

WHIDBEY ISLAND CHAPTER



# ARS Whidbey Island Chapter NEWSLETTER

Website: [www2.whidbey.net/dapont/ARS](http://www2.whidbey.net/dapont/ARS)

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

March 2008

**Next Meeting: Wed, March 26**

**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

March 26	Chapter Meeting Winter Color with Rhodies/Patti Kretzmeier
April 16-20	ARS Annual Convention Tulsa, OK
April 22	Canadian Visitors/BBQ @ Lounsberry Park, Oak Harbor
April 23	Canadian Visitors/Potluck @ Barry & Kathy Rix, Coupeville
May 7-11	International Convention Edinburgh, Scotland
May 17-18	Oregon Overnight Bus Tour
May 28	Chapter Meeting Bill Heller
August	Chapter Picnic
Sept 24	Chapter Meeting
May 28	Western Regional Conference Hilo, HI

## It's Déjà Vu

Yes, the program description is the same as last month's. There was a bit of confusion for our speaker last month as to the day of our meeting so **Bill Stipe** stepped forward and gave his Rhododendron 101 presentation instead. He really put on an informative program; thanks Bill. We've rearranged the schedule and Patti of *Gardens at 4 Corners* will be giving her 'Winter Color with Rhododendrons' program this month. She is also providing our raffle prize and plants for sale.

Bill will also have his special fertilizer blend on hand for your rhododendron needs, 25 lbs for \$20. Sounds like it's going to be a very worthwhile meeting so don't be late!

## Share Those Trusses!

I'm sure some of your early blooming rhododendrons are starting to put on a show. I always take the time to appreciate the early bloomers as their splashes of color tell me spring is just around the corner. Later, when all the others rhodies are in bloom, it is hard to appreciate them individually. Take a walk out in your garden, pruners in hand, and snip a few trusses to bring along to the next meeting. It gives other members a chance to see what's in bloom, educate them about a variety, or convert them to a new 'must have'.

## Canadians' Visit

For those of you who like to plan ahead, here is a tentative schedule of our Canadian friends April visit. A complete itinerary will be published in next month's newsletter.

4/22	4pm	Potluck BBQ at Lounsberry Park Bring a dish; Chapter provides fish & burgers
4/23	9-12	Garden tours, ending at Meerkerk
	12-1	Lunch at Meerkerk
	2-5	Garden tours ending at Barry/Kathy Rix
	6pm	Potluck dinner at Rix Bring a dinner dish
4/24	9-12	Garden tours
	12	Plant sale with DOA inspector at Glynneden

If you would like to host any of our visitors or would host in a pinch (last minute additions) please contact **Bill Stipe** 678-8740 or [wstipe@whidbey.com](mailto:wstipe@whidbey.com).



**Cookie reminder:**  
Suzanne Ramsey &  
Margaret Hamm

Have a swell Easter



## From The Prez

Bill Stipe

Mary and I just returned from Vancouver Island where we were graciously hosted by North Island chapter, the Mt.



Arrowsmith Chapter and the Nanaimo Chapter of the ARS. I put on a similar presentation on Rhododendrons 101 that I gave for our chapter last month. I was impressed by how many visitors attended and are potentially new members. Our chapter needs to bring in visitors so we can increase our membership. Each of us is an ambassador for the club and has the potential to increase membership. Invite a friend or neighbor to attend a meeting for rhododendron or garden information and a cookie dessert. If you have any other ideas to increase membership, please let our membership chairman, **Pat Sasson**, know.

Our chapter board meeting will be held on March 20 at my house at 2:00 PM. All members are invited and encouraged to attend. This is where the detail chapter activities are planned and we could use your ideas. Mary always has some exotic treats and chocolates are always available.

There is still time to fertilize your rhododendrons, in fact all your garden plants. Our special blend of fertilizer is slow release by microbial action and contains 11% N, 9% P, 15% K, 14% sulfur, 3.25% magnesium, 0.25% boron, 0.20% manganese, 0.20% zinc. These are all the elements your rhododendrons need. The price is \$20/25# bag, that is \$5 less than retail.

