

Rhododendron News

Vol. XXXXXI, No. 10
November 2006
www.rhodies.org

A publication of the Portland Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

November

14 - Study Group -7PM Van Veen Nursery
16 - Chapter meeting - Frank Fujioka: Rhody hybridization
21 - Board meeting

December

12 - Study Group -7PM Van Veen Nursery
21 - Christmas Potluck Party
TBA - Board Meeting

January 2007

8 - Study Group -7PM Van Veen Nursery
18- Chapter meeting - Peter Kendall: 2 summers in the Rockies
24 - Board Meeting

Other programs

February - Mike Bones: memberships and rhodies
March - Larry Borlin: companion planting in Portland
April - Ron Spendall: composting
May - Awards Banquet

Meeting Info

Location: All Saints Episcopal Church on SE 40th and Woodstock. There is parking onsite and on the street.

When? Third Thursday each month beginning in September and ending with the Awards Banquet in May.

What do we do? We have fun activities such as presentations, pot lucks, parties, auctions, tours, and garden events. The social hour includes refreshments and begins at 7 pm. A short business meeting at 7:30 pm follows. Meetings typically include an informative and entertaining presentation of about 45 minutes.

Hosts:

**Donna Sell
&
Mike Kaminski**

President's Message

WHY WE LOVE RHODODENDRONS

When we venture out in the garden, there are a whole variety of trees and bushes and flowers we can play with. Some like the Douglas firs and the white pines and the Oregon grape require little attention. Others like the apple and the pear and the plum trees are a bit of a pain for we are constantly trimming sucker branches, spraying for something or another, and then picking up the fruit.

The rhododendrons fall somewhere about the midpoint of this "required attention" spectrum. True, you need to watch out for those pesky weevils and occasionally chase off some white flies. Yes, the rhodie will certainly appreciate an application of fertilizer and a few micronutrients would be most welcome. Whatever effort you put into the rhododendron the rhodie will return that attention many fold.

We live on a piece of property that was virtually abandoned for nearly 25 years. On the property were six rhododendrons that were not watered, fertilized or sprayed for the entire time. In the wintertime they survived the frigid east winds blowing out of Canada through the Gorge. Year after year they endured the scorching hot winds off the Eastern Oregon desert, yet every spring they put forth a few flowers and some new green growth. They were saying "We are still here. We are still trying. We would still appreciate your attention." Finally, we beat back the blackberries and the poison oak, tamed the grass and

---continued on page 2 column 3---

Ask the Editor

*Class: Jungermanniopsida
Leafy liverworts which look like thin
mosses*

November's program: What's on the horizon in hybridization with Frank Fujioka

Do you want plants that will thrive in the full sun or a plant that requires little water and has interesting foliage? Does the magic name of Frank Fujioka ring any bells? He is the Chapter's guest speaker on November 16, 2006.

Frank Fujioka will present a two-part program. The first part will be a presentation showing us his gardens and the hybrids. The second part will be slides of a seminar that he gave to the French Rhododendron Society, slides of Hachmann's Nursery in Germany and rhodies at his friends' gardens in Denmark.

Frank has plants that are registered with England's Royal Horticultural Society. Meerkerk Gardens has honored Mr. Fujioka along with hybridizers Else Watson and Jim Barlup.

Ask the Experts:

Carol B, came up with a good one that stumped us. She asked what the "family" name for liverwort is. Well no one came up with an answer but it sure opened discussion about how to control it.

Mike S. said that Maria had been using vinegar with success. The rates they are trying is 100% for paths and areas not touching plants and a 50% dilution with water for those areas where the plants are touched.

-Vicki

*class: Marchaniopsida
Thallose liverworts, possibly
Marchantia polymorpha -
they're cute little things*

Garden Chairs

Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden

Bob MacArthur
360-256-2522

Beverly Watkins
503-244-0537

Cecil & Molly Smith Garden

Ginny Mapes
503-647-2896

Online Discussion Group

Point your browser to
<http://groups.yahoo.com> and
look for rhododendrons.
Participants include renowned
hybridizers, growers and
hobbyists.

