



# Indumentum

The Monthly Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

Re-Est. 2018

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<https://www.gardenia.net/garden/a-pretty-spring-border-idea-with-rhododendrons-and-crocuses>

This newsletter is brought to you by the Vancouver Rhododendron Society, purveyors of fine rhododendrons and florid news.

Presented for your delectation, an assortment of current and historical items gleaned from divers sources, scientific to leisurely, all with a smattering of Ericaceae.





[www.rhodovanbc.org](http://www.rhodovanbc.org)

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**The next meeting of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society is Thursday, February 15, 2018 at VanDusen Gardens** - Floral Hall, 5251 Oak Street (37th and Oak) Vancouver, BC. The doors are open by 7:00 pm and the meeting starts at 7:30.

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### PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Chris Hodgson

I am delighted this month to see this note in our re-inaugurated *Indumentum*. Many thanks to editor Toby Hughes for his most welcome initiative. A newsletter is much more than a need-to-know what's-new-in-the-month list. It allows details on upcoming events, members' views and lots of relevant and perhaps even not-so relevant tidbits on rhododendrons and other interesting gardening stuff. Bravo!

I'm writing this on a soggy Sunday, February 4. January was one of the rainiest on record, with a yard of rain at the airport (and much more on the north shore). The collateral good news is that almost everything in the garden is galloping towards spring. Aconites, galanthus and hellebores are in bloom and buds are bursting out everywhere else. The blooms on our *R. cilpinense* are eye poppers. The down side? The garden is too sodden for work, and one always worries about nutrient leaching, or at least I do!

And while on the topic, please remember to dig out chunks of those still dormant hostas and ferns and stick them in 1-gallon pots for sale in May.

This month we are privileged to have as guest speaker **Ms. Atsuko Gibson**, an assistant curator at the Species Foundation in Federal Way. She graduated in horticulture from University of Arkansas and completed an internship at Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. She's been with RSBG for the past eight years.

Atsuko will talk about her recent trip to Japan in May where she saw massive displays of *R. quinquefolium*, *kaempferi*, and *wadanum* in Honshu region, *R. dilitatum* and other species in Tochigi prefecture, and on Mt. Takao, the closest mountain to downtown Tokyo, she spotted the orchid *Dendrobium monoliforme* on cedar trees. Yaks will be on her must-see list next time!



Happy *R. cilpinense* on Feb. 3



Aconites give welcome ground cover

## LOCAL UPCOMING EVENTS & NOTICES:

Get excited! Here's what's on tap for the next six months.

**February 15:** General meeting. Atsuko Gibson of the Rhododendron Species Foundation will speak on Japanese rhododendrons encountered during her latest visit in May, 2017.

**March 15:** General meeting. George Woodard will speak on large leaf rhododendrons in New York. George is head gardener at the Phipps Estate on Long Island, a property of 100 acres modelled after the grand estates of England. Mr. Phipps was first interested in peonies, then magnolias, but at last found his permanent love in rhododendrons. He encouraged development of hybrids, a program greatly expanded upon by George Woodard. Under Mr. Woodard, 10,000 rhododendrons are under cultivation and the estate is the setting for a test garden being established by the New York ARS Chapter. We look forward to learning of his success in growing large leaf rhododendrons in New York.

**April 19:** General meeting. Judy Walker, author of "*A Garden for Life: Mary Greig & the Royston Rhododendrons*" will speak on the Royston garden, its many sources and contributors and its connection with Alleyne Cook, Clive Justice and the Stanley Park rhododendron collection. See below.

**May 4, 5 (Friday, Saturday):** setup and sale of our annual "Show and Sale" at Park and Tilford Gardens, North Vancouver. All hands on board, please, for this event. Bring plants and willing hands.

**May 17 (Thursday):** Evening visit to the Royston collection at Stanley Park.

**June 16 (Saturday):** Spring picnic, destination to be decided.

## Divers

- UBC Garden has a number of early blooms, not least of which are *R. thomsonii*, *R. hanceanum*, and *R. arboreum*. At our recently held AGM, Doug Justice provided another colourful display, indicating blooms for many species could be as much as a month 'early'.
- I have been informed that the advertised trip to Sabah, organised by a member of the Australian Rhododendron Society is fully booked: however, a tour to central China, organised by Whistling Arrow Expeditions (<https://whistlingarrow.com/plant-hunting-expedition-china>), is planned for June. The area covers the Yunnan-Myanmar-Tibet border region.
- The Rhododendron Species Foundation & Botanical Garden has its Spring Catalogue available online: <https://rhodygarden.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/2018-Spring-Catalog.pdf>

