist, and the conclusions divined from data on plant macrofossils, fossil insects, ancient pollens and spores, even sedimentary charcoal – the residual evidence of things that lived in the very distant past.

A bee was encapsulated in a resin 50 million years ago, a log was found near a high mountain creek where there is now no forest, the bottom of Hecate Strait holds remains of freshwater life forms, a squirrel’s nest in northern Alaska where no squirrel lives today, provide a treasure trove of biological information. Pollens tell of very different vegetations in former times - the story that Rolf unfolds reveals evidence of global climatic changes and the past disturbance history of ecosystems, due to droughts, fires, earthquakes, even tsunamis, and human activities.

Continued on page 2, see “The Queen Charlotte Islands”



Photo by Douglas Justice



Photo of a beach on the Queen Charlotte Islands,  
courtesy of the Government of British Columbia

**The Queen Charlotte Islands** (photo right, from space, courtesy of NASA )– the “Canadian Galapagos” – are of special interest to Dr. Mathewes. The region apparently escaped the most recent glaciation of 24,000 years ago that encrusted the rest of North America, allowing the Islands to develop their own unique ecological systems in isolation from the rest of the continent.

Rolf's talk: “The Plants of the Queen Charlotte Islands - Past, Present and Future”, will give us a glimpse into the past, and possibly a portent of what the future may hold.

By Louis K. Peterson

### Books of Interest

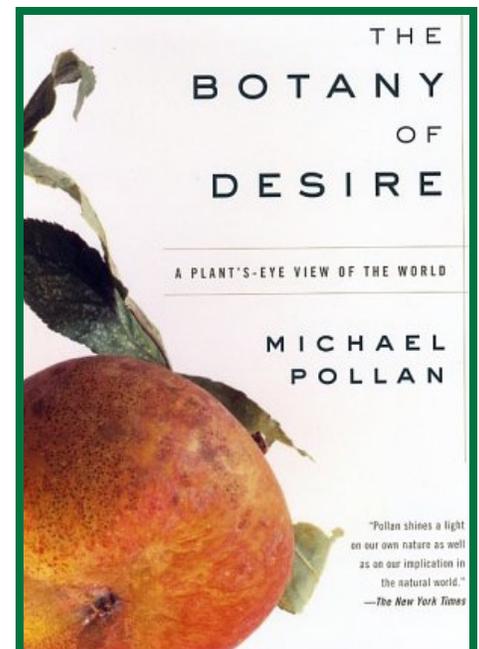
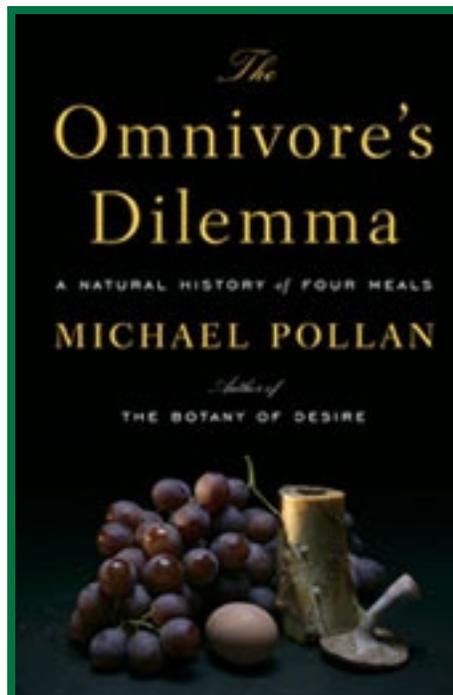
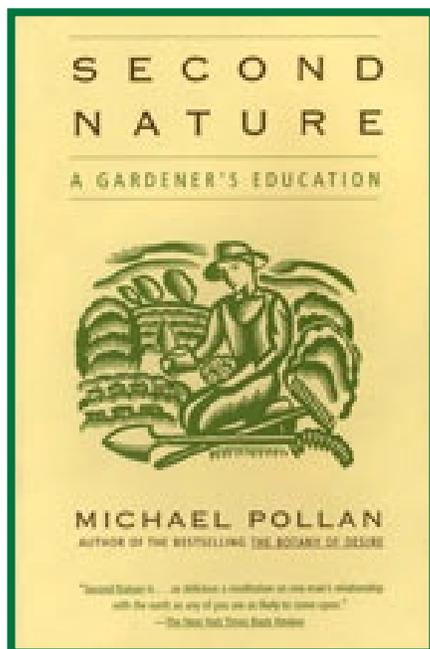
Three books that are relevant to the world of today. All three are written by Michael Pollan, he is the Knight Professor of Journalism at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism and director of the Knight Program in Science and Environmental Journalism. Mr. Pollan's web site can be found at [www.michaelpollan.com](http://www.michaelpollan.com).

