



ARS Whidbey Island Chapter NEWSLETTER

Website: www2.whidbey.net/dapont/ARS

Meets the 4th Wednesday of each Month
Fire District 5 Headquarters Station
215 East Race Road, Coupeville, WA
Refreshments: 7:00 Meeting: 7:20

February 2008

Next Meeting: Wed, February 27

Program: Patti Kretzmeier
Winter Color with Rhododendrons

Patti Kretzmeier, is the owner of *Gardens @ 4 Corners* in Pt. Townsend, a retail nursery on 5½ acres. The nursery also includes demonstration gardens set up for educational programs. Patti is a member of the American Rhododendron Society with 14 years experience in rhododendrons and their care. Patti is donating our raffle prize and will have plants for sale after her presentation.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Feb 20-24 ... Seattle Flower & Garden Show
Feb 23-24 Mt Baker Orchid Show/Sale
Mt Vernon, WA
Feb 27 Chapter Meeting
Winter Color with Rhodies/Patti Kretzmeier
March 15-16 Meerkerk Opening Sale
March 26 Chapter Meeting
Growing Rhodies on Whidbey/Bill Stipe
April 16-20 ARS Annual Convention
Tulsa, OK
April 22 Canadian Visitors/BBQ
@ Lounsbury Park, Oak Harbor
April 23 Canadian Visitors/Potluck
@ Barry & Kathy Rix, Coupeville
May 17-18 Oregon Overnight Bus Tour
May 28 Chapter Meeting
Bill Heller

Garden Tours and Friends

We have a wheelbarrow full of garden tours and visitors scheduled for this spring.

♦ **April 22-23, Canadians Visit:** Our Canadian friends from Vancouver Island will be coming for a couple of nights stay to visit with us and tour members' gardens in mid-April. They are thrilled that they will also be able to purchase plants to take back with them thanks to some diligent planning by **Bill Stipe**. If you would like to host any of our guests in your home and/or open your garden for them to visit, contact Bill Stipe 678-8740 or wstipe@whidbey.com. More details (BBQ and potluck!) in the March newsletter.



♦ **May 17-18, Overnight 'American/Asian' Bus Tour:** Join members of the Pilchuck and Komo Kulshan chapters for an overnight bus trip to the Portland, OR area. The Dover Nursery (Sandy, OR) and Lloyd Baron Rhodo Garden (Hillsboro, OR) are on the agenda for the 17th and on the 18th visit the Classical Chinese Garden and Japanese Garden in Portland. The bus will pick up passengers, 7am, at the Casino (above Marysville) parking lot where you can leave your car overnight. Cost is about \$98 per person or \$136 per couple. This cost includes your hotel but not your meals. Bring a lunch for the trip down. More details at this month's meeting and in the April newsletter or contact Don Allen, 678-4329, to reserve your spot as space is limited.



Emails from Horse Tales

I hope you all enjoyed Patti Jones' presentation last month as much as I did. I envy Marilyn Wright for holding the winning ticket for the beautiful planted planter raffle prize Patti donated.

If you want to receive an email of the latest classes, sales and new arrivals at Horse Tails Nursery email your address to Patti at horsetales@cablespeed.com. There will also be a signup sheet available at the meeting.

The RSF and You

Our chapter will again be renewing its membership to the Rhododendron Species Foundation (RSF) located in Federal Way, WA. The Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden showcases more than 10,000 rhododendrons with a compliment of companion plants in a 22 acre woodland setting. As a member admission to the gardens is free just tell them you are a Whidbey ARS member at the gate. We are also invited to participate in their Spring and Fall mail order plant sales.



Cookie reminder:
Nancy Lyon & Kristy Knickrehm



From The Prez

Bill Stipe

It is time to think about fertilizing your rhododendrons. The chapter has purchased a ton of rhodie fertilizer formulated for Whidbey gardens. This is a slow release fertilizer that contains all the elements shown to be deficient in our soils.

Slow-release fertilizers release nutrients (make them available to the plant) over an extended period of time. This fertilizer releases over a 3 month period based on microbial activity. This provides the nutrients to the plants when they can best utilize it.