Remember to share some plants for the dollar table.

## Q&A

Horticulture Magazine

**Reading the label of an insecticidal soap, I came across "potassium salts of fatty acids." Can you tell me what those are and how they kill insects? Can I use dishwashing liquid as a substitute for insecticidal soap? - G.C., Hollywood, CA**

**Answer:** Potassium salts of fatty acids are created by adding potassium hydroxide to fatty acids obtained from animal fat or plant oils. The resulting "soap salts" are most effective in controlling soft-bodied pests, such as aphids, scale and mealybug crawlers, thrips, whiteflies, and spider mites. Generally, they have little effect on beetles and other hardbodied insects (an exception being cockroaches). The soaps must come into direct contact with the pest to be effective. The soap penetrates the outer cuticle of the insect's body and dissolves or disrupts the cellular membranes, causing dehydration and death. Soaps can also block the spiracles, or breathing pores, in the insect's body, which interferes with respiration. In some cases soaps may also act as an insect growth regulator, affecting the metabolism of cells and metamorphosis.

Certain common dishwashing liquids and laundry detergents, mixed with water, have also shown insecticidal and miticidal properties. When applied to an assortment of vegetable crops, Palmolive, Dawn, Joy, Ivory, and Dove, for example, have effectively reduced populations of whitefly, aphids, and spider mites. However, dishwashing and laundry detergents are not labeled as insecticides. Although they may be insecticidal, they are chemically different from the registered insecticidal soaps. Furthermore, they may prove phytotoxic, causing injury by dissolving the waxy cuticle of the plant's leaf surface. It is better to save these soaps for the chores for which they were designed.

## Meerkerk Magic

*If thoughts were like flowers~  
How easy they bloom  
Into bouquets of prose and rhyme.*

*Should words be as petals~  
How softly they fall  
gently  
to earth passing time.*

*The language of nature  
Written in color  
Interprets the glory of spring.*

*A blossom,  
A quill,  
Transcribe the beauty!  
Celebrate the life that they bring.*



*Kristi O'Donnell*

## 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. Contact: Penny@meerkerkgardens.org

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## Meerkerk Gardens 2008 Events

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April-May	<b>PEAK BLOOM!</b>	Wed-Sun 9-4
April 12	<b>April Showers-May Flowers Sale</b>	9-4
April 19	<b>Magic Festival of Flowers</b>	Noon-4
May 11	<b>Mother's Day Harp Concert</b>	Noon-4
August 2	<b>Meerkerk Medley</b>	5-9
Sept 13	<b>Old Timey Bluegrass Pickers Festival</b>	All day long!
Oct 4, 5	<b>Autumn Rhododendron Sale</b>	9-4

☞ Nursery open March through May ☛

# Reinventing Rhododendrons

**"Their big blooms loom large in consumers' minds, but dwarf forms and interesting foliage are bringing rhodies into scale with modern landscapes"** Tracy Ilene Miller

In a recent article in Digger magazine, author Tracy Ilene Miller discusses the shift away from the large rhododendron of yesteryear to smaller varieties that "fulfilled gardeners' other needs and wants: for low-maintenance, hardy plants that maintain more than one-season interest." Though large rhododendrons still have their place as foundation, background or specimen plants the newer, smaller varieties are being added to mixed borders and the landscape to providing year-round interest. Here are a few growers favorites from the Digger magazine article that you may want to add to your shopping list.

Don't forget the dollar table!

## Picks from the Pros

*It isn't hard to get growers to talk about plants. The tough part is getting them to narrow down their list of favorites to just a handful. Here's what some of our sources had to say:*

### Mike and Maria Stewart, Dover Nursery, Sandy, OR

*Rhododendron* 'Nancy Evans' — This rhododendron fits into the category of extremely high-quality yellows, a color much sought after in the market. The blossoms bud in orange-yellow and open into yellow, waxy funnels with a bit of wave and peach and orange. But beyond the color are the other good qualities of this plant that is in high demand and often used to parent new hybrids. The compact grower fits smaller yards with its slow growth to approximately 3 feet tall by 4 feet wide. The leaves complete the attraction: they emerge green and bronze and are extremely glossy at maturity.

