

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

January 2007

Christmas Party Recap

Wow, what a great party! Thank you **Pat Sasson** for putting together yet another memorable Holiday event. Christopher's has moved to a great new location and the food was fantastic. The dining room is large, open and surrounded by windows. If you missed the party (shame on you) stop in at Christopher's for dinner some evening. It is well worth it.

Thanks also to **Bill Stipe** for his auctioneer expertise in keeping the gift exchange moving along and amusing us with his dancing hat and sly wit. And thanks all of **you** for bringing gifts of garden tools and art, chocolates, wines, ornaments, plants and more to join in the fun.



Next Meeting: Wed, January 24

Program: **Don & Jan Allen**

Spring Wildflowers in the Swiss Alps

Don and **Jan Allen** will take us along on the hiking trip to the Zermatt and Murren areas of Switzerland they made last July. Enjoy the beauty of the alpine spring when wildflowers grace the hillsides, valleys are a luscious green, and the Matterhorn towers in the distance.

Come join us for an armchair hiking trip that won't give you blisters!

Calendar of Upcoming Events

- Feb 14-18 ... Seattle Flower & Garden Show
- Feb 24-25 Mt Baker Orchid Show/Sale
Mt Vernon, WA
- Feb 28 Chapter Meeting
- March 11 Annual Chapter Plant Sale
- March 17-18 Meerkerk Opening Sale
- March 28 Chapter Meeting
- April 12-15 ARS Annual Convention
San Francisco, CA
- April 25 Meeting/Potluck/Show/Auction
- May 23 Chapter Meeting
- Oct 12-14 ARS Regional Conference
Cleveland, OH

Christmas Party: Multi-Tasking

As you know, our meeting in November was canceled due to stormy weather and power out. Not only was this the most important meeting of the year for pie-a-holics, it was also our annual meeting and election of officers. We took a few minutes at the holiday dinner to take care of these loose ends. Your new officers are:

President:	Bill Stipe
Vice-President:	Pat Sasson
Secretary Treasurer:	Marilynn Wright
Director 1:	Donna Lee Von Falkenberg
Director 2:	Paul Loudon
Director 3:	Stephen Schwarzmann
Newsletter Editor:	Gail DaPont

There were also some special awards and thank yous handed out to some of our hardworking members:

Ann Lee, our 'cookie' lady was given a gift certificate to the Blue Goose Restaurant in thanks for keeping us in cookies. She keeps track of and reminding whoever has signed up to bring them and sets up and tears down the snack and refreshment counter. *Thanks Ann!*

Jack and Norma Lounsberry were handed a check for repairs to the grand dining hall at Lounsberry Park in appreciation for all the great picnics we've enjoyed there. *Thanks Jack and Norma!*

Pat Sasson and **Gail DaPont** were awarded Bronze Medals for their dedication to the Chapter and its activities. **Pat**, as VP for the last five years, always puts together a great slate of programs, hosts guest speakers and chairs the Meerkerk Medley fundraiser. **Gail** continues to produce an informative and entertaining newsletter after seven years. *Thanks Pat and Gail!*



January cookie reminder:
Mary Stipe & Marcia Nelson



From The Prez

Bill Stipe

Congratulations to our new Bronze Metal winners, Gail DaPont and Pat Sasson! They have willingly worked hard for our chapter and deserve our thanks.

Our gardens got a quadruple whammy from Mother Nature in December. First we got heavy rains then high winds that took the electrical lines down, then wet snow, then freezing weather when the electricity was off. I had 9 trees that came down, two large hemlocks that crunched some of my prize big leaf species rhododendrons. The freeze turned the leaves on several rhododendrons brown. Oh well, when you live in the woods you have to expect Mother Nature to object. Anyway, we must now clean up the damage and hope for the best.

If you also had some damage to your rhododendrons, remove the broken or damaged branches and prune off any broken stubs. Some may re-sprout from the trunks. Those with brown leaves may also re-sprout so just leave them until spring before you put them on the burn pile.

Looking forward to the New Year, the National ARS Convention will be held in San Francisco in April. Consider attending, you will see some great gardens in that area. Also, our chapter has been invited to visit the Vancouver Rhododendron chapters in April or May. They have even agreed to find homes to put us up while there. Think about it, you will more info later.

