

Rhododendron Society of Canada

ATLANTIC NEWSLETTER

www.AtlanticRhodo.org

Volume 24: Number 1

February 2000

CALENDAR

All R.S.C.A.R. regular monthly meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, 7:30 p.m. at the Nova Scotia Museum Auditorium, Summer St., Halifax, unless otherwise noted. Parking provided in the Museum lot. Friends, guests and anyone interested in rhododendrons, azaleas or companion plants are always welcome at R.S.C.A.R. meetings or events.

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|-------------------|--|
| 1 February | Meeting: Dr Wilf Nichols: "Plant Hunting in Northern British Columbia: Native Alpines & Hardy Plants and Their Introduction into Mainstream Horticulture" |
| 7 March | Meeting: Wendy Cornwall: "Gardens of Italy", with slides
Workshop: Roundtable on "Expectations for Making Rhodo Crosses" |
| 4 April | Meeting: Captain Dick Steele: "Magnolias".
Stephen Archibald: "The Morocco Garden of Yves Ste. Laurent" |
| 2 May | Meeting: Bernie Jackson: "Alpines and Their Growing Requirements"
Members Plant Sale (see Special Notice in this Newsletter) |
| 21 May | Annual May Plant Sale and Mini-Show. Nova Scotia Museum
(see Special Notice in this Newsletter) |
| 3 June | RSC Annual General Meeting & Show: Floral Hall, Edwards Gardens, Toronto |

(The May Newsletter will be mailed in May)

ATLANTIC NOTES

ARS/RSC District 12 (National) Membership fees for 2000 were due on December 1 and 'Local' membership fees were due on January 1. If you have not renewed your membership please do so now. If you are not sure if you have renewed, please contact **Betty MacDonald** our **Membership Secretary, 902-852-2779**. The current dues structures are as follows:

1. R.S.C. - A.R.S. Membership (which includes Atlantic membership) \$42.00 Canadian for individual membership. Please make your cheque payable to - "Rhododendron Society of Canada" and send to **National Treasurer, Mr. Robert Dickhout, R.S.C. District 12 A.R.S., 5200 Timothy Crescent, Niagara Falls, Ontario L2E 5G3.** Be sure to specify Atlantic Region.

2. Atlantic Society only (which includes all privileges, mailings and activities of R.S.C. Atlantic only) \$15.00 for individual or family membership. Please make your cheque payable to "R.S.C. Atlantic Region" and send to **Atlantic Membership Secretary, Betty MacDonald, 534 Prospect Bay Road, Prospect Bay, Nova Scotia, B3T1Z8.**

When renewing your membership please include your telephone number. This will be used for RSCAR purposes only (co-ordination of potluck suppers and other events) and will be kept strictly confidential. Thanks!



A very warm welcome to our new and returning R.S.C. Atlantic Region members who have joined since the October 1999 Newsletter:

Terry Bower	Shelburne, NS
Hung-Min Chiang	Charlottetown, PEI
Sarah Davis	Halifax, NS
Cindy Donaldson	Hammonds Plains, NS
Duff and Donna Evers	Hammonds Plains, NS
Janet Quigg	Dartmouth, NS
Shirley Sangster	Dartmouth, NS
David Wojcik	Hammonds Plains, NS



WETTING AGENT

As promised at the January Meeting, we have a wetting agent available in 50ml bottles. This product is perfect for wetting stubbornly dry peat-based potting mixes that have dried out, or for peat itself. For avid gardeners, this quantity should last for a year or so of normal usage. It is simply mixed with water and applied to the soil. We all know how unreceptive peat can be to water, once it is parched. The price will be \$2 per bottle and includes instructions and will be available at the March Meeting. Cheques should be payable to "RSCAR". If you would like some brought to a later meeting, please email John Weagle a note to that effect at **Taliensia@aol.com**.

