

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  
**Refreshments: 7:00 Meeting: 7:20**

Oct 2009



## Those Dues



Time is running out to renew your ARS membership. Please send your renewal to Marilyn as soon as possible so she can get them in to National headquarters by November 15<sup>th</sup>. If your membership is not renewed by then you may miss the January issue of the ARS Journal.

### Next Meeting: Wed, Oct 28

Program: Shirley Rock

#### Hardy Fuchsias, All You Need to Know

**Shirley Rock** is a member and past president of each of the Northwest Fuchsia Society, North Cascades Fuchsia Society, and Pilchuck Fuchsia Society and a certified judge for fuchsia shows. She is the editor and charter member of the Pilchuck Rhododendron Chapter, ARS, Treasurer of the Komo Kulshan Chapter, ARS, and membership chair for the American Rhododendron Society. Gardening is her second love, family comes first. Her presentation will illustrate the many varieties of hardy fuchsia in her gardens, how she plants new ones, fertilizes, winterizes, and propagates more. These lovely plants grow right along with rhodies, and bloom when the rhodies are resting in preparation for winter and spring.

## The Ultimate Rhododendron Conference

April 9 – 11, 2010

The University of British Columbia  
Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research  
Vancouver, BC

Learn all there is to know about rhododendrons and rhododendron gardening through six 90-minute educational sessions offered at a Novice or Veteran level. You'll be busy throughout the day attending lecture/slide presentations and listening to practical advice, laboratory experiences and field work with evenings free to enjoy Vancouver and the UBC campus. You'll have the opportunity to visit 3 notable gardens: *UBC Botanical Garden; Nitobe Memorial Japanese Garden; VanDusen Botanical Garden.*

This conference does not offer banquets, raffles, keynote speeches, contests, truss shows, bus tours, business meetings, or entertainment events just high octane rhododendron education.

Registration is easy and affordable but limited to 100 gardeners. Visit <http://www.rhodos.ca> for costs, daily schedule, teaching topics, registration, accommodation and meal information.

*Editors note: This is not an ARS sponsored conference but that won't stop all you rhodoholics!*

### Calendar of Upcoming Events

- Nov 18 ..... Annual Mtg/Election of Officers  
Steve Bottemiller: Big Leaf Rhodies
- Dec 9 (Wed) ..... Holiday Dinner  
@ Christopher's in Coupeville
- Jan 27 ..... Chapter Meeting  
Program TBA
- Feb 24 ..... Chapter Meeting  
Program TBA
- Mar 24 ..... Chapter Meeting  
Program TBA
- Apr 28 ..... Chapter Meeting  
Richard & Jennifer Fairchild: Gardens of Japan
- May 26 ..... Chapter Meeting  
Program TBA

### Don't forget the dollar table!

*Eye of newt, and toe of frog,  
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,  
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,  
Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing,  
For a charm of powerful trouble,  
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.*

William Shakespeare



### Cookie reminder:

Katie Dickerson &  
Stephen/Diane Schwarzmann

## From the Prez

Pat Sasson



Dear Friends,

How thankful we are for the rain even though we only got 50% of what was predicted. My rhodies are still drooping and my yard is still brown but there is hope. But what beautiful weather we had for five months! I have had calls from my friends in Boston – only one week of summer and one tomato that ripened. My friends called from Nantucket filled with woes – all tomatoes were black inside and the mosquitoes were out in such great numbers because of all the rain that it was impossible to go outside. Pity! I found it hard not to brag about our perfect summer which stretched into fall. I know I made the right choice moving to beautiful Whidbey Island.

Thank you all for your patience and support at the last meeting. Meerkerk Gardens will come up with a concrete proposal for the \$1,000 requested from the Carl Jacobson Fund. We voted to support the Big Leaf Valley as a Chapter, initially giving \$1,000 to purchase gravel for the path. We also voted to support the Big Leaf Valley through work parties. I have been in touch with the two Dons and they are assessing what needs to be done. It may be that we will wait until after the holidays for a work party. We will keep you posted. Jake's smiling, I am sure!

