

# INDUMENTUM



VANCOUVER  
**Rhododendron**  
SOCIETY

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## GENERAL MEETING:

MARCH 20TH - 7:30 P.M., AT THE VANDUSEN BOTANIC GARDEN, IN THE FLORAL HALL

## LECTURE PROGRAM:

PHILIP MACDOUGALL

FORMOSANA: A PLANTSMAN'S PARADISE

Perhaps it was the frozen corpse of *Helleborus foetidus* pulled from the thawing spring earth. Perhaps it was the fact that the garden statement made by winter flowering *Ericas* is obscured by five feet of snow. Or maybe just the desperate desire to grow any *Camellia* at all.

Philip is an eastern transplant now living in Vancouver with a lifelong involvement in horticulture. His background is in plant biochemistry, he currently practices oncology nursing in Vancouver. Having been an active participant with a number of gardening groups on both the east and west coasts, Philip presently is acting as chair of the upcoming 2008 western North American Alpine Study Weekend, program director of the Vancouver Alpine Garden Society and membership chair of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society.

The aim of his micro nursery, *Clorophyllia*, is to evaluate and propagate new material from a wide range of biomes. As part of this enterprise he has traveled to a number of regions on the globe, chosen



*Rhodophiala rhodolirion*

for their high biodiversities; he has photo-documented the flora, environment and culture of each area visited.

(Photos by Philip MacDougall showing Ginger to the right, photo left is *Rhodophiala rhodolirion*).

By Joe Ronsley





## President's Message

It is with sadness that I announce the death of long-time VRS member and generous supporter, good friend to many of us, and an artist whose work will provide many of us with lasting mementoes, **Rosemary Burnham**. We received the news from **Margaret and Charlie**: 'Rosemary died on Valentine's Day. She went into a coma on Tuesday so the end was quick. We had been with her about a week before and had a great up-beat visit. She said that she had a bit of discomfort but otherwise was doing well. Our conversation was all about the future. She was true to herself right to the end – positive'. Last year Joe and I visited England at snowdrop time, and were surprised to hear her name in the form of a highly valued snowdrop, which is also featured on the cover of this February's Journal of the Alpine Garden Society of BC, with an article by **Pam Frost** on the cultivar. Surely the snowdrop, along with Rosemary's art work, is another lovely legacy. We shall miss her.

At its February meeting the VRS Executive agreed unanimously to confer an honorary life membership on **Hideo Suzuki**. We have only one other member in this category—**Alleyne Cook**. Like Alleyne, Hideo holds the ARS Gold Medal. He is also an honorary life member of the ARS and of the Seattle Chapter. Hideo has lectured to the VRS and was a lecturer when the VRS convened the 1997 ARS international conference. Acknowledged as an expert on Japanese rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias, and maples, he has written articles of authority and charm on all these genera, and has also provided seed, much of it collected in the wild, of all these genera to institutions and individuals both in Canada and the United States. He is a long-time member of the VRS, and we are honoured to have him among us.

It is now time for us to begin thinking about and organizing for our annual spring show and sale, again this year at the **Park and Tilford Gardens**, North Vancouver, on **Saturday and Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm** both days. Please be sure to volunteer to help on this occasion. If you missed the sign-up sheets passed around at the February meeting, please call either **Sean Rafferty** (604-990-5353) or me (604-921-9444) to volunteer to be a cashier or to help with the set-up on Friday or the dismantling on Sunday. We have, unfortunately, lost a couple of our major growers, mainly due to health reasons, but are compensating by bringing in plants from Hammond's Rhododendron

Nursery in Arlington, Washington, and the Rhododendron Species Foundation, to supplement our plant sales. By participating in the show and sale you help the VRS raise funds, enjoy the reward of being at the exciting centre of things, and, most importantly, have a very good time.

Meanwhile, I look forward to seeing you at our March 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, when our own **Philip MacDougall** will be speaking on the rhododendrons of Taiwan.

Please, as usual, remember to load an abundance on the raffle and refreshment tables.