SPECIAL NOTICES

MEMBERS PLANT SALE

**During Regular Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, May 2, 2000**

Members may bring plant material to sell at the regular monthly meeting in May. Plants should be uncommon or unusual varieties of perennials, annuals, shrubs, etc. that are not readily available commercially or rhododendron species and hybrids - seed grown or rooted cuttings. Members will be required to price and sell their plants themselves. This is a great way to get rid of those surplus plants while recouping some of your expenses for pots and soil.

MAY 2000 PLANT SALE

**Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History - Auditorium - Lower Level
1747 Summer Street, Halifax**

Sunday, May 21 - 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

This Sale is one of our major fund-raisers and it relies heavily on donations from our members. We hope to have a good selection of tree and shrub seedlings, rooted cuttings, perennials, annuals, etc. Please keep the Sale in mind this Spring when you are seed-sowing, transplanting and dividing. Your donations are greatly appreciated. Members are requested to drop off any donations between 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

Donors and Sale volunteers will be able to select two plants prior to the Sale opening. This will not include nursery-grown stock this year. Plants must be selected, paid for, and taken to your vehicle a minimum of one hour prior to the Sale opening. This rule will be strictly enforced! No exceptions!

Plan to attend and bring your friends. This event is always popular and the line-up to get in is usually long. For the best selection we recommend that you plan to arrive prior to the 1:30 p.m. opening time.

Members, whose dues are current, will be able to pre-order plants from the nursery grown rhododendrons, azaleas and companion plants that we are bringing in for the sale. Many of the varieties are in very limited quantities so be sure to order early to avoid disappointment.

Volunteers are needed to help with the sale. If you can help with the sale please contact **Ken Shannik** at (902) 422-2413. E-mail: InsigneGdn@aol.com

SPRING 2000 MINI-SHOW

**Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History - Main Level
1747 Summer Street, Halifax**

Saturday, May 20 - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 21 - 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The May Mini-Show is a non-competitive exhibition of rhododendrons, azaleas and any other early-Spring blooming plants. It is held annually in conjunction with our May Sale. The Show is an important opportunity to educate the general public and always draws many inquisitive visitors.

Volunteers are needed to help supervise the display. You need not be an expert. If you can assist either with your time or by lending plant material, please contact **Jenny Sandison** at (902) 624-9013.

RSCAR 2000 SEED EXCHANGE

INSTRUCTIONS

Send all orders to: **Kathy Chute, Box 45, Milton, Nova Scotia B0T 1P0 CANADA**

CANADIAN: Enclose a self-addressed envelope and one first class stamp for every six packets ordered.

FOREIGN: Enclose a self-addressed envelope and \$1.00 for every six packets ordered instead of stamps.

One packet per lot per person. More may be ordered but are subject to availability. **All orders must be on the form provided and should be received by March 31, 2000.** Save this Seed List as seed will be identified by number only.

Seed packets are \$2.00 each for hand-pollinated and collected wild seed and \$1.50 each for open pollinated seed. Please make your cheque or money order payable to 'RSC Atlantic Region'.

SEED LIST

DONORS: **CRA** Don Craig, Centreville, NS **HAR** Joe Harvey, Victoria, BC **SHA** Ken Shannik, Halifax, NS. **TIG** Peter Tigerstedt, Finland **WEA** John Weagle, Halifax, NS **WIL** Bill Wilgenhof, Antigonish, NS. **WOO** Goerge Woodard, Westbury, NY

Rhododendron Species - Collected Wild - \$2.00

- 001 WEA Evergreen Azalea Species cw Ichofusa, Japan
#981025 (Li 1999-809) Zone 6?
- 002 WEA Deciduous Azalea Species cw Ishizuchisan,
Japan #991013 (Li 1999-759) Zone 6?
- 003 HAR macrophyllum cw Shawnigan Lake,
Vancouver Island
- 004 WEA yakushimanum cw Yakushima Island, Japan
1630 metres (Li1999)