Portland Chapter Web Site

Paste this address into your
browser to see what we're about
in the Portland Chapter ARS at
www.rhodies.org/index.htm

SEED HARVESTING TIME IS HERE

October and November is the
time when the seed crosses that
we made in the spring come ripe.
Harvest them before the weather
dries them out. It takes only a few
sunny days for the mature wet
seed pods to air dry and split
open. If you wait too long, all of
your crosses will be competing for
sprouting space with the weeds in
the open ground.

Once you have collected the
seed pods, mix them with a little
bit of fungicide powder, such as
Captan, and put them in labeled
envelopes to dry out. After the
dry pods have opened, you can
remove the seeds from the chaff
and save it for planting.

The Pruning of Trees, Shrubs, and Conifers

By George E. Brown
2nd ed. Revised and enlarged by
Tony Kirkham
Timber Press, 2004, pp 338
Reviewed by Peter Kendall

This book was first written by
George Brown of the Kew Garden
Arboretum in 1972 and has long been
deemed a classic on this aspect of the
gardening world. Brown's position as a
curator of an esteemed collection
allowed him to develop the best
approaches to caring for a vast and
disparate stable of plants. Thirty years
later Tony Kirkham, who took over
Brown's position as curator, decided
that enough advancement in knowledge
and techniques had been made to
warrant a revised expansion of this
much admired work.

Kirkham's work retains Brown's
sensitivity on how a greatly expanded
collection of plants should be treated.
Each species has its natural tendencies
of growth that should be catered to, and
its classic pitfalls that should be
avoided. He departs from some earlier
mandates regarding fundamental
pruning techniques and wound
dressings. As an example he advises
cutting limbs to the collar of the branch,
do not flush-cut and avoid the use of
proprietary asphalt based wound
dressings.

From the initial training in the
nursery to the after-care of mature
specimens of large trees, pruning shrubs
and climbers, and pruning for special
circumstances each is given a generous
consideration.

The specific pruning needs and
cultivation demands of a long
alphabetical list of plants is exhaustively
covered. Completing the book are
appendices of common names with their
botanical equivalents, lists of the best
tools and equipment, and of a glossary
of botanical and technical terms.

President's message
(continued from previous page)
installed a sprinkler system. We
rescued some of the rhodies and
moved them to an area where they
had a fighting chance. Cynthia has
trebled in size during the past six
years and has shown her appreciation
with trusses that have brought home
trophies.

Meanwhile, Gomer Waterer has
flexed his muscles and instead of
producing a few flowers each spring,
is covering himself with a whole
cape of white trusses with
magnificent greenish-yellow throats.
The cuttings we took from Gomer
Waterer two years ago have been
thoroughly babied and now they are
18 inches tall with a bud or two the
size of the end your thumb. Yes, if
you talk to them and treat them with
love and affection a rhodie will
respond more enthusiastically than
any other plant in our garden.

We start talking to the rhodies in
early March. It takes a considerable
amount of discussion, coaching and
persuasion to convince them to reach
their prime at the exact time of the
Early Flower Show and the Mother's
Day Flower Show.

Each morning the dog and I go
out to converse with every
rhododendron plant. The joy that
comes from witnessing the first
blooms each spring is incredible.

Very early in the morning
someone comes along and paints a
delicate red fringe around the
edges of the Point Defiance
trusses. An artist with an
exquisite pallet of colors splashes
the blossoms of Crater Lake and
Night Editor with hues that would
bring envy to the French
Impressionists. And then we have
Taurus, Grace Seabrook and Jean
Marie de Montague competing for
who has the most exquisite robe
of red.

It really isn't very hard to love
your rhododendron family.

-Irv

Send articles, events or ideas for the newsletter to: arsportland@wa-net.com or if all you have is the US Postal service, to: **Luurt Nieuwenhuis, Managing Editor**
P.O. Box 2353
Vancouver, WA
98668-2353

Article and idea deadline is at the Chapter meeting. Items received after that time may not be included in the current issue. Questions concerning delivery, should be directed to **Maria Stewart** (503) 668-7565.

