

Whidbey Rhodies News

whidbeyrhodies.org

March 2010

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

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 24

Program: Expert Panel Rhododendrons How & Why

Frank Fujioka, Bill Stipe and Don Allen will make up our panel of experts to discuss how to grow rhododendrons on Whidbey Island. They will cover the basics: planting, pruning, pests, diseases, and watering smart. The panel will also cover using the right plant in the right place, overcoming landscaping challenges, things to consider in small vs. large gardens, hybrid vs. species plantings. *Please come with questions and rhododendron problems you need help with!*



Calendar of Upcoming Events

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 14-17.....	ARS Annual Convention Long Island, NY
May 26.....	Chapter Meeting Shirley Rock: All About Hardy Fuchsias
August.....	Annual 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

Big Leaf Valley Work Party

Gail DaPont

I was able to attend the March 13th work party and was quite impressed at how nice the Big Leaf Valley is looking. Other helping hands included **Don & Jan Allen, Marilyn & Mel Wright, Kristi O'Donnell, Frank Fujioka, Paul Loudon & Susie Reynolds**. We spent the morning cutting back ferns, pulling salmonberry and raking the Valley floor to a wonderfully manicured glow. Slug bait was then spread to keep those pests at bay. Determining which ferns to remove, spreading a layer of mulch, repairs and renovations to the drip system and signage are tasks that still remain.

The next work party will be **Saturday, April 10th**. The work parties are very low key as you work at your own pace and capability. It would be great to see you! Bring a potluck dish to share at noon.



Looking up the BLV path



Cookie Reminder:
Stephanie Rodden & Bob Turner

From The Prez

Pat Sasson

Hola mes amigos!



I returned from a cruise to Mexico late last night and am rather brain dead. Arriving in Seattle I happened to read a newspaper front page that told me that daylight savings began last night and I would lose an hour. As I had to be at church by 7:30 to usher this morning this was not good news. Then I got Gail's message this morning that she wanted the President's column by yesterday and Don Lee's message that he wouldn't be able to be at the Big Leaf Valley Saturday and could I be sure to be there. Gail tells me I can just write about my trip as she pitched in at the Big Leaf Valley work party and will give us an update. She is a wonder!

So with my house seeming to rock as did the boat, I will tell you about my trip. I flew to San Diego with my friend Joann and it was actually raining and as colder there than when we left here. It was nice to see that San Diego is not always gorgeous. We cruised on the Holland American line down to the Mexican Riviera. I could not say enough about the ship. Our accommodations were actually larger than I had thought they would be, the food was fabulous and the service amazing. The weather was perfect, not too hot but sunny and bright. This was my first cruise, although I have done a lot of "cruising" on a sailboat with the family. I would highly recommend it!

My thought while gone was that I would miss spring here as all of the ornamental plums that are so spectacular here on Whidbey were in bloom, along with quite a few of the rhododendrons, camellias and daffodils. But it seems like spring stopped for us while we were gone and the weather turned back to being cold and sometimes quite miserable. Sorry, guys. I even heard of snow over in Lynwood.

But back to rhododendrons. I fertilized all mine before I went on vacation and remembered to put out the hummingbird feeders for the "scouts" that arrive when the red current blooms. And I am looking forward to seeing all of you at the March 24th meeting. Be sure to bring some friends to that meeting who might have questions about rhododendrons!

Hasta la vista!

Pat

Bus Tour!



The Pilchuck Chapter, ARS, is receiving signups for the bus tour on May 22nd. Pilchuck Chapter members have first priority for seats. The bus holds 40 passengers and 23 have signed up as of 3/4/10. The cost for non-chapter members is \$25, and covers any entrance fees to the gardens we will be visiting.

The tour will consist of visits to Point Defiance Park, The Anderson Garden, and Lake Tapps Rhododendron & Nursery. Please contact Barbara Blankenship to register by April 15th at 360-435-8264.

➤ Big Leaf Valley work party April 10 ◀

Meerkerk Specialty Nursery Spring Opening Sale

Saturday, March 20 & 21

9am-4pm

This annual fund-raising event showcases the *best selection of rhodies* including new hybrids from Frank Fujioka, exotic species and tried and true good bloomers!

The nursery season begins this weekend and lasts throughout spring.

Proceeds go directly to caring for this 53-acre outdoor classroom, living museum and woodland preserve.