Rhododendron Species - Hand-Pollinated - \$2.00

- 005 SHA camtschaticum
- 006 CRA bakeri 'Top of the Mountain' (golden)
- 007 TIG brachycarpum ssp. brachycarpum Tigerstedtii
Group KO9-98-280 (1998 seed of the 'real
thing')
- 008 WIL canadensis
- 009 HAR degrobianum ssp. heptamerum 'Enamato'
- 010 WEA ferrugineum 'Boulderwood'
- 011 HAR schlippenbachii FG
- 012 SHA vaseyi ex 'Haag's Red Form' ARS94-534
- rosy red

Rhododendron Species - Open-Pollinated - \$1.50

- 013 HAR calophyllum FG#1461 ex Vaartnou
- 014 WIL carolinianum
- 015 HAR decorum FG#1461 ex Vaartnou
- 016 HAR decorum FG
- 017 SHA fauriei RSF#66/539
- 018 HAR fortunei FG#1129 Vaartnou
- 019 HAR fulvum ex Stuart Holland
- 020 HAR insigne

- 021 SHA kaempferi 'William Tritt' (aka Hfx Hardy)
- 022 SHA kaempferi 'Eastern Fire'
- 023 HAR makinoi FG#983
- 024 WEA maximum (Gable's red leaf form)
- 025 SHA mucronulatum v. chejuense
- 026 WIL mucronulatum - white
- 027 WIL mucronulatum - pink
- 028 WEA mucronulatum ('Woodland Pink' x
'Cornell Pink')
- 029 HAR oreodoxa FG#2032
- 030 HAR pseudochrysanthum FG
- 031 HAR yakushimanum 'Whitney Form'

Rhododendron Hybrids - Hand-Pollinated - \$2.00

- 032 WOO 'April Rose' x 'Looye's Tetra Pink'
- 033 WOO 'April Rose' x ['Starry Night' x
(carolinianum 'Epoch' x augustinii)]
- 034 WOO 'Blue Ridge' x 'Northern Starburst'
- 035 WEA 'Baden Baden' x 'Sumatra'
- 036 WEA 'Baden Baden' x brachycarpum Roseum
Group #7
- 037 WEA 'Betty Hume' x proteoides Berg
- 038 HAR degrobianum ssp. heptamerum 'Enamato'
x clemantinae
- 039 HAR degrobianum ssp. heptamerum 'Enamato'
x makinoi
- 040 HAR degrobianum ssp. heptamerum 'Enamato'
x pachysanthum
- 041 HAR degrobianum ssp. heptamerum 'Enamato'
x pseudochrysanthum
- 042 HAR degrobianum ssp. heptamerum 'Enamato'
x tsariense

- 043 WOO 'Looye's Tetra Pink' x 'Northern Starburst'
- 044 HAR yakushimanum 'Exbury' x clementinae
- 045 HAR yakushimanum 'Exbury' x degonianum
ssp. heptamerum 'Enamoto'
- 046 HAR yakushimanum 'Exbury' x insigne
- 047 HAR yakushimanum 'Exbury' x pachysanthum
- 048 HAR yakushimanum 'Exbury' x
pseudochrysanthum
- 049 HAR yakushimanum 'Exbury' x wiltonii
- 050 HAR yakushimanum 'Yaku Angel' x makinoi

Rhododendron Hybrids - Open-Pollinated - \$1.50

- 051 HAR fortunei hybrid ex Buchanan-Simpson
garden, large pink-peach

Azalea Hybrids - Hand-Pollinated - \$2.00

- 052 WEA Laura Morland x (nakaharai 'Orange Form'
x kiusianum Mt. Fuji)F2 - dwarf white
- evergreen

Azalea Hybrids - Open-Pollinated - \$1.50

- 053 WIL ('Homebush' x Unnamed Big Pink)
RSCAR95-048 - selection - "June Bride"
- 054 WIL ('Homebush' x Unnamed Big Pink)
RSCAR95-048
- 055 WIL ('Homebush' x Golden Yellow Frilled)
RSCAR95-049
- 056 WIL Deciduous Azalea Hybrids - Mixed Colours

