

Whidbey Rhodies News

whidbeyrhodies.org

September 2011

Meets the 4th Wednesday of each month ❖ Race Road Firehouse, 1164 Race Rd, Coupeville WA
7pm Refreshments, 7:20 Meeting & Program

Next Meeting: Wed, Sept 28th A Taste of Sicily

John Cienki and **Stephanie Rodden** will present a program on their recent trip to Sicily with the American Horticultural Society. Entitled, A Taste of Sicily: Gardens and Antiquities. John and Stephanie's presentation will touch on the cultures, food, history, and rhododendrons of Sicily.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

- October 26 Chapter Meeting
Tim Lawrence, Sweet Nectar & Mad Sex
- November 16 Pie Social/Annual Meeting
Election of Officers
- December 4 (Sunday) Holiday Party
@ Christopher's in Coupeville
- January 25 Chapter Meeting
DVD, TBD
- February 8-12 NW Flower & Garden Show
- February 22 Meeting
Frank Fujioka, Hybridizing Primer
- March 28 Chapter Meeting
Bus Tour, TBD
- April 25 Chapter Meeting
- May 23 Chapter Meeting
- September 26 Chapter Meeting

Thanks Jack and Norma!

I don't know how they do it, but **Jack and Norma Lounsberry** hosted yet another perfect picnic. I was unable to attend but have heard reports of the best weather and the grounds groomed to garden tour standards. Thanks Jack and Norma for all you do for all of us!

Thanks also to **Bill Stipe** and his auctioneer skills selling off those auction treasures. After expenses, meal tickets and auction items added \$187.00 to our treasury!

And a big thank you to all who spent the afternoon sharing your rhodie stories, your favorite side dishes and warm friendship.

Let's Take a Tour!

At this month's meeting we will discuss the feasibility of a bus tour in March. Your options are a visit to Bloedel Reserve on Bainbridge Island or the Rhododendron Species Foundation and Kubota Garden in the Seattle area. Bloedel's 150 acres are a unique blend of natural woodlands and beautifully landscaped gardens. The Species Foundation is home to one of the largest collections of species rhododendrons in the world, an extensive fern collections, a new conservatory and more... while the 20 acre Kubota Gardens features streams, waterfalls, ponds, rock outcroppings and a rich, mature collection of plantings designed to display the beauty of the Northwest in a Japanese manner. A bus at \$35/person is available for the Species Foundation/Kubota Garden. Other options will be discussed as well.



Help Us Help You

The Program Chairman, Stephen Schwarzmann, and the Board of Directors are putting together the programs for the upcoming year and need your input. Bring your program thoughts and requests to this month's meeting so we can schedule the programs that fit your needs.



Cookie Reminder:
Stephanie Rodden

*If a pig loses its voice,
is it disgruntled?*



From The Prez

Felicia Marshall

Can you believe this weather. As I write this, cool temperatures and possible rain are forecast. The May 13th Seattle Times stated that there had been 119 consecutive days of temperatures below 70°. I wonder now how many they've added to that record. Last week broke records of 8 days above 70°. I'm always fascinated by weather as are, I'm sure, most



of our members. So much of the health and vigor of our beloved plants depend on it!

Your Board has been exploring options for our meeting programs. We welcome suggestions from all of you for programs and field trips in the next year. We kick off our year with a presentation by Stephanie Rodden and husband John Cienki. They promise some surprises in their presentation of their trip to Sicily. October's meeting will feature Tim Lawrence's program 'Sweet nectar and mad sex'.

We hope to see you then!

Time to Renew

By now you will all have received your renewal notices for your 2012 membership in our Whidbey Island Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. Please fill out your renewal envelope and get it in the mail (to Marilyn Wright, 453 Kineth Pt Pl, Coupeville, WA 98239) today or bring it to the next chapter meeting. The cutoff date for dues renewal is the end of October. If your membership is not renewed by then you may miss the January issue of the ARS Journal. If you did not receive a renewal notice it means your dues have been paid through 2012 or beyond.



ARS Goes Blogging

Are you aware of the new blogging page at the ARS website? Take a look at <http://www.rhododendron.org/blog/default.asp> You'll find useful rhododendron tidbits and can add comments of your own or share your knowledge and experiences, good or bad, with other rhodoholics.

Don't forget the \$ table!

Big Leaf Valley Work Party

It's time once again to roll up our sleeves and tidy up the Big Leaf Valley. A work party is scheduled for **Saturday, October 15th**. These work parties are very low key as you work at your own pace. Meet in the Volunteer Cottage at 9am, bring a pot luck dish to share at noon.



Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens Autumn Garden Festival & Plant Sale Saturday and Sunday, Oct 1st & 2nd

9:00 – 4:00

Plants - Garden Art - Music - Fun

Meerkerk Garden's Autumn Garden Festival and Plant Sale will again showcase specialty plants from local nurseries and exhibit garden art from Whidbey Island artists.

Species and hybrid rhododendrons & plants from area specialty nurseries:

Far Reaches – Exotic collector plants
Fancy Fronds – Temperate Ferns
Stonehenge Nursery – Japanese Maples

Garden Art from:

Albe Rustics – Twig furniture
Carol Rose Dean – Tiles and sculptures
Elemental Inc. – Garden sculptures
Due Vetro Studio – Blown glass
Carl Ulmschneider – Deer Cages
Winfield Design – Metal sculptures

Music:

Saturday, Noon: **Cranberry Bog Bluegrass Band**
Sunday, Noon: **Piper Reva**

Good News from Meerkerk

The latest news from Meerkerk is that Nursery Manager, Susie Reynolds, has taken on the additional job of Garden Manager. I'm sure you'll all join me in congratulating her and giving her your full support. The first thing on Susie's agenda is getting us all back at Meerkerk for **2nd Saturday work parties**. The first one will be **Saturday, October 8th**. No special skills are required, but do bring your enthusiasm for the Gardens.