The October meeting should to be a good one, with a diversion into fuchsias. I am looking forward to this as I bought a beautiful fuchsia at the August picnic and hope to keep it alive until next spring. Our two meetings after that are not the regular dates. The November meeting is Wednesday the 18<sup>th</sup> at the Greenbank Progressive Club for the annual Pie Social. A "piece of each" really? The December meeting is our annual Holiday Party at Christopher's in Coupeville on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Keep your eyes open for a clever \$10-12 gift for the Chinese auction. Be sure to mark both dates on your calendar!

Note: I am in possession of a pair of wooden salad tongs which were left at the picnic. I will bring them to the next meeting or call me if they are yours and you need them earlier.

I hope you all are enjoying the beautiful foliage. Who says there is no fall color on Whidbey?

## Those Pesky Root Weevils

Gail DaPont

If you have a root weevil problem on your rhododendrons or some of the other susceptible plants, now is the time (also in May) to consider a plan of attack on their larvae. Talstar® has been suggested as an insecticide for this purpose. If you are like me and don't have a huge root weevil population but enough to be objectionable, you won't need a 25lb bag of Talstar®. I did some research and found that Ortho has a liquid and granular form of Bifenthrin (generic Talstar®). Ortho MAX Lawn and Garden Insect Killer (liquid) and MAX Home Defense (liquid or granular) can be readily found at local hardware/garden stores.

If you prefer biological warfare in the form of beneficial nematodes, keep in mind that they are temperature sensitive so should be applied in May when the soil temperature is at least 55-60 degrees.

## Congratulations Don Lee

**Don Lee** has been named Master Gardener of the Year.

*PULLMAN, Wash. – Island County resident Don Lee of Coupeville has been named Master Gardener of the Year by the Master Gardeners Foundation of Washington State.*

*The selection was formally announced at the annual statewide Master Gardener Conference held at the Washington State University campus in Pullman, Wash.*

*Lee, a retired aerospace engineer, moved to Island County from California in 1989 and was accepted into the Master Gardener training program that year. He developed a strong interest in learning and teaching about the area's native plants. Lee developed a reputation for his expertise that has resulted in his teaching Master Gardener trainees on the topic in Island and neighboring counties for nearly 15 years.*

*Prior to becoming a Master Gardener Lee had gotten involved in the important issues of water supply and quality in Island County, and quickly connected his interest in native plants to the county's water issues... MasterGardener Mag*

Congratulations Don, take a well deserved bow!

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## Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens

### Autumn Rhodie Sale

**Saturday, Oct 31st 9am-4pm**

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Don't let our great prices spook you! Mature hybrids from the test garden and fantastic Meerkerk Grown specialty rhodies are ready to beautify your gardens! All proceeds benefit this peaceful woodland garden.

Prizes for best flower, plant or insect costume: kids and adults. Admission is free this day: take time to enjoy the fantastic Fall colors and fragrances!



## Meerkerk News

### Thursday: Hands-on-Horticulture

Work with our professional horticulture staff and other garden enthusiasts on projects throughout the Gardens. We meet in the volunteer cottage for hot coffee and tea at 8:45. Then we're into the Gardens to prune, plant, pot, and beautify.

Join the Meerkerk Gardens' Grateful Deadheaders every Thursday morning, 9am to noon (afternoon volunteers are welcome too!). Attend 3 times and receive a tie dyed T-shirt! Bring your favorite pruners and gloves and team up with us for fun in the Gardens and potluck lunch.

### 2nd Saturday: Work Party

Join us in the Gardens to plan and prepare for each new season. Park in the volunteer's parking lot and meet in the volunteer cottage for hot coffee and tea at 8:45. Embark on projects throughout the Gardens at 9 then return to the cottage at noon for a potluck lunch.

# Rhododendron strigillosum

Franch

Steve Hootman

A Species Profile reprinted with permission from the  
Rhododendron Species Foundation website:  
[www.rhodygarden.org](http://www.rhodygarden.org)

One of the classic species in the genus *Rhododendron* must surely be *R. strigillosum*. The large deep red flowers in early spring set against the characteristic whorl of dark green leaves with distinctly bristly petioles make this species a must for every collection.

Known in its native China as *mang ci dujuan* ("prickly rhododendron") this species was first described in 1886 by the French systematist M.A. Franchet from material collected several years earlier in Sichuan, China. It was introduced into cultivation by Ernest Wilson (W#1870) in 1904 during his plant hunting days as an employee of the Veitch Nursery.