Companion Plants - Open-Pollinated - \$1.50

- 057 SHA Actaea erythrocarpa (Baneberry) - black
berries, poisonous - perennial
- 058 SHA Actaea spicata - as above but shorter
- 059 WIL Aquilegia flabellata 'Mini-Star' (Dwarf
Japanese Fan-Leaf Columbine) - blue/white
- perennial
- 060 WIL Aquilegia species? (Columbine) - tall pink,
most come true - perennial
- 061 WIL Campanula glomerata (Clustered
Bellflower) - blue - perennial
- 062 WIL Campanula persicifolia (Peach-leaved
Bellflower) - blue - perennial
- 063 WIL Campanula persicifolia 'Alba' (Peach-
leaved Bellflower) - white - perennial
- 064 SHA Clematis integrifolia - blue, herbaceous,
non-climbing - perennial
- 065 WIL Delphinium cv. - two-tone blue - per.
- 066 WIL Digitalis mixed - biennial/perennial
- 067 WIL Echinacea purpurea (Coneflower) - perennial
- 068 SHA Gentiana affinis - blue, 4" - perennial
- 069 SHA Gentiana asclepaedia (Willow Leaf
Gentian) - blue, 24" - perennial
- 070 WIL Geranium sanguineum 'Splish Splash' -
violet with stripe - perennial
- 071 WIL Helianthus sp. - tall, yellow - perennial
- 072 WIL Iris kaempferi (ensata) (Japanese Iris)
- purple/blue - perennial
- 073 WIL Iris siberica (Siberian Iris) - blue - perennial
- 074 WIL Iris sibirica (Siberian Iris) - white - perennial

- 075 WIL Liatris spicata (Gayfeather) lavender - per.
- 076 SHA Lilium henryi - orange - perennial
- 077 WIL Lilium martagon - mixed - pink & white
- 078 WIL Lilium hybrids - mixed - perennial
- 079 WIL Limonium 'Blue Cloud' - ? - perennial
- 080 SHA Lobelia syphyllitica - 3'+, blue - perennial
- 081 WIL Lychnis chanceltonica (Maltese Cross) - red
- perennial
- 082 WEA Magnolia x loebneri 'Spring Snow' - tree
- 083 WEA Magnolia sieboldii 'Halifax Hardy' - tree
- 084 WEA Magnolia sieboldii - Wainwright Garden
- 085 WEA Menziesia ciliicalyx v. purpurea - shrub
- sow as per rhododendrons
- 086 WIL Monarda - mixed (Bee Balm) - perennial
- 087 WIL Paeonia - mixed - from over 25 cultivars
- 088 SHA Penstemon virens - blue 4" - alpine
- 089 WIL Platycodon grandiflora (Balloon Flower)
- blue - perennial
- 090 WIL Potentilla species - yellow, clump-
forming, 24" - perennial
- 091 SHA Rodgersia sambucifolia - perennial
- 092 SHA Rodgersia henrici hybrid - perennial
- 093 WIL Rudbeckia - mixed colours, double and
single - perennial
- 094 SHA Scilla scilloides - pink, 16" spikes, summer
- perennial
- 095 WIL Stachys byzantina - Lamb's Ears - perennial

Notes

1. Open-pollinated species may not come true from seed. Cultivars, with the exception of a few perennials do not come true. Plants from these seeds should not be labelled as being that species or cultivar. Be sure that you label the plants as being 'OP' in the case of species and 'ex' in the case of cultivars.
2. Degonianum ssp. heptamerum 'Enamoto' was formerly metternichii 'Enamoto'
3. FG indicates seed was collected at Finnerty Gardens, Victoria BC
4. We would like to thank the seed donors for their time and effort making crosses, collecting and cleaning seeds.
5. Magnolia seed has been partially stratified. Store in plastic packet in fridge until ready to sow, then sow in warm soil.
6. See the forthcoming RSCAR Members' Handbook for an article on growing rhododendrons from seed. The article can also be found on our website:

www.AtlanticRhodo.org

MAY 2000 PLANT SALE

ADVANCE PLANT SALE FOR MEMBERS

Members may pre-order plants from the nursery grown stock to be brought in for the May Plant Sale. This year's offering, unfortunately, offers very few 'new' rhododendrons. However, most have not been offered for a number of years and will be of interest to our newer members and those who missed out the last time around. We continue to offer the Finnish hybrids. They are a staple to our members in colder areas and, although extremely hardy, are very nice vigorous hybrids even for those in milder climates.

