

WHIDBEY ISLAND CHAPTER



ARS Whidbey Island Chapter NEWSLETTER

Website: whidbeyrhodies.org

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

November 2009

November 18th, 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 *pie, pie, pie* meeting! Bring your favorite pie (precut please) to share and a hardy pie appetite. Our other chapter friends from the mainland will again be joining us so be sure to say hello and make them feel welcome.

This is also our annual meeting including the Treasurer's report and Election of Officers. Our guest speaker is Dennis Bottemiller from RSF and we'll have an auction as well. Wow, you'd better 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 or 678-1948 if you can help.

Next Meeting: Nov 18, 6:00pm

**Program: *Moving on to R-2*
The Care and Culture of Species
Rhododendrons**

Dennis Bottemiller will explain the mysterious title of his program at the beginning of his talk then educate us in the care and culture of species rhododendrons. Dennis has been the Nursery Manager/Propagator at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden for a total of 14 years. In that time he has had the privilege to grow a tremendous variety of species rhododendrons. Many of these rhododendrons have some very specific cultural required to grow them well. Dennis's care and culture presentation will outline some of the variables of rhododendron culture and suggest ways to manipulate these variables to successfully grow the more difficult species from our favorite genus. Dennis will answer questions after his presentation so don't hesitate to get all the information you need for species rhodie success in your garden.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Dec 6 (Sun) Holiday Dinner
@ Christopher's in Coupeville
Jan 27 Chapter Meeting
Feb 24 Chapter Meeting
March 24 Chapter Meeting
Apr 28 Chapter Meeting/Potluck
@ Greenbank Progressive Hall

ELECTION of OFFICERS 2009



We will be voting on the following Officer and Board nominees. The VP and a Director's slot are open for election. Stephen and Frank have stepped forward to fill these slots but the floor will be opened for any others who want to throw their hat in the ring.

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

... The waitress asked "How many pieces do you want your pie cut?" Yogi responded, "Four. I don't think I could eat eight."

Yogi Berra



FROM THE PREZ

Pat Sasson



This will be a short "Prez Message" as I am running more than usual... and it is a short month. Hard to believe that it is already November and soon will be Thanksgiving. We have our wonderful pie social on November 18th. Note the change in time and place and come with an appetite for pie!

November also brings our first "Big Leaf Valley" work party at Meerkerk on the 21st. Do hope you are able to come. There will be enough work for everyone, even those of us with creaky knees and bad backs.

The response for the Holiday Party at Christopher's on Sunday, December 6th has been good. We have room for more so invite your friends. Watch for the invitations. In the meantime you can be thinking and searching for the perfect \$10-\$12 gift for the Chinese Auction with Bill Stipe and his crazy Santa hat.

"And that's all folks!" See you soon.

BIG LEAF VALLEY WORK PARTY!

OK gang, remember when you raised your hands at that meeting to adopt the Big Leaf Valley... it's time to get those hands dirty to complete Jake's vision. Don Kohlenberger has scheduled a work party for Saturday, Nov 21st. This will include general cleanup in the Big Leaf Valley beginning in the immediate areas around established rhododendrons. Subsequent work parties will expand the cleanup to remove sword ferns, salmonberries and other plants that are encroaching on the Big Leafs breathing room.

Many hands make light work. Meet in the Volunteer Cottage for coffee & coffeecake. Then head out to the BLV at 9:00. We'll share a potluck lunch at noon.

2009 Holiday Party



A reminder that the party date is **Sunday December 6th**. It will again be held at *Christopher's* in Coupeville on the corner of Coveland and New Alexander St. This year Chef Andreas and his staff are preparing a bountiful buffet for our enjoyment.

Bring a gift, \$10-12, 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.



MEERKERK UPDATE

Kristi O'Donnell

Greetings, members of the Whidbey Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, from Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens.