- The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group (UK), is organising a tour of Northern Ireland gardens, from April 10<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>.
- The BC Council of Garden Club also lists upcoming events at:  
<https://bcgardenclubs.com/wp/events/>
- The Master Gardeners Club of BC events, courses and links:  
<http://mgabc.org/content/104-calendar-upcoming-events>
- The David C. Lam Asian Garden will be closed for construction between mid-February 2018 and mid-March 2018.
- The annual ARS conference is to be held in Bremen, Germany. See <http://ars2018.org/FAQ.php> for more information. At time of writing, there were a few spots remaining for the Pre-Tour, Holland.
- A Spring tour of Welsh gardens, organised by the Scottish Rhododendron Society, takes place from Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April. See <http://ars2018.org/wales/index.html>.
- The 41<sup>st</sup> Annual John Druecker Memorial Rhododendron Show, California's largest rhodo' event, is taking place on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> May. It will be held at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens. For more information, go to: <https://www.gardenbythesea.org/calendar/rhododendron-show-2018/>
- The Vancouver Orchid Society Show & Sale is being held on march 24-25<sup>th</sup> at VanDusen Garden:  
[www.aos.org/news-and-events/event.../vancouver-orchid-society-show-sale.aspx](http://www.aos.org/news-and-events/event.../vancouver-orchid-society-show-sale.aspx)

Just in time for Spring, next month's newsletter will include links for Lower Mainland and islands nurseries. With urbanisation removing so much green space, and with it established businesses, it's increasingly difficult to locate quality plants. Native plants are a vital part of any garden and I'll endeavour to include sources in the list.

***Submissions, be they articles, images or events, are most welcome, as are comments and suggestions.***



## On this day in history, 20th February, 1722:

Mark Catesby journeyed to South Carolina to undertake plant collecting on behalf of the Royal Society. The son of a lawyer, growing up in Sudbury, Suffolk, his interest in natural history was likely inspired by the garden activities of an uncle, Nicholas Jekyll (yes, Gertrude would be a relative), who kept a botanical garden near Hedingham Castle, Suffolk. His first voyage to the American colonies took place in 1712, residing with his sister's family in Williamsburg, Virginia.

During his nine year journey, he travelled extensively, documenting, drawing, painting and collecting. His efforts drew the attention of some very influential people, including Royalty, the chair of the Royal Society, Sir Isaac Newton, and several of its members, who, upon his return to England, requested he undertake a second exploration to further catalogue and collect New World faunal and floral specimens. With such considerable backing, he arrived in Charleston with his sister and embarked on one of America's most important biological expeditions. It culminated with the publication "The natural history of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands", described in 1743 by C. Mortimer, F.R.S., as "the most magnificent work ... since the art of printing has been discovered."



Left: The Crested Titmouse and *R. viscosum*, later considered by others to be *R. canescens*, or possibly a composite of the two species. Right, *Kalmia angustifolia* and *R. maximum*.

The images are from:

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/126154#page/7/mode/1up>, a pdf file of the entire work, with descriptions of all material and their environs.

The text contained prints from his original watercolours which were presumed lost for over a hundred years, but were actually stored, albeit unknowingly, at the Royal Library, Windsor Castle. Some 220 plates were produced, with subjects including the first paintings of the presumed extinct Ivory-billed Woodpecker and the officially extinct Carolina Parakeet.

Linnaeus cited his work many times, as did Thomas Jefferson in his “Notes on the State of Virginia,”, 1785. Prior to their expeditions, Lewis & Clarke studied his work, as did Alexander von Humboldt. His contributions remain widely valued: in 2012, the Catesby Tercentennial symposia (sic) was held to discuss his work, and the following year saw publication by Cornell University of a study that included re-classification of the organisms using more modern taxonomic information.

(<http://www.phytoneuron.net/2013Phytoneuron/06PhytoN-CatesbyIDs.pdf>).

That same year, National Geographic presented a brief article on him. A book by Nelson & Elliott, “Mark Catesby: the Curious and Ingenious Naturalist” is available, as is “The Curious Mister Catesby” by Stone & Neal, on DVD. The Catesby Commemorative Trust produced a movie, “The Curious Mr. Catesby”, which you can view on Vimeo.

As an aside, one of his forebears was Robert Catesby, leader of a group who planned the Gunpowder Plot.

Meanwhile in London, one of his backers, Dr. Hans Sloane had made provisions for the stocking of the Physic Garden, Chelsea, then owned by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries, one of many livery companies in London. As manager of the garden, he was to provide annually, a minimum number of plants, which eventually totalled over 2,000, including collections by Catesby. It is the second oldest botanical garden in Britain.

Dr. Sloane, an Anglo-Irish physician, later knighted, was president of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Royal Society, and is notable in many respects with a list of his deeds and works that would fill several tomes. Founder of the British Museum, the natural History Museum and the British Library, he was an avid, some would say, manic collector, accumulating in his lifetime, over 3,500 manuscripts, 50,000 volumes of texts, 32,000 coins, and 15,000 specimens of biota, all of which he catalogued. He would later donate the vast majority to the above institutions for the sum of £20,000, an arrangement that nearly fell through, which would have seen his collections heading East to St. Petersburg. I can hardly imagine the loss if that had happened.