Joanne Ronsley  
VRS President

## Rhododendrons Growing in Limestone By Glen Patterson

Since the early days of plant exploration in Western China, it has been known that a wide variety of rhododendron species actually survive and do well growing in the limestone mountain ranges. Yet, in cultivation, it is well known that rhododendrons cannot be grown in alkaline soils. One often hears that "rhododendrons are acid loving plants." Finding the answers to such questions as "Do rhododendrons actually grow in actual contact with limestone soils? and if so, What is the Secret? was the subject of a lecture by Professor Rankin at a past Rhododendron Species Symposium in Bellevue, Washington. Professor Rankin works in the Chemistry Department at the University of Edinburgh.

For several years, he and his colleagues, including Mr. Sun Hang of Kunming Institute of Botany have analyzed soils and leaf samples from widespread limestone areas in China.

continued see "They tested" on page 3

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## In Memory of Rosemary Burnham

Rosemary Burnham died on Valentine's Day. She was an active participant in the Vancouver Rhododendron Society. I remember her best for her zest for life and her enthusiasm for all that interested her – an enthusiasm that propelled her to see the world. And go she did. In addition to countless botanical trips in North America she attended Rhododendron Conferences in Tasmania and New Zealand, the Species Foundation trip to China just last spring, the Alpine Garden



International Conference in England and Scotland, and the Alpine Interim Conference in New Zealand.

Rosemary was also a leading member of the Alpine Garden Club of BC. She had an incredible all-encompassing eye and saw plants down to the smallest detail. She once was drawn to a remarkable variant of the snowdrop *Galanthus elwesii* in an abandoned garden and dug it up. Today this plant, now named *Galanthus* 'Rosemary Burnham', is much sought after in Britain. Rosemary was an accomplished botanical artist and had a yearly show. She was a superb photographer, to the benefit of the Club. Her talent as a graphic designer was much in demand by all the groups she joined. She produced beautifully designed programmes and posters for garden events, always in an obliging and cheerful way.

In her mid-years Rosemary went back to UBC for a degree in Graphic Arts, following which she worked at UBC in the Department of Continuing Studies. On retirement in 1992 she joined the Friends of the Garden at UBC.

Her own garden on the South Burnaby slope was a continuing work in progress – a creation of her own making. A large pond was front and centre in a very naturalistic garden that truly reflected her life and spirit. She leaves behind her husband Ted, two daughters, two grandsons, and many, many friends. She will long be remembered for her warmth and for her great love of plants that she so beautifully painted.

Margaret Charlton

**They tested** both organic and inorganic content of soils from 60 very different sites. The research concentrated on the ions of calcium, magnesium, iron and manganese and related concentrations to the soil pH and to availability of these minerals to the plants.

Many delegates to the conference were astounded to hear that rhododendrons in the wild actually grow right in the limestone, not on the top or in organic layers, as usually understood. The soils were generally found not to be dolomite (which contains up to 50% magnesium), but were pure calcium carbonate. Professor Rankin showed that, contrary to popular opinion, the heavy concentration of calcium in the snowmelt and run-off water actually permeated the organic topsoils. Often this water was saturated with calcium showing pH as high as 8.4. He reported that the heavy summer rains in N. W. Yunnan, rather than washing minerals out of the soil, actually wash them into the topsoil.

In their soil analyses results, the study team found that calcium attained very high concentrations in high pH soils, with rhododendrons being healthy and thriving. Magnesium had comparatively low concentrations (less than 1%), even in high pH soils, and therefore, the survival and health of plants could not be attributed to successful competition to calcium by magnesium. Further analysis of iron and manganese showed that there were sufficient quantities available to plants for healthy growth in all the Chinese soils whether acid or alkaline.

In rhododendron leaf analysis, some plants appeared to be close to iron deficiency. Manganese was never a problem in the wild areas. Professor Rankin said that rhododendrons grab and store in the leaves all the manganese available and never seem to get too much. It appears that the source of manganese is from the manganese rich leaves when they fall and biodegrade around the roots. Professor Rankin noted that some rhododendron species are much more tolerant of limestone than others. These included: *R. primuliflorum*, *R. telmateium*, *R. cuneatum*, *R. vernicosum*, *R. yunnanense*, *R. racemosum*, *R. taliense* and *R. rubiginosum*.

