

Indumentum

Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

Volume 34, Number 8, May 2003



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

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This Month's Meeting: May 15th, 6:30 pm, VanDusen
Botanical Garden - Meet at main entrance

Program: Tour of the Sino-Himalayan Garden &
Rhododendron Walk with Gerry Gibbens

Plants in Bloom - *Rhododendron anhweiense*

Rhododendron maculiferum subsp. *anhweiense* is a shrubby, moderate-sized species native to Anhui Province in eastern China. It performs extremely well at UBC Botanical Garden; so much so, that people who see the specimens often remark that the species should be more widely grown. Its medium-sized leaves are convex and neatly pointed and, together with the dense branching, give the plants a clean, well-clothed appearance. Overall, the plants are rounded, about 3m (10 feet) across and tall and covered to the ground with foliage. Flowers are pale pink, in lax trusses of up to ten; however, as with a number of notable species (such as *R. degronianum* subsp. *yakushimanum*), the deeper pink unfolding flowers are set against the lighter, expanded flowers, which creates a spectacular, apple-blossom-like display.

Cultivation is easy. Peter Wharton, Curator of the David C. Lam Asian Garden, reports that his *R. anhweiense* have been completely trouble-free over the last 30 years. Peter Cox, in his book *The Larger Rhododendrons* (revised edition, Timber Press, 1990), notes that while plants are winter-hardy in the Pacific Northwest and Britain, they are not reliable in colder parts of Holland. He says that the species is free-flowering from a young age, and recommends it highly.

continued on page 2



photo: Judy Newton, UBC Botanical Garden

The 1982 revision of the genus *Rhododendron* by David Chamberlain states that “the tomentum of the ovaries, calyx and pedicels is apparently the only reliable character separating subsp. *maculiferum* from subsp. *anhweiense*, a difference that does not merit maintaining them as separate species.” The *Rhododendron Handbook* (RHS, 1998), on the other hand, does recognize them as distinct species (a classic example of the botanical-horticultural debate so commonly fought in rhododendron circles).

Outside of modern, large botanical gardens, species rhododendron gardens are often collections of single plants of well-known clones (e.g., the Exbury form of *R. bureavii* or the Bodnant form of *R. strigillosum*). Among stuffer botanists, this is known as “stamp collecting.” Among stuffer horticulturists, this is known as “quality.” These clones are well-known for a number of reasons: they are usually very distinctive, perform well in the garden and are easily and commonly vegetatively propagated by cuttings or grafting. In nature, there is much variation, however. Much of the distinctiveness of individuals effectively disappears into the greater, more diverse whole of a species. The botanical approach is to describe a species by taking into account all its inherent variation. Botanists often regard horticulturally recognized “species” as minor variants—subspecies (e.g., in the case of *anhweiense*), varieties, or forms.

The exceptional plants at UBC came as scions from the gardens of Stronachullin, Argyll, Scotland in 1965. The plants were re-propagated from cuttings of the originals in 1972; hence, they are probably the same individual clone as much of what passes for the “species” *anhweiense* in the Pacific Northwest and probably much of Britain.

Douglas Justice

President's Message

Besides beautiful rhododendrons (such as ‘Mrs. Tom H. Lowinsky’ shown above right), one of the things I like best about springtime is the incredible array of garden events available in Greater Vancouver. Our club has four such events:

We have already completed our Sale and Show at Park and Tilford Gardens, and there will be a complete report on this event in an upcoming *Indumentum*. For now, however, I want to extend a huge thank you to the following executive members who assumed major leadership roles, having worked on the Sale and Show since February. **Gerry Gibbens** organized the truss show and judging. **Barb Sherman** handled the finances and cashier training. **Bill Herbst** coordinated the growers and sales area. **Louis Peterson** was foreman of the set-up and clean-up crews. **Carole Conlin**



photo: Ron Knight

and **Joanne Ronsley** took care of the membership table. **Douglas Justice** and **Joe Ronsley** obtained the volunteers, and **Todd Major** and **Bill Spohn** managed the publicity program.

