

Portland Chapter, American Rhododendron Society

## Calendar

September 21, 2017  
Regular Meeting  
Social time 7:00 pm  
Meeting 7:30 pm  
Speaker: Dennis  
Bottemiller, RSBG, on  
propagating difficult  
rhododendrons,  
followed by our annual  
cuttings exchange!  
October 14, 2017  
Smith Garden Work  
Day  
Continued on page 2

## Meeting Info

Regular chapter meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month (except in June, July, and August which have other events).

Meetings start at 7 pm with a social half-hour preceding the main meeting. We clean up and exit by 9:30 pm.

Location: All Saints Episcopal Church - At the corner of SE 40<sup>th</sup> and Woodstock, Portland, Oregon



## September Meeting and Program

By Caroline Enns and Steve Hall

The Portland Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society will hold its September Meeting on Thursday, **September 21, 2017**, from 7:00 pm—9:00 pm.

Our September meeting will feature one of our favorite speakers, Dennis Bottemiller, from the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Washington. His presentation is titled “Rooting the Proverbial Pencil: tricks of the trade for propagating difficult rhododendrons”

Dennis Bottemiller’s presentation will use standard methods for propagating cuttings as a basis for experimenting with plants that are known to be difficult. He will discuss some of the biological reasons that plants form roots, and how that information can lead to experimental approaches from the mundane to the bizarre. Dennis’ style of presentation encourages participation by the audience unusually well. Come armed with questions and we will have a fun and lively discussion.

Dennis began propagating rhododendrons at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden as an undergraduate intern in 1987. After graduating from Washington State University in 1989 with a degree in production horticulture, he joined the RSBG full time. With the exception of a brief hiatus to manage the W.W. Seymour Conservatory in Tacoma, he has remained at RSBG, where he is now the Manager of the Nursery & Propagation Manager. He was also heavily involved in building the Rutherford Conservatory at RSBG, and in maintaining it since. He is widely known for his corny sense of humor—corn was his original botanical fascination—and for his exceptional skills as a propagator.

Dennis Bottemiller’s presentation will be followed by the annual cutting exchange sponsored by the Chapter. This is an opportunity for members to share cuttings of their favorite rhododendrons with their fellow members. Although rare or hard to obtain species or varieties are preferable, more common types that do well for you are also desirable. ( Deciduous varieties would not be suitable for distribution in the fall.)

This is a good opportunity to encourage propagation of rhododendrons vegetatively and make much goodwill with your fellow members. Some recipient may even thank you for your generosity!

## Purpose

To encourage interest in and disseminate information and knowledge about the genus *Rhododendron*.

To provide a medium through which all persons interested in the genus may communicate with others through education, scientific studies, meetings, publications, and other similar activities.

The Portland Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society is registered in Oregon as a 501 (C)(3) non-profit organization. Dues and donations are qualified charitable tax deductions.

## Meeting Calendar through November, 2017:

**September 21, 2017**

**Regular Meeting**

**Social time 7:00 pm**

**Meeting 7:30 pm**

**Speaker: Dennis Bottemiller,  
RSBG**

**Topic: Propagating difficult rhododendrons**

**Followed by the Chapter's annual  
*Cuttings Exchange!***

**October 14, 2017**

**Smith Garden Fall Work Day**

**Start between 8:00 and 9:00 am,**

**Lunch will be served; please bring  
your favorite hand tools and gloves**

**October 19, 2017**

**Regular Meeting**

**Social Time 7:00 pm**

**Meeting 7:30 pm**

**Speaker: Maria Stewart, Dover  
Nursery**

**Topic: Indumentum: Persistent,  
Plastered, Woolly, Tomentose**

**Followed by the Chapter's annual  
*Species Auction!***

**All accompanied by Halloween  
treats and/or costumes**

**November 16, 2017**

**Regular meeting**

**Social time 7:00 pm**

**Meeting 7:30 pm**

**Speaker: James Cassidy, OSU,  
Dept. of Horticulture**

**Topic: Soil: what it is and how it  
works**



The Rutherford Conservatory at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, Federal Way, Washington.

## Looking Ahead:

**ARS 2018 European Convention**

**Full details at: <http://ARS2018.org>**

**Registration for ARS-members only  
will begin September 1st and extend  
until November 15th**

**Main convention May 20-27, 2018 in  
Bremen, Germany, with pre- and  
post- convention tours to the Nether-  
lands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden  
and Finland.**

## President's Message for September

### BACK TO SCHOOL TIME AT THE RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Our end of summer August events lived up to their advance billing. The Smith Garden Soiree was on the third Thursday in August. The weather cooperated and Tom Gressler and Jane Mays hosted a fine evening at the Cecil & Molly Smith Garden. Tom regaled us with the story of the large cherry tree that came down in the middle of the garden (right on top of the plants I planted at the spring work party. Perhaps I undermined the tree with my vigorous trowel work). Ray Clack's chainsaw heroics were on display, reopening the blocked garden path and giving it a bit of the feel of a national forest trail. Good food and pleasant conversation were plentiful. Thanks to all who helped and participated.