Meerkerk Gardens is cared for by a dedicated group of volunteers. Friends from the American Rhododendron Society, local garden clubs, Island County Master Gardeners and our community assist throughout the year. There are many ways you can volunteer to help at the Gardens:

- *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 as needed in the Gardens, 9-noon. Add your name to the call list 678-1912.

- *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 Kristi: meerkerk@whidbey.net.

Meerkerk Gardens 2010 Events

March 20-21	Specialty Nursery Spring Opening
April 10	Early Bloomers Rhododendron Sale
April 17-18	Meerkerk Magic Festival of Flowers
May 9	Mother's Day Concert on the Lawn
May 15	Purple Passion Rhododendron Sale
August 28	Bluegrass Festival
October	Autumn Rhododendron Sale

Visit www.meerkerkgardens.org for event updates.

You're Invited

The Seattle Rhododendron Society would like to invite you to hear Ken Cox speak on Woodland Gardening. Ken is a renowned plant hunter, author, hybridizer and owner of Glendoick Rhododendron and Azalea Nursery in Perth, Scotland. He will speak at the Center for Urban Horticulture, 3501 NE 41th Street, Seattle, WA 98105 Wednesday April 7 at 7 PM.

Contact seattlerhodo@comcast.net or Jeff Bell 206-363-1417 with any questions. Please call ahead for a seating head count.

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden Spring Plant Sale

Saturday, March 27th, 10-3

Sunday March 28th, 10-2

**Weyerhaeuser Campus
West Entry Parking Lot
Federal Way, WA**

With a host of some of the finest horticulture vendors from around the Puget Sound area and a wide variety of plants to choose from, the 2010 RSBG Spring Plant Sale is the ideal gardening venue.

(253) 661-9377 / www.rhodygarden.org

Garden admission is free for the days of the sale!

In Bloom

Gail DaPont

Fountains of daffodils are nodding hello as I walk the garden paths, the payoff for all those bulbs purchase last fall. Pink and white Chionodoxa and Muscari *armeniicum* have escaped foraging deer and rabbits. Species tulips, planted in the fenced garden, are clusters of whites and reds on petite stems. Species tulips planted in the open garden have yet to bloom to prove/disprove the 'deer-proof' labeling.

In other areas of the garden I find Rhododendrons 'Night Editor' and 'Rosamundi' in bloom along with Dicentra spectabilis (bleeding heart) and Epimedium 'Enchanted Silver Pink'. On other parts of the Island R. calophytum, R. faucium, Camellia 'Brigadoon', forsythias, hellbores and hyacinths are strutting their stuff.

More on Elderberries

Last Month's article about Elderberries prompted a question about the toxicity of Red Elderberries. I did a bit of research and here is what I found.

Q: Are the elderberries mentioned in the Newsletter the same as the ones growing wild here on the island? I have understood, for many years, that the native variety is toxic, not edible for humans.

A: "Red elderberries, though small and seedy, were a highly important food for the peoples of the central and northern coast, although few people still eat them today. **They should always be cooked**, since the raw berries may cause nausea. They were sometimes boiled to make a sauce or cooked with the stems intact. The stems and seeds were discarded later. The berries make an excellent, tangy jelly, and some people make wine from them, but **they should always be cooked** for this purpose. Caches of red elderberries have been found in archaeological sites dating back hundreds of years. The stems, bark, leaves and roots, especially in fresh plants are toxic due to the presence of cyanide-producing glycosides." Ref: *Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast* by Pojar & MacKinnon.

Elderberry Anecdote

Bob Turner

In the UK where I lived we had a variety of elderberry that turned black when ripe, during the war when dried fruit was impossible to find in the grocer's, we used the elderberries, after drying them in our oven, in cakes etc. Our cookstove was a wood burning one and the elderberries would dry overnight after the fire had burned out. We also collected wild Rose Hips for a source of vitamin C.

Phobias - Did you know...

Anthophobia: Fear of flowers

Botanophobia: Fear of plants

Lachanophobia: Fear of vegetables

Rupophobia: Fear of dirt

Scoleciphobia: Fear of worms

Seplophobia: Fear of decaying matter



Please submit articles of interest for Feb Newsletter by 4/13/10

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➤ Big Leaf Valley work party April 10 ◀