His books include:

*Second Nature : A Gardener's Education* (About our everyday relationship with the natural world).

*The Omnivore's Dilemma : A Natural History Of Four Meals* (He discusses how our food is grown and food politics).

*The Botany Of Desire : A Plant's Eye View Of The World* (In this book he looks at the history of apples, tulips, marijuana and potatoes).



## Just For Interest - Photos from our Members

COVER GIRL - Photo and Story by d'Arcy Bartlett

At our 1998 February meeting of the VRS Joe Ronsley introduced our guest speaker George McLellan. At the time George was Chairman of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of the Rhododendron Species Study Group.

His slide lecture was on native azaleas and hybrid swarms that he and his group found in June 1995 on their hike into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park of North Carolina/Tennessee.

Of special interest to him was the hybrid swarms at a place called Gregory Bald. One of these natural hybrid azaleas was featured on the cover the 1996 Spring addition of The Journal of the ARS. They subsequently called it Cover Girl. He handed out some seeds collected from this azalea and here is my result. Photo was taken in June 2005.

Accompanying George McLellan in 1995 was Donald McLean who also wrote an article for ARS entitled Return to Gregory Bald.

Through the magic of the internet it can be retrieved by entering [www.rhododendron.org/v52n3p122.htm](http://www.rhododendron.org/v52n3p122.htm)



## Society Funds

The main source of our income is our annual Show & Sale in May, an event that is precariously dependent on weather and public turnout. We did well in May 2006 under perfect weather conditions, but such may not always be the case if rain should spell trouble for our finances.

The contributions made by growers who sell plants at our Thursday meetings are greatly appreciated, as Door Prize donations (I kinda liked the raffle, an opportunity to win a valuable vase or expensive rhodo for very little outlay – hardly the most noble of motives!). All of the proceeds from items sold at the Membership Table go to the Society, as does the profits (if any) from the refreshment table. At our November 16th meeting the Membership Table will have 2007 Wildlife Calendars, selling for \$20, divided equally between the VRS and the Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society. These calendars feature the superb photography of Bill and Serena Keay, who capture exceptional images of wildlife in their natural habitat in minute detail, including many of the most elusive, the most powerful and the most colourful of living things on this planet.

At the table you will also find gift sets of Art Cards generously provided to the VRS by Mary Comber Miles, our distinguished Botanical Artist, and a selection of books kindly donated to the VRS by Mary Dorsey in memory of Frank. The “50 years of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society” by Clive Justice in booklet form and on disk will also be available for those interested in our historical roots.

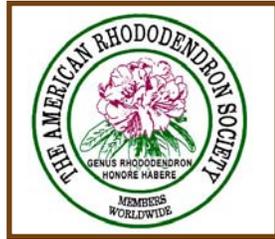
To further enhance your Christmas shopping opportunities, the pottery of Ron Feicht and paintings by Mary Miles and Rosemary Burnham will be on display. We also hope to have a table of Silent Auction items for your consideration. Come on over!

By Louis K. Peterson

## Membership Report

Please join me in welcoming new members **Geraldine Barnes and Alec** and **Rossane Lenec**.

