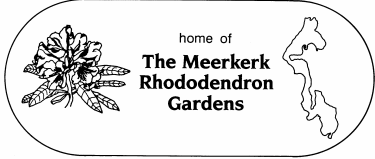


WHIDBEY ISLAND CHAPTER



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 2008

Next Meeting: Wed, January 23

Program: Patti Jones

Plants for Winter Interest/Color

Patti Jones of Horse Tales Nursery (*Oak Harbor*) will bring an assortment of plants to put together a planter that will be attractive through the winter months. She will also address the use of containers and dos and don'ts for the components used in them. Patti will provide a plant suggestion list and have plants for you to purchase before the meeting. All you have to bring is your imagination!

More about Patti and Horse Tales at right...

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 Island/Bill Stipe
- April 16-20 ARS Annual Convention
Tulsa, OK
- April 23 Meeting/Potluck
@ Greenbank Progressive Hall
- May 28 Chapter Meeting
Bill Heller

★ Plant Sale 7:00... don't be late! ★

Our speaker, **Patti Jones**, will be bringing an assortment of plants from **Horse Tales Nursery**, for an impromptu tabletop plant sale before our meeting. Get a jump start on spring; bring your wallets and a truck to haul off your bargains...

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

About Horse Tales Nursery

Patti Jones' gardening life started simply enough with a basket of petunias. She couldn't stand to touch the sticky faded blooms and often neglected to water it but it survived and sparked in her a desire to garden. Her first greenhouse fed an addiction to fuchsias. She took on a part time job in a nursery where she learned first hand about greenhouse growing, its pitfalls and benefits. All of this knowledge was put on hold when she moved to Whidbey Island 1993 to raise a family. It would be several years before the seed of Horse Tales Nursery, begun on a table fashioned from two saw horses and an old construction door, could flourish into truck loads of bare root trees, shrubs, native plants and more.

Horse Tales Nursery now stocks perennials, groundcovers, grasses, fruit and ornamental trees (including Japanese Maples), berries and an inventory of ceramic pots and garden objects. Compost tea and classes are in the 2008 offerings along with a recycling program for some nursery pots. Landscape design and installation in conjunction with All Seasons Landscaping owned by Bret Fritch is also available.

Customer service is Horse Tales Nursery *number one priority*. Visit them soon or contact them for current class, sale and new arrival info:

Patti Jones ~ Horse Tales Nursery
1258 West Beach Road
Oak Harbor, WA 98277
360-678-1925 horsetales@cablespeed.com

A Member's Passing

I am saddened to relay to all of you that member **Sam Jobses** passed away suddenly last week. The family will be arranging a celebration of his life but the details have not been worked out. Please keep Nancy and her family in your thoughts through this difficult time.



Cookie reminder:

Felicia Marshall & Marilyn Wright





From The Prez

Bill Stipe

I hate January! Especially this January. Rain, rain, and more rain. I can't dig, plant, or do any work in the garden. I sink up to my ankles in mud. I should have booked a trip to New Zealand where the rhodies are blooming and the weather is warm. But.... Spring is just around the corner. HOORAY! The days are getting longer, and my mail is full of gardening catalogs. It is time to plant the seeds of the rhododendron crosses I made last spring. I'll sprinkle them on a bed of damp, milled sphagnum moss and cover them with saran wrap to keep in the moisture. Then put them in a warm location under fluorescent lamps for 16 hours a day. It will take 2 to 3 weeks for the seeds to germinate and about a year before I transplant them to larger containers. The thought of my new hybrids should help overcome the January doldrums. It is also time to think about fertilizing the rhododendrons. I will use a temperature release rhododendron fertilizer so the nitrogen will be available to encourage root growth when the temperature starts to rise.

I have prepared the soil for a new rock garden and am anxious to start planting dwarf rhodies and other alpine plants there. I have finally discovered there are lots of interesting plants, other than rhodies, that can enhance a rock garden. If you are also interested in rock gardens, I will bring some of the plants for the "dollar table" that I have started from seed or cuttings. I encourage you to also share some of your plants for the dollar table. See you at the January Meeting... I'll try to be in a better mood by then.

Some Seedy Facts

When perusing seed and plant catalogs you have probably come across varieties labeled as "F1" or "OP" and wondered what that means.

F1 hybrids are created by taking the pollen from the male parts of one pure, inbred plant and transferring it to the female parts of a different pure, inbred plant. The goal is to produce a new variety that is superior to either parent: larger, higher-yielding, more disease-resistant, more vigorous, among other criteria. The new variety or offspring is called an F1 hybrid. Seed from F1 hybrid plants will not likely breed true for future plants.

On the other hand, varieties labeled "OP" (open-pollinated) will grow true to variety name from seeds produced from the plant that you grow yourself. These may be saved and will produce the same plant in future sowings as long as proper seed-saving procedures are followed. Visit www.seedsave.org for detailed seed-saving instructions.



"Though I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been, I have great faith in seed. Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders." *Henry David Thoreau*

Meerkerk Magic

Kristi O'Donnell

*Glistening frostlight
reflects the moonbeams*

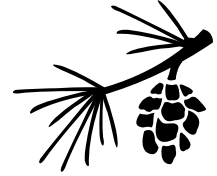
*Twinkling stars are
beacons of love*

*Spires of conifers
sway with the cool breeze*

*Sprinkling snowflakes
from boughs up above.*

*May the light of the season
Brighten your path*

*And make evergreen
Our hopes for joy and peace.*



Best New Year wishes from the flowers, fauna, folks and fairies at Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens!

