



# The Newsletter of the Portland Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

Volume 52 no. 12 - December 2007

www.rhodies.org

## Table of contents

- p.1 Haiku
- p.1 President's message
- p.3 [December Program-potluck](#)
- p.4 [Obituary: Bruce Winston](#)
- p.4 [book sales](#)
- p.5 [hybrid of the month](#)
- p.5 [2008 convention](#)
- p.6 [November Program Review](#)
- p.9 [Book Review](#) by Peter Kendall
- p.11 [Picture](#) by Jan Snyder  
Heaven's Gate
- p.12 [Official](#) ese and meeting place

*blue boxed items are hyperlinks*

## Haiku

By Peter Kendall

A cloud filtered light  
not a breath of wind, not an  
unmuted shadow

The window and its  
clematis, framing what's left  
of the roadside fence

The scampering leaves  
have unleashed the energy  
of a thousand suns

The lingering moon  
the daybreak and its flower  
A brisk autumn wind.

One more tear  
in yesterday' crumpled leaf  
one more day of sun.

The potluck is **BYOB**

That stands for

**BRING YOUR OWN** name **BADGE**

**December 20 2007**

**Christmas Potluck-**

**the usual place but at 6:30PM**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

### SUCCESSFUL HYBRIDIZERS

I am impressed when I hear stories about successful hybridizers. How do people create not one but many successful hybrids which stand the test of time? Are they lucky, skillful or what? I have had the opportunity to peruse Ben Lancaster's hybridizing records recently. As you study the records, you almost feel like you are working next to this man, acting as an apprentice.

It became clear to me that there may be a little bit of luck in creating successful hybrids, but there is a whole lot more involved. You must be persistent, very well organized, creative and detailed minded. You do not go out and pollinate a few flowers and come up with Mission Bells, Yaku Sunrise, Snow Lady, Spice, Vulcan

Flame, Crete, Yaku Frills, Inca Gold and Rose Elf to name a few hybrids. There is a whole lot of work involved.

Let me give you some statistics. In 1961 Ben Lancaster made 139 different hybrids. This same year he moved 470 seedlings into flats, which were made up of 36 different hybrids. In 1962 he slowed down a bit and made only 57 different hybrids. The sheer logistics of keeping track of his hybrids is interesting. His large back yard was laid out in grids. In 1964 he had 433 rhododendrons growing in his evaluation garden, which included 110 different hybrids. Each year he would cull the less desirable hybrids, and would again add the latest newcomers to his outdoor garden.

Lancaster's efforts to select names are interesting. Hybridizers like names for the plants they create that are related. Lancaster had whole lists of bell names, like mission bells, butter bells, covenant bells, Christmas bells, angels' bells, spring bells, cathedral bells, Westminster bells, Newcastle bells and Buddha bells. There is a wonderful education on Indian tribes as he considered tribal names for his hybrids. There are the Eastern tribes like Mohawk, Oneida, Onondagas, Cayuga and Seneca. Then there are the central U.S. tribes such as Cherokee, Chickasaw, Chippewa, Choctaw, and Ottawa. Next we have the plains Indians from tribes like Comanche, Kiowa, Izage, Pawnee, Ute, Shoshone, Arapahoe, Dakota, Sioux, Ulna, Cheyenne, Ojibwa, Okanogan and Omatta. There are pages of other fascinating names that were waiting to be awarded to a hybrid that was deserving of a special appellation.

Ben Lancaster loved plants. There is a wonderful collection of large camellia plants on his property, and we understand that his interest in camellia's preceded his passion for rhododendrons. He also loved bulbs. There is a list of species bulbs and their origin. Did you know that the origin of several crocus species was in the vicinity of Greece or that the origin of many daffodil species was from southern France to Spain to Portugal and clear down to Morocco? Tulips did not come from Holland, but rather Turkestan and Persia for example.