*R. campylogynum* Myrtilloides Group — This dwarf rhododendron is also in great demand for its small stature (to about 15 inches) and unique form. It grows in a natural bonsai shape and covers itself in early spring with small pink to lavender, thimble-shaped flowers perched on single stems. The small, glossy leaves contrast to the cinnamon-colored bark on a heavy stem, resembling an azalea.

*R. 'Rosevallon'* — The oblong leaf is one of the standout characters of this red-blooming rhododendron. Customers are attracted to the leaves with tops in a soft blue-green and undersides of deep burgundy that glow in the sun. The growth habit is variable from 18 inches to about 4 feet and sports a deep red flower bud that opens to a rounded, free-flowering red.

*R. austrinum* — There are 16 species of azaleas native to the United States, and this one is hardly known on the West Coast but should be. What's striking about this East Coast native are the blossoms, for both shape and scent. The flowers bloom in red tubes with orange mixed in and a yellow flower that is up to 2 inches long and a quarter-inch wide. The anthers and stamens extend like long, delicate eyelashes. And then there is the fragrance—like honeysuckle. With a hardiness down to -15 F, these plants are versatile and are planted in all situations.

*R. 'Pomegranate Splash'* — This newer hybrid from Frank Fujioka offers a distinct flower of red, pink and white. The striking multi-tone blossoms will attract customers, but the formal look of the plant makes it an attractive addition to the landscape as well. The leaves are uniformly distributed around the stem and hang downward, almost like an umbrella. They form on a compact plant that reaches only 5 feet in 10 years.

## Jerry Simnitt, Simnitt Nursery, Canby, OR

*R. 'Teddy Bear'* — The official term is *indumentum*, and it is the cinnamon-brown coating on the leaf bottom that gives the plant its furry name. The leaf characteristic is only one reason this Yak cross seems to sell itself. The glossy tops of the leaves contrast well with the light pink with a hint of purple, midseason blooms whose wavy edges fade to white. The hardy plant, to -10 F, keeps compact with a dense growth habit, reaching between 4 and 5 feet tall.

*R. 'Blue Peter'* — This is a tried-and-true class that hails from the early part of the 20th century. The flowers are old-fashioned lavender with a darker, almost blue blotch, and the large, dark green foliage is more open and grows wider than some of the newer compact plants. People like it for its show and for its tolerance of heat and sun.

*R. 'Scintillation'* — This midseason bloomer is in high demand and won a 2005 award from the American Rhododendron Society. It's hardy to -15 degrees F, and attractive for its dark green, glossy foliage that is somewhat rounded, with a waxy, slightly crinkled face. The plant and the flowers both grow slowly in mounds — about 5 feet in 10 years. The flowers are large and full with a light flare of bronzy, golden tones.

*Tracy Ilene Miller is a freelance garden writer, teaches journalism courses at the University of Oregon and Northwest Christian College. Reprinted in part with permission from Digger magazine, November 2007, Oregon Association of Nurseries, [www.oan.org](http://www.oan.org).*

## Other 'Must Haves'

You may also want to add these *Rhododendron of the Year* (Northwest Region) picks for 2008 to your wish list.

- Elepidote Rhododendron: 'Marie Starks'
- Lepidote Rhododendron: 'Vibrant Violet'
- Evergreen Azalea: 'Girard's Fuchsia'
- Deciduous Azalea: 'Cannon's Double'

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## Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden Spring Plant Sale

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Saturday, April 5, 10-3  
Sunday April 6, 10-2

Weyerhaeuser Corporate Headquarters  
33663 Weyerhaeuser Way South  
Federal Way, WA

A great selection of rare & unusual plants  
plus many all around favorites!

For more information visit: [rhodygarden.org](http://rhodygarden.org)

*(Editor's note: Whidbey Island ARS is a member of the Rhododendron Species Foundation)*

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Please submit articles of interest for Feb Newsletter by 4/13/08

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