

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 2007

May Truss Show

Our program this month will educate us on the fine points of participating in a Rhododendron Truss Show after which we will have an informal show (no show rules) of our own. You are invited to bring your best trusses (in soda bottle or the like) for a chance at 1st, 2nd or 3rd prize! Though our show is informal here are some 'choosing a truss' tips from Victoria Chapter's Alec McCarter you can use as a guide.

- A day or two before the show, go around in your garden and make a list of the blooms you will pick on the day before the show.
- Organize whatever containers you will be using to transport your blooms to the show. They needn't be elaborate. Empty bottles or cans work well. Be careful to avoid crushing the blossoms. Fill the containers with water almost to the top. Six-pack cartons are great for transporting.
- Picking blooms always takes more time than you think it will! Choosing trusses: look for ones with straight stems...with the bloom at the top. Don't choose ones with crooked stems that are growing at odd angles...e.g. pointing straight down.
- Choosing sprays: look for ones that will present themselves gracefully in a bottle. Pieces of cork can be used to stabilize the stem in the neck of the bottle.
- Prune judiciously...if needed to enhance the shape of a spray. Avoid choosing entries with bruises. Sometime rain damage is inevitable, but avoid it, if you can.
- Look for freshness. In a spray, it is better to have one or more unopened flower buds...for they frequently open after they have been picked...than to choose blooms that are already open and going over. Some judges like to see one or two unopened or partially opened buds...but, a truss must not have flowers from more than one bud.
- Choose blooms with good-looking foliage. Avoid ones with chewed or otherwise damaged leaves. Once again, some judicious snipping of damaged leaves snipping of damaged leaves can be done... but don't go too far because some foliage is needed. You must not trim off the bitten parts of a weevil-chewed leaf!
- For a truss...one nice whorl is best...with flowers from one bud only. For sprays, more foliage will often be needed for balance and, of course, more than one flowering bud is allowed.

Next Meeting: Wed, May 23rd
Program: Jeanine Smith
Truss Show How-to

Jeanine Smith, a former President of the Seattle Rhododendron Society and former Board member of Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens, will talk on protocol for a truss show.

Her presentation will be followed by an informal show of members' trusses. Prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. Bring some beauties from your garden and take home a prize!

Calendar of Upcoming Events

May 23 Chapter Meeting
August Chapter Picnic
Sept 26 Chapter Meeting
Oct 12-14 ARS Regional Conference
Cleveland, OH
Oct 24 Chapter Meeting
Sept 22-23 NW Regional Conference
Newport, OR
Nov 14 Pie Social/Annual Meeting
Dec 8 Chapter Holiday Dinner
@ Christopher's in Coupeville

Cookie reminder:

Cee Schacker & Fran Spicer



From the Prez

Bill Stipe

Isn't it glorious that the weather on Whidbey Island has finally turned warm? Because of our cool weather the early rhododendron flowers lasted longer than usual, but the later blooming rhododendrons will have a shorter bloom cycle because of the heat. But the Species rhodies are putting out spectacular new growth! You should see *R. erosum*, *R. rex*, *R. macabeanum*, and all of the other big leaf rhodies. If you plan a visit to Meerkerk, make sure you go through the Big Leaf Valley, you won't see many blooms but the new grow is fantastic.



The Chapter Members Garden Tour was great! **Stephan Schwarzmans** did a good job of organizing the tour. Speaking of tours, the 16 people that traveled to Vancouver Island were literally stunned by the magnificent gardens and the hospitality of our hosts. **Barry Rix** put together a great electronic slide show and has offered to share it with our members. Make sure you attend our next meeting and bring your best rhododendron truss, you may win a prize.

Invite a friend, relative, or neighbor to join us. Better yet, offer to pick them up and bring them to the meeting. Visitors are welcome to participate in the plant sale, and raffle. We are expanding the 'Dollar Table' to include some specimen plants for \$2 and \$5... first come, first served!

Garden Tour Thanks

Kudos to **Stephen Schwarzmans** for pulling our Garden Tour together and lining up five beautiful gardens for members to visit. A very special thank to our hosts, **Doug Kirk, Frank Fujioka, Bill and Mary Stipe, Kate and David Dickerson** and **Marjorie and John Bachert**. Thank you **John Marshall, Mark Walljasper** and **Marcia Nelson** for assisting our hosts. And, finally, thanks to all of you who spent all or part of the day visiting these lovely gardens to make it a great success!

John Marshall Gets Bronze

The Whidbey Island Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society presents this Bronze Medal to John Marshall.

Without hesitation, he has stepped forward to serve 3 consecutive terms as President of our Chapter. As President he set a hands-on example for the membership, always helping out at plant sales, auctions, picnics and parties. Under his guidance, Chapter and Board meetings were kept on track and on time!