Meet in the Volunteer Cottage at 8:45 then break at noon for a pot luck lunch. Bring your favorite dish to share.

Other Ways You Can Help Meerkerk

Joan Bell, Meerkerk Office Manager

Whidbey Island's garden gem, Meerkerk Rhododendron Garden, needs your help!

Yes, even though summer is about to end, work in the Gardens does not. Your helping hands are always welcome with the ongoing planting, shaping, dead heading and maintenance of the Gardens. Also in demand are greeters, office help, sign making and computer expertise. Additionally, Meerkerk is recruiting capable individuals who can help direct our PR/Marketing and Fund Raising activities. Do you share Ann Meerkerk's vision and love for this Garden? If so please consider joining our dedicated team as a member of our Board of Directors.

Email us: meerkerk@whidbey.net

A Drop to Drink

Keeping track of how plants use-and lose-water

by Dr. Ed Brotak

Water is crucial to all plants. Moisture in the soil is necessary for seed germination. Water and carbon dioxide

are taken in by plants to produce glucose, their food. Water also transports food and minerals through the plant's vascular system. Too little water, plants will die. On the other hand, too much water in the soil, and roots will rot.

Plants get their water from the soil, so it is important to know about soil moisture. After a soaking rain, the soil is saturated. As the excess water drains, it leaves "plant available water" in the soil. This water is bound to the soil particles and it requires a certain amount of negative pressure, or suction, from a plant's roots to free it. Initially, the soil is at "field capacity" and the water can be easily extracted. As the soil dries, the tension or pressure binding the water molecules to the soil increases. The water becomes increasingly harder for plants to

You know plants need water and that they'll wilt when they don't have enough—but have you ever wondered how it all works? Plants release water through leaf pores. This release causes negative pressure that travels to the roots, where it acts as suction that frees water molecules from soil particles. When a plant is releasing more water than it is able to replace from the soil, it shuts its pores, creating a loss of pressure that results in a limp, wilted appearance. Plants can be feeling the stress of a lack of adequate soil moisture before they reach the wilting point, however. A rain gauge is a simple way to note whether supplemental watering is needed each week.

extract. At some point, the negative pressure in the root isn't enough to draw up the remaining water—the permanent wilting point is reached.

Besides taking in water, plants also put water back into the air in a process called evapotranspiration. This water is a byproduct of the photosynthesis process. Water evaporates into the air from stomata, openings on the leaf surface. Evaporation of water at the leaf surface also helps to cool the leaf. The amount of evapotranspiration is important because it determines how much water a plant needs to take in through its roots. When water evaporates from the leaf surface, it generates negative pressure that is transmitted down to the roots. That's the same negative pressure that causes water to be pulled from the soil into the root. From there the water can be transported back up to the leaves.

Temporary wilting occurs when a plant is evapotranspiring more water than it is taking in and it shuts its stomata. This results in a loss of turgor pressure in the plant and a limp appearance. Supplemental watering or a reduction in sunlight or temperature brings the plant back from the brink. However, it's important to know that production, be it of flowers or fruit, lags in times of inadequate water even if the plant shows no visible signs of stress. And although water may remain available in the soil, remember that over time it gets harder for the plant to use it. Supplemental watering may be necessary before plants show any stress.

WATER AND WEATHER

A number of weather factors come into play in a plant's hydration process. Sunlight is the driving force for photosynthesis and its water requirement. Temperature, relative humidity and wind affect evapotranspiration. Higher temperatures, lower relative humidities and stronger winds all increase evaporation and water usage.

The natural water budget for plants is fairly simple in terms of water inflow and outflow. On the plus side, we have rain, and perhaps melting snow in winter, putting water into the soil. On the negative side there is mainly evapotranspiration from the plant leaves with some direct evaporation from the soil surface during the growing season.

Keeping track of soil moisture input during the growing season simply means measuring the rain that occurs. A simple rain gauge can be mounted near the garden or field. Plastic rain gauges cost only a few dollars and they are available just about everywhere garden supplies are sold.

Of course, the soil-water budget can be changed by adding water to the soil through any irrigation method, from a watering can to an in-ground sprinkler system. But the question is always: How much water is needed?

It is extremely difficult to measure the amount of water lost by evapotranspiration. Although not exactly the same, evaporation from a water surface can be used to estimate soil water loss—so measuring the amount of water evaporated each day from a container of water is one way to judge how quickly the soil is drying out.

In the heat of the summer, measured evaporation rates can be excessive, a quarter-inch or more in one day at most locations. Although evapotranspiration rates from plants would be somewhat less than this, it does indicate how quickly water can be used up.

There are several government websites that can provide useful water-budget information. Sites for local agricultural extension services or agricultural experiment stations provide data specifically for your area. The Climate Prediction Center, cpc.ncep.noaa.gov, has national charts depicting various soil moisture parameters.

DR. ED BROTAk is a retired meteorologist from North Carolina.

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Soil type has an important relationship with water and its availability to plants. When judging how much supplemental water your garden may need-or better yet, what plants are best suited to the typical moisture conditions in your garden-keep in mind your soil.

Sandy soils drain much of their water quickly. There is less soil moisture for the plants. Clay soils often contain large amounts of water and can be too wet for proper root development.

Loam soils, being a mixture of clay and sand, tend to have the right amount of soil moisture for most plants. Whatever your soil type, evaporation from its surface can be slowed by a top-dressing of mulch.-EB

Please submit articles of interest for Oct Newsletter by 10/14/11

Gail DaPont, editor
PO Box 1399, Freeland, WA 98249
gail@whidbey.com