Membership renewals are being received and I thank you for the steady flow. ARS members who wish to avoid 'journal jeopardy' should send their renewals to me no longer than November 24th, or turn them in at the November 16th monthly meeting.



**Vancouver Chapter**

Benefits change:

Please note that Murray Nurseries, Vancouver, is no longer in business (retired and a house being constructed on the site). Please amend your list and I will update the benefits change. Many thanks to **Murray Nurseries** for supporting the Vancouver Rhododendron Society over many years.

Carole Conlin,  
VRS MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

## Nominations for the VRS Executive

The Nominations Committee has recommended the following nominations for the positions to be voted on at the January 2007 Annual General Meeting. The Executive has accepted the report with thanks.

Joanne Ronsley, President  
Sean Rafferty, Vice-President  
Radojka Harris, Secretary  
Barbara Sherman, Treasurer  
Newsletter Editors, Todd & Shannon Major  
Membership Chair, Vacant - No nomination received  
Program Co-Chairs, Joe Ronsley and Louis Peterson  
Director: Tony Clayton (to 2009)

The Ongoing Positions on the Executive are:  
Louis Peterson, Past President  
Iain Forsyth, Director to 2007  
Don Haslam, Director to 2008

Respectfully submitted by Louis Peterson on behalf of Iain Forsyth, Nominations Committee Chair.

## Do You Have Some News or a Picture?

Letters to the **INDUMENTUM**, news, pictures and anything rhodo or just for interest, can be emailed to Todd & Shannon Major at [stmajor@shaw.ca](mailto: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!

Visit our online repository for past **INDUMENTUM** issues, hosted by the UBC Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research at: [www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org/vrs](http://www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org/vrs).

Visit our website at [WWW.RHODO.CITYMAX.COM](http://WWW.RHODO.CITYMAX.COM)

Todd & Shannon Major,  
**INDUMENTUM** Editors



# BACK TO BASICS

By Ron Knight

## Members have asked the Indumentum: What are your favourite rhododendrons?

My favourite rhododendrons have great flowers and something else going for them, for example spectacular foliage, fragrance, or very early / very late bloom time. Since these are the criteria I use to purchase rhododendrons for my own collection, I have hundreds of different varieties that could qualify as "favourites".

In addition, for a rhododendron to stay in my good books after it has been planted, it must perform reliably, year after year, in my garden on the Sunshine Coast. At this location, rhododendrons have to tolerate living on rock in my home-made soil mix and must be able to survive cold winter winds off Hotel Lake as well as endure very dry summers.

Therefore, I feel a bit uncomfortable about recommending a few favourite rhododendrons to novice collectors whose gardens may have very different soil and climatic conditions to mine. Rhododendron performance recommendations are really only relevant in specific climatic areas.

With this in mind, I think it would be most instructive for me to select personal favourites from the American Rhododendron Society's 2006 Rhododendrons of the Year (ROY) and from the Proven Performers lists submitted by Pacific Northwest rhododendron clubs ([www.rhododendron.org](http://www.rhododendron.org)). Then, readers will know that my selected plants have received wide acclaim, based on both outstanding appearance and reliable performance from B.C. to Oregon.

The following plants are ten of my favourite rhododendrons. They are easy to grow and all have been listed multiple times as Proven Performers in the Pacific Northwest or have won a 2006 ROY Award. Azaleas have been given short shrift because, as Frank Dorsey taught me when I first joined the Vancouver Rhododendron Society, "The best sorts of people don't collect azaleas."

All of the hybrid rhododendrons mentioned in this article are easy to find and easy to grow in the Pacific Northwest. Ask for them at your local retail garden centre and at rhododendron club meetings. Most species rhododendrons, on the other hand, will only be available from member-growers of rhododendron clubs.

My favourite rhododendrons are listed no particular order, starting with Ginny Gee at the top of the adjoining column, the remainder are listed on the following pages.