Vireya Vine Newsletter

Receive a newsletter about Vireya Rhododendrons. Submit your Subscription request to:

E White Smith,
% Bovees Nursery
1737 SW Coronado
Portland, OR 97219
503-244-9341
info@bovees.com

Send \$10 to join - that's one ten dollar bill that lasts forever or until you want to send another to keep it company. The Vireya Vine is published 4 times a year and is sent to over 400 people world wide.

Printing and mailing is done by Fran Rutherford at the Rhododendron Species Foundation.

Newsletters require letters from subscribers to be interesting (hint, hint). The Vine was started in 1982 by Bob Badger. E White Smith has been its editor since taking over from Mr. Badger a very long time ago.

Do you know an interesting tidbit on how a hybrid received its name? We'd love for you to contribute the information.

Tualatin Valley Chapter

Regularly scheduled meetings on the **second Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m.** – at the:
First Baptist Church
177 NE Lincoln Street
Hillsboro, OR.
Phone: **Ginny Mapes** 503-647-2896
Email: ginny@coho.net

Siuslaw Chapter

Meets on the **third Tuesday of the month at 7 pm.** at the:
Presbyterian Church of the Siuslaw,
3996 Hwy 101 N.
Florence, OR
A pre-meeting dinner is held at a different restaurant each time at 5 pm. Visit www.siuslawars.org to find out where.

Featured rhododendron hybrid:

R. ETTA BURROWS

now where did That Name come from? R. Etta Burrows is a Yelmer Larson hybrid and while we love and admire the flower, it took an email from another Etta Burrows to spark my curiosity about this name.

Bert Larson, the nephew of Yelmer Larson, remembers the Burrows as good family friends who lived in Lakewood, Washington. They were lumber brokers who bought many plants from Mr. Larson. The red hybrid was a seedling that was named for Mrs. Burrows.

So who is this other Etta Burrows? She lives in Australia. She was so delighted and tickled to see a rhododendron with her name that she and her husband of 40+ years had to know the story. After asking all over the world she not only found out, but one of the members of the Australian Rhododendron Society gave her R.Etta Burrows for their anniversary!

Sometimes there is a lot in a name!

The Rhodo Rooter Show

September meeting notes
Mike Stewart and Kathy Van Veen presented techniques varied from taking the cuttings early like Mike does to taking them later as Kathy shared. While Mike's Dover's Nursery is willing to spend a little money to get the

Chapter Officers

(All numbers are 503 unless noted)

President: **Irv Snyder** 509-427-7738
Vice President: **Jan Snyder** 509-427-7738
Secretary: **Carol McCarthy** 245-3533
Treasurer: **Dick Cavender** 625-6331
(Bookkeeper: Bruce Krohn 668-4842)
Past President: **Kathy Van Veen** 777-1734

BOARD MEMBERS

Through 6/30/07

Ray Clack Mike Stewart
Kath Collier Dave Collier
Mike Domaschofsky

Through 6/30/08

Steve Hopkins Brenda Ziegler
Steve Kaminski Donna Sell
Maria Stewart

job done, we all enjoyed the look of horror that crossed Kathy Van Veen's face! Spend money? NO WAY!

They compared and contrasted their methods of cutting madness to thoroughly convince us that they are both beyond dedicated to the art of propagation.

Van Veen Nursery uses 50% pumice and 50% peat moss, while Dover's Nursery uses 20% peat, 30% fine bark, and 50% pumice.

Simple things like should you remove the "fuzz" on the stems of the yak cuttings before or after the wounding, which tools and methods used to create the wounds and which hormones to use were all very helpful.

These nursery owners did not overlook the home do-it-yourselfer as they took time to show how a novice can get started (with some money or no money).

Mike Stewart supplied media and Kathy Van Veen supplied cuttings ranging from R. Hallelujah to R. Pure Sex. After a talk like theirs, free media and cuttings how could anyone not want to try their hand at becoming a Rhodo Rooter?

-Vicki

Designer Clothing

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Ask the experts:

*Irv Snyder asked about **Root Weevils** and what our experts are recommending to stop them from damaging our prize rhodies.*

Avoid large leafed purple flowering rhodies that seem to attract more weevils.

