

Whidbey Rhodies News

whidbeyrhodies.org

January 2010

Meets the 4th Wednesday of each month ❖ Race Road Firehouse, 1164 Race Rd, Coupeville WA
7pm Refreshments, 7:20 Meeting & Program

Next Meeting: January 27

Program: *The Zurich Garden*

A DVD presentation of private rhododendron gardens on the East Coast. A program dedicated to the late Dr. William Zurich, ARS Princeton Chapter.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Feb 3-7	NW Garden & Flower Show
Feb 6	Big Leaf Valley Work Party
Feb 24	Chapter Meeting Janet Hall: Composting for Acid Loving Plants
Feb 27-28	Mt Baker Orchid Show
March 20-21	Meerkerk Opening Sale
March 24	Chapter Meeting Rhododendrons 101
Apr 9-11	Ultimate Rhodie Conference Vancouver, BC
April 28	Chapter Meeting/Potluck @ Greenbank Progressive Hall
May 26	Chapter Meeting Shirley Rock: All About Hardy Fuchsias
August	Picnic
Sept 22	Chapter Meeting Judith Jones: Ferns as Companion Plants
Oct 27	Chapter Meeting Dennis Bottemiller: Big Leaf Propagation
Nov 17	Pie Social/Annual Meeting Election of Officers
Dec 5	Holiday Party

Holiday Party, a great success!

What more can be said about the Holiday Party last month. Chef Andreas outdid himself producing a wonderful buffet with everything cooked to perfection. The restaurant was open on a Sunday just for us. The great news is that Andreas will do this again for us this year.

Thanks **Pat Sasson** for coordinating this effort. Thanks also go to **Bill Stipe** for keeping the Chinese auction lively with encouraging banter and his dancing hat. Did anyone notice the reappearance of those flamingo lights? Will they be at the party this year? Will you be the lucky recipient? Mark your calendars now so you don't miss any of the fun!

Big Leaf Valley Work Party

The first Big Leaf Valley work party was held on Saturday Nov 21 with great success. Fourteen people (thank you!) joined forces with an arsenal of tools to whack, dig, pull and cut back brambles. The culvert was cleaned out and is flowing freely carrying runoff water to the upper pond. About a quarter of the Valley and its' collection have been spruced up and Don Kohlenberger estimates another 2 work parties would finish this phase. Then perhaps 1-2 work parties to put down some serious bark chips would complete the cleanup. From then on periodic maintenance work parties would keep the valley tidy.

The **next work party** is scheduled for **Saturday, Feb 6**. Meet at the cottage then head out to the Valley at 9. Bring a potluck dish to share at noon.

The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.



Cookie Reminder:
Marilynn Wright & Mary Stipe

From The Prez

Pat Sasson

Happy New Year!

Sometimes I think Whidbey Island is the only normal place on the planet. Friends this week came up from Florida where it was 24 degrees when they left. Friends in Boston had a large snow fall before Christmas and it has been so cold it hasn't melted – just more snow piled on top. These are only a few personal reports. I'm sure you have many stories, too. I try to be good and not tell them what a mild winter we have had, except for the week early in December. I try not to mention my Christmas Cheers that are blooming, the hellebores, or the primroses and the bulbs poking out. It is hard to be good but we don't want everyone moving here!

We had a very productive work party in November in the Big Leaf Valley followed by a delicious pot luck augmented by Kristi and Keith. It was amazing how much we accomplished. Thanks to **Don Kohlenberger, Don and Jan Allen, Stephanie Rodden, Frank Fujioka, Lisa Irwin, Jack Lounsberry, Mark Walljasper, Mel and Marilyn Wright, Stephen Schwarzmann, Kristi O'Donnell** and **Susie Reynolds**. I hope I didn't miss anyone! We eagerly await notice of the next work party date.

The Holiday Party at Christopher's was a huge success. Andreas outdid himself with a fabulous buffet! He has agreed to do it this way again this year so we are booked for the first Sunday in December, the 5th. Be sure to put it on your calendars as you don't want to miss it!

Another date to put on your calendar is Saturday, February 27 for Meerkerk's "Dreams of Spring..." Please consider joining me for this fundraiser. I would like to get a table of Rhodie people. Those of us who went last year had a wonderful time and got some nice items at the auction. Let me know if you are interested.

I am getting used to writing "2010". How could it possibly be ten years since we entered this decade, expecting computers, etc. to crash? I wish all of you a healthy and happy New Year – and may all your rhodies bloom and the pests keep away!

Pat



BLV Work Party, 11-21-09

Meerkerk Notes

Kristi O'Donnell

Greetings Whidbey Island ARS members from Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens. Our weekly preparations for spring time are in full gear now. We would love you to join others in our chapter who attend every week to groom the gardens readying them for the splendid season of spring.



Our Thursday crew meets in the Volunteer Cottage around 9am to enjoy a hot cup of coffee and then we head out to the Gardens.

This week, **Paul, Mark, David, Keith** and **Kristi** worked in the mature section of the Secret Garden along the main walking path. We pruned back dead wood, cut back scraggly rhodies, thinned out invading saplings and mowed down old fern fronds and perennials. After raking we stood back and breathed in the sunlight and fresh air, delighting in our team work. Everything looked perky- just like getting a haircut! We toured the gardens admiring the very early bloomers. Sunlight sparkled on the raindrops adorning the maples branches. Crystalline ornaments of divine creation. Lovely!