This year's feature is a broad range of conifers mostly in affordable sizes. Many have not been tested in our climate thus we cannot project a hardiness rating. We will not know if they are hardy until we try them. With plants smaller than one gallon in size, we recommend planting them out in "nursery" beds where they can be watched, adequately watered, and protected for the first few winters before being placed out in their permanent garden positions.

Quantities of some items are very small and others we may not receive at all. You may list substitutes for specific plants on the order form. (i.e. If you are ordering plant #1 and if it is not available, you would like to receive plant #3 - enter the number '3' in the sub column beside plant #1.)

You may order more than one plant per variety. However, plants will be allocated on a basis of one plant per membership, based on the order in which they are received. Following this one per membership allocation, an adequate reserve will be held back for the public sale in May. Any surplus will be divided up among multiple variety orders. Some items listed have been offered to members in the past few years and will only be available at the public sale in May. These are indicated as 'May Sale Only.' Please complete the enclosed order form and return it no later than Friday, March 24, 2000.

There were some problems with some of the deciduous trees and shrubs last year - namely their roots were dead and they failed to leaf out properly. The plants in question were *Acer japonicum* 'Aureum', *Cornus kousa* 'Satomi', *Cornus mas*, *Corylopsis pauciflora*, *Viburnum juddii* and *Larix laricina* 'Newport Beauty.' *Daphne burkwoodii* 'Brigg's Moonlight' last year had a bumpy ride from the west coast and thus we guaranteed its survival. If you purchased any of these plants and they did not live, please indicate this on your order form and you will be given a credit for them. Should you not wish to order this year or if your credit exceeds this year's order, a refund will be issued.

Plants are to be picked up at 12 Central Street, Bedford, NS on Saturday, April 29, 2000 between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. (The driveway is around the corner on Gardon St.) Plants are to be paid for when they are picked up. Do not send payment with your order form. Plants will not be shipped. Any plants not picked up will be offered for sale at the May Plant Sale.

Return your order form to: **Ken Shannik, 1421 Edward Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 3H5**

LEPIDOTE RHODODENDRONS

R. 'Manitau' - A 'Conestoga' (*carolinianum* x *racemosum*) hybrid. Golden orange buds open to clear light pink flowers, which deepen in colour with age. It literally covers itself in bloom. Early. Bronzy coloured foliage in winter. A semi-dwarf with a dense, compact habit. To 18" high. One of my favourites. Zone 5. (1 gal. - \$15.00 May Sale Only)

1. R. 'Milestone' (*minus* v. *compacta* x *dauricum* v. *sempervirens*) Frilled, bright purplish-red flowers in flat ball-shaped trusses. A very floriferous and early blooming Mezitt hybrid. Orange/red fall colour. Dense in habit. To 3' x 3' in 10 years. Bud hardy to at least -25°C (-13°F). Plant hardy to -29°C (-20°F). (1 gal. - \$15.00)

2. *R. mucronulatum* 'Cornell Pink' - A selection of this deciduous species with bright rose-pink flowers. Blooms very early in spring before the leaves emerge. Golden yellow fall colour. Upright habit to 9' high. Requires excellent drainage. Zone 5. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

3. *R. 'Weston's Pink Diamond'* ('P.J.M.' x *mucronulatum* 'Cornell Pink') Frilled double pink flowers have a silver-toned centre which gives a 'sparkling effect.' Another very early blooming and floriferous Mezitt hybrid. Red, orange & yellow fall colour. Bronzey winter colour. Vigorous, wide upright habit. To 6' high x 4' wide. Hardy to -28°C (-18°F). Not received last year. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