To expose us all to a variety of rhododendrons, he pulled together an annual truss show at Meerkerk. Rhododendron Gardens were we could spend an enjoyable afternoon picking our favorite rhodies. Another educational venture was the addition of a ten minutes Q&A before each meeting so members and guests could



find answers to their rhododendron and companion plant questions.

There is more to being a member of the American Rhododendron Society than the sharing of rhododendron knowledge; one can also serve as a leader. In grateful appreciation of his leadership this Chapter is please to award John the Bronze Medal.

Meerkerk Medley

Don't miss the 7th 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 or attending a dinner, donating a dessert or volunteering the night of this event please contact **Pat Sasson**, 331-5816, patken@whidbey.com or Meerkerk Gardens, meerkerk@whidbey.net



Meerkerk Gardens 2007 Events

August 4	Meerkerk Medley	4:30-9
October 6	WI Farm Tour, Harvest Celebration & Autumn Rhododendron Sale	9-4



Busted Myths

Myth: Extra fertilizer will yield lots of garden production.

Fact: A soil test will explain fertilizer needs. Excess nitrogen can lead to water pollution and may give you huge green plants that fail to produce vegetables or flowers.

Myth: Lilies look great, but they are just too demanding and fussy.

Fact: Our region offers nearly perfect growing conditions for lilies. Growers have developed hardy, sturdy plants that thrive easily.

Myth: Aphids and other insects attack flower gardens and can ruin them.

Fact: Few insects damage annual and perennial flowers. Encourage birds and beneficial insects such as lacewings, lady beetles and even wasps.

(Written by Mary Robson and Holly Kennel, Washington State University Cooperative Extension/King, Snohomish and Pierce counties. Seattle Times)

R. sargentianum Profile

Everett Hall, Siuslaw Chapter

R. sargentianum, a dwarf rhododendron, was first introduced in 1903 by plant explorer Ernest Wilson who found it when he was hunting for plants in the mountains of western Szechwan, China. He found it a few other times growing in the same locality, in exposed areas, at elevations of nine to eleven thousand feet.

This is an ideal plant for a rock garden, or tucked into a little niche in your garden, because at maturity the plant is such a little gem. Plants grow to about 18 inches tall and about that wide; there may be some larger than that, but I've never seen one. They grow slowly but start blooming as small plants. Sometimes plants grown from cuttings will start blooming within two years. It is a twiggly compact plant with small aromatic leaves that are shiny green on top and densely covered with tiny rust colored or dark brown scales.

In the central Oregon coast area, this species will bloom in April or early May. The flowers are small, narrowly tubular with spreading lobes that are held in little trusses of five to seven flowers. The flowers are either white, pale yellow, or lemon yellow. The yellow forms are in greatest demand...but I really prefer the clones with white flowers.

This is an alpine rhododendron and, like most alpine rhododendrons, it is absolutely essential that it has good sharp drainage and an open location. However, try to provide it with afternoon shade, as it doesn't seem to like the hot sun.

R. sargentianum is one of the finest dwarf rhododendrons you can have in your collection. In the spring it will cover itself with a profusion of color and when it is not in flower it is still an attractive little shrub. Don't forget that fragrant foliage! *R. sargentianum* does not look like a 'typical' rhododendron and will be certain to add more interest and variety to your garden.

(Reprinted from the R&A News)

Annual Picnic

Our Annual Picnic is coming up in August. We're working out the details so watch for flyers in the mail the latter part of July.

People from a planet without flowers would think we must be mad with joy the whole time to have such things about us.

Iris Murdoch, British author/philosopher (1919 – 1999)



Meeting Reminder

Bring...

- Trusses, trusses, trusses
- Plants for the dollar+ table

... and friendship to share!

Dollar Table Expansion

The size and quality of the dollar table plants have made such an improvement that they are often worth, well, *more than a dollar*... so we're going to expand the pricing on large specimen plants to \$2 and \$5 dollars. All the proceeds go the Chapter to fund fun things like the Holiday Party! So bring those castoffs to the next meeting and donate it to the dollar+ table. It may be just the plant some bargain hunter is looking for.

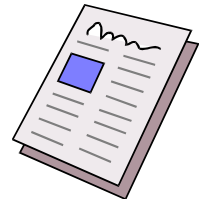
Would you like to be the first to peruse these plants when they come through the door? We need a volunteer to price plants before each meeting. It will take just a few minutes to stick a price tag on each plant. Please contact Bill Stipe 678-8740, wstipe@whidbey.com.

Conference News Flash!

Word has just been received that the Northwest Regional Conference will be held in Newport, OR on September 22-23. Don't miss it!

It's Your Newsletter

I don't mind tapping on these keys for 8 months out of the year but I encourage you all to send me any tidbits you'd like to see in the newsletter. Send me articles of rhododendron or garden interest, how-to, humor, a wacky observation, a laugh at yourself story, an interesting quote, a mind puzzle. This newsletter belongs to each of you. Your contributions are most welcome!



Gail

Please submit articles of interest for Sept Newsletter by 9/14/07

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