During May and early June, **Lothar Mischke** has arranged for us to visit over a dozen spectacular gardens throughout the Lower Mainland, from the Fraser Valley to Keats Island. Detailed information is available on pages 3 and 8 of this issue.

On **Thursday, May 15th**, instead of our regular meeting in the Floral Hall, we are touring the Sino-Himalayan Garden and the Rhododendron Walk at Van Dusen, when **Gerry Gibbens** will be our guide for the evening. Please meet at 6:30 p.m. at the main entrance ticket counter. There will be dozens and dozens of spectacular rhododendrons in bloom.

Our final VRS special event is the club picnic on Sunday, **June 22nd** at **Gordon and Vern Finley's** home. In addition to seeing some fabulous rhododendrons, the evening will feature a magnificent pot-luck dinner and presentation of trophies to our truss show winners. More information on this event will be available in the June *Indumentum*.

After all that, we'll need time to catch up on our weeding and dead-heading!

Ron Knight

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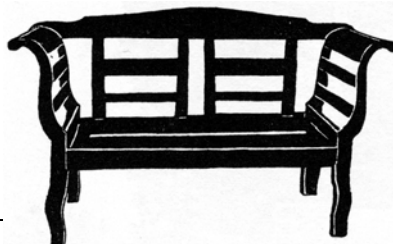
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Open Garden Details and Directions
(see schedule on page 8)

Lamont Garden - May 10

The Lamont garden is part of a 0.9 acre property in Clayton Hills in Surrey. It consists mainly of rhododendrons and companion plants. VRS members Mark Lamont and Glenda Powroznik created the majority of this garden for Mark's parents in 2000. Most of the rhododendrons and companion plants were moved from the Lamont's previous 3-acre woodland garden in Langley in the spring of 2000 (some of you may have had the pleasure of touring the Langley garden in 1999). To save as many rhododendrons and their companions as possible from the bulldozers and lumberjacks, Mark and Glenda basically picked up the Langley garden and moved it to Mark's parents' new home in Clayton Hills and incorporated them into the existing garden. Hope you can come and see these plants in their new home!

From Highway #1: take the 176th Street exit to Surrey and head south for approximately 3 miles on 176th Street until you come to Fraser Highway. Turn left on Fraser Highway and head east for 1 mile until you come to 184th Street. Turn right on 184th Street and head south for about a block and the first road you come to is 68th Avenue.



Turn right on 68th Avenue and head west about 1/2 mile. The house is on your left.

From Highway #99: take the Highway #10 exit to Surrey/Cloverdale. Drive through Cloverdale on Highway #10 until you come to 184th Street. Turn left on 184th Street and head north for about 1 1/2 mile until you come to 68th Avenue. Turn left on 68th Avenue and head west about 1/2 mile. The house is on your left.

Mike and Patty Bale's Garden - May 11 (Mother's Day)

A large woodland garden located at the eastern end of the Fraser Valley bordering on the Fraser River with magnificent views of the surrounding mountains.

For directions, please call 604 853 4100 or via e-mail lu_zhu@telus.net.

Darts Hill Garden Park - May 17

Darts Hill is a "must see" garden in the White Rock area. There are, however, some changes in the way tours are handled. The Surrey Parks and Recreation's Culture Department now administers Darts Hill and tours are booked through them. Only Wednesdays and Saturdays are available; also only 2 times per day (10:00 am or 2:00 pm) are available. In addition, a five-dollar entrance fee is now charged per person. I have booked the garden for May 17 from 2:00 pm until 4:00 pm exclusively for the VRS. Other days are available but you will have to do the booking in advance.

Palm Grove, Keats Island - May 25

Palm Grove is a "woods and hillside" garden above south-facing Peggy's Cove on Keats Island. The mild microclimate of the protected waterfront area consists of a series of terraces planted with a huge variety of subtropical plants, including bananas, palms, eucalyptus, gingers and tree ferns. The wooded area above has over one hundred plantings of rhododendrons, including eight-footers planted in the late 1950s.

