

INDUMENTUM



VANCOUVER
Rhododendron
SOCIETY

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

FEBRUARY 15, 2007, 7:30 P.M. AT VANDUSEN GARDENS

LECTURE PROGRAM:

Peter Wharton - Curator of the David C. Lam Garden at the UBC Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research. Speaking on "The Lure and Role of Plant Expeditions in Asia"

Peter (photo right) was born in West Yorkshire, UK, where the beautiful rolling hills demand the outdoors attention of hiker and walker. He graduated in forestry from the University College of North Wales, in the shadow (metaphorically) of Mount Snowdon, England's highest peak. He qualified as an arborist before coming to UBC over 30 years ago, to the Faculty of Forestry, where he has conducted botanical research and taught courses on Garden Design and Woody Plant Materials in the Landscape, among other things.. Besides climbing trees, his career has led ever upwards to some of the highest mountains in the world, in China, South Korea and Burma.



The UBC website tells us: "(Peter's) prime focus is the conservation of the uniquely bio-diverse forests of southern Yunnan and border areas of Vietnam and Burma". His knowledge of the Asian horticultural scene is immense, stemming from collaborations as participant or leader in a dozen or so botanical expeditions of organizations such as the US National Arboretum, the Rhododendron Species Foundation, Duke University (North Carolina), the Capilano University College Ecotourism Program, the Wespelaar Arboretum (Belgium) and, in the Peoples' Republic of China, at Sichuan University, the Kunming Institute of Botany, the Botanical Gardens of Nanjing and Guizhou – to give you a sample of his international collaborative network.

Peter's exploration work, and the work of others like him, is of great value to the horticultural community. It leads to the advancement of botanical knowledge, the conservation of natural habitats, and is a boon to our own gardens. The book "The Jade Garden – New and Notable Plants from Asia" by Peter Wharton, Brent Hine and Douglas Justice is highly recommended reading. In Peter's talk at our February meeting, we can expect to be entertained as well as educated, and to share, vicariously, in the exciting experiences of the challenging expeditions themselves from the comfort of a soft chair in VanDusen's Floral Hall.

By Louis K. Peterson

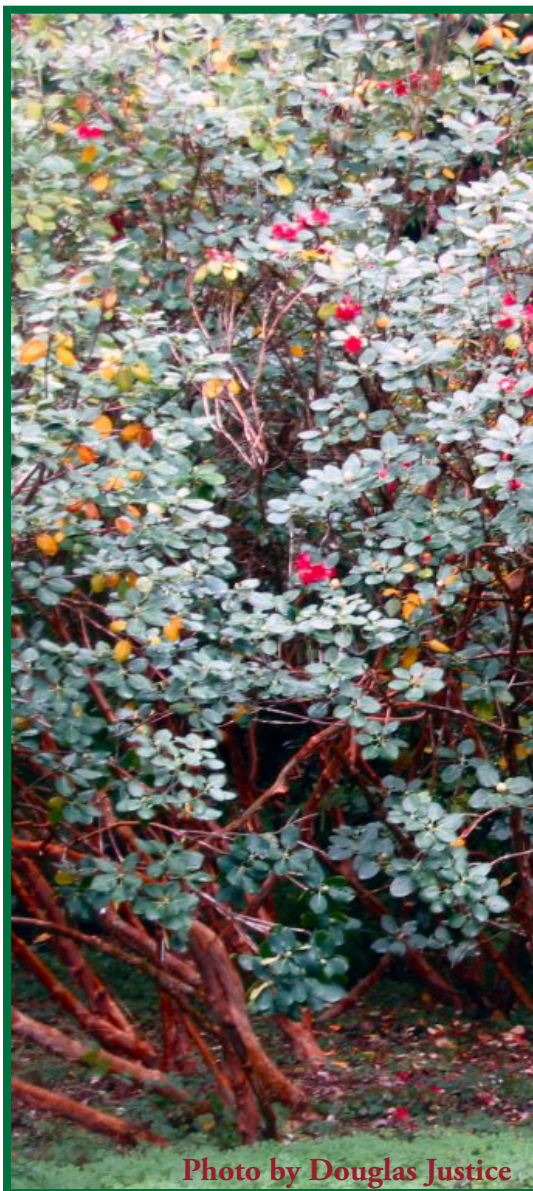


Photo by Douglas Justice

The Annual General Meeting

At our January 18 meeting, Barbara Sherman revealed the financial good news that we had made an encouraging profit from fundraising efforts and cautious control of expenses during 2006. Iain Forsyth introduced the new members of the executive - Joanne Ronsley (President), Sean Rafferty (Vice President), Philip MacDougall (Membership), and Tony Clayton (Director). He thanked the members continuing on the executive, and the previous Vice President Lothar Mischke, and Membership Chair Carole Conlin, for sterling contributions to the Society.