Speaking of which, it is not too early to get the Smith Garden fall work party onto your calendars. It is now scheduled for Saturday, October 14<sup>th</sup>. More information will be provided in next month's newsletter.

On the last weekend in August, Brenda Ziegler and Steve Hopkins hosted a salmon dinner and potluck for members and friends, complete with a striking view of the Sandy River from their back deck. Steve not only cooked salmon for the hungry hordes, but provided a personally guided tour of the grounds and his collection of unusual plants and trees. Our thanks and appreciation to them for undertaking an event of this magnitude, which we certainly enjoyed.

After our late August escapes, it is back to school time for the Portland Chapter. Our regular meetings and programs start up in September and continue throughout the school year. Our Speaker's Committee, chaired by Caroline Enns, has outdone itself. The speakers and programs for the entire 2017-2018 season are already posted on the Chapter website so that you can look ahead and plan accordingly.

Our back to school night program appropriately enough features Dennis Bottemiller of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden speaking on rhododendron propagation, followed by the Chapter's annual exchange of rhododendron cuttings. Please be generous with your cutting material so that there are plenty of cuttings for members inspired by Dennis' presentation. More details are provided elsewhere in the newsletter.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Dennis O'Malley  
President, Portland Chapter

## September Cutting Exchange:

The September meeting features not only the welcome back after the doldrums of summer, but also the excitement of the annual Cutting Exchange. The Chapter's website, [www.rhodies.org](http://www.rhodies.org), features details, but the basic rules are:

- Rare plants are preferable, but common types that propagate well are also desirable;
- Cuttings fare best when collected in the cool of the day as close to the meeting as possible;
- Select lateral buds, that is, stems without developing flower buds;
- Cut the stems as long as possible; dip the cuttings in water, to thoroughly wet them;
- Keep the cuttings hydrated in a zip-lock bag;
- At least three cuttings per bag, if possible;
- Include a tag with the name of the plant and your name, written in pencil;
- Refrigerate the bags of cuttings, until it is time to leave for the meeting;
- Please, no lace bug! Please select healthy material. Thank you.

Special requests:

- Chemainus
- fletcherianum 'Yellow Bunting'
- flinckii
- impeditum Litangense group
- Vireyas: christii, celebicum, curviflorum
- R. 'Chelsea Seventy'

## We Have a Facebook Page !

Are you on Facebook? Did you know that our Chapter has a group page? We welcome you to join our group. It's easy. Go to your Facebook page. In the search bar at the top of the page, type in American Rhododendron Society—Portland Chapter. Click on the title in the results list (it should be listed first). On our group page on the top picture, click on the button that says "Join"! That's it. The administrators of the site will approve your request! David Anderson is working to make sure we have some great content on the page, so come back and visit it often.

**Ann Clack**

## Treats:

You probably have all heard that nectar and pollen produced by rhododendrons can be toxic, and cause “mad honey disease”, characterized by a “pleasant tingling” and hallucinations. There may also be a few troublesome side effects such as vomiting, weakness of various muscles, including the ones with which you breathe, and cardiac arrhythmias. But it’s a good wind that blows no one any ill.

You may also know the story of King Mithridates and his Turkish army, who in 67 BC defeated the Romans by intentionally leaving in their path honeycombs built by bees that pollinated rhododendrons.. The invaders consumed the honey, succumbed to mad honey disease, and were defeated. Or so the story goes.

But is mad honey disease not yet another urban myth? You can find out.

The Chapter needs volunteers to provide treats at our meetings during the coming year. The enterprising among you should immediately recognize the opportunity to conduct a controlled study. Make half of the goodies with honey from a beehive in close proximity to your rhododendrons, and the other half with standard clover honey. Variable amounts of the rhododendron-honey might provide a nice test of the dose-response. The controls among us can then enjoy the hallucinations of our colleagues without the distraction of too many cardiac or respiratory arrests.

The more squeamish among us can answer the Chapter’s need with more customary delights. Here is the chance to impress your friends and intimidate your frienemies with your culinary skills or the best that Fred Meyer has to offer. But don’t be greedy. Depriving others of this opportunity by signing up for more than one meeting is usually considered bad form; at least without Barbara MacArthur’s approval.