The amount of fertilizer applied should allow optimum growth without undue risk of polluting the natural run-off. It is important not to apply more than a generous handful for each foot of height. If the rhodie shows good color and good growth last year, reduce the amount by half. Species rhododendrons require much less if any fertilizer. It is important to observe your rhododendrons during the growing season. If their color is not a dark green, another application may be made after they have flowered, but not later than July.

Cottonseed meal, blood meal, bone meal, hoof and horn meal, fish emulsion and all manures are examples of organic fertilizers. Organic fertilizers contain relatively low concentrations of actual nutrients, but they perform other important functions which the synthetic formulations do not. These functions include: increasing organic content of the soil, improving physical structure of the soil, and increasing bacterial and fungal activity.

The regular addition of manures, compost, cover crops, and other organic matter can raise the soil nutrient and structure level to a point at which the addition of synthetic fertilizers is greatly reduced, and in some cases, no longer needed. This highly desirable soil quality does not come about with a single or even several additions of organic material, but rather requires a serious, long-term program.

The price of our special rhododendron fertilizer is \$20 for a 25 pound bag. Be prepared it get it at the February meeting as it may not be available after that.

Whidbey Gardening Workshop



The Whidbey Gardening Workshop is presented annually for the benefit of the gardening public and is sponsored by the Island County Master Gardeners. This year's workshop

features more than 30 gardening classes, local vendor booths and WSU publications. Fee is \$25, registration begins February 15th. For more information visit: www.island.wsu.edu or call 360-240-5527

Keynote speaker, Cass Turnbull, Plant Amnesty Founder, will share 'How to Prune and Renovate the Overgrown Garden'. Born and educated in the Seattle area, Cass Turnbull, is frequently published and interviewed on the subject of pruning reform, and has won three awards for her work in teaching and lecturing, instructive pamphlets, a newsletter, information booths, a how-to book and several videos.

Meerkerk News

♦ March 5, 12, and 19 Conifers in the Garden:

Learn to identify coniferous trees and shrubs at the Gardens under the instruction of arborist Bess Bronstein. This class includes discussion of the primary coniferous genera used in Pacific Northwest gardens, as well as plant culture and uses in various garden settings. This is an excellent opportunity for you know how to recognize, incorporate and care for conifers in the garden.

March 19th is a *bonus class* with Eric Studebaker, who has been in the nursery business for 24 years, and speaks regularly for Master Gardeners and Garden Clubs all over the island. Catch his passion for dwarf conifers and discover how to incorporate the unbeatable form and texture of these underused plants in your landscape.

For more info contact Deborah Smith 360-222-3382 or email deborah@meerkerk.org.

♦ **March 15-16, Spring Opening Sale:** Help with plant pricing and labeling, setting up the nursery and signage. For the Sale weekend, we need your expertise in enchanting people with rhodies and educated them how to grow them here on Whidbey Island.

Beautify the World... Volunteer!

♦ **Work Parties:** Join us for monthly work parties the 2nd Saturday of each month, 8:45-12:00. We share a potluck lunch at noon.

♦ **Wednesday Construction Team:** Join our crew in building and repairing structures in the Gardens, 9-noon.

♦ **Thursday Mornings: Hands-on-Horticulture** Enjoy working with gardening volunteers and the Meerkerk staff on horticultural projects in the Gardens.

♦ **Independent Opportunities:** Work on your own schedule on a solo or team project in the Gardens or your home office. Please contact Kristi: meerkerk@whidbey.net.

Meerkerk Gardens 2008 Events

March 5, 12, 19	Conifers in the Gardens Class	
March 15, 16	Spring Opening Sale	9-4
April-May	PEAK BLOOM!	Wed-Sun 9-4
April 12	April Showers-May Flowers Sale	9-4
April 19	Magic Festival of Flowers	Noon-4
May 11	Mother's Day Harp Concert	Noon-4
August 2	Meerkerk Medley	5-9
Oct 4, 5	Autumn Rhododendron Sale	9-4

What to Do for Winter-Injured Plants

Shaina Gates

With all of the harsh weather we've been having, you may be concerned about the health of injured plants. Here are a few tips from the *Green Garden Program*.