Avoid rhodies with soft, tender leaves. Yakushmanums and indumented rhodies with the ir thick leaves seem to hold less appeal to root weevils. A weevil would have to be crazy to try to chew on the Night Editor leaves.

E. White Smith brought up the success he has had with the insecticide Talstar™. There is far less insect damage and one application per year generally takes care of the problem.

Mike Stewart incorporates it into the soil when he plants and has seen it work well for several years on one application.

Talstar is a commercial product, but the same ingredient (bifenthrin) can be found in retail outlets under the Ortho "MAX" label. Be sure to check the concentrations before you buy.. (see the White's article in the *Journal*, v60, #2, 2006)

Portland Garden Club Events

November 16, Thursday – Historic Planning, Politics, and Growth of Portland, Dr. Carl Abbott, Professor of Urban Studies and Planning, Portland State University

December 9, Saturday, Market Basket, *Naturally Elegant*, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Unless otherwise noted meetings begin at 10:15 a.m. at the Club House, 1132 SW Vista Ave. and are open to the public. Coffee is served at 9:30 a.m. 503-222-2845

Phytophthora-proofing your planting

Are you seeing the development of dead branches and dead plants this summer where the whole branch or plant is affected at the same time? It does sound suspiciously like you might have a phytophthora problem. This is a fungus which attacks the roots, especially when there is poor drainage away from the plant's root zone. There is almost no defense once the die-off starts on a plant.

The following fix for this problem was recommended for use with azaleas. While the same process would work with rhododendrons, applying it to an eight foot tall plant could prove to be daunting.

From George Klump

The best way to avoid meeting this ugly death is to take action during the original planting preparations. Applying these same directions after the problem surfaces may not help a lot for the affected plant. I would suggest a few things for the gardener to consider in either case.

Living in Portland and the Pacific Northwest you probably have an acidic soil: good! Hopefully it will not be an acidic clay. The ground must be porous to permit drainage or your plants are doomed. If that's your problem, do some further preparation.

If you do have an acidic clay here's something to try. Dig up your affected plant (or any others whose health you

find to be suspect) and make the new hole triple the width of the original root zone.

For example, if the root zone is about 8" make the hole about 24" diameter across and set the plant smack dab in the middle. You can also increase the depth since you will have the plant close to the surface anyway.

You have a hole. Now you need to fill it with something besides the plant. Get some **coarse** peat moss. It could be Canadian or Michigan sphagnum peat. Also get some **coarse** pumice, often sold as sponge rock. Finally get some shredded bark such as Douglas Fir which is often sold as 'orchid bark'. If you can get Kellogg's Big R Redwood Bark "gorilla hair" then use it, because it's the best! Then mix the three items - peat, pumice, and bark in a 1 : 1 : 1 mixture by volume, or 1 : 1 : 2 if you use the orchid bark.

Wash the old dirt from the roots with a hose. If you're concerned about shocking the plant during transplanting use a little "Superthrive" first, then plant the azalea high in the midst of the mix with which you have filled the hole. Water it in well and watch that it drains.

Drainage is the key to all the ericaceae plants, including azaleas, rhododendrons vireyas. If the water does not drain away about as fast as it comes in, you're cruisin' for a bruise. Get as much organic material as you can around your plant roots. Since you have a soil pH probably less than 7 gypsum might be too much of a good thing, although it tends to break compacted soil and promotes drainage.

There are three keys points to remember: the first is drainage; the second is drainage; and the third is drainage. Otherwise, you are setting yourself up for phytophthora. The wood chips are important. The micro-organisms which attack and break down the wood are also predatory on the phytophthora organism. I suggested the Kellogg's redwood bark as it breaks down very slowly over a long period. Pine

needles and pine bark tend to break down rather quickly and are decayed and gone in no time.