Professor Rankin gave suggestions for growing rhododendrons in high pH soil:

- Choose more lime tolerant species.
- Do not add peat because it locks up manganese. (Adding acidifiers, such as sulphur is only a temporary measure.
- Keep rhododendrons comparatively dry in the spring.
- Do not use such manganese rich additives as "sequestered iron" because the manganese from this application becomes unavailable to the plants.
- Clean up rhododendron prunings and fallen leaves from rhododendrons. Chip them and spread the chips around the rhododendron roots as a source of the critical manganese.



# RHODODENDRON SALE & SHOW

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## Taiwan Journal of Forest Science

**Abstract:** Molecular Phylogeny of Eight Taiwanese Rhododendron Species Based on Chloroplast trnF-trnL DNA Sequences

**Author :** Shih-Ying Hwang, Kuo-Kai Hsu

Phylogenetic relationships among 8 species of Rhododendron were derived from sequence comparisons of the chloroplast trnF-trnL intergenic spacer region. Aligned sequences of the 8 Rhododendron taxa were 460 base pairs. The region contained 16 variable sites, of which 10 were phylogenetically informative. Neighbor-joining and parsimony analyses were conducted using MEGA. Identical topology with 3 major clades was obtained from parsimony and neighbor-joining trees. Clade 1 consisted of *R. pseudochrysanthum*, *R. rubropunctatum*, *R. morii*, *R. hyperythrum*, and *R. formosanum*. Rhododendron formosanum was sister to the other 4 species in the clade 1. Clade 2 consisted of *R. oldhamii* and *R. kanahirai*. Rhododendron ellipticum formed clade 3 and was basal to all other Rhododendron species. Close phylogenetic relationships among *R. pseudochrysanthum*, *R. morii*, *R. rubropunctatum*, and *R. hyperythrum* based on the cpDNA sequences agreed with those derived from morphological characters.

For more information follow this link [http://www.tfri.gov.tw/enu/pub\\_science\\_in.aspx?pid=345&catid0=37&catid1=65&pg0=&pg1=1](http://www.tfri.gov.tw/enu/pub_science_in.aspx?pid=345&catid0=37&catid1=65&pg0=&pg1=1)

## Peach Arch Rhododendron Society Plant Sale

The Peach Arch Rhododendron Society is holding their annual plant sale on Saturday April 5th, at Elgin Hall 14250 Crescent Road in Surrey BC, from 9:00am until 3:00pm.

They will have a variety of great plants available for sale, from the keen growers of this society.

There are sure to be some great species rhododendron available for your garden. Visit their website at this link: <http://www.peacearchrhodo.ca/>



## Garden Smart

GardenSmart events are soon starting up to help you garden this spring. A new partnership between the Lynn Canyon Ecology Centre, the North Shore Edible Garden Project and the North Shore Recycling Program( NSRP) means that with our pooled resources, GardenSmart is offering even more learning opportunities, event types and venues than ever! Check out the great March programs at the NSRP!

GardenSmart event registration call (604) 990-3755, or visit our website at <http://www.gardensmart.ca/>

Contact: Elizabeth Leboe  
North Shore Recycling Program  
Email: [elizabeth@nsrp.bc.ca](mailto:elizabeth@nsrp.bc.ca)



## Rhodos to Grow By Ron Knight

**Rhododendron 'Trewithen Orange'**  
(*Full House X R. concatenans*)

The highly rated (4.5/5) orange-sherbet coloured flowers appear in mid-April and hang down in loose clusters. The plant grows taller than wide, reaching about four feet in ten years. It performs well in filtered sunlight with good air circulation. Trewithen Orange won a First Class Certificate in 1950. It may be obtained from VRS growers Les and Bev Clay. (Photo by Ron Knight)





## GARDEN SENSE



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ROY JONSSON

Garden Sense is a book that will appeal to both beginning and experienced gardeners. It will help gardeners fully understand the wonderful world of horticulture. The book deals with a wide variety of topics including garden practices, planting procedures and growth patterns that most garden books skim over or do not cover. If you have ever wondered about the N P K values of

fertilizer, why leaves turn red in the fall, the secrets of good composting, why plants grow up and roots grow down or how to prune shrubs for better flower production, then this is a book you will come to value. After teaching landscaping and gardening for more than twenty five years Roy Jonsson came to the conclusion there were few books that covered the subject of horticulture in a straightforward and comprehensive way.