Growing a garden together is very rewarding. If you are unable to come on Thursdays for Hands-on-Horticulture, or to the Whidbey Chapter Big Leaf Valley Clean Up in February, perhaps you will join us for an evening of floral fun!

This year's Garden Gala fundraiser, Dreams of Spring, is being held February 27th at the Fireseed Hall in Langley. Our team is doing a fantastic job of locating unique plants and plant experiences to raise money vital to keeping the Gardens cared for.

We would love to see two full tables of 8 representing the Whidbey Island ARS!

Would you like to donate an item or experience to support the Gardens:

- ◆ Host a flower party for 4-10 in your lovely garden this spring. Show off your fantastic collection of rhododendrons and your savvy landscape design.

- ◆ Offer a Garden Tour to 4-10 people to see your new landscape feature: garden sculpture, new plantings, garden railway or new patio. Create a fun event by offering mimosas, tea and scones, or a barbeque in summertime.

- ◆ Donate a week in your condo in Hawaii or cabin in the mountains.

- ◆ Contribute a day sail on your boat with lunch or a tour of Whidbey in your classic automobile. Maybe you can offer a flight over the islands in your airplane!

The ideas are endless, the rewards are ever-blooming!

For more information, give me a call: 360-678-1912 or send and email to meerkerk@whidbey.net

Best wishes to you and yours for a new year bountiful with blossomings.

Kristi

➤ Big Leaf Valley work party Feb 6th ◀

On the Scent of the Katsura Tree

by Marcel Robischon

MY INTRODUCTION TO the katsura tree started with a tantalizing scent drifting in the air of a municipal park in late fall. The scent reminded me of freshly baked cake, gingerbread, and caramel. After some searching, I discovered that the source of the scent was a small, multi-stemmed tree with a pagodalike crown of elegantly bowing branches. The scent emanated from the tree's small, heart-shaped leaves. Recently fallen, they formed a golden carpet around the trunk. I readily identified it as a katsura tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, USDA Hardiness Zones 4–8, AHS Heat Zones 8–3).

ASIAN ROOTS

In contrast to the 40- to 60-foot tall specimens that typically grace American parks and gardens, this tree towers up to 100 feet in its native China and Japan. Curiously, the katsura tree is one of only two species in its genus, and the genus is the sole member of its own family, Cercidiphyllaceae. The genus name refers to the resemblance of the trees' foliage to that of redbuds (*Cercis* spp.)

Introduced to North America in 1865, the katsura tree is a wonderful specimen tree prized for its elegant, densely branched shape. It tends to develop multiple stems and is pyramidal in youth, sometimes spreading broadly at maturity. On older trees, the milky hot-chocolate-colored bark sometimes peels decoratively. The attractive foliage emerges rosy purple in spring, then turns dark emerald in summer and light gold to apricot in fall. Inconspicuous green flowers open in early spring before leaves bud out.

Selections of weeping forms have resulted in varieties such as 'Morioka Weeping', 'Amazing Grace', and 'Pendula'. A dwarf selection, 'Heronswood Globe', grows to 15 feet with a dense, rounded branching structure. Plant katsura in a site that has rich, moist, but free-draining soil that is neutral to slightly acidic. It grows best in full sun, but afternoon shade from an open canopy may be beneficial in the south. Water regularly during establishment and in periods of drought.

TRACKING THE SCENT

The unique autumn scent has given the katsura common names such as *arbre caramel*—"caramel tree" in French—and *kuchenbaum*—"cake tree" in German. The scent varies between different forms of the tree and has



been likened to cotton candy, caramel, brown sugar, cinnamon, and strawberries. Scientists have found that this fragrance is produced by a chemical compound called maltol, which *Fenaroli's Handbook of Flavor Ingredients* (CRC Press, 2004) describes as "a warm, sweet, fruity odor... [maltol] is also reported to have a characteristic caramel-butterscotch odor and suggestive of fruitystrawberry aroma in dilute solution." The identification of the chemical responsible for the scent raises additional questions. What is the biological function of the odor? What is the evolutionary force that drove the development of such a trait? Even if we never unravel these mysteries, we can be content to enjoy this delightful tree and its annual sweet-smelling gift.

Marcel Robischon is a biologist and forester. Until recently he worked for the USDA Forest Service in California.

SOURCES

Forestfarm, Williams, OR. (541) 846-7269.
www.forestfarm.com.

Wilkerson Mill, Palmetto, GA. (770) 463-2400.
www.hydrangea.com.

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In Bloom

Gail DaPont

The garden journal I have kept for several years is a compilation of many garden walks and recordings of what is in bloom. I am now able to skim through it to anticipate what will soon coloring my landscape. This is especially encouraging around this time of year when it has been raining for days and my hands are starting to fidget for the lack a trowel in them.

Today's walk through the garden revealed blooming Erica 'Kramer's Rote'; Hellebore *foetidus* and Cyclamen 'cilicium'. I thought it might be interesting to ask other members what is blooming in their gardens as well. They responded with : R. 'Christmas Cheer'; R. 'Tabitha'; R. *ririei*; R. 'Pink Prelude'; Galanthus (Snowdrops); Primulas; *Jasminum nudiflorum* (Winter jasmine).

If your garden is looking bleak consider adding a few of these early bloomers to your landscape.

Please submit articles of interest for Feb Newsletter by 2/13/10

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➤ Big Leaf Valley work party Feb 6th ◀