Ben Lancaster maintained correspondence with rhododendron lovers around the world. He had a particularly good rhododendron which he used often as a pollen seed parent. He believed this was *R. croceum* which he has purchased. He gave a cutting of this plant to Dr. Phetteplace of Eugene. Several years later Dr. Phetteplace was visiting the Royal Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh Scotland and found what appeared to be an identical plant. This rhododendron was *R. chlorops*, and there were only two known plants in all of England. Ben Lancaster sent some leaves and flowers from his plant to the head botanist, Mr. Davidian, at the Royal Botanical Gardens, and he confirmed that Lancaster's plant was definitely *R. chlorops*. This was the only known rhododendron like this in the United States, and there were several newspaper articles in June of 1961 announcing this discovery. The only known source of this species was from seed that Mr. Forrest had collected during one of his later explorations to the Himalayas.

We are fortunate to have had people with the dedication, curiosity and perseverance of Ben Lancaster. I would sure like to pick up the newspaper today and read about a new species being discovered in the United States, rather than the reporting on all the mayhem and turmoil going on. It is also interesting how a rhododendron can help bring the world together.

—Irv Snyder

## DECEMBER MEETING

Christmas comes but once, by golly.  
We will eat and we'll be jolly.  
Deck the halls with hunks of holly  
(save the rhodies - Ed.)  
Hold on, here we go again.

At Christmas time  
you can't get sore  
your brother's pictures  
you must adore  
you can ignore them  
all the more  
the other 364.

Santa's bag of small surprisals -  
add some useless yard utensils  
that your friend will think essential  
(not a pot of wilting herbage -Ed.)  
make another take it home.



*Mushrooms fruiting on a stump "bloom" in the fall*

The December meeting will be the annual potluck. There is always lots of food for everyone. Somehow the mix of entrees, salads and desserts always comes out with enough of each – though if you're in doubt as to what to bring, select an entrée.

Members have signed up for table decorations, but if more are needed, some will get to eat on an undecorated table. Plan to bring your own plates, cups, appetite and utensils. Eating starts at 6:30 PM, while setup is earlier and social interaction takes place all evening.

The entertainment is also bring-your-own, consisting of the giving of presents (bring something small for the community disbursement) and pictures. Limit yourself to a dozen or so pictures - if you bring more, be ready to cycle them through FAST. The chapter will make sure that there is a slide projector as well as a computer (digital) projector there. If digital, put the pictures on some sort of transferrable media (DVD or CD or thumb drive) for easy assimilation into the display hardware.

—Luurt

[return to table of contents](#)

## OBITUARY: Bruce Winston

Bruce was a long time fixture in the Portland Chapter, anchoring the Finance Committee for years and a regular volunteer at the Wednesday work parties at Crystal Springs Rhododendron garden. He will be missed by all of us. The following information is from Bill Ferguson.

It is with sadness that I report to you that Bruce Winston died on the evening of Monday, November 19, 2007.

Bruce's daughter Kathy called with the sad news this morning. She said Bruce had been receiving treatment for cancer and had developed an infection that became so contagious that even his family members could not visit him. Kathy will let us know what the family would like to do as a memorial for Bruce. I'm quite certain that memorial will involve something at Crystal Springs Garden where he devoted so much of his energies as an active volunteer and First Chairman of the Friends of the Garden.

I'll let you know as I receive further information about Bruce's funeral and the memorial plans.

–Bill Ferguson



A Japanese maple: fall color at night

## **BOOK ORDERS are back!**

The Portland Chapter is able to provide Timber Press books again.

We're also going to be able to order other publishers' books. A list of books will be available at the December meeting.

Talk to Loni Welsh if you are interested in ordering books; plan to order some reading material for the cold days when you won't want to go out and weed beneath the rhododendrons.

–Loni

[return to table of contents](#)

## Oklahoma, the rhododendron

By Kathy Van Veen

R. Oklahoma originated with Edmund de Rothschild in 1948. It is a Talley-Ho hybrid and not especially hardy, although  $\frac{1}{16}$  of its parentage comes from R. catawbiense.

The Van Veen Nursery has had Oklahoma since 1983 after one of my Dad's trips to New Zealand in that year. Ours is a round full bush now about 3 feet high and wide. It has the narrow leafed look of R. griersonianum and flowers that are waxy red with dark speckles. The blooming time is in late May and early June.

Exbury does not rate this plant among its best, but for us it has been a decent plant. Don't forget that someone once thought enough of it to send it off to New Zealand [Ed's note: "and someone else thought enough to bring it back to Portland"].

