

GENERAL MEETING:

NOVEMBER 15TH - 7:30 P.M. AT THE VANDUSEN BOTANIC GARDEN IN THE FLORAL HALL.

LECTURE PROGRAM:

STEVE HOOTMAN CO-DIRECTOR OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN
SPEAKING ON: EXPLORING NORTHERN VIETNAM AND ADJACENT SOUTHERN YUNNAN

Steve Hootman really needs no introduction to people who have been VRS members for more than a couple years. Steve has been speaking to the VRS on pretty much a yearly basis for several years now. But he missed last year, and was missed. We'll try not to let that happen again, since he continues to be one of our most popular speakers. Steve is so familiar to VRS members that there is little new for me to say about him, other than that this past spring in San Francisco he received the ARS Gold Medal.

For the benefit of new members, Steve is one of the major plant explorers in the world today, in the words of Keith White 'an intrepid explorer along the lines of the great plant explorers of the early 20th century'. I have spoken to no one among several people who have been on expeditions with Steve who didn't praise him for his special style of participation on these expeditions—his intrepidity, his great knowledge of plants, his value as a comrade and colleague. He also has the capacity to convey vividly the enthusiasm and excitement in undergoing difficult physical conditions and being rewarded with great plant discoveries. He has certainly been involved as much as anyone in discovering species of rhododendrons that hadn't been known before, and also adding to the gene pool of those already in cultivation.

Steve is Co-Director of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden (RSF), located in Federal Way, Washington. For the benefit of newer members, I should also mention that the many recent plant expeditions that have been carried out in Asia, by Steve Hootman and others, not only provide our gardens with beautiful new plants, but also contribute to the conservation of the species in their dissemination among gardeners, when they might otherwise be brought to extinction by destruction of their natural habitats. This is where the RSF comes in. Steve has gone on as many expeditions as anyone, bringing back propagating material collected in the wild. All the plants introduced through the RSF are propagated and eventually offered for sale, with first choices going to RSF members. At the same time, especially beautiful clones of more familiar species are vegetatively propagated and distributed in a like manner, with similar benefits to the horticultural world. The RSF, and Steve particularly, also have much to contribute in the way of education about the natural species of rhododendrons. In fact, for the last few years groups of Canadian gardeners, some of them considered quite expert in their own rights, have been going down to the RSF regularly for a series of classes on rhododendron identification, conducted by Steve. These classes have become increasingly more popular. Steve is evidently an excellent teacher.

By Joe Ronsley

RHODODENDRON RESEARCH PROJECT

This project was sponsored by the Norwegian Research Council, and the project leader is Dr. Ole R. Vetaas. It is based at the Botanical Institute at the University of Bergen in collaboration with The Norwegian Arboretum at Milde - Bergen. Collaborators are Prof. Per M. Jørgensen, Director Per H. Salvesen, and Prof. Ram P. Chaudary from Tribhuvan Univ. of Kathmandu, Nepal.

AIMS:

The present project aims to identify the climatic limits for selected Rhododendron species found in the Nepalese Himalaya region. Rhododendrons are very popular garden plants due to their large, colourful flowers as well as their large, shiny green leaves. The applied aim is to be able to predict the chances of survival for Nepalese Rhododendron species when they are grown in gardens located in temperate climates. Several theories indicate that certain low temperatures are critical in defining the range of evergreen rhododendron species. At the upper end of the temperature range, water efficiency is relatively more important. The long term aim is to develop this knowledge further within a Nepalese institution, which will then provide seeds and/or seedlings for sale, stimulate local economy, and help with reforestation. In order to generate information about the climatic limitations of the selected Rhododendron species we depend on information from gardens/arboreta which have these species. If you have any of these species, your collaboration is essential to our research. Information that you submit will be compared to the data collected in Nepal and an overall picture of the climatic limitations of these species can be outlined.

Cutting of rhododendron forest for fuel wood, leaving a single tree of Rhododendron arboreum (photographed in Lukla, Central Nepal Photo by O.R.Vetaas in 1997).



INFORMATION SOURCES:

Three different data sources are used to develop predictive models for Rhododendron species and sub species:

1. Distribution maps based on Herbaria data and written information can be superimposed on iso-climate maps.
2. The variation in abundance along an elevation gradient (1500 - 4500 m.asl.) with established climate stations.
3. Survival data on Rhododendron species in Botanical gardens and their corresponding climate.