Soft cover, 218 pages, ISBN 978-0-9782884-0-2 Retail Price: \$19.95.

For More Information Contact:

Roy Jonsson at this weblink: [www.royjonsson.com](http://www.royjonsson.com)

## Things We Forgot To Do !



## Global Crop Diversity Trust Receives Gates Foundation Funding

The Global Crop Diversity Trust has received the largest grant ever for the conservation of crop diversity! The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation awarded \$30 million to a partnership of the UN Foundation and the Trust for an unprecedented global initiative to rescue threatened, high-priority collections of crop diversity in developing countries and to support information systems to improve their conservation and availability. The grant will also enable developing countries and international agricultural research centres to place seed samples in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault for safety purposes.

Jane Toll and Luigi Guarino, internationally prominent figures in our field for more than two decades, have joined the Trust staff to lead this programme. \$7.5 million of the grant was earmarked for the Trust's endowment, contingent on our finding a donor willing to match it. We are extremely grateful to Norway for volunteering to do so and in the process becoming the largest country donor to the Trust, taking their total given so far to over \$15 million.

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Trust have announced an historic partnership and financial arrangement that will ensure the permanent conservation and availability of the world's largest and most important rice collection. See [www.croptrust.org](http://www.croptrust.org) for details.

A new Executive Board was formed. Dr. Margaret Catley-Carlson, current chair of the Global Water Partnership, former deputy head of UNICEF and former head of CIDA, Canada's development assistance agency, was elected to chair the board. Prof. Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and head of Kenya's Greenbelt Movement, was elected vice-chair. Lewis Coleman, President of Dreamworks Animation, founding president of the Moore Foundation and former Vice Chairman and CFO of the Bank of America, was appointed to chair the Trust's Finance and Investment Committee. We bid a warm farewell to our wonderful interim board, headed by Ambassador Fernando Gerbasi, under whose leadership the Trust was firmly established.

For further details of the follow this web link to

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

Article courtesy of the International Society for Horticultural Science

Original story follow this weblink to [www.ishs.org/news/index.php?page=2](http://www.ishs.org/news/index.php?page=2)





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

## Contribute to the INDUMENTUM

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](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, you'll have to live with what we print.

Visit our online repository for past **INDUMENTUM** issues, hosted by the UBC Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research at this web link:  
[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

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TAM





## The Language of Rhododendrons By Barbara Cook

Young and keen horticulturalists would seek out Alleyne in Stanley Park and he would bring them home to dinner for the night and often for a week. One such lad in 1969 was John McArthur-Moir, a tall and lanky Scot. Eventuallay he became the valued head hardener at Castle Kennedy, Stranraer, Scotland, home of the Earl and Countess Stair. Photo above Castle Kennedy. Visit their website at this link: <http://www.castlekennedygardens.co.uk>.

When in 1990, John sought permission to show Alleyne and myself around the estate. The Lady Stair (the late Queen's mother's neice), said yes and she would accompany us. Then to John's further surprise, the Earl appeared from the trees, with his ancient machete and joined us (photo right by Barbara Cook, from left to right; Alleyne Cook, the Earl of Stair, Lady Stair, John McArthur-Moir).

In a biography book by David Duff, entitled "George and Elizabeth, A Royal Marriage", there is recorded a charming letter of thanks from Prince Albert using the language of Rhododendrons, for his stay at the castle, with the present Earl's father and mother. The king was then Prince Albert. The letter is written in English interspersed with Latin, which is the language of rhododendorns. The letter reads as follows.



Dear Lady Stair,

I must write & thank you both so much for asking me to come to Lochinch. I did so enjoy my visit & you gave me such an *Agpetum* (delightful) time.