There are a number of options for getting to Palm Grove. If you have a private boat, you can disembark on one of the nearby private floats and walk over. If you prefer to come as a group, park in Horseshoe Bay and catch the 9:20 am ferry to Langdale. On arriving at the Langdale terminal, walk down the nearby ramp to the waiting Dogwood Princess (a 48-passenger ferry) for a pleasant trip to Keats Landing. A twelve minute walk across the meadows leads to Palm Grove. There are return sailings of the Dogwood Princess at 3:25 and 5:45 pm. For those unable to come on Sunday, arrangements can be made to see the garden on Saturday, May 24 (call Larry at 604 988 2355).

Trachycapus palms grown from seed collected at Palm Grove will be made available to VRS members.

Turner Trees - June 7

The collection consists of trees only—more than 400 species (no cultivars) of conifers and broad-leaves. Specimens are not labeled. A guided tour will be available 1:00-3:00 pm.

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VRS + ARS Membership (US & Overseas)	\$50.00 \$US 28.00
VRS Membership (no ARS Quarterly Journal)	\$25.00
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Vancouver Rhododendron Society ARS Bronze Medallists in the 1980s

The 1980s saw the VRS awarding Bronze Medals to eleven of our members. While none were given at the start of the decade, or the two-year hiatus of 1985-86, in 1988 and '89, there were three given each year. The writer has always considered his Bronze Medal, awarded in 1981, very special; in particular, the unique citation signed by then VRS president Harold Johnson. It was completely hand drawn and lettered in old English script—even the ARS logo was hand drawn and painted. It was done by one of my firm's ex-employees, Toshi Ito, who had left to set up his own

landscape architectural practice in Steveston, where he is still in practice. The framed, hand-lettered and -coloured citation now hangs beside my computer, which can turn out citations in any style—but not like mine.

Ed and Francisca Darts received their Bronze Medal in 1982. It was the first of the joint awards. Ed had long kept the VRS books in order and Francisca gave a 'show and tell' of a wide range of plants from their garden, Darts Hill, at every Thursday meeting for as long as I can remember. She still does S&T each meeting she attends and in all the years, not one repeat have I seen! Ed and Francisca served on the committees for at least two ARS Conventions held here in Vancouver.

Melba Johnson passed away quite recently. She and **Harold Johnson** received their joint Bronze Medal in 1983. Melba and Harold grew fine vegetables and rhododendrons at their home in Whalley. Melba was the rhodo authority; Harold just gave them away to friends. He would also always bring some large wood planter boxes, made by a friend of his, for sale at meetings. Harold and Melba had numerous friends and brought in many new members to our club during the 1970s and 80s. Harold served as club president and as a VRS Director. He went on to serve as District 1 Director and ARS President, and Austin Kennel had him on the long range planning committee for a time. Harold received the ARS Silver Medal in 1989.

Vern Finley was the 1984 VRS Bronze Medallist. This quiet lady of science and impeccable judgement for quality in rhodos was rewarded when her submission, to be named 'Burnaby Centennial' after five years under trials, got the top spot in 1992. For many years, Vern had chaired our annual Truss and Landscape plant shows and was heavily involved in two ARS Vancouver Conventions. She and her husband, Gordon 'Doc' Finley, are 'avid hybridizers', quoted in the *Pacific Coast Rhododendron Story*, and Vern

continues next page



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Bronze Medals, from previous page

has an encyclopedic knowledge of rhododendron parentage, acquired long before you could look it up in Salley and Greer.

In 1987, Tsawwassen resident and retired United Church Minister **Horace West** was awarded a VRS Bronze Medal. It was mainly for his long and dedicated work in revising the constitution and bylaws of the society. It was primarily Horace who brought about the Canadianization of our Society with a name change, and a new constitution and bylaws that met the requirements and conditions of the BC Societies Act. We had been chartered as the Vancouver, BC Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, with an ARS constitution and bylaws adapted to the old BC Societies Act, which in the early days had very few requirements. The VRS Board, led by Horace as President, gave us a new constitution and bylaws and a new entity. We became the Vancouver Rhododendron Society, a registered BC Provincial Society, which then rejoined the ARS District 1 as a Chapter.