This will facilitate a comparison between the natural climate limits (realized niche) and the limits in cultural condition, where interactions from other organisms is reduced (fundamental niche). How species and their genetically related sub species is distributed along a documented climate gradient provide useful insight in how plant species tackle changes in climate.

QUESTIONS:

The following questions will be answered by the project for selected Rhododendron species:

1. Which climatic parameters best explain their distribution within their natural habitat i.e. their realized niche?
2. Can these parameters predict their survival outside their natural geographical range?
3. How much different are the climatic limits of related sub species in their natural habitats and in arboreta?

TARGET TAXA:

1. *Rh. anthopogon ssp. anthopogon ssp. hypenathum*
2. *Rh. lepidotum*
3. *Rh. arboreum ssp. arboreum ssp. cinnamomeum var. cinnamomeum ssp. cinnamomeum var. roseum*
4. *Rh. barbatum*
5. *Rh. campanulatum ssp. campanulatum ssp. aeruginosum*
6. *Rh. wallichii*



Rhododendron lepidotum

Highly variable low and compact to upright and lean shrub, up to 2m. Flowers open, white, yellow, pink, or purple. Leaves are elliptic, upper surface dark green, lower surface with large brownish scales. Distribution: Kashmir to S.E. Tibet. 2400-4900m. Photographed in Langtang, Nepal by O.R. Vetaas in 1986.



Rh. campanulatum ssp. campanulatum

Low compact to taller bush/tree, 2-11m. Flowers white to pale rose to lilac. Leaves ca. 9-18cm, upper surface glabrous, lower surface with a continuous indumentum. Distribution: Kashmir-Sikkim. 2900-4100m. Photographed on Milke Danda, E. Nepal by Keith McInturff in spring 1998.

Specialty Sales at the November 15th Meeting

Mary Comber Miles and Rosemary Burnham will sell their beautiful paintings, Ron Feicht will sell his lovely pottery, and garden books belonging to Frank Dorsey donated by Mary Dorsey, will be available for purchase at the Nov. 15 VRS meeting. Let's come out and actively support our very talented member artists. It's a real opportunity to shop early for Christmas and at the same time, support fellow members and the VRS.

President's Message

First, a big thank you to **Charlie Sale** for stepping in so effectively at our October meeting. Mainly because of the storm warning, I think, our attendance was smaller than usual. And then the storm didn't even happen. We had about forty people, which for most ARS chapters would be quite good, but we are more accustomed to having 65 to 70 members present, sometimes into the 80s. Perhaps we are spoiled. Nevertheless, the spirit and vitality were good, and the people that were there appeared to be having a good time, and to have enjoyed Charlie's New Zealand pictures and his comments about them.

Thanks again to **Gerry Gibbens** for stepping in with his usual grace for Douglas Justice in presenting our monthly bouquet.

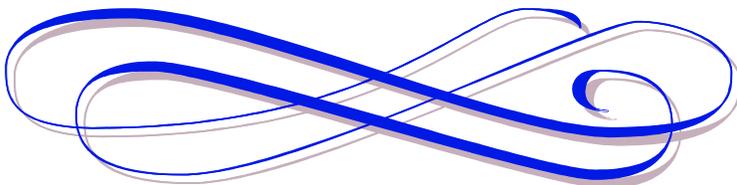
I'm also pleased to announce that **Heidi Schneider** will henceforth be working with **Jacque Clayton** and, from time to time, when needed, her assistant **Tony Clayton**, to organize the refreshment table. One of the wonderful things about the VRS is that so many good and talented people are always ready to do their part, and often more so. So thanks from all of us to the three of you.

The Nominating Committee, with **Brenda Macdonald** at its head, has nearly all the Executive positions for next year filled. Details will be forthcoming.

Both the raffle table and the refreshment table have been looking very good, so I won't keep reminding you to furnish them. Please consider this simply an encouragement to continue doing so!

See you all on November 15th, when our speaker will be perennial favorite **Steve Hootman**.

Joanne Ronsley
VRS President



Membership Fees Due?

We are pleased to receive your annual membership fee to fund the programs we all enjoy. ARS/VRS members should renew by the end of November in order to be sure their Journals are not interrupted. VRS members should also renew by that time in order to help us save time and resources.