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, I offer sincere thanks to you for approving the generous grant of \$1,000 for the



improvement of the path through the Big Leaf Valley. Already the gravel has been delivered and we have begun the work. We are able to make a few drainage repairs with your funding as well, to raise the path keeping it drier through the rainy season.

We are also very grateful to the WIARS for volunteering to adopt the Big Leaf Valley. Don Kohlenberger has assessed the needs and is outlining a plan. I look forward to working at the November 21 work party with you in the Big Leaf Valley.

I know Jake is smiling from his rhododendron garden in the sky about all the energy we are pulling together for the Big Leaf Valley!



We gardeners are aligned with the squirrels this autumn, busy preparing for the solitude of winter and the glory of spring.

Thanks to many of you, our *Thursday Hands On Horticulture* is making a lot of progress in the Gardens. **Mark Walljasper** lent us his chipper this fall, and he and **Paul Loudon** have been our weekly lumberjacks. **Barry Rix** joined us for our Lumberjack Work Party last month too, and we made a tremendous progress in removing diseased trees. One of our regular gardeners and members of our board, **Lisa Irwin**, has joined WIARS too! She is quite a spark plug and a fantastic plant person- we are very lucky she has moved to Whidbey full time now. **Jack Lounsberry** brought his TLC tools to our rhodie sale and made many gardeners happy. WIARS members helped make our Autumn Rhodie Sale a grand success. Thanks to **Mel and Marilynn Wright, Susie Reynolds, Joan Bell, Billie Barb, Keith Bowers, Don Allen, Frank Fujioka, Don Kohlenberger** and **Kristi O'Donnell**. Members of the Greenbank Garden Club and Friends of Meerkerk Gardens assisted too, baking cookies and helping with plants. Thanks to **Fran Spicer, Cee Shaker, Arlee Anderson, Babette Thompson, Penny Harger** and **Bob Boehm**. I hope I have listed everyone. My apologies if I omitted someone by accident.

We are getting ready to install a new landscape in the main entry of the Gardens, to replace the Port Orford Cedar hedge that succumbed to root rot. We're moving mature rhodies from the Hybrid Test Garden, integrating deciduous trees with spring flowers and autumn foliage and planting thousands of daffodils. If you would like to come and help landscape, join us on Saturday, November 14 or Thursday November 19.

The Greenbank Garden club is busy renovating the Secret Garden; the area they have adopted for over 12 years. Lisa Irwin led a pruning workshop to clean out dead wood and open up the canopy to air and light. November 19 we will begin planting a few new shrubs and flowering

perennials to brighter up the landscape. Rejuvenation is in the air!

The Wednesday Construction team sends its best to Don Lee while he is recuperating. This month they were able to complete adding insulating boards to the Volunteer Cottage to better retain heat in the new office. Bob also worked on sanding the doors to the Gatehouse restoring the blonde cedar vigor to the look of the building.

I am also happy to announce that Meerkerk Gardens received a grant from the National ARS for rhododendron research. The \$5,000 is earmarked for our hybridizing program. Because of this influx of cash, we were able to construct new raised boxes for hundreds of hybrid seedlings and plant them out. Some of the first crosses Oriana and I made in 2003 will be planted in the Hybrid Test Garden this autumn! Our goals as stated in our research grant application are to create rhododendrons with fragrance, orange, yellow or purple flowers, with good foliage and form. We are now onto transplanting last year's seedlings which will remain in the propagation house until next year. One of our new master gardeners has expressed an interest in hybridizing and a student from Edmonds Community College has contacted us as well. This is very exciting isn't it?!

We have already been taking cuttings from the collection and from some of our members' collections as well. The first sets have been sent to Kathy Van Veen for rooting. We will begin sticking our cuttings later this month after we complete cleaning the propagation house.

Dreams of Spring...



