

WHIDBEY ISLAND CHAPTER



A R S - DISTRICT 2

# ARS Whidbey Island Chapter NEWSLETTER

Website: [whidbeyrhodies.org](http://whidbeyrhodies.org)

Meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each Month  
Fire District 5 Headquarters Station  
1164 Race Road, Coupeville, WA

November 2008

**November 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm, Don't be late!**

**Note: This month's meeting is at the Greenbank Progressive Hall  
(Behind the Greenbank Store, enter on Bakken Road)**



## PIE SOCIAL



That's right, it's our infamous **nothing but pie** meeting! Bring your favorite pie (precut please) to share and a hardy pie appetite. Our friends from the Komo Kulshan chapter will again be joining us so be sure to swap a few rhodie stories to make them feel welcome.

This is also our annual meeting including the Treasurer's report and Election of Officers. We also have a special guest speaker and an auction. Wow, you'd better be sure to get there early so you don't miss anything!

Help is needed to setup (5:30) and take down tables and chairs. Please contact Stephen Schwarzmann: [sschwarzmann@msn.com](mailto:sschwarzmann@msn.com) or 678-1948 if you can help.

## BOB TURNER GETS BRONZED!



**Bob Turner** has performed a vital task for the Chapter for more than 10 years! He is the man that gets those bargain raffle tickets into the hands of the membership at each meeting. Bob diligently attends the chapter meetings and diplomatically motivates members to buy a raffle ticket or suggests a visit to the dollar table. Each dollar he is able to talk us out of helps pad our budget to provide little 'extras' for the membership.

In grateful appreciation we were pleased to award a Bronze Medal to Bob at our October meeting.

## ELECTION OF OFFICERS 2008

We will be voting on the following Officer and Board nominees. The floor will be open for any others who are interested.

President:	Pat Sasson
Vice-President:	Stephen Schwarzmann
Secretary/Treasurer:	Marilynn Wright
Newsletter:	Gail DaPont
Director (3yr term):	Don Allen

**Next Meeting: Nov 19, 6:00pm**

**Program: Cathy Waymire Rooks  
Using Different and Unusual  
Rhododendrons in the Garden**

**Cathy Waymire Rooks** of *Inspired Gardens* has been designing gardens here on Whidbey for 14 years. Her garden designs reflect the unique lifestyles of her clients. Specialties include hardscaping, water gardens, lighting, minimal maintenance, using both native plants and unique, exotic plants. Some of her designs have been featured on the Whidbey Island Garden Tour.

Visit her on the web:

[www.inspiredgardensdesign.com](http://www.inspiredgardensdesign.com)

### Calendar of Upcoming Events

Nov 19 .....	Pie Social/Annual Meeting Election of Officers
Dec 10 (Wed) .....	Holiday Dinner @ Christopher's in Coupeville
Jan 28 .....	Chapter Meeting
Feb 25 .....	Chapter Meeting
March 25 .....	Chapter Meeting

## FROM THE PREZ

Bill Stipe

We have had some excellent weather for Fall! It has been great for working in the garden and I have moved (and sold) lots of large rhododendrons. This is also the best time to propagate



rhododendrons. If you want to know how, just ask some of our expert members. I received some cuttings from Denmark and hope to have some of their unique hybrids in my display garden next year. It is also time to collect seeds of any crosses you made this spring. If you didn't make any crosses, collect some seed anyway and try your hand at growing rhododendrons from seed.

Our next meeting is our annual business meeting and election of officers for the next term. Our nomination committee has a slate of candidates, but there is also the possibility of nominating someone from the floor. Our PIE Social is also the same night. This is a chance for you to bring a friend or neighbor and let them see how friendly a bunch we are. We will also have some plants for auction. If you have any extras, bring them along and we will sell them.

I have served my second term as President and wish to thank all of you for your help.

## 2008 Holiday Party

Mark your calendar for **Wednesday December 10<sup>th</sup>** for this year's holiday party. It will again be held at *Christopher's* in Coupeville on the corner of Coveland and New Alexander St. I'm sure Chef Andreas and his staff will be cooking up another fantastic feast for us.

Bring a gift to put under the tree for the Chinese auction then sit back and enjoy the entertainment this gift exchange always provides.

Watch for a flyer in the mail later this month with all the details.



## MEERKERK MAGIC

Kristi O'Donnell

Autumn now is waxing with the last leaves falling to earth, creating a patchwork of gorgeous hues.

### November Inspiration

*Dawns' pallet of mist  
rose to clouds kissed  
with peach and persimmon*

*The glowing orb  
splashed bands of warm light  
crimson to copper  
upon the rough bark of towering timbers  
painting poles  
creating today's totems.*

*Now the Sun, slung low to the southeast  
reaches every autumn leaf  
still clinging to the branches.  
And with divine alchemy  
infuses light to spin gold.*

*Calmly, diffused sunbeams glow beneath the horizon of clouds  
washing the sky with her pallet of mist.*



## Meerkerk Gardens' Volunteer Opportunities:

We invite you to join us on Thursday mornings this autumn, 9am to noon, to rake leaves and place name tags on rhodies in the Hybrid Test Garden, cut back heathers in the Ramsey Rock Garden and groom the perennial beds up front.

Throughout winter we will be engraving plant tags for the Test Garden and plants throughout the Gardens in preparation for the ARS Conference next spring. Can you help us out? Our new engraver works from a PC. If you are familiar with laying out graphics or lines of text on your PC, you can do this job! The schedule is flexible once you are trained and the work station is in the cozy, heated Volunteer Cottage.

After engraving, signs will need to be affixed to the cedar stakes that WIARS member Jake Jacobson made and then placed in the Test Garden.