Following the “transfer of power”, signaled by the presentation of a lighted candle to Joanne by Louis, (surely an emblem of an illuminating season to come), and great assistance by Douglas in setting up the projector, Iain Forsyth gave us a splendid snapshot of Holehird Gardens, reputedly one of the finest and most visited sites in the UK. The Gardens are located in the spectacularly beautiful Lake District, and although they come under the aegis of the Lakeland Horticultural Trust, the 10-acre site is maintained entirely by 250 or so volunteers out of a total membership of 1800 supporters. One of the goals of Holehird is to maintain a National Collection of Astilbe, Hydrangea, and Polystichum plants, and to preserve other rare species from extinction.

Jacquie Clayton followed with “A Peruvian Vignette”, a personal account of her recent trip with Tony into the high mountains of Peru and Bolivia. Peru is the third largest country in South America and the cradle of the Inca civilization. To a soft accompaniment of gentle Peruvian music, Jacquie’s excellent photography revealed many aspects of the Peruvian geography, culture, flora and fauna. In the harsh unforgiving rural landscapes, despite an obvious struggle for survival, numerous indigenous ethnic groups hold celebration festivals and dress in cheerfully brilliant clothes. Strange carvings, some visible only from the air, a “candleabra” on a mountainside, and mysterious stone structures evoke curiosity about the practices of the ancient peoples. The “modern” colonial Spanish architecture in the towns and cities contrasts with the massive boldness of the mountain temples of Machu Pichu. These, and much more, were among the images that Jacquie brought to us. For more background, see www.geographia.com/peru or www.lonelyplanet.com.

The third talk was another stimulating one - Stuart Scholefield on “Gardens in Winter”, an inspiring account of so much to see and experience when we may wrongly assume that the garden is asleep (or dead!). Stuart’s trained horticulturist eye and expert camera work led us on a rich December/January trip in his Garden on Pender Island, supplemented with aspects of VanDusen and UBC Botanical Gardens. His several themes focused on the structures and colours of the branches and bark of different deciduous trees, the numerous fruits berries and seeds that are on display when the leaves have gone (the nourishment thankful birds), the colours and textures of late leaves and needles and grasses, and, yes, the winter flowers that bloom well before spring tra-la’. I for one will surely look much closer now, at what Nature has to offer in ‘the dark mid-winter’.

The evening ended in party atmosphere. Many good friends had brought in a bountiful selection of cakes, cookies and other goodies for the refreshment table, decorated for the

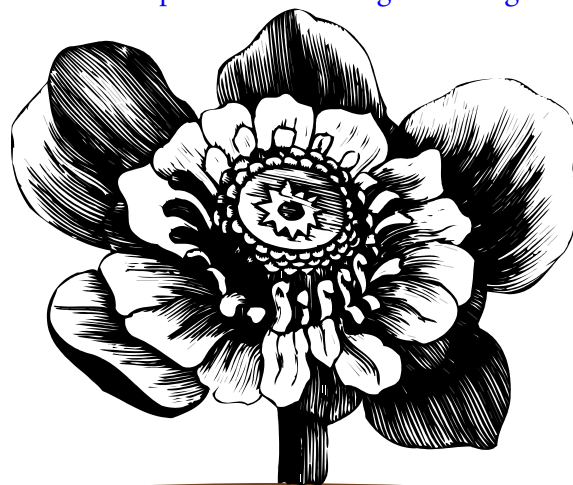
occasion with a bright tablecloth, multi candles and real party plates! Thank you very much, refreshment team!

“Let us Welcome the New Year, Full of Things that have Never Been”

By Louis K. Peterson

Ex Officio - VRS President 2006

Photo above, the Upper Garden at Holehird, courtesy of Holehird Gardens. Visit the Holehird web site by clicking on this link: <http://www.holehirdgardens.org.uk/>



I am writing from Somerset, England. I have just been surfing the net for rhododendrons and was interested in The article in the September 2006 Indumentum called "The Red Rhododendron at 883" by Clive L. Justice, as I often look for any information I can find on various rhododendrons. I am submitting 8 paintings to the Royal Horticultural Society in London in February and one of the paintings is of R. 'John Waterer'. I studied the rhododendrons in Stourhead Gardens, Wiltshire, England, for my botanical paintings, and a gardener who had been at the gardens for many years identified the shrub R. 'John Waterer' (photo right and below) as he had actually planted it years ago.

I chose this rhododendron as one of my subjects to study because of its brilliant red blooms and the contrast between the leaves being a bright green. The shrub was a very healthy one and when in full bloom amidst the dark green foliage of other shrubs, looked illuminated. I thought you may just like to know where it can be found in England, though not much help to you in Vancouver - a long way to travel to see it. If any of your members are over here on a holiday and visit Stourhead Gardens in Wiltshire, they will know there is one flourishing. There are also many other old species of rhododendrons in the Gardens. I am sending you a digital photo of 'John Waterer' which was taken in 2006 at Stourhead.