There is a new type of phytophthora called phytophthora ramorum, the so-called "sudden oak death". Some plants are good hosts and yet remain unaffected by it while the plant next to it is affected and dies. Since you have a wet climate where leaves will remain wet for at least 18 hours there is a potential for that fungus, too. In California the Bay trees are unaffected but are excellent hosts. The tree or plant near one of them would pick up the spore and die. Sometimes, if the plant is resistant, it may just drop the lower leaves and not the upper ones, or it might become a set of leafless branches which will regrow again. If the annual defoliation pattern is the case, Phosguard is probably a good idea to try. Phosguard is made with phosphorous acid (NOT phosphoric acid). It works and is far cheaper than Aliete or Subdue or similar chemicals.

Big Fall Plant Sale at the Bovees Nursery.

Everything 25% off including Rhododendrons, Rare Rock Garden plants, Woodland plants and Shrubs, and the Vireya Rhododendrons.

Bring newsletter for discounts. Fall is the best time for planting your new acquisitions (except for vireyas which require growing in protected conditions).

Sale extends through October to Thanksgiving.

The Bovees Nursery
1737 SW Coronado
Portland, OR 97219

Phone: 503-244-9341

Hours 9AM to 5 PM, and after noon on Sundays

Phone if you need directions
-Lucie Sorensen-Smith

Experts Predict:

British Ladybugs in Danger

Culled from major news sources

Just when you thought that it was safe to practice natural methods of insect control on your garden pests. The experts say that British Ladybugs are in danger of being overrun by insects from Central and Southeast Asia.

The Harlequin Ladybug is an established pest in North America, but it was spotted in Britain for the first time in September, 2004 and is flourishing in a land where it has no natural predators.

The native ladybug population, known there as ladybirds, are in danger of being overrun by the Asian invaders. The alien Harlequins have a voracious appetite for aphids (good), pollen and nectar (not as good), sometimes eat other ladybugs (bad), and may even take a piece out of the unwary bug-lover (very bad).

Harlequins can produce two or three generations during the course of a favorable year; the native British ladybirds only produce one. This bodes badly for the beloved British bugs that might be bred into bye, bye, birdie-ville.

The Harlequin ladybugs were introduced into the United States to control aphid populations. They had become agricultural pests by 1988, when their numbers and appetites had spread beyond aphids to desirable plant products and other insects.

Harlequins were also introduced to continental Europe as 'natural' insect controls, same as in the U.S. with the same type of results. They can fly high and far, and probably could make it from the continent across the English Channel to the island, or they could have hitch-hiked on agricultural products such as flowers that were shipped from nearby Netherlands and Belgium. In any case, they've arrived.

The Harlequins demonstrate a problem that has become all too prevalent in different places throughout the world. An introduced species finds lots of food and flourishes. It fills ecological niches already occupied by native fauna, but when there are no natural enemies to control its numbers, it out-competes the natives. Sometimes it even expands its food tastes to include life forms that are desirable and beneficial. Whole ecologies have the potential of being disrupted.

Many places in the world know about alien introductions. Australia has its rabbits. America has its starlings. We in the Pacific Northwest are finding that the praying mantis has arrived in our area. Plants also have the POTENTIAL for ecological disruption. The Southern U.S. has its kudzu vine, while the Northwest has its Himalayan blackberry.

Now for a little bit of sanity.

The above story made its world-wide rounds through the Internet last year. But we all know that the Internet is not the most reliable source of information. This story was picked up and passed around by, among others, the Associated Press and www.abcnews.com.

Involved ladybug lovers and most gardeners who encounter ladybugs in their natural habitat agree that there is not a lot of difference in behavior among the different types of ladybugs. One species is not distinctively more aggressive or dominating over another. And while the distribution of this particular species of ladybug is spreading in England, no drastic impact on the ecology is becoming apparent.

But there is a small point in this whole story to consider. We have introduced many new species of rhododendron and companion plants from diverse places throughout the world into our region. It's a good thing that they will never become pests. Or will they? *R. ponticum* has already escaped into the wilds in England! Which plant will be next?