VRS Membership Fees:

ARS/VRS membership including the Journal - \$50.00

VRS membership - \$25.00

Associate membership - \$10.00

Membership dues can be paid at our regular meeting on November 15th or you can pay your membership by mailing to:

Philip MacDougall
VRS Membership Chair
14776 90th Ave
Surrey, B.C.,
V3R 1A4

Rhodos to Grow By Ron Knight



Rhododendron 'Black Satin' (PJM cross)

This hybrid is similar to its famous parent in flower colour and leaf shape. It also has the same aromatic foliage with the pleasant spicy scent and is extremely hardy (to -20F). However, it has two additional characteristics that make it worth considering: the foliage turns a mahogany colour later in the season, and the plant is low growing. Its height will be about 1 metre in ten years, making it suitable for smaller garden spaces. Black Satin can sometimes be found in the spring at retail nurseries in the Lower Mainland, but it is available anytime from VRS growers Les and Bev Clay.

An Interesting Idea “Moon Gate” photo by Clive Justice



Letters to the Editor: Letters published in the Indumentum are the opinion of the writer.

Two Classes of “Ordinary” VRS Membership

All societies raise funds through membership fees to facilitate their activities and generally monitor the source of their income and its distribution to ensure that it is not only equitable, but responsible. Our Vancouver Rhododendron Society (VRS) programs are excellent and we are lucky to have experts in varied fields who regularly attend our meetings to offer advice. The VRS is a member of the parent organization the American Rhododendron Society (ARS). In spite of all good intentions, there continues to be a long standing disparity between members who pay for the dual ARS/VRS membership fee and members who pay for the stand alone VRS membership fee, and the money received by our society in this regard.

A current VRS membership fee is \$25 per person of which \$25 goes to fund the excellent programs we receive at the VRS. By contrast an ARS/VRS membership fee is \$50 of which the VRS receives only \$16.79, the remainder of the fee goes to the ARS, not accounting for currency fluctuations and exchange rates.

The money paid to purchase an ARS/VRS membership, in effect, supports the VRS less than the money paid to purchase a stand alone VRS membership, and both purchases are intended to pay for the same programs. This inherent imbalance could be perceived as VRS members subsidizing the ARS/VRS members.

In 2005 for example, the society collected membership fees as follows:

- \$905.49 from 59 ARS/VRS members
- \$1475.00 from 59 VRS members

This disparity places an unfair financial burden on the VRS member to support the society. The ARS/VRS member is actually financially supporting the ARS more than the VRS.

It has been argued that the VRS was founded and continues to be, a chapter of the ARS, and therefore we must contribute to the greater organization of which we are a part. This is understandable and beneficial to both organizations. We do support the ARS by many means including publicity,



but we must take care of our society first if we are to be sustainable. It has also been argued that the true VRS membership cost is \$50 and the current membership cost of \$25 is in fact a discounted rate, if true, this fact compounds an already disparate fee structure.

We must take care of our society first as a matter of sustainability for the VRS. The VRS members are the majority in the society, they are entitled to receive the best benefits and be assured of an equitable fee structure? Who speaks for the majority? Isn't it time we all became involved to address this issue? It's your money and your society. If you have concerns or comments regarding this issue please contact any member of the VRS Executive to voice your opinion, see page 7 for contact information. Or send your letter to the Editor of the Indumentum via email to stmajor@shaw.ca.

Best Regards,
Iain Forsythe & Todd Major



Finnish Rhododendrons

Part two of our story on Finnish rhododendron hybridizing begins with another look into the garden of Kristian Theqvist. When I first contacted Kristian to ask permission to use his excellent photographs and plant information in the *Indumentum*, I did not receive the quick reply normal for email. I assumed that my email went off into cyberspace. Two days later an email from Kristian appeared in my inbox, with the following comment, "Sorry to be so long in getting back to you, but I was in Latvia and Estonia for the past few days and just returned with a van loaded with plants." I had to laugh and thought to myself that it is good to see that plant collecting and plant addiction is the same all over the world. Just so you know Kristian, we all do the same thing here in Canada as we travel to the United States to collect our own van load of plants. Kristian's garden is located on an island in the Turku Archipelago in Southern Finland and his garden is 100 metres from the shore of the Baltic Sea. His garden is surrounded by rocks and the natural vegetation consists of trees and shrubs



such as *Pinus sylvestris*, *Picea abies*, *Betula pendula* and *Juniperus communis*. Natural ground covering plants are *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Vaccinium vitis-idaea*, *Vaccinium uliginosum*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Empetrum nigrum*, *Anemone nemorosa* and *Dactylorhiza maculata*.