Now that you have heard the list of autumn action items- I ask you to remember this date **February 27th** for our **Dreams of Spring Garden Gala and Auction:** We would love the WIARS

Chapter to fill a table of eight. For District 2 ARS members reading this newsletter. Can you get eight of your members to fill a table? The magnificent dinner will be held at the Fireseed Hall on South Whidbey. It has good parking and easy access. Our team is gathering all kinds of cool and exotic plant donations and everything GARDENS! Maybe you would like to donate a plant, a sailboat outing, a condo or a garden party in your own garden? Contact Arlee Anderson, r.leea@hughes.net, phone 360-678-4919 or give me a call if you'd like an invitation or to volunteer.

IN THE FALL GARDEN, WE RELISH WHAT REMAINS

Valerie Easton/Seattle Times

When we venture into the autumn garden, we stop planning and pushing, taking time at last to relish what remains. It's a time to enjoy that last raspberry and settle into the moment.

I'VE BEEN trying to figure out why I love my garden most right now, when it's so not at its best. And finally I think I understand:

I find the garden's quiet decline comforting, the mellow colors of autumn soothing. Only this late in the season is it possible to see the garden without a scrim of ambition and hope between me and reality.

It's not that I didn't appreciate every single hellebore and daffodil that bloomed during the cold, wet spring. I swooned when the heat wave brought forth a burst of lilies. I've been thankful to harvest tomatoes and sweet peas since July. But it's now, during the garden's waning weeks, that I relax into its pleasures and see every flower, falling leaf and remaining pumpkin most clearly.

And it isn't just the clarity of the low-lying sun slanting across the horizon; it's the clarity in my head, where I've stopped anticipating, plotting and planning the ideal garden. Maybe this is the only time of year that most of us can get beyond our projections of gardens future and remembrances of gardens past. By this point in autumn, the garden is what it is.

As the weather cools and the days shorten so dramatically, we're no longer aspiring. It's not that fall dashes our dreams, but rather that it diminishes them enough so we can accept fall's decrepitude as beautiful in its own right. Nothing is more precious than picking one of the last roses of the season; nothing sweeter than popping a final raspberry into your mouth.

Perhaps we'd all be happier, more serene gardeners if we could keep an autumn sensibility year-round. Recently, an earnest guy asked my advice on how to loosen up and enjoy his garden. He told me he worried over imperfections to the point he vacuums up every fallen leaf. Every day. After I got over feeling sorry for his wife, I suggested he remember that gardens are part of nature. They're outdoors and subject to all of weather's vicissitudes. The inherent messiness of gardens is their mystery and magic. The fact that they change constantly is the humbling brilliance that keeps us gardening. To say he looked skeptical is putting it kindly.

Anyone want to join me in emulating the Slow Food movement with our own Slow Garden movement? Not that getting hyped up about gardening is all bad. If we didn't hanker after a bluer delphinium, a tastier tomato or the coolest new color of hellebore, we might not have the momentum to keep on turning the compost, pulling weeds and spreading mulch. Plant lust propels us through all the early spring work.

You'd think that at the peak of summer we'd pause to revel in all that's burgeoning up and blooming. But we're so busy seeding fresh lettuces and keeping everything watered, it's hard to find time to do anything but work and fret over lack of rain. And along with houseguests, summer breeds perfectionism. If the garden isn't faultless in June... July... August... then when? So we describe to visitors what was in bloom last week, or point out what will be at its peak next week.

Now the season's downward momentum is in full swing. I sat outside in a fleece jacket, drinking tea the other morning watching a goldfinch teeter on a spent stalk of sea oat grass for the longest time.

We may as well enjoy what's left for as long as we can.

Years ago, California artist Robert Irwin received an honorary doctorate from the San Francisco Art Institute. He walked up to the podium, made a joke, then walked away after saying simply, "All I want to say is that the wonder is still there." I hope autumn reveals all the wonder in your garden.

Valerie Easton is a Seattle freelance writer and author of "A Pattern Garden." Check out her blog at www.valeaston.com.

Please submit articles of interest for Jan Newsletter by **1/15/10**

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