If we get an accidental cross with *R. occidentale*, we'd probably never notice it since that species already exhibits a wide variation. But how about the chance of developing a natural, more aggressive hybrid between our native *R. macrophyllum* and one of the Asiatic imports? Will we lovers of rhododendrons be willing to go into the wilds and eradicate the invading half-breeds? OR will we bow to the inexorable power of evolution and let nature take its course?

-Luurt

A GRAPHICAL ADDITION TO THE NEWSLETTER

I too have found green growing crud in my greenhouse pots. That's when I first got interested in cryptogams. Even the name was intriguing. The full name is actually *non-vascular cryptogams*. It refers to a group of plants that lack the vascular system normally found in seed plants, have hidden (crypto) sexual structures (gam) and reproduce through spores and fragmentation. If you prefer the to view the classification in more traditional terms, they constitute the liverworts, mosses and lichens



Marchantia polymorpha

I sometimes find the little leafies growing in my small seed transplant pots. I often find the thallose liverworts growing below the cutting bench in the early summer, in places where it is warm and wet. They appear to be very happy to be growing in the greenhouse environment!



The liverworts are subdivided into the thallose liverworts and the mossy liverworts. They used to be Orders in the scheme of botanical classification, but these two groups currently enjoy the status of Classes. There is a good overview on the Wikipedia.com site. Just look for *jungermanniopsida* or *marchaniopsida*.

Lichens are another cryptogam, though they rarely appear in the greenhouse environment. But they appear commonly on the branches of older azaleas, especially when these are in damp and shaded areas. The lichens are a combination of fungus and an algae or cyanobacterium.



The lichens *Xanthoria polycarpa* and possibly *Ochrolechia* growing on an *R. occidentale* stem. These are two of perhaps 6 different lichens growing on this one azalea.

Lichens come in a perplexing range of colors and forms. Its not likely that you'll find lichen crusts on your plants, but many of the other forms will show up eventually. They only use the structure of the plant to live on – no invasive roots, no clinging, no parasitism, no symbiosis.

I've usually this green lichen growing in the damp, shadier areas of the yard, on the old wooden fences and boards. I even found one growing on the stump of an azalea. This azalea was trimmed back a number of times by that pesky wabbit that I can't get rid of, but the lichen hasn't hurt it any. The azalea is still alive too.



Cladonia fimbriata "pixie cup"



In case you don't recognize this little evil pest, it is the common root weevil that bedevils our rhododendrons. If you use the Talstar® or bifenthrin pesticide, you might be able to relegate this little critter to the list of endangered species.

Root weevils are capable of flight. That explains part of how they get into your garden. They don't all come in with the plants that you buy.

I have a bug light in the yard. It hangs over a large drum with some water in it. Not every bug that hits the electrified grid gets burned to a crisp. Some fall stunned into the water and are unable to get out. In the morning when I come to check the night's catch I often find beetles, bugs, moths and other insects. This root weevil was collected in the middle of October.

Just remember that no matter what the British say, not all insects are evil. Here's a larval form of the ladybug beetle, the state wherein it is the most predaceous on aphids.



Now if we could only find a product that would do a first rate, multi year prevention of the sooty bud mildew.

I've noticed that my purples seem to be the most susceptible, and a branch can have 4 or 5 years in a row where the terminal flower bud dies because of the mold.



In Ellis and Ellis, MICROFUNGI ON LAND PLANTS, Item #1008,

Pycnostysanus azaleae, looks to be our little bud blaster. "Synnemata dark olivaceous or blackish brown with a pale dusting of conidia at the apex, up to 2mm high and 0.5 wide. Conidia in chains, 4-6 diam. or 6-12 x 4-6, pale brown or olivaceous. The cause of bud blast and twig blight. Terminal flower buds are first affected; later, lateral buds, stems and leaves are attacked. When a twig is infected, flowers fail to develop and leafy shoots become necrotic. It is easy to spot infected buds, which turn brown and later silvery, and synnemata make them look as if they are thickly coated with black spines.

Diseases on Rhododendrons (there really is a book by that title!!!!) agrees with Ellis and Ellis

THERE. GRAPHICS IN A NEWSLETTER REALLY ISN'T ALL THAT PAINFUL, IS IT?

-Luurt