ELEPIDOTE RHODODENDRONS

R. 'Golfer' (*yakushmanum* x *pseudochrysanthum*) Perhaps the finest foliage of any hybrid. Persistent silver tomentum and pale beige indumentum. Flowers are clear pink fading to white in dome-shaped trusses. Broad, well-branched habit. To 30" high x 42" wide in 15 years. A Berg hybrid. Zone 6 or colder? (1 gal. - \$15.00 May Sale Only)

4. *R. 'Mardi Gras'* (*yakushmanum* 'Koichiro Wada' x 'Vanessa') Large 3" frilled flowers are soft pink with darker margins in ball-shaped trusses fade to blush white. Narrow glossy dark green leaves have reddish-brown indumentum. Compact, dense semi-dwarf habit to 3'h. in 10 years. A very floriferous Bovee hybrid. Hardy to at least -20°C (-5°F). A few only. (2 gal. - \$30.00)

R. 'Normandy' ('Newburyport Beauty' x 'Newburyport Belle') Bright rosy-pink flowers with deeper pink ruffled margins and slight orange spotting. Leaves deep green. Uniform, dense, broad- rounded habit. To 4'h. in 10 years. A Leach hybrid hardy to -29°C (-20°F). (1 gal. - \$15 May Sale Only)

5. *R. 'Rangoon'* ('Fanfare' x 'Gertrude Schale') Medium to dark red flowers in trusses of 8 florets. Dark green foliage with red buds and petioles. To 3' high x 6' wide in 10 yrs. Hardy to -26°C (-15°F). A few only in 2 gal. size. (1 gal. - \$15.00/2 gal. \$30.00)

R. yakushmanum 'Mist Maiden' - If you were to grow only one rhododendron, this should be the one. This species has long narrow leaves with tan-white indumentum. New growth is covered in silver tomentum. Dense foliage covers a plant that is symmetrical and broadly mounded in shape. Its rosy-

pink buds open to form large apple-blossom pink trusses which fade to white. Slow growing to 4'h. x 11'w. in 30 yrs. Best in a half-day of sun. A proven performer. Z5. (1 gal. - \$15.00 May Sale Only)

R. yakushmanum 'Ken Janeck' - Originally thought to be a "yak" hybrid, DNA tests now indicates that this is a selection of the species. Very similar to 'Mist Maiden' but slightly more upright in habit. Zone 5. (1 gal. - \$15.00 May Sale Only)

SUPER-HARDY FINNISH ELEPIDOTE RHODO HYBRIDS

These super-hardy hybrids, bred in Finland, are well worth a try almost anywhere in the Maritimes. We hear that they are doing very well in PEI. More information on the Finnish breeding program can be found in the Fall 1996 Journal of the A.R.S.

6. *R. 'Elviira'* (*brachycarpum* v. *tigerstedtii* x *forestii* v. *repens*) Bright red flowers cover this very low, densely branched, spreading hybrid. Very early blooming and subject to late frosts. Avoid eastern exposure if you are in a frost prone area. Under 2' high. Bud hardy to -34°C (-29°F). (1 gal. - \$15.00)

7. *R. 'Mikkeli'* (*brachycarpum* v. *tigerstedtii* x *smirnowii*) White flowers, tinted pink, with green spotting. Dense, lush green foliage on a compact well-branched plant. Hardy to -37°C (-35°F). A few only. (2 gal. - \$30.00)

8. *R. 'Peter Tigerstedt'* (*brachycarpum* v. *tigerstedtii* x *catalgla*) Sparkling white flowers are heavily flecked giving the effect of a large burgundy blotch. Late blooming. Long, lustrous leaves on an upright spreading plant. To 6' high. Extremely hardy - perhaps to -36°C (-33°F). A few only in the 2 gallon size. (1 gal. - \$15.00/2 gal. \$30.00)