1. Don't do anything until late spring when new growth begins on the live wood and does not begin on the dead wood. Then prune to remove dead wood. Before doing anything, check to be sure the crown is alive.

2. Prune properly. Do not leave stubs. Prune back to live, green, healthy wood. Prune to a bud, stem or trunk. Give a suffering plant a chance to become healthy again.

Prune out only dead and severely damaged wood. Do not prune live wood. The larger the leaf surface area of the plant, the better it can manufacture food and grow new tissues.

3. Water properly. Make sure the plant is not further damaged by drought. Pay special attention to evergreens and plants situated under eaves. Water properly throughout the spring, summer and fall.

Do not overwater. (See EB1090, *Watering Home Gardens and Landscape Plants*, available at your WSU county extension office.)

4. Fertilize properly. Fertilization is recommended if the soil lacks adequate amounts of basic plant nutrients.

5. Mulch with a loose organic mulch to maintain soil moisture and protect from temperature extremes.

6. On damaged fruit trees, remove as much of the developing fruit as possible to allow it to overcome the winter injury rather than produce fruit.

7. The best thing you can do for your injured tree or shrub is to avoid further stress during the coming season by giving it special attention and care.

The *Green Gardening Program* is sponsored by Seattle Public Utilities promoting alternatives to lawn and garden chemicals and funded by the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County. Visit them online:

http://www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Yard/For_Landscape_Professionals/Integrated_Pest_Management/

What is an Heirloom Plant Wikipedia

An **heirloom plant**, **heirloom variety**, or (especially in the UK) **heirloom vegetable** is an open-pollinated cultivar that was commonly grown during earlier periods in human history, but which is not used in modern large-scale agriculture. Since most popular heirloom plants are vegetables, the term **heirloom vegetable** is often used instead. The trend of growing heirloom plants in gardens has been growing in popularity in the United States and Europe over the last decade.

There is no consensus as to how old a plant variety should be before it can be considered an heirloom. Many gardeners consider 1951 to be the latest year a plant

can have originated and still be called an heirloom, since that year marked the widespread introduction of the first hybrid varieties. Some heirloom plants are much older, some being apparently pre-historic. Usually, a plant is not called an heirloom if it is grown widely and commercially, regardless of how old it is.

To be an heirloom, a plant must be "open-pollinated", meaning it will grow "true to type" and produce plants like the parents from seed. This excludes nearly every hybrid. Open pollination allows the same cultivar to be grown simply from seed for many generations.

Typically, heirlooms have adapted over time to whatever climate and soil they have grown in. Thanks to their genetics, they are often resistant to local pests, diseases, and extremes of weather.

Heirloom roses are sometimes collected (nondestructively as small leaf cuttings) from cemeteries, where they were once planted at gravesites by mourners and left undisturbed in the decades since.

Feed Us, We're Starving

Bill's message this month stresses feeding your rhododendrons. He's put together a slow release fertilizer that specifically meets the needs of Whidbey Island soil and will have it available at our meeting as a fundraiser. I've used Bill's fertilizer and especially like the slow release feature because I'm not focused enough to feed rhodies more than once a year. With the slow release at least they're fed over an extended period.



In planning for my fertilizing task, I've been out in the garden taking a close look at which rhododendrons can use a boost. Some are just crying for nutrients, others are telling me... no thanks. The leaves of those that need help are an 'off' green, some tinged yellow along the edges as well. These will get Bill's recommended dose. A few plants will also need a bit of magnesium or iron to overcome their chlorotic state. But I won't forget the ones that need nothing at all. These have rich green leaves and healthy growth.

Dollar+ Table... *don't forget!*

I would suspect that many of you have been out in the garden planning for the garden year ahead and probably have been eyeing those plants that need to be divided or removed. Keep the dollar+ table in mind for these castoffs! What you're discarding may be just what another club member is looking for. All the proceeds from the dollar+ table go directly to our fun activities. And don't forget any spare seedlings you may end up with.

Please submit articles of interest for Feb Newsletter by **3/14/08**

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