Leslie K.C. Clay, 'Les' of Langley, received his Bronze Medal in 1988. Les had been a member of the VRS long before the Fraser South Chapter was formed, and continues as a member of both chapters. As well as being our president, Les has consistently mounted plant sales at our meetings—particularly at our annual shows, where 40% of the sale of plants sold goes to the VRS. (One of Les' sales brought in \$3000 for the VRS.) Les went on to be President of the Fraser South Chapter and served as District 1 Director.

The two other 1988 Bronze Medallists were **Jean Rhodes** and **Frank Dorsey**. Jean served the VRS in many low profile but essential VRS positions: VRS Board Secretary, Membership Chair, and more. She now gardens and manages Dr Bob Rhodes on Gabriola Island.

Frank Dorsey's Bronze Medal was awarded as much for the knowledge of rhodo species and hybrids Frank imparts through all the donated raffle plants at each meeting (which help pay for the hall rental at VanDusen), as for his long service on VRS board and past Vancouver ARS conventions. VRS can't have Frank's services 100% of the time, though, as he is also an avid rock and alpine plantsman.

Three bronze medals were awarded in 1989, the first to **Alleyne Cook** of North Vancouver. Alleyne has always been the most knowledgeable and 'impartial' judge of the species and hybrids in the genus. His contribution in sharing this knowledge and practical professional plantsman's experience with members of the VRS has assured there is a new generation of rhodo enthusiasts to take over and continue VRS traditions. Alleyne received the ARS Gold Medal in 2000.

A Bronze Medal award to **Garth Wedemire**, VRS member and founding member of the Fraser Valley Chapter, acknowledges the help and service of this plantsman-nurseryman of Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows to the VRS board. Garth was our president, then went on to be president of the Fraser Valley Rhododendron Society. Garth is the link to one of our local nursery and rhododendron pioneers, Lloyd Smith. Some may claim otherwise, but it was Lloyd who first came up with the idea for the municipality of Burnaby to adopt the rhododendron as the District's flower. Lloyd had a nursery in Burnaby on Burriss Street and wanted to sell fine plants, including rhodos. The link: Garth married nurseryman Lloyd Smith's daughter.

The team of **Alice and Robert Mann** most deservedly received the society's Bronze Medal in 1989. Alice had served as VRS board secretary and Robert had been VRS treasurer for more years than was decent. They were both the conveners and managers of the 1984 Western Regional Fall Conference at Whistler.

Thanks again to Martie Irwin. Should anyone have any anecdotes that add to the service record of our VRS Bronze Medallists, drop a note to Douglas and Karen for inclusion in *Indumentum*. To come: Bronze Medals to VRS members in the 1990s to date.

Clive Justice

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Carole Conlin, VRS Membership Chair, 604 921 7260
conlin@sfu.ca



Rhododendron primuliflorum
photo: Judy Newton, UBC Botanical Garden

News and Notes



Don't forget...

Next month's meeting is the annual VRS potluck picnic on the 22nd of June at Gordon and Vern Finley's. See the June *Indumentum* for details and directions. Contact Vern Finley (604 581 5100) to coordinate food.



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Book/Plant Review - images and text by Bill Spohn

Part 1 – the Book Review

Azaleas, by Frederick Street (Cassel & Co., Ltd., 1959), is available in the club library or on the Internet from used booksellers. This is a book review, but also a plant review—all in one.

Published in 1959, Street's *Azaleas* is written by an English plantsman who ran a nursery near Woking in Surrey, England. It is unusual in that it is not simply a pedantic litany of plant names and particulars, but rather a history of the discovery of azaleas and their importation and culture in Europe. From the new American discoveries in the late 18th Century to the Oriental influx that came later, and the culture and preservation of the plants in Ghent through the French Revolution, Street details developments in a human, rather than dryly botanical way.



The use of azaleas from the time of Capability Brown (18th Century) through the intermediate period (much of the 19th Century)—when these plants were primarily cultured on the Continent and kept as indoor or glasshouse specimens—to the early 20th Century, when they came out of the houses and into the gardens, bred by people such as Anthony Waterer and Lionel de Rothschild, is covered in an engaging fashion, with lots of human interest.