I don't know why it was named Oklahoma but I do know there is not much chance of it thriving there.

—Kathy

## Oklahoma – the Convention

By Kathy Van Veen

It's not too early to start thinking about going to Oklahoma in April for the ARS National Convention. The Ozark Chapter is the sponsor; the chapter consists of people from Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Missouri. It's not what is traditionally thought of as rhododendron country. Nevertheless, Leonard Miller and his chapter members have been putting in lots of effort the last two years to make this convention a great one.

Oklahoma has some really nice gardens on the Convention Tour list, including Leonard Miller's own, which has been featured in the ARS Journal; Lendonwood, which he created; and something that you might not expect, a 23 acre English garden. Come and see.

Convention program emphasis will be on R. hyperythrum hybrids, which are mighty tough and grow well there. Hundreds of them, contributed



by Ozark Chapter members and friends, will be available at the plant sale.

Dr. Steve Krebs from the David G. Leach Research Station in Ohio has been studying R. hyperythrum and phytophthora resistance. He will be there to present his findings.

Tijs Huisman from the Netherlands will talk about European hybridizing and Allan Anderson is to lead the breeders' round table.

Something that you can't miss is Ozark Chapter president Keith Johansson's talk at the banquet. He is a former stand-up comedian and his presentation about the perils of raising rhododendrons in his climate is absolutely sure to be entertaining.

The flavor of the region will come out in the fiddle concert, the Shawnee Indian flute music and of course a choir with excerpts from the famous musical "Oklahoma"!

This gathering will be great fun for everyone. Don't miss it.

—Kathy

[return to table of contents](#)

## THOUGHTS ON THE NOVEMBER PROGRAM: Damn the Luddites

By Luurt Nieuwenhuis

**Luddites:** look them up in Wikipedia

Bob Denman spoke at the October Chapter Meeting on the topic of how to properly care for your hand tools. His presentation was limited to those implements that are used manually and involve cutting or sharp edges of iron or steel, so the discussion revolved around the care and feeding of shovels and pruners.

Most shovels and rakes use wooden handles: Denman suggested that their care is one of the essential aspects of keeping the tool for any length of time. Wooden handles that dry out and weather become weak and will break long before handles that are properly taken care of will. Once or twice a year take first coarse then fine sandpaper and smooth the wood to keep the grain from drying and splitting. Then apply successive coats of boiled linseed oil; apply every 15 to 30 minutes until no more soaks into the wood. Buff off the excess. Adding a small quantity of turpentine to the linseed oil helps and speeds the penetration into the wood. If boiled linseed oil is too hard to come with, a backup choice would be to use minwax. Mr. Denman also demonstrated the correct way to replace shovel handles.

If your yard is as full of rocks as mine, you might have questioned Bob's assertion that a shovel edge should be



sharp enough to cut you if you aren't being careful, but it does make sense. Use a 20 inch bastard file to sharpen it; the bevel on the upper side of the shovel should be between 20 and 30 degrees for best cutting, with no bevel on the underside -- and clean the file after you're done with the sharpening. The fancy finish on a shovel blade wears off with use; if the metal is rusted or pitted, clean it to brightness with steel wool, paint it with a coat of red oxide primer and finish with a couple of coats of a hard paint finish. Yes, the paint will wear off with use, but it can be easily replaced and while it is on the reduced friction will make the spading much easier.



Denman said that taking care of pruning tools uses some of the same logic that taking care of any other implement deserves: Keep it clean and sharp. Plant sap tends to collect

on all parts of pruning tools: A regular cleaning makes the tool move with less effort and less possibility of disease transfer. Gun oil works very nicely for the cleaning and surfacing of all metal parts. If a part needs greasing, white synthetic lithium grease works the best while WD40 does the worst. Plastic dip, sold in hardware stores, can be used to revitalize the handles of hand tools once covered with vinyl.

