



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

May 2006

Next Meeting: Wed, May 24

Program: Companion Trees Lucile Whitman

Anyone who was at the September Rhododendron Conference in Oregon and had the good fortune to attend Lucile Whitman's talk will know what a treat we have in store for us! Lucile owns Whitman Farms, a tree nursery in Salem, Oregon. She will enlighten us on the use of trees in our gardens, i.e. the smaller variety of those large trees we all love in large settings like parks. Lucile is extremely interesting and quite amusing, to say the least!

Calendar of Upcoming Events

June 10 Meerkerk Picnic
Aug 13 Annual Chapter Picnic
Lounsbury Park, Oak Harbor
Sept 22-24 ARS Regional Conference
Harrison Hot Springs, BC
Oct 25 Chapter Meeting
Bill Heller
Nov 15 Annual Chapter Meeting
Pie Social/Steve Hootman
Dec 9 Holiday Dinner/Gift Exchange
@ Christopher's in Coupeville

Anderson Garden Tour

We have all been invited to walk through **Dave and Karen Anderson's** garden on Thursday, May 25th. Those who are familiar with this garden know that it contains hundreds of rhododendrons and is well worth a stroll. Located at 3890 E French Road in Clinton, the garden is open all day but as a courtesy to Dave and Karen we're concentrating our visit between 10am – 2pm. **Donna Lee Von Falkenberg** is coordinating this rhododendron treat. Please contact her by the 23rd, 341-3240, if you are interested in attending (so she can give the Anderson's a head count) or have any additional questions.



In the Garden

May Rhododendron tips: (Bill Stipe)

If your rhododendron is getting too tall or just plane leggy, now is the time to prune it into shape. Look for the dormant buds (little bumps) on the stalk and cut just above. Don't remove more 1/3 of the foliage in any one season. I prune off any branches that are touching the ground, that is just a good place for the root weevil to climb up on the plant. Don't leave any stubs, cut close to the main stem. If your rhodies are being chewed by the root weevil, now is a good time to take action. I have found that the beneficial nematodes (*steinernema carporcapsae*) are a deterrent but will not eradicate them. A more effective treatment is applying the insecticide bifenthrin. It is sold under the trade names: Talstar, Bifenthrine, Brigade, Capture, and Zipak. Apply it as a drench to the root zone. It is not a contact spray, but will kill both the larvae and adult weevil in the soil. Watch the new leaves, when the weevil start to notch them is the time to apply bifenthrin.

Enjoy the flowers, but also observe the new growth. On many specie rhododendrons, the emerging leaves are just as attractive as the flowers.

General gardening tips:

(Mary Robson, author of "Month by Month Gardening in Oregon and Washington" (Cool Springs Press, 2006), and Sandy Dunham, Seattle Times desk editor)

- Fertilize continual-blooming roses like hybrid teas this month, again in June and once more in July.
- Check your irrigation systems, soaker hoses and drip systems to make sure they work efficiently.
- Plant summer-blooming dahlias, begonia and gladiola bulbs.



May cookie reminder:

Felicia Marshall and
Margaret Hamm

From the Prez

Bette Kohlenberger



Every year I am amazed how seemingly overnight the yard transforms itself from generally brown leafless plants to a lush green forest. Already we're right about in the middle of the rhododendron peak bloom season. I hope you are all able to get around and enjoy all of the beautiful flowers. Don and I just returned from a short two day trip to Whistler where the trees are just now beginning to awaken, the tulips and daffodils are now just opening and the skunk cabbage is getting ripe! There are bennies to living around Puget Sound closer to sea level.

The results from our plant sale are in. We netted \$1053.50 from the March sale at the Master Gardener Workshop and the sales at the March and April Chapter meetings. *Thank you all* who helped make this year's fund raising plant sale a success.

Due to personal reasons I have had to step down as your President. **John Marshall**, our immediate Past President, has graciously agreed to step in as Interim President until we hold elections in the fall. The Chapter Board of Directors has confirmed John's appointment. We will need to elect a new Chapter President at our annual meeting in November. I encourage you all to consider stepping up for this position.

Annual Picnic

Can you believe **Jack** and **Norma Lounsberry** have again said YES to hosting our Chapter's annual summer picnic at Lounsberry Park! They must really like our company... The date is set for **Sunday, August 13th**. As in the past, Jack will serve up the steaks and salmon at a dirt-cheap price and the rest of us will contribute our favorite salads and desserts. Flyers will be sent out with more details as the time nears but mark your calendars NOW!



Meerkerk Medley

Don't miss the 6th annual *Meerkerk Medley*, an evening of fun, friends and fantastic cuisine. Invited guests dine in private homes, then gather in the flower filled, candle-lit gardens to enjoy gourmet dessert, fine wines and live music. This fund-raiser for Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens, a charitable organization, is tax deductible. For information regarding hosting a dinner or attending, please contact **Pat Sasson**, 331-5816, patken@whidbey.com or Meerkerk Gardens, meerkerk@whidbey.net



Meerkerk Notes

Kristi O'Donnell

Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens
"The Late Show"
Mid May through June

While the Gardens peak rhodie bloom is tapering off, the Gardens now enter a period of perennial blossoming and late rhodie surprises!