There are plenty of lists for the botanically minded and chapters on culture and care, but I was delighted at the way in which Street enlivens a dose of what can be overly dry detail with his flair for recounting the historical aspects of the subject. Highly recommended, this book passes the hardest test: give it to a spouse who quite unreasonably fails to be as fascinated as you are with the scientific details of rhododendrons, and she or he will find enough to allow for an entertaining read.



Here's an example, related by the wife of Lionel de Rothschild to the author:

"23rd May, 1924. Winston Churchill and his delightful wife came to visit us. The other guests were the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, Sir George and Lady Holford, Mr. Kingdon Ward, the explorer, and Mr. J. Bean, curator of Kew Botanical Gardens. [They went out for a tour in the gardens, which were then being restored and developed.] ...Lionel was indefatigable. One by one our guests returned exhausted, except, of course for the experts, Sir George, Mr. Bean and Kingdon Ward. On the Sunday morning Winston slipped away taking with him his painting materials. Alas, when he returned, he had put his fist through the canvas, so we never saw the results. That afternoon, he, Clemmie, his wife and Beatrice Granard retired to a little boudoir to play bezique solidly for several hours. No doubt they were suffering from 'rhododendron-itis'."



Part 2 – the Plant Review – Cinnabarinum Hybrids

Although hampered by the reputation for susceptibility to various mildews and fungal disorders, the Cinnabarinum subsection has several lovely species that have been hybridized into some worthy plants deserving of more attention.

If you are wondering what on Earth this has to do with Frederick Street and Lionel de Rothschild, you need to know that two of the most popular 'Cinn' hybrids were made by Rothschild

in 1930 and 1931. Both crossed 'Royal Flush', a J.C. Williams (another neighbour of Lionel's) hybrid of *R. cinnabarinum* x *R. madenii* with *R. cinnabarinum* 'Royleii'.



R. 'Cinnkeys'



R. 'Lady Chamberlain'



R. *spinuliferum*



R. 'Razorbill'

What Lionel did with 'Royleii', another English hybridizer, E.J.P. Magor of Cornwall, did with *R. keysii* x *R. cinnabarinum*, to give us the tight little 'Cinnkeys', which look like a bundle of firecrackers.

This is a form almost unique—one shared perhaps with only the *R. spinuliferum* hybrids, most of them little known, but nonetheless worth searching out.

VRS Open Gardens 2003

The following is a list of VRS. members that have generously opened their gardens to fellow members this spring. Included are a variety of gardens as different as the gardeners themselves. Gardens large and small in many varied settings offer visitors a chance to experience collections not only of rhododendrons, which may be of primary interest, but also of many other fine plants.

Directions and further information can found on page 3.

May 10 Saturday

Bill & Suzanne Spohn 11-4
2950 Palmerston Ave
West Vancouver

Lamont Residence 12-5
17918 68th Ave
Surrey (see directions)

May 11 Sunday (Mother's Day)

Michael & Pattie Bale 10-6
33623 Wildwood Drive
Abbotsford (see description)

Gordon & Vern Finley 10-4
10476 -125B Street
Surrey

May 15 Thursday

VanDusen Botanical Garden
Sino-Himalayan Garden tour 6:30 pm

May 17 Saturday

Francisca Darts 2-4
Darts Hill
1660-168th Street, White Rock (see description)

May 18 Sunday

Joanne & Joe Ronsley 11-4
250 Oceanview Road
Lions Bay

Richard & Heather Mossakowski 11-4
155 Highview Place
Lions Bay

Lies Ganske 10-2
360 Mountain Drive
Lions Bay

May 22 Thursday

Penny Pearse 6-9pm
6450 Elm Street
Vancouver

Judy Williams 6-9pm
6365 Elm Street
Vancouver

Rachel Mackenzie 6-9pm
6389 Elm Street
Vancouver

May 25 Sunday

Larry Wick
Palm Grove
Keats Island (see directions)

June 1 Sunday

Gerard Pury 11-4
86 West 40th Ave
Vancouver

June 7 Saturday

Alan Turner 12-3
1437 212th Street
South Langley (see description)