*R. strigillosum* is typically a plant of open shrubby thickets and woodlands. It occurs at elevations of 7,000 to 11,000 feet (2100 to 3400m) in the mountainous regions of southwestern China, specifically the Provinces of Sichuan and adjacent northeastern Yunnan. I was able to observe this species many times during the fall of 1995 while exploring that region of China. It grew as a large shrub or small tree up to 25 feet in height and often made quite an impressive specimen. Unfortunately, due to the season, we did not see any flowers, but I was quite taken with the overall quality and beauty of the foliage. We noted that it grew in association with a wide variety of plants including several rhododendrons, maples (*Acer* spp.), *Viburnum* spp., and hollies (*Ilex* spp.) to name but a few. A sampling of the rhododendrons found growing with *R. strigillosum* in the areas visited would include 1) *pingianum*, *argyrophyllum*, *rubiginosum*, *racemosum* and *augustinii* 2) *lutescens*, *argyrophyllum*, *huianum*, *asterochnum* and the closely related and extremely rare *ochraceum* 3) *calophytum*, *longipes* and *denudatum*. The first two associations were observed in the fairly rugged mountainous country of southern Sichuan near the Yunnan border at 10,000 (3048m) and 9,300 (2835m) feet respectively. The third occurred at 8,500 (2590m) feet in the low hills of northeastern Yunnan.

*Rhododendron strigillosum* is a member of Subsection *Maculifera* (Subseries *Maculiferum*). It is probably most closely related to the species *ochraceum* and *pachytrichum*, the latter merging into *strigillosum* and probably hybridizing with it where the ranges overlap. These hybrids probably account for the reports of pink or even white-flowered forms of *strigillosum*. The taxon *R. strigillosum* var. *monosematum* ("*R. monosematum*") is probably actually closer to *pachytrichum* and may be nothing more than a natural hybrid arising where these two species occur together.

The distinctive foliage of *R. strigillosum* is easily recognized and at first glance can only be confused with that of the closely related *R. pachytrichum*. However, closer study will reveal the distinctive differences between the two. The lower leaf surface of *R. strigillosum* is typically covered

with short glandular or branched hairs and will have a more or less bristly midrib. In contrast, the lower leaf surface of *R. pachytrichum* is typically smooth except for short hairs on (and sometimes near) the midrib. The petioles and younger branches of the former are also quite bristly-glandular (strigillose) while typically only tomentose (shorter, softer hairs) in the latter. The leaves of *R. strigillosum* are elliptic to oblanceolate in shape with a wedge-shaped to somewhat rounded base and a short sharp tip (cuspidate) at the apex. They are three (7.6cm) to six inches (15cm) in length and up to two inches (5cm) wide with a more or less recurved margin.

In early spring, the sticky flower buds open to reveal brilliant crimson, scarlet or deep red flowers nestled beautifully on a whorl of dark green bristly leaves. Although the flowers appear in late February to mid-March here at the RSBG, they are relatively frost resistant and so escape serious damage most years to put on one of our most spectacular early exhibitions. The tubular bell-shaped flowers are up to 2.5 inches (6.35cm) long and occur in an inflorescence of eight to twelve flowers. The bright red color is nicely highlighted by the five black nectar pouches at the base of each flower for a truly spectacular floral display.

In cultivation *R. strigillosum* forms a large dense evergreen shrub often as wide-spreading as it is high. Being a plant of forests and thickets it prefers some protection from full exposure to the sun but is not really a difficult species to accommodate. We have found that the foliage tends to yellow if planted in too much sun. It grows splendidly for us exposed to the east in the partial shade of adjacent tall conifers. This species is relatively hardy (-5F (-20C) to -10F (-23C)) but the new foliage tends to emerge rather early so it is best to avoid low areas or other frost pockets.

With its ease of culture and beautiful flowers, *R. strigillosum* is often used as a parent in *Rhododendron* hybrid breeding programs. Some very popular and well-known hybrids have arisen from crosses using this species including 'Etta Burrows', 'Grace Seabrook', 'Matador' and 'Taurus'. A clone of this species with rich blood-red flowers received an Award of Merit when exhibited by Bodnant in 1923.



## Happy Halloween

Trick or treat,  
Smell my feet,  
Give me something  
good to eat.



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Please submit articles of interest for **Nov** Newsletter by 11/6/09

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