New this year, thanks to a beautification grant from the Greenbank Garden Club, we have additional flowering collections to inspire you from late May through summer. When you visit now, you will see the Allium collection popping up their purple sphere-shaped heads. One we are looking forward to is called Allium 'Hair' and looks like it's from another planet. And, we have planted a gateway to the universe, with stands of giant violet orbs named Allium 'Mars'.

As we enter the summer months, remember that Meerkerk is not just for spring time anymore! The beautification grant funded the planting of over 660 Asiatic and Oriental lilies. Landscaped en masse, we painted the circular Hybrid Test Garden with flowers. We invite you to view our 'Floral Lava Flow' created with groupings of orange, yellow and red lilies underplanted with drifts of poppies and fissures of cobalt-blue cornflowers.

We invite you to '*Beautify the World*' with us and attend these Meerkerk Events:

Sat, May 20, 9-4: Purple Passion Rhodie Sale

Wear purple and receive a free purple companion plant. We'll have our purple rhodies on special sale! All proceeds benefit the ongoing care of the Gardens.

Sat, June 10, 11-4: Meerkerk Plant Auction and BBQ

Bring a dish to share and a plant to participate. We'll fire up the grills and kindle new friendships! Lunch begins at noon, so arrive a bit earlier. The plant auction is from 2-3pm.

The plant auction features brand new hybrid rhododendrons from Whidbey's own hybridizer, Frank Fujioka, along with choice plants from the Meerkerk Nursery. Many great companion plants show up from our members gardens, and from yours! Come join the FUN!



Special Volunteer Opportunities

Every Thursday in Spring: Join the Meerkerk Gardens' Grateful Deadheaders every Thursday morning in April & May, 9am to Noon and receive a hand made tie-dyed T-shirt! Bring your favorite pruners and gloves and team up with us for fun in the Gardens as we deadhead the rhododendrons and beautify the world.



Cultivating Calm

Valerie Easton

(Seattle Times)

To have a good day in the garden, don't try to do it all

One recent weekend I indulged in a lengthy fugue of focused gardening, emerging scratched and tired, but happier than I've been in months. It's embarrassing and perhaps a bit pitiful to have your psyche so entwined with your garden, but no amount of willpower or rational thinking seems to change it. I wouldn't wish such a state on anyone, but I'd hardly be surprised if many of you aren't in the same susceptible condition. How the garden looks, what is thriving and what is faltering, contributes mightily to our states of mind. And last spring I didn't have anywhere near the time needed to care for the garden, and, of course, it showed. Hence my dismal mood.

There is absolutely no reason in the world to garden as obsessively as many of us do, if not to please ourselves. Why does that seem to happen so rarely? I usually come indoors with my head spinning from what I haven't accomplished rather than what I have, with my mental list of tasks grown longer than when I started. We should feel satisfied rather than frustrated after all that hard work. Well, if not exactly satisfied — who ever feels that way about their own garden? — at least content. Maybe even gratified, and on good days, glossed with a tinge of triumph.

What is a good day in the garden? Perhaps it is simply when, after a day of work, the plants look refreshed, and the gardener feels it. To accomplish this rarity, we can borrow a rough interpretation of the Buddhist idea of large mind and small mind, the yin and yang of the garden.

Begin by taking an overall, expansive view: this is macro mind. Tell yourself firmly that you'll never, ever finish all you'd like to, so you're just going to fluff and buff right now. Give yourself permission to skim over most tasks, doing the minimum, leaving the real work for another day. Pull the bindweed that has climbed up to encircle the lily, water the pots, stake up a listing dahlia. The point here is to do just enough so no plant is left to suffer, cleaning up enough so your garden doesn't offend your eye — sweep, tidy, but don't be too particular. Now is the time to refine the art of looking loosely, blurring your eyes a bit, not paying real close attention. Never, ever wear your reading glasses for this part of the work. If you can whip through this overview of the garden in an hour or so, hardening yourself to the tantalizing call of all the things that need doing, you're ready to move on to the satisfying part of the work.

Now zoom in on one area of the garden that is most important to you that day, and concentrate on it. Bring all your creativity and skills to bear. Whether you add more flowers around the terrace, refresh a container planting or free a section of ground from the chokehold of weeds,



take the time to finish up and make that one small area just how you'd like it to be. If you need to run to the store for a bag of mulch or a soaker hose, do it. Sit down for a minute, drink some ice tea, and contemplate which low-growing perennial would look just right in front of the pink rose, or what shape pot would best fit in that corner of the porch. Then go buy it, rather than making a mental note that will soon be long gone, pushed out by a list of groceries to buy or appointments to make. By taking this micro view of one small area, and completing a few specific tasks that are important to us, we can defeat the frenetic nature of gardening by not becoming frenetic ourselves. There is great contentment in finishing up, cleaning up, putting away and being done.

The trick is cultivating the strength of mind not to be pulled here and there, only tweaking, never completing. When not so buffeted by all that needs doing, it is possible to accomplish something satisfying, and have a good day in the garden.

Deadheading Tip

Coat your fingers or gloves with Vaseline or a dab of solid Crisco to keep sticky rhodie sap from gluing your fingers together. If your fingers are already glued together, a little cooking oil will have them free and clean in a snap...

Meeting Reminders

Bring...

- ❖ *Blooming trusses!*
- ❖ *Lots of money*
- ❖ Friends, neighbors, family
- ❖ Your enthusiasm

...and especially your warmth and friendship to share!

Please submit articles of interest for Sept Newsletter by **9/15/06**

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