Mr. Denman advised that hand pruners should not be used to cut anything thicker than a finger, no matter how powerful your grip; we have loppers for that. The cutting blade should have a bevel on one side of between 22 and 35 degrees while the other side should remain flat and unbeveled. If there is a hollow ground edge on the blade, keep it and don't try to grind it out. Don't try to sharpen or file on the anvil side of an anvil pruner. A medium grit diamond coated file is the best thing to use for sharpening. Don't be surprised if you have to take the pieces of the pruner apart to sharpen it successfully.

Bob Denman's presentation dovetailed very nicely with a book that I've been reading about the golden days of landscape designing. In the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the English ideal garden started to depart from copying the look of the Italian architectural garden with its regular and artificial layout of terraces and fountains and delightful statuary (including living topiaries) to one of a more idealistically natural appearance. This movement tied in with the general romantic period of the English as expressed in literature and painting. Its most famous proponent was Lancelot 'Capability' Brown whose gardens date from the middle of the 1750's to the end of the century.



The new trend was for landscape gardens, an idealized, romantic landscape where the view and the evoked emotions enjoyed by the master of the estate was the sole criteria for its appearance. Achieving this could be a monumental feat: Lakes might be created or enlarged, rivers relocated, hills and dales formed where there were none and trees and forests relocated or cut down (and these could be big trees!): Sometimes an entire village would be razed and its inhabitants relocated to a place that did not interfere with the aesthetic intent of the landlord.

You might have guessed that the 'rights' of the common laborer and tenant were not high on the list of considerations motivating the estate owner and landscape designer, and you'd be right. But think of the benefits to the community and to future generations of tourists. Of course the latter did not get to revel on the grounds of the private estates until far in the future when the estates went bankrupt.

You might be asking yourself by now, how do we tie Capability Brown and Bob Denman and his talk on the care and feeding of hand tools together? Well, this was in an age before the industrial revolution created labor saving devices and power tools. Everything was done with hand tools. Do you want to create or enlarge a lake? Don't call a dredge; break out the shovels and the horse drawn wagons and all the able-bodied villagers from miles around. Do you want to relocate a river? The same constructions rules apply, except that you also have to divert the stream before you start. Just envision Chinese laborers of 50 years ago trying to build a dam by brute force.

Then there is the fun of exalting the valleys and making the hills low. That's involves a lot of shovels full and wagon loads. No power tools and no bulldozers, just people and horse power. Imagine trying to place a grove of fifty foot high trees where the designer decided that they would look best. That means that you find a suitable stand of trees somewhere else, and dig, dig, dig out a monstrous root ball, carefully work it onto a very heavy duty horse drawn wagon ( or ox-drawn if the drovers can find them), drag it to the destination, dig another monstrous hole, and carefully heel it in place.

When all is created to the designed ideal, there will be the upkeep on a 100 acre landscape garden. Its probably less than for a formal Italian architectural garden of the same size but it is still be significant. The local village probably existed primarily to service the estate garden. No tractors pulling forty foot wide power mowers to create that perfect close-cropped grass field. Reel mowers are still possible when drawn by horses, even though they will leave dimples in the grass during the rainy season. Cutting down trees calls to mind the loggers of the American west - big bucksaws with a team of men to work them, then big wheeled wagons with teams of oxen or horses to move the trees away. No power chippers to get rid of the branches, only CO<sub>2</sub> polluting bonfires.



Then there are such problems as pest control and weed abatement. Another aspect of gardening that is on full manual control. This time period was one before the wonders of chemistry were foisted off on a benighted world. If you wanted to get rid of dandelions or ragwort tansy, your groundskeepers did it all by hand, all 100 acres of it. If you had an infestation of tent caterpillars, you got out the long poles with rags and tar on it (they had tar in those days) and burned each tent out by hand.

In those days, it was extremely important to take good care of the tools that were available. There were very many of these, each one was a little different, each one manufactured by hand and according to the creators' ideas of the perfect tool for the job and representing significant investments in time and energy.

Just keep in mind that if you want to return to those thrilling days of yesteryear, you will have to make some major sacrifices in how you relate to your garden. No earth friendly insecticides or herbicides (though the beneficial effects of arsenic, lead, and



mercury were already established by this time), no John Deere, no power tools to make life easier and more efficient, and no internet chat groups to ask questions of rhododendron experts when problems crop up. My conclusion is that technology is good; better living through chemistry and all that.