What's Up at Meerkerk...

- ♦ **Jan 30, Winter Garden Tour at the Washington Park Arboretum.** Botany Adventure guides (former, current and prospective!) are invited to a special tour of the Joseph A. Witt Winter Garden on Wednesday, January 30th at 10:30. Enjoy the intoxicating scent of the witch hazels and get inspired for spring and the upcoming field trip season. Cost is \$10.00. For more info contact Deborah 360-222-3382 or email Deborah@prosceniumgardendesign.com to reserve your spot. Space is limited.

- ♦ **Feb 9 Work Party** will be planting rhodies in the new test garden bed. Other projects as well, including chain sawing, mulching and sowing seeds. Join us from 8:45-12:00 then share a potluck lunch.

- ♦ **Feb 16 "Dreams of Spring"**... a horticultural gala, elegant dinner and auction raising funds vital for the care of the Gardens, 5:30-9:00pm at the Freeland Hall.

To receive an invitation to this premier horticultural gala or to contribute to the silent and live auctions, (a garden related item, tour of your garden, summer vacation condo or your extra vehicle for the auction...) please contact: Penny Harger, co-chair: pennywinks@earthlink.net, 360-320-2265 or Kristi O'Donnell, executive director meerkerk@whidbey.net, 360-678-1912

- ♦ **Mar 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. For more info contact Deborah 360-222-3382 or email Deborah@prosceniumgardendesign.com.

The Indestructibles

Valerie Easton

It feels as if we've been catapulted into the depths of winter, even though it's early in the season. That's probably because nasty November-like weather dragged its sorry self into town prematurely this year. Like in August. Whatever the reason, I'm not much up for winter gardening once the bulbs are tucked in and the mulch is down.

And yet . . .

Flora is never dearer than in winter when there's so little of it. The thought of looking out the windows at a denuded garden for the next three months is a dreary one. It's a little worrisome that the forecast is for a La Niña season, complicated by the vagaries of global warming. The Old Farmer's Almanac piles on with a prediction of multiple cold snaps and an exceptionally snowy January. No matter. You can greatly improve the view out your window by relying on these indestructible winter plants.

Have you heard of that cost-per-wearing formula used to excuse high clothing prices? Because these indestructible plants clothe your garden in foliage and form all year 'round, they rate the highest return per dollar and time spent. Think of these robust plants as nature's answer to tropical-weight wool.

But here's the trick: Plant 'em where you can see 'em, every day. It won't do you a bit of good to have hellebores blooming way across the lawn. And how often will you cut flowers or foliage to bring indoors if you have to pull on knee-high muck boots before venturing out? Too often evergreens are pushed out as perimeter plantings, or worse yet, used as foundation plantings along the side of the house so they virtually disappear during the months you're not outside. These indestructibles beg to be planted along walkways, near doorsteps, outside windows and in pots you pass by often. Every one of these plants will live happily in a pot, for a few years at least.

Every gardener-of-duration (doesn't that sound better than "old gardener"?) has a list of steadfast plants they depend on to get them through the darkest days of the year. If any living thing can be described as indestructible, these few plants are the ones that have carried my gardens through the worst winter can bring. I would never be so foolish, just at the turn of the solstice, to say, "Bring it on." But even when Old Man Winter delivers his worst, you can count on these plants to keep your garden going -- not just this winter but the next and the one after that.

My personal best

- *Winter daphne* (*D. odora* 'Marginata') has yellow-trimmed evergreen leaves and, in late winter, pink/purple blooms that smell sweet as jasmine. If you have room for only one more plant, make it this.
- *Mahonias* set the bar for indestructibles with their architectural profile and perfumed yellow winter

flowers; these toothed-foliage plants range in size from ground covers like the native creeping mahonia (*M. repens*) to dramatic treelike forms (*M. x media* 'Charity').

- *Epimedium* is the most durable of ground covers, even in dry shade, with pretty little spurred flowers in early spring, and heart-shaped leaves that turn coppery in winter. My current favorite is *E. x warleyense* for its orange flowers.

- *Dwarf conifers* add great texture and color to the landscape year-round. To grasp the range of possibilities, visit South Seattle Community College's Coenosium Rock Garden (6000 16th Ave. SW; 206-763-5396; www.southseattle.edu), where more than 300 kinds of diminutive conifers are on display, free and open to the public.

- *Heucheras* lend the surprise of soft, colorful leaves to the winter garden. Some kinds are more truly evergreen than others. Try 'Velvet Night,' 'Green Spice' and 'Chocolate Ruffles' for year-round good looks.

- *Sweet box* (*Sarcococca hookeriana* or *ruscifolia*) are smallish shrubs with shiny green leaves and intensely vanilla-scented little white flowers in midwinter.

- *Witch hazels* (*Hamamelis* species) are big, deciduous shrubs with spidery, highly fragrant flowers in deepest winter.

- *Hellebores* are evergreen perennials with handsome foliage and big, showy winter flowers in shades from white through purple.

Valerie Easton is a Seattle freelance writer and author of "A Pattern Garden." (Seattle News Times 12/23/07).

Your Board of Directors is Listening

Your Board of Directors is meeting and planning the rhody year ahead. If you have any educational or comaraderie ideas you'd like us to consider, please don't hesitate to speak to one (or all) of us:

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

Please submit articles of interest for Feb Newsletter by **2/15/08**

Gail DaPont, editor
PO Box 1399, Freeland, WA 98249
gail@whidbey.com