### Ginny Gee (photo below)

This dwarf rhododendron from Warren Berg won a Superior Plant Award in 1985. Its small leaves turn shades of bronze in autumn in my garden. Profuse blooms appear in April and are pink and white. Wee Bee, another dwarf from the same hybridizer, is a 2006 ROY winner with much brighter pink flowers.



### Loderi King George (photo below)

Several mature members of the Loderi group are displayed in a grove at VanDusen Gardens. They need wind and sun protection and plenty of space as they eventually become small trees. King George is probably the best white form. Its huge flowers are fragrant and open in May from pink buds. Loderi Venus is the darkest pink form and has the added attraction of purple leaf stalks. Both rhododendrons develop small, dark, harmless spots on their leaves, likely caused by a virus.



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## PJM

Peter J. Mezitt's signature hybrid (photo left) is easily taken for granted because its flowers are on the small side and the PJM group of rhododendrons is extremely common. Don't be fooled, however. PJM deserves to be on any "top ten" list because it has so many things going for it: tolerance of sun and heat, hardiness to  $-31^{\circ}\text{C}$ , spicy-scented foliage that turns mahogany shades in winter, and bright purplish-pink flowers that are a perfect compliment to a pot of yellow daffodils. PJM is also very easy to propagate and I've rooted a flat of cuttings in 100% wood shavings.

## Point Defiance

This giant rhododendron won a 2006 ROY Award and is a member of Halfdan Lem's superb "Walloper" group. The large flowers (photo right) have a white centre with pink picotee edges. If you buy a very young potted specimen, make sure to leave lots of space on each side of the planting hole to accommodate its future spread.



## *R. angustinii*

This species rhododendron (photo right) is a "must-have" in any garden.

It is a tall, upright plant that is magnificently displayed in Van Dusen's Sino-Himalayan Garden. Although there are white and pink forms, most selections of the species have violet-blue flowers often with interesting spotting or blotching.

*R. angustinii* Hobbie is often sold at retail garden centres while Electra, Green Eye, and Tower Court can be obtained from member growers of rhododendron clubs. Other members of the Triflorum group that are Proven Performers are *R. yunnanense* and *R. davidsonianum*.



## *R. campylogynum*

This wonderful dwarf rhododendron (photo below) has bell-shaped flowers that are loosely held on long stalks. Flowers range in colour from creamy-white to pink, salmon, purple, or red. Several selections are available from rhododendron clubs.



Marine,

member growers

# BACK TO BASICS

## *R. kiusianum* (photo right)

This dwarf species azalea from Japan is definitely worth growing as a potted specimen, in a rock garden, or at the front of a border. The plant buds young and is covered with pink flowers in the excellent American selection, Komo Kulshan. *R. kiusianum alba* is a highly-rated white form that is considered to be one of the finest plants in the azalea group.



## Snow Lady (photo left)

March frost looks spectacular on the copper-coloured hairs that cover Snow Lady's leaves. The flowers are clear white with chocolate-brown anthers. This low-growing rhododendron blooms at an early age and can be planted in full sun or shade.



## Taurus

A Superior Plant Award was given to this rhododendron in 1990. It is a tall shrub with pointed, deep green leaves and rich red flowers (photo right). Grace Seabrook's flowers are almost identical but Taurus is my pick because it has bright red buds that look fabulous all winter long.



## Teddy Bear (photo above)

It's parents are *R. bureavii* and *R. yakushimanum*, both Proven Performers in their own right. Anyone who touches Teddy Bear's beautiful orange indumentum in my garden wants to buy the plant. The flowers are pale pink on this low-growing rhododendron. Sir Charles Lemon is a Proven Performer alternative with superb orangey-brown indumentum; however its white flowers do not appear for several years.

Other Proven Performers that have been chosen by several Pacific Northwest rhododendron clubs are Bob's Blue, Dora Amateis, Paprika Spiced, Horizon Monarch, Scintillation, Odee Wright, Lem's Cameo, and Nancy Evans. Although these last two plants have superb flowers, they were not included in my top ten because they are quite susceptible to powdery mildew.