The garden gets water from the neighbouring marsh (photo left), the garden is just behind the trees seen in the background. Kristian explains "I took the picture in spring when the snow had melted but there is still ice on the marsh. *Rhododendron tomentosum* ssp. *tomentosum* are growing on the right side of the picture." His garden soil consists of "black, loose mould, rich in organic matter with good drainage and the soil pH is close to 5.5 and as such perfect for rhododendrons" as he explains.

His garden microclimate is almost windless and warmer than the average temperature on the island. The surrounding forest shields his garden from the winter storms and the large rocks (photo below) radiate heat stored from sunshine. Sounds like an ideal climate for growing

rhododendrons until you realize that the average winter temperature can reach -24°C (see photo at the top of the page as *R. 'Haaga'* endures the Finnish winter). In part one of this story I mistakenly reported the average which temperature of -35°C , which is the low temperature on the Finnish mainland. Kristian's island paradise enjoys the moderating effect of the Baltic Sea. Kristian commented to me that, "During winter there is not always snow so you cannot depend on good snow cover to protect plants. Young and tender plants need to be protected with shelters. Snow is the best possible protection during the winter. However, it is rare to have a thick snow on the island and quite often the snow melts during warmer periods of the winter. I do protect the young and tender plants. I have lost some rhododendrons and winter damages have been at a tolerable level. I try to avoid tender rhododendrons and I have used the winter hardiness limit of -24°C as a general rule. As an exception to the rule I have some plants hardy only to -21°C , but I protect them during winter." The climate zone is officially Ia (Finnish system) which corresponds to the zone 5a (US).



The northern part of the garden includes the extremely hardy Finnish *elepidote* hybrids. There is also a separate area for *yakushmanum* hybrids. In 2003 Kristian planted approximately 70 rhododendron hybrids. Photos courtesy of Kristian Theqvist.

See Page 6 for Finnish *Marjatta* Hybrids

Finnish Rhododendrons

Listed below are three more Marjatta hybrids from Finland which are now becoming available in Canada and the United States, all are suitable for cold winter climates.

Common Trade Name: Rhododendron Finn 'Helsinki University'

(*R. brachycarpum* ssp. *tigerstedtii* hybrid 'Helsinki University' also known as 'Helsingin Yliopisto')

Parentage: *R. brachycarpum* ssp. *tigerstedtii* OP.

Breeder: Marjatta Uosukainen / Arboretum Mustila, Finland

Habit: An upright, well branching plant, reaching more than 2 m height when fully-grown.

Flowers: Bright pink flowers, red-orange freckled.

Flower Size: 6 to 7.5 cm.

Leaves: Leaves are glabrous, dark green, 12-17 cm long.

Cold Hardiness: -39°C



Common Trade Name: Rhododendron Finn 'Pohjola's Daughter'

(*R. caucasicum* hybrid 'Pohjola's Daughter' also known as 'Pohjolan Tytär')

Parentage: *R. caucasicum* hybrid 'Cunningham's White' x *R. smirnowii* Seidel hybrid.

Breeder: Marjatta Uosukainen / Arboretum Mustila, Finland

Habit: Very dense, wider than tall and well branching bush, reaching 1 m height in ten years.

Flowers: Flower buds are bright purple red. When open, the flowers are almost white, with green or brown freckles.

Flower Size: 6.5 to 8 cm.

Leaves: Dark green, 12 to 18 cm long.

Cold Hardiness: -34°C (?) Needs snow cover in Finland not to get damage on leaves.



Common Trade Name: Rhododendron Finn 'Hellikki'

(*R. smirnowii* hybrid 'Hellikki')

Parentage: *R. smirnowii* Seidel hybrid no. 60 OP.

Breeder: Marjatta Uosukainen / Arboretum Mustila, Finland

Habit: An upright, compact plant, 1m height in 10 years.

Flowers: Purplish red flowers.

Flower Size: 6.5 to 8 cm.

Leaves: Leaves are glabrous, dark green, underside with indumentum.

Leaf Size: 9 to 13 cm long.