Please contact Kristi: [meerkerk@whidbey.net](mailto:meerkerk@whidbey.net) or 360-678-1912 with your interest.



*Meerkerk Gardens cordially invites you to*

*the Holiday Open House*

*December 6, Noon to 3pm*

We'll gather 'round the fireplace for warm conversations. The Christmas Tree will be glistening while you'll be listening to our trio play some holiday tunes!

Bring your favorite savory appetizer or baked sweets to share with our rhodie friends!

If the weather is nice, park at the main entry and enjoy a peaceful walk in the wintery gardens, through the Gatehouse adorned for this festive time of year.



Meerkerk Gardens' **DREAMS OF SPRING HORTICULTURAL GALA** is around the corner- March 7, 2009. This important fundraiser supports the work our horticultural staff does caring for the rhododendron collections and hybridizing program at Meerkerk. Last year, this fundraiser supplied vital funds to pay portions of Oriana's and Susie's wages. The *Fund A Need* segment of the auction raised dollars for Meerkerk's Educational Program, *Botany Adventure*.

Our goal is to raise enough money to fully cover the wages of our Gardeners and ask your assistance to achieve this goal by contributing an item for the silent or live auction.

- Experiences: A garden tea in your yard; a cruise on your sailboat or a festive dinner in your home.
- A Baker's Gift: A dozen cookies a month for a year!
- Services: Furniture refinishing, pruning rhodies, teaching a class or doing a genealogy chart.
- Arts & Crafts: Weave a scarf; paint a watercolor landscape or create a unique piece of garden art.

Bid on a private gallery showing and wine tasting for you and your friends, a trip to an exotic flower farm or a one-of-a-kind plant at our auction? These items have already been donated to Dreams of Spring 2009.

We will be mailing invitations after the New Year and would love to send one to you! To receive a Dreams of Spring invitation or an auction form, please contact: Penny Harger, [penny@meerkerkgardens.org](mailto:penny@meerkerkgardens.org), 360-320-2265.

Hope to see you soon!

With sincere Thanksgiving,  
*Kristi and all at Meerkerk Gardens*

## KNOW WHAT'S INVASIVE AND WHAT'S BANNED WHEN DECIDING WHAT TO PLANT *Valerie Easton*

*The line between what is defined as an invasive weed and what is not can be fine, but some rules apply in the state of Washington. English ivy, for instance, is a no-no.*

It seems like every time I write about one plant or another these days, I get e-mail from readers warning that it's a menace. I'm sometimes scolded for even mentioning a buddleia, verbena or ranunculus, although among the hundreds of species and cultivars of these plants, few or none are truly invasive.

Yet for every plant denounced, I also hear from a gardener or two struggling to nurture along this same weak darling. Is it just that one gardener's gem is another's nuisance? For every gardener who deplors Japanese anemones, *Ranunculus ficaria* 'Brazen Hussy,' bronze fennel or love-in-a-mist, there are 10 more who love it when plants spread themselves about so generously.

I'll confess that I may be the only gardener on the planet who failed with English ivy. Many years ago I blanketed a difficult hillside with ivy starts. Moses, our German Shepherd, amused himself with the endlessly repeated game of running to the top of the hill, dropping his tennis ball, then charging back down the face of the slope to retrieve it. Even ivy couldn't withstand such an onslaught.

Such embarrassing tales aside, we gardeners need to figure out how to be responsible without ruining the excitement of trying new plants. We need to learn which plants really do pose a problem, and which are merely annoyances in certain situations.

I think the defining question is this: Which plants are management issues within our garden, seeding about too freely, or spreading more vigorously than we'd prefer, and which are a danger to our parks and woodlands? If growing a plant has repercussions for our neighbors and surrounding natural areas, then it's time to ban it.

I turned to Dr. Sarah Reichard, a University of Washington conservation biologist who is an enthusiastic gardener as well as an international expert on invasive plants. "Just because a plant self-sows, doesn't mean it'll be invasive," says Reichard. "And just because it *doesn't* self-sow doesn't mean it *won't* be invasive — it depends on soil and irrigation."

Reichard is researching how to determine ahead of time if a newly introduced plant will end up becoming problematic. One warning sign is a rapid juvenile period, meaning that if a plant grows quickly, flowers and fruits when it's young, it might well be too efficient at reproducing itself. Plants that regenerate rapidly from root fragments (beware the horseradish) and ones with deep tap roots might well cause problems in wildland areas if they did escape from gardens. For example, popular and pretty Himalayan honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa*) is invading natural areas in New Zealand, spread about by birds. Reichard is suspicious of

*Verbena bonariensis*, too, which is taking over grasslands in Australia, although she hasn't yet found it populating natural areas around here, despite how many gardens feature its violet blooms.

Just to complicate it further, many invaders have a "lag phase" that can last up to a decade. Sometimes pollinators haven't shown up yet, or it can take a while for birds to recognize fruit on a plant that's new to them.

Ecologist Richard Mack of Washington State University explains that gardens can be staging areas for future problems. We irrigate and fertilize our plants so birds begin to notice and recognize them as food sources. So in a way, good gardeners are nurturing the invasives of the future, which is why we all need to pay attention.

OK, bottom line, which plants should we never allow into our gardens? "English ivy and any of the knotweeds. All knotweed cultivars are quarantined," says Reichard (see [www.nwcb.wa.gov](http://www.nwcb.wa.gov) to learn which plants are outlawed and/or quarantined in our state).

*Valerie Easton is a Seattle freelance writer and author of "A Pattern Garden." Seattle Times 10/26/08*

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Please submit articles of interest for Jan Newsletter by **1/16/09**

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*Happy  
Thanksgiving*