Early rhododendron blooms with crocus are a treat, but nearly all species croci are Fall flowering, with older gardens growing *Crocus sativus* or *Colchicum* in abundance. I recently read of a comparatively newly discovered Fall flowering species, (from Turkey, of course), *Crocus brachyfilus* (Iridaceae):

(<http://www.bioone.org/doi/pdf/10.3372/wi.44.44107>)



Forty years ago, there were approximately 80 crocus species; with increasing use of molecular methods coupled with re-investigation of known Iridiaceae sites, this has increased to over 150.

By now, that *R. ledbourii* should be ready to bloom, though my February pick is one of the more unusual but well known to enthusiasts, *R. stenophyllum*. It has been extensively documented, though the fortunate few see it

blooming (at time of writing, they were out at the Species Foundation, albeit indoors).



<http://www.thedangergarden.com/2017/03/the-rhododendron-species-foundation.html> & [http://www.rhododendron-azalee.fr/classification/images/stenophyllum\\_IMG\\_6419.jpg](http://www.rhododendron-azalee.fr/classification/images/stenophyllum_IMG_6419.jpg)



Officially first described by (Joseph D.) Hooker and O. Stapf, it is a Kalimantan native growing on Mount Kinabalu. Sir Hugh Low collected it as a dried specimen on a previous expedition in 1867.

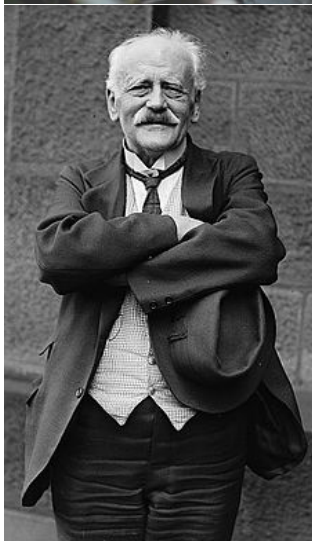
Hooker needs no introduction: Dr. Otto Stapf published information in The Transactions of The Linnean Society of London, (2<sup>nd</sup> Series, Vol. IV- Botany), 1894-1896, wherein he describes the Mountain's Flora. Floral distribution was based on a broad classification into Hill Zone (up to 3,000 ft), Lower (3,000 to 5,000 ft), and Upper (5,000 to 10,500 ft), Mountain zones, with *R. stenophyllum* within the latter, at elevations of 5,000 to 8,000 feet, along with *R. cuneifolium*, *durionifolium*, (with natural hybridisation), *acuminatum*, *lowii*, and perhaps *brookeanum*, and the highest, Summit Zone. Some 360 species were located and described. Though not the first expedition to the area, arguably, it provided the most comprehensive description of the flora.



*R. lowii*. Image (c) Sander van Hulsenbeek 2005

<https://www.vanhulsenbeek.com/>  
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NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License

Otto was the son of Joseph Stapf, Oberbergrat, Senior Inspector of Mines, at Isehl, the world's oldest known salt mines. He grew up in nearby Hallstatt, and later graduated from Vienna with a Ph.D in biology.



Otto Stapf,  
<http://enacademic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/3110350>.

He later published a study of the archaeological plant remains from the Late Bronze and Iron Age mines that had been uncovered by his father. Now a UN World Heritage Site, the underlying salt stratigraphy has preserved three eras of settlement, with thousands of artifacts preserved, from clothing, pottery and weapons to jewellery, including arguably the most spectacular Bronze Age piece, the Kultwagen Strettweg, overleaf:





(Thilo Parg / Wikimedia Commons,  
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Workplace acrimony including a hint of nepotism aimed at replacing Stapf with the brother of his employer's spouse, led the Austrian to move to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in 1890, where he became Keeper of the Royal Herbarium. In 1908 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and was awarded the Linnean Medal in 1927. A member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the German botanical society, and later became

Editor of Kew's Botanical Magazine.

A busy chap, he combined systematic botanical work publishing the results of several expeditions, with his own, to West Africa, Persia, the Solomon Islands and India. Publications included monographs on the genus *Ephedra*, and later, the aconites of India, assisting Hooker with the "Flora of British India", particularly on the native grasses, (which was of great interest to him throughout his career), and most significantly, "Flora of Mount Kinabalu in North Borneo". A significant portion of the Borneo material was from Dr. George Darby Haviland who collected it during his work as medical officer in Sarawak. The Royal Society published an obituary, summarising his work:

<http://rsbm.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/royobits/1/2/115.full.pdf>

His name was given to many species, including *R. stapfianum*: Section *Euvireya*, subs. *Solenovireya*:

<http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/biodivpfl/Knopf/field%20trip%20Mount%20Kinabalu.html> &

[http://www.stoplusjednicka.cz/sites/default/files/obrazky/2016/07/rododendrony\\_r\\_stapfinum.jpg](http://www.stoplusjednicka.cz/sites/default/files/obrazky/2016/07/rododendrony_r_stapfinum.jpg)