District 2 will be host for the 2009 Convention and still need volunteers to help plan and organize programs. **Pat Sasson** is our chapter's representative on the planning committee. If you are interested contact her: 331-5816 or patken@whidbey.com.

Chapter Plant Sale

Mark your calendars for March 10th for our Annual Plant Sale. We're working out the details so you will have a great assortment of plants at bargain prices. More info coming soon!

Chapter Garden Tour



We're putting together a Chapter Garden Tour for April 14, from 9:30-3:30. It will be for gardens located on South or Central Whidbey. All of you are invited to participate by opening your gardens or volunteering to help park cars or docent in someone else's garden. Don't think for a minute that your garden isn't ready for this kind of show and tell as no garden is truly complete, right? Just hang a *Work In Progress* sign out front and invite us in. **Stephen Schwarzmann** is coordinating this effort and will bring signup sheets to the next three meetings or contact him:

sschwarzmann@msn.com.

Meerkerk Notes

Kristi O'Donnell

Meerkerk Gardens' winter inspiration:

It is peaceful here in the Gardens today. Golden sun rays filter through the snow clad trees lighting russet bark, awakening chirping birds. They are happy to find the feeders filled and suet blocks hanging.

The Gardens are beautifully dressed in garments of glistening snow and jewels of icy fractals.



We had a small but active work party on January 13th, cutting trees, dragging limbs, stoking the burn pile, sowing rhodie seeds...and germinating friendship and ideas. More than normal wind and snow damage to trees are creating additional volunteer opportunities for you to come and assist us. Our next work party is scheduled for **Saturday, February 10 from 8:45-noon** with a pot luck lunch following. Some folks stay into the afternoon to continue assisting with garden projects. A dozen trees falling in the Big Leaf Valley are being addressed- and we need more help here, propping up plants, clearing limbs, re-installing uprooted irrigation lines. We will also apply rhodie food, rake paths, work on signs.

Volunteers also come to help out **every Thursday morning from 9am to noon**.

If you are unable to help our physically, we ask you to send a contribution to help us pay for the additional contract tree work we must hire this winter. The heavy rains dictate that we add more gravel to paths this spring as well. Your gift is greatly appreciated and is tax deductible.

While wintry weather has prolonged the length of some projects, real progress is being achieved.

This week the electricians installed the wiring for the propagation greenhouse. It is currently filled with new hybrid rhododendron seedlings made by Oriana and pots of spring bulbs awaiting the new entry landscape.

Lumber was delivered to augment the wood we milled for the Hybridizer's Garden new Gazebo, which will be completed this winter and landscaped for spring. This new garden area, being created to honor the hybridizing successes of **Elsie Watson, Frank Fujioka** and **Jim Barlup**, is made possible by the lead generosity of the Family and Friends of Elsie, Frank and Jim along with a grant from the Whidbey Island Garden Tour. Donations toward this Garden are welcome and are being used to maintain the Garden and further the hybridizing efforts of the Gardens as envisioned by founder Ann Meerkerk. This Hybridizer's Garden, along with the collection of hybrids throughout the ten acre garden collection, represents a phenomenal library of genetic material for new rhodies!

The New Gatehouse at the Entry to the Gardens is taking shape in a magnificent manner. Thanks to our major gift donor, Nancy Nordhoff, our visitors will be greeted by warm volunteers housed in an old-world style garden house. Meerkerk's pepper-pot style building is being hand crafted by fine builders in our area, including bluestone walls, a slate roof and a copper finial which incorporates the shape of rhododendron leaves in the tiling. Patterns from the Meerkerk's home are being designed in the detail work of the structure. We would love you to volunteer as a greeter this spring, welcoming people from around the globe to the Gardens and to the world of rhododendrons!

If you appreciate the efforts of our dedicated volunteers and the opportunities for horticulture and serenity the Gardens offer, we invite you to become a Friend of Meerkerk. Visit our website to become a Friend and also to learn about the NEW business partnership program we offer to your company.

Kristi O'Donnell, Executive Director
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'Whidbey Island's peaceful woodland garden'
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How to Prevent and Treat Powdery Mildew

Ron Knight, Vancouver Chapter

Powdery mildew is very common in the Pacific Northwest and is caused by members of the fungus genus *Microsphaera*. The disease can affect both hybrid and species rhododendrons. Surprisingly, the symptoms are different for rhodys than for many plants. Specifically, it is rare to see deformed rhododendron leaves with a gray powder on them. Some notable exceptions include many azaleas as well as 'Purple Splendor' and 'Vulcans Flame'.

