

Indumentum

Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

Volume 33, Number 7, March 2002



The
Vancouver Rhododendron Society
is a chapter of the
American Rhododendron Society

2002 Executive

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Kathy Poole & Ray Talbot

Refreshments: Mary Dorsey

This Month's Meeting: Thursday, March 21st 7:30 PM

**Program: Ted Kipping, San Fransisco, CA - Rhododendrons
in the Woodland Garden**

Education: TBA

President's Message

The continuation of our fine weather has pushed many of the early flowering rhododendrons ahead by at least a week. During a walk in the garden this week, I counted more than fifteen species that had colour in their bud. Should the warmth continue, there should be a superb spring show of flowers.

The meeting of the District Presidents took place in Vancouver in early March. One of the items discussed was the development of a district endowment fund. It is important to remember that with seven ARS chapters in BC, there is the potential to impact on a greater scale the interest in rhododendrons. With the increasing number of public gardens, the district has the opportunity to contribute greatly to the knowledge and expansion of garden areas devoted to rhododendrons.

Joe Ronsley will be presenting the list of gardens open for our Spring Garden Tours. There are some exciting opportunities for members to visit and learn, and perhaps to gain some ideas for their own gardens.

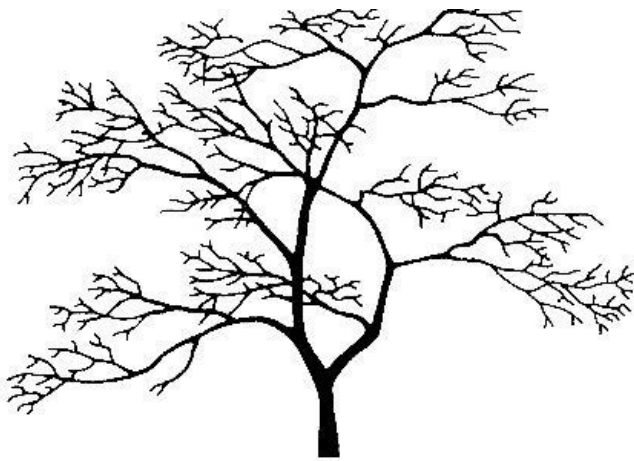
The VRS Executive, at the February meeting, opened discussion regarding the awarding of the Bronze medal. Members who wish to nominate a member who has contributed greatly to the society should let the executive know their candidate. **Ron Knight** has the VRS Rhododendron Show and Sale well in hand. **Karen Shuster** has agreed to act as co-chair. Her wealth of knowledge and past experience has helped to make our show the success it has become. A committee has been set up to review the trophies awarded at our show; discussion will center around which of these are relevant. In the past, VRS held an early and late show. At present we hold only one. The recommendations of the committee will be brought forward to the members.

Todd Major, in his presentation on propagation by seed, provided a wealth of practical information to our members. His broad knowledge on the subject comes from his many years in the field. We look forward to Todd's continuing contributions to VRS.

The members of the Executive are preparing a budget to present to the members for approval. We hope to have this finalized in time for the April meeting. Any suggestions or comments are most welcome. We look forward to seeing everyone at the March meeting.



Gerry Gibbens



Ted Kipping's business card identifies him as "Tree Shaper." The notion of tree shaping is interesting in itself—more so, for instance, than 'tree pruner', and, certainly, infinitely more so than 'tree topper'—but it also suggests someone with skills, interests and sensibilities that are more far reaching. This suggestion is borne out in a book called *Gardening from the Heart*, edited by Carol Olwell, which contains brief autobiographical sketches by various special gardeners. Ted describes himself as a "Terminal Case," which he explains is "a person whose profession became an obsession." The editor's description of Ted confirms that he has a horticultural background that expands considerably on his occupation as "Tree Shaper." We learn that he is "a master horticulturist by passion, a paleo-ecologist by training [at Columbia University] and a tree trimmer by trade." With information apparently provided by Ted himself, Olwell explains that he "began working with trees and plants almost by accident and discovered he couldn't live without them. His quest to learn everything he could about plants and trees has taken him all over the world." Ted, she says, has an "almost encyclopedic horticultural knowledge." "Tree Shaper," indeed!