A signup sheet will circulate at the September meeting.



The Rutherford Conservatory at the RSBG, another view.

## One of Taliensia's Gems: *R. roxieanum* variety *oreonastes*

By Maria Stewart

When Dennis Bottemiller speaks to the Portland Chapter this month, it will be enlightening to find out how he propagates *R. roxieanum* var. *oreonastes*. We have found that it roots weakly for us and every plant that survives the rooting process is a treasure. This rhododendron, however, is worth all the efforts to propagate it. It has the most narrow leaves of all the *roxieanums*, a quite variable group of forms, and is striking in a garden setting. Tan to cinnamon-colored indumentum covers the underneath of each leaf as a bonus. Who needs flowers when the foliage is so wonderful? OK, so a little frosting on the cake is desirable, even if you have to wait a number of years for it to bloom.

Here is more about *R. roxieanum* var. *oreonastes*:

Classification: Subgenus *Hymenanthes*; Section *Hymenanthes*; Subsection *Taliensia*

As suggested above, *R. roxieanum* presents itself with varying sizes from dwarf and compact to a small tree. Its foliage varies in size and shape also. There is evidence that *R. proteoides* is related to *R. roxieanum* and that *R. roxieanum* var. *parvum* is an intermediate hybrid of the two species. It is also suggested that *R. globigerum* is a form of *R. roxieanum*.

Distribution in the wild: N.W. Yunnan, S.W. Sichuan, Tibet-Yunnan border at 11,000-14,000 feet, above and below the tree line.

About the name: named after Mrs. Roxie Hanna of Tali-fu, China, a friend of George Forrest.

Flowers: white or creamy and usually spotted red; funnel-campanulate corollas with 6 to 15 corollas in a truss.

Foliage: very narrow and linear shaped; dark green on the upper surface with tan to cinnamon indumentum on the lower surface; new leaves have white indumentum which gradually turns to tan or cinnamon.

Structure: slow growing shrub

Hardiness: -10 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: any exposure with good drainage.

**R. roxieanum var. oreonastes**

Photographs courtesy *hirsutum*  
website. Top right image, photographer:  
Garth Wedemire.  
Lower image, photographer:  
Susan Lightburn.



Portland Chapter of  
the American  
Rhododendron  
Society

PO Box 86424,  
Portland, OR 97286-0424  
ADDRESS SERVICE  
REQUESTED

Phone: 503-777-1734 for  
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Web: [www.rhodies.org](http://www.rhodies.org)

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CHAPTER OFFICERS

President: *Dennis O'Malley*  
Vice President: *Caroline Enns*  
Past President: *Brenda Ziegler*  
Secretary: *Steve Hopkins*  
Treasurer: *Dick Cavender*

BOARD MEMBERS

(Through June 30, 2018), **Ann Clack,**  
**Ray Clack, Betsy Soifer, Mike Stew-**  
**art, Joanne Turner**  
(Through June 30, 2019) **Steve Hall,**  
**Steve McCormick, John Stephens,**  
**Maria Stewart, Bill Zanze**

GARDEN INFO:

Crystal Springs Rhodo. Garden

Chair:

**Dan McLaughlin,**  
**dvmclau@comcast.net**  
Tours/Volunteering:  
**csrgvol@gmail.com**  
Gatehouse:  
**Tom Hoffman, 503-452-0975**  
**Rose Kress, 971-239-9016**  
Friends of Crystal Springs:  
**Dan McLaughlin,**  
**dvmclau@comcast.net**  
Events:  
**Rachael Moloney, 503-975-6743**

Cecil & Molly Smith Garden  
Chair: Open

Newsletter, membership, and  
ownership: The Portland Chapter is  
a local Chapter of the American Rho-  
dodendron Society. Combined annual  
dues to both the national society and  
local chapter are \$40. Membership  
benefits include nine or more newslet-  
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tor, at: **[tjhoffman56@yahoo.com](mailto:tjhoffman56@yahoo.com)**, or  
via mail to: 4765 SW 38th Place,  
Portland, OR 97221

Delivery: Questions should be di-  
rected to: **Maria Stewart** at 503-668-  
7565.

Website: **[www.rhodies.org](http://www.rhodies.org)**; web  
masters: **Steve Hall and Caroline  
Enns**

Membershi p Updates: John  
Stephens & Stephen McCor-  
mi ck, Membershi p Co-Chai rs, e-  
-mai l :  
[j.d.stephens@outlook.com](mailto:j.d.stephens@outlook.com)  
[ssmccormick@outlook.com](mailto:ssmccormick@outlook.com)