Powdery mildew symptoms in rhododendrons appear first on the leaves, with light green or yellow blotches on the upper surfaces and brown to purple spots or feathery areas on the lower surfaces. In severe cases, partial or complete defoliation and stem dieback can occur between late summer and early spring.

The *Microsphaera* fungi seem to be able to infect most rhododendrons, but some are more susceptible to powdery mildew than others. Some highly susceptible examples include *R. cinnabarinum*, *R. campylocarpum*, 'Elizabeth', 'Virginia Richards', 'Unique', the 'Loderi' grex and many deciduous azaleas. Less susceptible plants are *R. dengronianum* ssp. *yakushimanum* and its hybrids, rhododendrons with indumentum, and our local native species *R. macrophyllum* and *R. albiflorum*.

Powdery mildew flourishes in locations with warm, sunny days and cool, humid nights. Especially favorable conditions occur in areas where plants are crowded and there is poor air circulation. Under such conditions, fungus spores can be produced within sixty hours of an initial infection and are then ready to be spread around the garden by means of wind or rain. *Microsphaera* spores prefer to germinate on dry leaf surfaces where they quickly infect the plant by sending specialized cells called haustoria into the leaf tissue to absorb nutrients. Young, soft rhododendron leaves are most easily attacked by powdery mildew although symptoms may not be evident until the leaves mature. Spores can overwinter on lower leaf surfaces or in buds and will attack new leaves that develop the following spring.

Prevention and treatment of powdery mildew can involve both cultural controls and chemical sprays.

Chemical Controls:

Fungicides will not remove the damage to infected leaves. However, if there are symptoms on last year's leaves, you might consider spraying the new spring growth to protect against further infection. Triflorine (Funginex) and sulphur sprays such as Safer's Garden Fungicide are registered for use by homeowners. Newer, potassium bicarbonate (baking soda) based sprays show some promise. In all cases, full leaf coverage with the spray is essential. Follow label instructions closely and wear protective goggles and clothing.

Cultural Controls:

Maintain healthy plants by providing good soil drainage and adequate water and nutrients. Stressed

rhododendrons are more susceptible to disease. However, avoid over fertilizing, especially late in the season, as this practice encourages soft new growth that is a prime target for *Microsphaera* spores.

Inspect your rhododendrons regularly to identify infected plants and problematic areas of the garden.

Move infected plants to areas that have less favorable conditions for the disease. Be particularly careful to have plenty of space for *R. cinnabarinum*, *R. thomsonii* and their hybrids. Try to plant them in areas with a fair amount of sunshine and good air circulation.

Prune to increase air circulation. At UBC Botanical Garden, they do nothing to rhododendrons to control powdery mildew other than occasional thinning of both the surrounding material and the rhododendrons themselves.

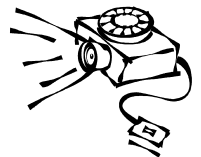
Remove old, heavily infected leaves from rhododendrons in fall or winter. Rake up diseased leaves that have fallen under the plant and burn them or dispose of them in the garbage.

If all else fails, discard heavily infected plants and replace them with rhodys that are more resistant to powdery mildew.

Visit Ron on the web: <http://www3.telus.net/rcknight/>

Wanted

Kodak slide carousels: **Don Allen** is looking for slide carousels to finish organizing his slide collection. Contact him at 360-678-4329. *Thanks!*



Busted Myths

Myth: Gardening practices haven't changed for centuries, so why not do like Grandma did?

Fact: Ongoing research clarifies plants' needs and teaches new techniques. Get acquainted with local growing conditions and use the Washington State University Cooperative Extension Web site: gardening.wsu.edu

Myth: We have constant rain in the Pacific Northwest.

Fact: Summer rainfall, from May through September, is scarce. Normal average rainfall for July in Tucson, Ariz., exceeds that in Seattle. Design landscapes with summer-adapted plants.

(Written by Mary Robson and Holly Kennel, Washington State University Cooperative Extension/King, Snohomish and Pierce counties. Seattle Times)

Please submit articles of interest for Feb Newsletter by **2/9/07**

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