But in fact, "tree shaper" he is. "I love pruning," he says. "I absolutely love it." Ted began his horticultural career working at the Strybing Arboretum in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, when he had merely an *interest* in plants. His interest became an obsession later, as he began "frantically studying about horticulture, and found [he] really liked all sides of it, the cultivating, propagating, landscaping, and so on." His study of paleo-ecology taught him "how quickly some creatures disappear in the geological clock, and how little it takes to alter things, so it teaches you to appreciate what we have." Ted's horticultural work, then, has concentrated on enhancing the natural objects with which he works and, while he applies this principle to all aspects of

horticulture, he is best able to satisfy himself in the pruning and shaping of trees and shrubs. He looks back on high school woodworking classes and a sculpting class he took at Columbia appreciatively. "All those things," he says, "taught me to train my eye and to tune in, because when you're pruning you're sculpting with time and the life force of that particular plant." Being obsessed, he appropriately keeps returning to his obsession: "It gives me a real pleasure to prune, to see a tree cleanly groomed and dancing in its own space. I want to enhance as many trees as possible. I want to see as many flowers and shrubs planted as possible. I really want to see the world beautified. That doesn't mean destroying what we've already got; sometimes it means awakening people to the potential that's already there. I want to make each thing the best thing I've ever done. That makes it fun and keeps the learning curve high." Expressed in distinctly western terms, there is still something of Zen, or at least of a Japanese spirit, in much of what Ted Kipping says and does. There is also something of the poet in his sensitivity to his work.

A contributor to several horticultural publications, consultant to the University of California Berkeley Botanic Garden, the University of California Davis Arboretum, the University of California Santa Cruz Arboretum, Strybing Arboretum, and the Denver Botanic Garden, Ted has written to me that he "did not believe [he] had a topic worthy of [our] audience's focus." He changed his mind when I suggested he speak on woodland gardens. He will speak on, as he says in his reply, "how to get more light to your gardens and enhance the look/character of the overshadowing trees—well, I could happily proselytize for hours about such a subject!!" We can expect such enlightenment the evening of March 21st—the equinox, appropriately enough—when **Ted Kipping** speaks on "**Rhododendrons in the Woodland Garden.**" And we can expect it from one of the most erudite, and modest, of 'tree shapers'.

Joe Ronsley

◆ **Contributions to the Raffle Table** help offset the rental of the Floral Hall. Plants, books, fresh eggs, etc. are always welcome!

◆ **For the Refreshment Table**, donations of cookies, cakes, cheese, and other snacks are greatly appreciated.





4th Annual Native Plant Sale

Sunday, April 7th
11:00 am to 4:00 pm

The **Plant Centre** has an excellent selection of choice perennials for Spring planting.

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R. moupinense
photo by Justin Moore

Plants in Flower at UBC, 6 March 2002

R. barbatum

R. dauricum

R. fulgens

R. mucronulatum

R. lutescens

R. moupinense

R. oreodoxa var. *fargesii*

R. praevenum

R. ririci

R. sutchuenense

Expanded buds only

R. bainbridgeanum

R. calophytum

R. lanigerum

R. neriiflorum 'Rosevallan'

Membership

A warm welcome to new members who joined in February: Heather & Stanley ROBINSON of Sechelt.

Please make the following changes to your Membership Directory:

Please add:

Graham McGarva & Susan BAKER, 1242 Shorepine Walk, Vancouver, BC V6H 3T8; Telephone: 604-731-1371; Fax: 604-731-0037; Email: uthet@attglobal.net

Heather & Stanley ROBINSON, 5160 Bay Rd., Sechelt, BC V0N 3A1; Email: robinson.sd@telus.net

Irene TATUM, 4882 47th Avenue, Delta, BC V4K 1P8 Telephone: 604-946-0907; Email: cit@bc.sympatico.ca

Philip WADDELL, P.O. Box 46, Egmont, BC V0N 1N0 Telephone: 604-254-0890

Please amend:

Carol HALSTEAD – Tel. 604-421-3054

Ayuko INOUE – Email ainoue@radiant.net

Margit KRISTIANSEN – Email: margit@pacmorg.org

Ian & Susan MORRISON – Email: jandkeds@telus.ca

Richard & Ingrid NITSCH – Email: nitsch@telus.net

Ann ROOT – Telephone: 360-650-671-2156; Email: annroot@attbi.com

Jack ROOT – Email: jackroot@attbi.com

Karen SHUSTER – Email: kshuster@telus.net

Ray TALBOT – Email raytalbot@shaw.ca

Carole Conlin, VRS Membership Chair

Telephone: 604-921-7260

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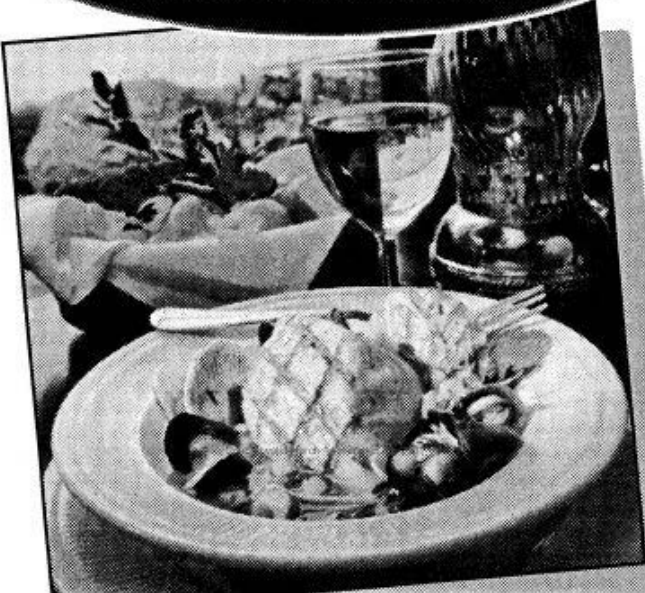
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VRS member and artist Mary Comber Miles invites members to the opening of *Mary Comber Miles Botanicals*, presented by the Harrison Gallery, 1741 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, on April 4th, 6:30 – 8:30 pm. Mary's show continues daily from April 5th to the 15th (10:00 am to 5:30 pm). Mary gives information on each plant illustrated and invites you to enjoy and study a choice group of plants.

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Mike Trembath (Fraser South) reports: Those of you who went on any of the Fraser South garden tours will remember the lovely garden of Fred and Ann Banford, with its “dell” where *R. macabeum* grows, and the BIG (for our part of the country!) *R. fulvum* near the house. This property is now being offered for sale—and you have the early opportunity to buy, prior to listing.

Rhodo Lovers: Here is your opportunity to acquire a very interesting property of 1.7 acres, well planted with magnolias, mature specimen rhododendron species and hybrids, but with room for you to add your own collection. Attractive 2500 sq.ft. rancher. Private sale. For information, phone 604 534 1783.

Subscription Rates

VRS + ARS Membership (US & Overseas)	\$50.00 \$US 28.00
VRS Membership (no ARS Quarterly Journal)	\$25.00
Associate Membership (member of another ARS Chapter in Canada)	\$10.00
Associate Membership (member of another ARS Chapter outside of Canada)	\$US 10.00

Advertising Rates

	1 month	3 months	8 months
Business card	\$10.00	\$25.00	\$50.00
$\frac{1}{4}$ page	\$25.00	\$67.50	\$160.00
$\frac{1}{2}$ page	\$40.00	\$108.00	\$256.00
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Computers and the Rhododendron

Following up on my article on websites of interest for the rhododendron fancier, I am now writing to offer some experiences I have had with using the computer to help organize information about the garden.

A simple garden list has many uses. Knowing what plants you already have can be as important as knowing which ones you still want at that big annual plant sale. No more opportunities missed, and no more needless duplicates. Knowing just where you planted a rhodo can be equally useful.

Rather than repeatedly making handwritten lists, one might choose to enter the information into a computer spreadsheet program. One of the most common is Excel. It comes packaged with the Microsoft Office software, and is user-friendly enough that you can find your way around it using the help manual, and can become fairly adept within a short time.

First, assign names to areas of your garden—simple letters are fine, and can designate squares on a rectangular grid, or areas that you can mark out on a hand drawn plan of your garden (do not lose that plan!). Next, decide what characteristics you want to list for each plant. Here is a sample of my list, with the headings:

	Name	Ht	Flower Colour	Date	Charac-teristics	Site	Yr	Photo
1	1000 Butterflies	5	pink/cream	ML	red blotch	J	'01	**
2	A. Bedford	6	mauve/lavender	ML	blk blotch	K	'00	

The things that I note are when the plant blooms, the colour of bloom, its 10 year theoretical height, the site at which it is planted and the date purchased. I'll talk about that last column in a minute.

If you are prone to buying a dozen or two plants at a time (usually in the earlier stages of rhodoholism), you can make a list of the new acquisitions, and Excel allows you to sort according to any column, so you can print out a planting list in order of height, or colour, or bloom time, to help you in choosing what

Continued next page

Please contact **Joanne Ronsley** for information on advertising in *Indumentum*
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 604.921.9444



From previous page

should go where. I always make a planting list in order of height, and take it into the garden on a clipboard to mark the area where the new rhodies end up being planted. I then enter the information, do a simple cut and paste and a new sort into alphabetical order and I have a new permanent list.

Now—that final column! If you own a digital camera of even modest ability (and they are getting cheaper every day – I got mine for free using Gold Card points), you can take pictures of your plants and save them onto your hard drive. Then, you can link them to your data in Excel (e-mail me or ask and I'll tell you how—it's easy), so that when you click on the link in the right column, the picture of your plant comes up!



Rhododendron '1000 Butterflies'

Photo by Bill Spohn

In the example above, here is what you would see if you clicked on the link on the far right (though in much higher resolution than you see here):

And now a bonus for those who reach this point and collect a bunch of their own rhodo photos. You'll already have put them all in one directory, so you can link them to your Excel spreadsheet, so go to this link:

<http://www.zdnet.com/downloads/stories/info/0,10615,54936,00.html>

and download a small program called JPGSaver. It is a simple program that allows you to link to your directory that has all those rhodo pictures (or your dog, your kids, whatever you like), and create a Windows screensaver that cycles through them. Takes about 5 minutes to set up and then all winter, every time you come in to the room, you'll see your garden on the screen, inspiring you to hold out until Spring.