It was a great disappointment to me that my wife was unable to come too, & she is miserable at having missed the two *Formosum* (beautiful) days we had there. I am glad to tell you that she is much better, though I found her looking *Microleucrum* (small and white).

It was nice of you to say that I deputised well for her on Saturday but I feel that she could have done everything much better, as she has the *Agastum* (charming) way of *Charidotes* (giving joy). As we had arranged our visit for her, she *Pothinum* (much desired) to be there, & it was very sad for her to have missed it. However, it is *Sperabile* (to be hoped for) *Timeteum* (to be honoured) with a future invitation.

As to my visit, I am overjoyed *Eclecteum* (to be chosen out) and *Aberrans* (wandering) *Cyclium* (round) so many *Erastum* (lovely) and *Arizelum* (notable) gardens in so short a time, has left me *Charitostreptum* (gracefully bent) with a *Recurvum* (bent back), & somewhat *Lasiopodum* (woolly footed). I must say I am filled *Coeloneurum* (with impressed nerves) at all the *Agetum* (wondrous) & *Aperantum* (limitless) beauties of the gardens *cyclium* (round) Lochinch.

Continued see "But despite being *Aperulum*" on page 9





But despite being *Asperulum* (slightly roughened) & having had time to examine my feet, *Denudatum* (naked) and *Detersile* (clean) I am glad to find that they are neither *Hypoglaucum* (blue beneath) *Hypolepidotum* (scaly) nor *Hypophaeum* (grey) but merely *Russatum* (reddened). The *Rufescens* (becoming reddish) will have *Comisteum* (to be taken care of) otherwise they will not be *Eudoxom* (of good report), for *Clivicola* (living on hillsides) in August. As a diversion I much enjoyed our chase after those *Tephropeplum* (ashy grey colour) *Dumicola* (dwellers in thickets) which we were lucky enough to find *Telopeum* (conspicuous) *Lochmium* (from a coppice). Knowing you to be an *Ombrochares* (lover of rain) I hope you will soon get some to revive the Species of Rhododendron; which as we are told by one Wallace: 'Of course it is over', and to make the snipe bogs *Paludosum* (marshy). It is too kind of you to have given me so many *Axiom* (worthy) & *Eucallum* (beautiful) plants which will be *Eritimum* (highly prized) by me & are most *Apodectum* (acceptable).

After this I feel I cannot write English any more. It was really too kind of you to have had me to stay & I did so enjoy every moment of it. Thanking you both again so very much.

Yours very sincerely,  
Albert [Prince Albert]

The castle Kennedy grounds, between tow lochs, enjoys a relatively mild climate. Its 75 acre layout is described as "being of 19th and 20th century, within a French formal 18th century design. There are mile-long avenues of single tree species, such as *Auricaria auricana*, planted from seed and well over a one hundred years old. Another avenue is *Abies nobilis*. Another is *Ilex* now iinterplanted, or lined, with *Eucalyptus glutinosa* and *Embothryium*. The two latter grown from seed collected by Harold Comber, in Chile. In 1976, Alan Mitchell found 87 diferent huge trees worthy of measuring.

Sir Joseph Hooker was a frequent visitor, supplying many seeds and plants from his Himilayan explorations. From them came the very first *R. arboreum* and *R. campanulatum*, now massive plants requiring thinning. We saw stumps of 10 inches or more in diameter (photo right by Barbara Cook). Many large and old plants of *R. barbatum*, *R. thomsonii*, *R. protistum* (photo top of page by Barbara Cook), and *R. nobile* thrive because of a dense protected belt of *R. ponticum*. Alleyne was asked to name some of the older rhododendrons. He took buds and broke them open to find colour. Later John said, "I could never have done that in front of the Countess."

On the day of our visit, John has received a letter from West Scotland Agriculture Research Station, stating that the mildew they found on his *R. cinnabarinum* leaves, must have come from the greenhouse plants. In fact they were from plants growing in a stagnant area under the huge Beeches. In Vancouver rhodos also need a good breezeway to prevent mildew.

It had been a lovely leisurely day with gracious hosts, and their glorious and mighty trees planted, to lean our eyes on and enjoy - a day to savor in memory.

Cheerily,  
Barbara Cook