This species was registered by John Waterer in late 19th century at Knap Hill, Surrey. The flowers of Rhododendron 'John Waterer' are very bright red and a great contrast with the presence of the lime green buds as they open. As your article was about red Rhododendrons, you may like to know that I also painted a very interesting Rhododendron called Shilsonii Group (photo right), also found in Stourhead Gardens. It is a bright red with leaves that look as if they were folded before they opened and still have the creases in, also the calyx on each flower starts of green then changes through various colours until it is a pink hue. I found the seedheads of this rhododendron of particular interest when they turn brown.

This photo was taken on a very sunny day in spring which showed up the brilliance of the shrub. It was taken at Stourhead Gardens close to Stourhead House in an area which is referred to as "the top garden" probably during May when I was studying the shrub and used the photo to help me with my drawings and painting as I live 4 miles away from the gardens.

These are the only two red rhodos that I studied, the others are pink, mauve, and pink with speckles in their throats, you will get pictures of these. I also studied *R. macabeaenum* but the painting was done too late when the shrub was in absolute full bloom, not the best time to study it.

Best Wishes, Sylvia Balch, Somerset- England



PlanetSave - Indiana Company Explores Crop Growing Niche Far From Sun's Warmth **By Rick Callahan**

MARENGO, Ind. In a dark, cave-like chamber carved deep into a southern Indiana cliff, Doug Ausenbaugh is raising corn and tomatoes as vibrant as anything that might grow in a sun-drenched field. Regardless of the weather outside flood, drought or blizzard crops thrive in the blindingly bright growth chambers that Ausenbaugh's Controlled Pharming Ventures LLC has erected 160 feet below ground in one corner of a vast maze carved from limestone.

Ausenbaugh started the company in 2003 with the dream of tapping into the emerging field of crops genetically modified to produce drugs or vaccines. Because pollen from altered plants can mix with other crops with unknown results, Controlled Pharming would instead grow those crops in underground chambers equipped with special filtration systems to remove that pollen. So far, the so-called "pharming" industry remains largely in clinical trials, and Ausenbaugh has shifted his focus to testing new crops under the precise conditions each needs. Instead of waiting months for a specific planting window to test for example, a newly developed crop bred for drought-tolerances a seed company could arrange for Controlled Pharming to grow it in drought-like conditions any time of year to speed along research. "If we can help a company save a year in the development of a product that's got a 20-year proprietary or patentable life, that could be measured in tens or even in hundreds of millions of dollars," Ausenbaugh said. Controlled Pharming's work takes place in the Marengo Warehouse & Distribution Center, a subterranean labyrinth about 35 miles northwest of Louisville, Ky.

The 60-acre complex has nearly 4 million square feet of storage space. Other occupants include the U.S. military, which stores thousands of Meals Ready to Eat, or MREs, and tire companies, which have found its stable temperatures about 58 degrees year-round ideal for keeping automobile tires supple. Here, Controlled Pharming has built two growth chambers fitted with lighting systems, rich soil and a drip system that provides plants water and nutrients. That system has raised Bt corn, a field corn inserted with genes from common soil bacteria to become resistant to European corn borer insect damage with average yields of 337 bushels per acre. That's far above the nation's average yield for field-grown corn of 142 bushels per acre, and better than greenhouse-grown corn at Purdue University that yielded about 267 bushels per acre.

Cary Mitchell, a Purdue horticulture professor, worked with Ausenbaugh to obtain a \$2 million grant from the state's 21st Century Fund, which invests in promising high-tech research. That funding helped refine the technology and methods to grow corn in the chamber, he said. "Corn is a very complex plant, and to not grow it outdoors

under sunlight and summer weather but indoors during the winter in mines is a pretty tricky proposition," Mitchell said. Part of the solution is regulating light, temperature, carbon dioxide, humidity and air circulation to maximize plant growth. Sensors that collect real-time information on those variables are linked to a computer system that regulate them.

So far, Ausenbaugh has had only one client, Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc., for which he recently raised 1,300 corn plants. He hopes to add more seed companies until the vaccine industry he originally targeted gets off the ground. That's still a few years away, said Michael J. Phillips, vice president for food and agriculture of the Biotechnology Industry Organization. But if the new technology pans out, he said, it will give drug companies a new and rapid source of pharmaceuticals that can be used to help cure life-threatening diseases. "Instead of taking years to build and certify a new plant, you can just go out and plant more," Phillips said. "It will take a matter of months instead of three to five or six years."

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Just For Interest - Beautiful Bark



Membership Report

I was pleased to be installed as your new Membership Chair at the January 18, 2007 Annual General Meeting. I look forward to meeting you all as you visit the Membership Table at the monthly meetings.