Bill Spohn

Haiku by Geoff Wilson

Vernal Equinox
My ass! Those expensive
Rhododendrons. Frozen!



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February Education Feature - 21/02/02

"Seeding" by Todd Major

Seeding techniques

- Surface sowing vs. covering seed—surface preferred for light exposure to speed germination.
- Maintaining humidity using plastic domes—vent regularly to remove condensation and aid the seed in imbibing.
- Watering seeds and seedlings using capillary watering, this prevents seeding damage and damping off.
- Using sterilized media avoids having to use chemical fungicides.

Seed preparation

- Refrigeration, notching, presoaking, soaking in hydrogen peroxide, sanding or passing through the intestine of your foreman.
- Use clean hands, tools, trays and pots to prevent infection.

Continued on page 8

Plants in bloom - *Rhododendron oreodoxa* var. *fargesii*

UBC Botanical Garden has an enviable collection of species rhododendrons. The site is ideal for woodland plants—high, overhead shade from high-crowned conifers, such as grand fir (*Abies grandis*) and western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), and the wind-stilling protection of low-branched western red cedars (*Thuja plicata*). The prevailing winds are normally from the west off the Strait of Georgia, and these strike the escarpment below the David Lam Asian Garden and are deflected upwards, allowing soaring birds to float lazily above the garden. In winter, a surprising amount of protection is afforded by the forest. On a clear night in March, the open sky draws enough heat from the ground to cause a radiation frost. Typically, under tree cover, the temperature at the ground stays well above freezing.

When we're favoured by mild winter weather, we brag about our *Rhododendron ririei* (see February, 2002) and *moupinense* plantings (and others), but most of these plants are in the open, and since I last wrote this column, their pristine corollas have been turned to mush by frost. A large planting of *R. oreodoxa* var. *fargesii* is under the influence of a few large trees, however, and their flowers are expanding even as ice nightly forms on the ponds. According to Peter Cox, in *The Larger Rhododendrons*, the buds of this species are very frost resistant, so perhaps we should consider trading places with some of our more bud-tender species.

Whereas many larger, early flowering rhododendrons are quite variable in their flower production, we find var. *fargesii* to be reliable and consistent from year to year. Farges rhododendron is, like so many species, poorly known, but deserves our attention. Plants are bushy shrubs growing to perhaps 10 feet tall. Flowers are narrowly bell-shaped, a beautiful strong pink, often with raspberry specks on the inside and held in loose trusses of 6 to 8. It differs from var. *oreodoxa* in its glandular ovary and slightly wider leaves. It is named for Paul Farges, a French missionary who was the first non-Chinese to discover it, and it was introduced by Wilson from western Hubei in 1901.



Rhododendron oreodoxa var. *fargesii*
photo by Justin Moore



er·i·ca·ceous (ěri'kejes) **1.** of or relating to the Ericaceae, a family of plants with typically bell shaped flowers: includes heather, rhododendron & arbutus. **2.** often used in conjunction with *compulsion* to describe common affliction of rhododendron lovers. See also *ericaceous compulsion*.

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Seed storage

- Collect seed when ripe; clean it, dry for one hour then refrigerate until sowing time to preserve viability.
- To prevent damage to the seed, store seeds in the fridge, not in the freezer. Store in envelopes, labeled and dated.
- Most seeds require a period of accumulated cold (i.e., time below a certain temperature) in order to germinate.

Seeding tools

- Protrays, row flats, seeding domes, trays.
- Soil thermometers, heating cables for bottom heat, fluorescent lights with full spectrum bulbs.

Timing

- Sow in fall outdoors (with domes) for trees, shrubs, perennials or biennials.
- Sow in spring for annuals, easy perennials, tender plants.

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Bah!

Karen's CURRIED CORN CHOWDER

- 3 T. butter
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 3/4 tsp. curry powder
- 3 T. flour
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup chicken bouillon
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled, diced and cooked
- 1 (341-mL) can whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1 cup light cream
- 2 T. chopped parsley
- 5 slices bacon, chopped and fried crisp



Melt butter in large saucepan and add celery and onion. Cook gently until soft but not brown. Stir in curry powder and flour and saute lightly. Remove from heat and gradually stir in milk and bouillon. Return to heat and bring to boil, stirring, until thickened and smooth. Add potatoes, corn, salt, pepper and cream. Cover and heat gently about 5 minutes. Stir in parsley and bacon.

Recipe says this serves 4, but I used the above amounts without increasing and easily had enough for 6.