Cold Hardiness: -34°C



All photos and plant information courtesy of Kristian Theqvist. Read more at his website www.rhodogarden.com

Article Compiled by Todd Major

Membership Report

I look forward to meeting you all, please come and meet me at the Membership Table at the monthly meetings.

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.

Guests are always welcome!

Philip MacDougall
VRS Membership Chair
14776 90th Avenue
Surrey, BC V3R 1A4



Vancouver Chapter

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 or 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 WWW.RHODO.CITYMAX.COM

Todd & Shannon Major,
INDUMENTUM Editors

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GARDEN WALK

Spring In Rhododendron Land By Tom Carter

~ a day on the trail ~

I awoke to a growing symphony of cuckoos, cicadas and primal jungle song. It peaked as the sun rose red through the ground fog and the egrets took flight. Fifteen hundred bird species live in Nepal or pass through it in the Spring and it felt like everyone of them was there when Singhi, much like a bird himself, brought the morning tea...

...After lunch, crossing the ridge above Gangpokhari, we entered a misty forest of pink rhododendrons. Petals were draped everywhere. Primroses poked out from the duff. On a rhodo trunk we found our first orchids. White jewels growing out of the moss. Emerging from the forest, Machapuchare, the Fish-Tail peak, towered above cloud-filled valleys...

All of my journeys in Nepal begin and end in Kathmandu, a dirty and polluted place but oh so fascinating. Our tours of the great Buddhist and Hindu temples are always high points of our visits. Bodnath is the largest of the Buddhist stupas and hundreds of the devout from Tibet and all over the mountains of Nepal circumambulate hour after hour. Impossible not to be deeply moved. Our time in Kathmandu is always a perceptive overload but it is wonderful to head out on the trail on this particular trek involving an eight hour bus ride to our trailhead.

Two great rivers come out of the Himalaya, one the Kali Ghandaki comes from the Tibet border. The other, the Marsyangdi, comes from the north side of the Annapurna range (photo top left). Between the two lie the Annapurnas, eighty kilometers of of 6500m. to 8100m. mountains. Enormous beyond imagining. Our route traverses the shoulders of this range, up over ridges and down into valleys keeping within an altitude range of 1500m. to 3000m. The valleys are hot and rice is grown (photo left). Up on the ridges the temperatures drop to refreshing levels. Between 2000m and 3400 meters is the "Rhododendron belt" The route, wandering through primeval forests, is punctuated regularly by villages.

Continued See "**The First Eight Days**" on page 9



GARDEN WALK

The first eight days heading west from the Marsyangdi is through areas rarely, almost never, visited by westerners, because not many visitors come with rhodos foremost in their minds. The cultural interplay is delightful. The children in the photo to the right abandoned their schools to come and see these visitors from “outer space”.

We eventually bump into the trekking route which goes up one of the valleys into the mountains. Suddenly there are other trekkers and lodges and commercial enterprise. But to sit in a lodge drinking a beer is not all pain! We too go up the valley which is dripping with vines and monkeys and orchids and mystery.

Suddenly you emerge into a bowl of enormous mountains. You are surrounded by alpine majesty unrivalled anywhere. After a couple of nights in the alpine we descend again and resume our traverse westward. From now on the trails are well trod and the villages all have lodges and the forests are superb.

After days in this zone we descend into the very deep Kali Ghandaki valley. The temperature has climbed and the riverside hot springs are a mecca for locals and tourists alike. Two days downriver we can access a bus to complete our circle. People often wonder if I'm exaggerating in hyperbolic promotion. But every word and impression is exactly as it is....the whole place is one voluptuous hyperbolic wonderland.

All the Best,
Tom Carter



Tom is a mountaineer and a senior member of the Alpine Club Of Canada. He has been going to Nepal for seventeen years, for the last ten years has been organizing treks in order to help others enjoy this beautiful country. His tour groups are always small, with a limit of eight members and are often formed by word of mouth. His clients' ages range from fifty-five to seventy but good fitness is a basic requirement. His next trek happens on March 17 to April 21, 2008, it is a 24 day trek, moderately strenuous with a high point of 4100m. Trip duration in Nepal is 29 nights. The route will parallel the Annapurna Range, travelling on foot in this botanical paradise, with snow peaks above and fascinating villages along the path, a special opportunity for rhododendron lovers. All photos courtesy of Tom Carter.

Further information at Tom's website: www.moonmountainadventures.com
Email: <mailto:carter@islandnet.com>
Telephone 250-954-2345