Please join me in welcoming two new memberships to the VRS: Darrell Mussatto of North Vancouver and Carole Humphrys/Nick Smith of Vancouver



Vancouver Chapter

Membership dues for 2007 are now due and I will be pleased to renew your membership (and welcome new memberships) at the meetings or by mail.

Thank you. See you at the February meeting. Guests are always welcome!

Philip MacDougall
VRS Membership Chair
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Surrey, BC V3R 1A4
Email: philpmacd123@hotmail.com

The 2007 VRS Executive

At the January 2007 Annual General Meeting, the following persons were elected to the Executive.

President, Joanne Ronsley
Vice President, Sean Rafferty
Secretary, Radojka Harris,
Treasurer, Barbara Sherman
Newsletter Editors, Todd & Shannon Major
Membership Chair, Philip MacDougall
Program Co-Chairs, Joe Ronsley and Louis Peterson
Director: Tony Clayton (to 2009)

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

Do You Have Some News or a Picture?

Letters to the **INDUMENTUM**, news, pictures and anything rhodo or just for interest, can be e-mailed 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!

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

Visit our website at link WWW.RHODO.CITYMAX.COM

Todd & Shannon Major,
INDUMENTUM Editors





GARDEN WALK

Fragrance in the Garden and Beyond By Barbara Cook

In 1988 I was in Lhasa, Tibet. There in front of the great buddhist Jokhang Temple (photo right and below), young men and women sat beside bales of *R. anthropogon*. Pilgrims bought dry, leafy twigs and tossed them into the huge incense burners. From them puffed upwards, to the azure sky, plumes of fragrant smoke to please the gods. This morning as I knelt to set the fire, a handful of kindling gave out a rush of heady scent, even before I had put a match to it.

Among the slivers of cedar, were clippings of the same *R. anthropogon*. So evocative was that scent, that memory plopped me back to delight and mingle with the Tibetan pilgrims.

For me fragrant foliage competes quite fiercely for my affection, over fragrant flowers! It is with heady delight that I work among all of the *R. cinnabarinums*, the *R. xanthocodons* and the *R. concatenans*.



I stroke their foliage, or better still, tweak their soft, sticky new leaves and sniff appreciatively.

Our *R. trichostomum* is now fifty years old. There is frequent die-back of the twig ends and clipping them off mixes sorrow with pleasure.

Continued Please See
“*The five R. campylogynums*” on page 7

GARDEN WALK

The five *R. campylogynums* (photo right by Ron Knight) planted by the driveway and the paths, always beckon me to brush into them. They also show such endearing little flowers in many shades of pink and burgundy. I have never seen the yellow form. At the front entrance is our second plant of *R. 'Yellow Hammer'*. The first died when moved into the 'new' garden. It is a must-have for many reasons. For the small and beautiful, dark green leaves, fragrant again, for the exquisite little yellow flowers, showing in most months of the year and because it was Alleyne's wedding buttonhole in November long ago.

R. saluenense, of the lovely name, has perfumed purple leaves. It does not need its purple flowers for it to be fully enjoyed. The narrow, lanceolate leaves of *R. pubescens*, distinguished by fine, little hairs both top and underside, is another aromatic charmer. These are the rhododendrons with sweet foliage that I know and love. There must be others, but it has always been impossible, for me, to strike up a conversation about them! Seldom have I found the topic in reading.

There must be myriads of other garden plants with scented foliage. *Choisya*, commonly known as Mexican Orange Blossom (photo below), I absolutely adore. We have the golden one and I use it in place of flowers all winter long. A cut branchlet will last for weeks and will sometimes root in a vase. It never loses its fragrance. Then there is Lemon Scented Verbena which gives off a sharp tangy whiff when rubbed. My sister always put two or three leaves in every letter she wrote. She did, until a letter sent to her son in Papua New Guinea was intercepted and he in turn was frighteningly interrogated! As for the not so humble Tomato--what a joy to handle and tie up the spicy things. In last year's exceptional growth, we had them nine feet tall, growing up through, what else, rhododendrons. And stinking geranium isn't really. I apologise as I easily pull it out.

These last blows brought down thick mats of brown *Thuja plicata*, especially thick on the path to the woodshed. Even though dead and brown, what a wonderful thing to tread on and thrill to the the fresh antiseptic tang. Don't get me started on Eucalyptus. One of my favourite memory delights is to be walking on warm, sunlit carpets of dry crackling leaves and twigs. When living in Melbourne, next to a park, I gleaned the sweet smelling bark and leaves for my week's firestarters.

As you work or wander through your garden, please remember to reach out and rub and tweak and pick the lovely, lovely leaves.

Yours cheerily,
Barbara Cook