—Luurt

[return to table of contents](#)

images: *fall color on a homebush seedling*  
*red maple in front of rhodies*  
*harvestman on rhody leaf*

## The Backpacker's Photography Handbook

By Charles Campbell, Amphoto Books, 1994, New York, pp. 144, \$19.95  
reviewed by Peter Kendall

Having read or perused a wide range of instructive material on photographic approaches and techniques, I was most delighted in a recent find. The Backpacker's Photography Handbook is a short, concise and well written effort with a plethora of photos and check lists.

Charles Campbell describes how a near death experience in an Alaska avalanche led him to reappraise the thrust of his life from purveyor of ski equipment to nature photographer. During this process he has learned to capture the essence of the wilderness experience on film.



*This is not a weevil  
with a wool coat.*

*Rather, she is an  
example of ecology  
in action.*

*A fungus mold has  
set up housekeeping  
on her carcass.*

He believes that the primary considerations of focus, exposure and composition, combined with the passion, creativity, skill, time and tenacity of the photographer create the best images. Tuning in to nature, determining the venues and preparing to safely and most decisively capture his subject on film are also essential to the experience.

Campbell lays out specific items he finds requisite for trips from short day hikes to full expeditionary back pack outings: Most of these items are camera related. He makes use of both large format view cameras and 35mm single lens reflex cameras. While the view camera offers the best result its weight is a limiting factor. Therefore, a high end 35mm SLR with appropriate lenses and filters is often the best choice for forays into the back country. He notes that these are only tools and their use is the photographer's responsibility.

He lists basic startup equipment and more elaborate options with an eye toward safety in selection of clothing and other paraphernalia. He suggests light management through a chroma-zone system. In capturing nature's design, we each put our own stamp on what we decide to record of nature's offerings.

This book calls for serious photographers to answers to three questions with their pictures: Is it a good subject? Is the composition good? Is the light up to the task?

—peter

[return to table of contents](#)

*next page: Jan Snyder won the photography contest at the recent regional at the beach with her entry of Heaven's Gate.*



## Newsletter

*Rhododendron News* is the newsletter of the Portland Chapter and is mailed by non-profit class postage Portland, OR. . *Rhododendron News* is sent to current members in good standing. Articles may be copied or reprinted with credit given to the author(s) and *Rhododendron News*. Views expressed herein do not imply Portland Chapter or ARS endorsement. Staff:  
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## Newsletter articles

Newsletter article and idea deadline is at the Chapter meeting. Items received after that time might not be included in the current issue.

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## Meeting time and place

Regular meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month except in June, July, and August, starting at 7 pm with a social half-hour which precedes the main meeting.

For location, see [www.rhodies.org/pdx/pdx\\_meeting.htm](http://www.rhodies.org/pdx/pdx_meeting.htm)

All Saints Episcopal Church

at the corner of SE 40th and Woodstock

( a little east of the Crystal Springs Rhododendron

Garden) in Portland, OR

## 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

4 issues a year. Send \$10 to join - that's one ten dollar bill that lasts forever or until you want to send another to keep it company. [info@bovees.com](mailto:info@bovees.com)

[return to table of contents](#)

## CHAPTER OFFICERS

(All area codes 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

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

## GARDEN CHAIRS

### CRYSTAL SPRINGS RHODODENDRON GARDEN

Bob MacArthur 360-256-2522

Beverly Watkin 503-244-0537

### CECIL & MOLLY SMITH GARDEN

Ginny Mapes 503-647-2896

### PORTLAND CHAPTER WEB SITE

[www.rhodies.org/index.htm](http://www.rhodies.org/index.htm)

### Membership and ownership

The Portland Chapter is a local chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. Combined annual dues to both the Society and the Chapter are \$35 for one person, \$40 for family. Annual subscription price to the 9+ times yearly newsletter *Rhododendron News* is included in Chapter membership

### Online Discussion Group

[yahoo.com](http://yahoo.com) and look for rhododendrons.

Participants include renowned hybridizers, growers and hobbyists.

### Tualatin Valley Chapter

Regularly scheduled meetings on the **second**

**Monday 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](mailto: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](http://www.siuslawars.org) to find out where.