9. *R. 'Pohjohla's Daughter'* (*smirnowii* x *catalgla*) Large open funnel-shaped flowers are almost pure white. Low compact mounding habit to 3.5' high and spreading wider. Hardy to -34°C (-28°F). (1 gal. - \$15.00)

DECIDUOUS AZALEAS

10. *Azalea 'Wallowa Red'* (syn. 'Red Hot') - Deep velvety red flowers in mid-season. Open rounded habit with arching branches. To 6'h. x 4'w. Fiery red fall colour. Hardy to -26°C (-15°F). (1 gal. - \$15.00)

EVERGREEN AZALEAS

11. *Azalea* 'Hino White' - A Shamarello hybrid with pure white 2" flowers. Spreading habit to 18"h. x 3'w. in 10 yrs. However, John Weagle's specimen is now over 3' high. Zone 6. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

R. kiusianum - Perhaps the best suited evergreen azalea species for our coastal climate provided it is given good drainage and plenty of sun. Densely branched and twiggy, they have a spreading, somewhat tiered habit and remain relatively low. Very floriferous. Excellent fall colour. Zone 6 but worth a try in Zone 5.

12. 'Alba' - A selection with pure white flowers and a smaller stature. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

13. 'Betty Muir' - A vibrant pink variety with very dark foliage. Considered by some to be the best selection. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

14. *Azalea* 'Komo Kulshan' - Usually listed as a variety of *kiusianum*, it is a hybrid. Flowers are bicoloured - bright rose-red with light pink centres. Leaves are larger than *R. kiusianum*. Beautiful burgundy fall colour. Z6. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

TREES

15. *Acer shirasawanum (japonicum)* 'Aureum' (Golden Full Moon Maple) Beautiful leaves are rounded and golden-green with 11 pointed lobes. Leaves develop red edges in the fall. To 12' high. Develops a beautiful angular branch structure with age. Superb. Zone 6. (1 gal. - \$20.00/2 gal. \$40.00)

16. *Magnolia* 'Butterflies' (*acuminata* 'Fertile Myrtle' x *denudata*) A broad, upright tree to 25' or more high. Stunning, 3-4" light buttery yellow flowers sit upright on its branches 'like butterflies.' Blooms before the foliage emerges. Floriferous at a young age. A highly rated Savage hybrid. Hardy to at least -30°C (-22°F), possibly colder. Not received last year. (1 gal. - \$15.00/B&B 90cm. - \$60.00)

17. *Magnolia x loebneri* 'Encore' (*kobus/stellata* hybrid) A vigorous, upright, multi-stemmed shrubby tree to 25' high with a spreading habit. Pure white 4-6" flowers born over an extended period of time in early spring. Great for areas subject to late frost since all buds do not open at the same time. Zone 5. A few only. (B&B 150cm. - \$80.00)

SHRUBS

18. *Clematis* 'Miss Bateman' - Although this large flowered hybrid has been in existence for over a century, it is not grown nearly enough here. Its 4-6"

glistening pearly-white flowers are accentuated by black-red stamens. Late spring. It is a Type B1 in that it blooms on the previous year's growth. Zone 5. A hit in my garden this year. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

19. *Clematis integrifolia* 'Caerulea' - This is completely herbaceous species with nodding indigo-blue flowers. It doesn't climb so it will need the support of nearby perennials or shrubs or let it scramble along the ground. A unique addition to the perennial border or a great filler for the shrub bed. Zone 5. A few only. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

20. *Corylopsis pauciflora* (Winter Buttercup Hazel) A much more civilized alternative to the early blooming but somewhat brash Forsythia. Pendulous clusters of two to three fragrant ¾" bell-shaped primrose yellow flowers in early spring. Yellow and orange fall colour. Densely branched beautiful horizontal habit to 10' x 10'. Plant in partly shaded spot protected from wind. Zone 6. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

21. *Cotinus* 'Grace' (*obovatus* x *coggygria* 'Velvet Cloak') An exciting new hybrid which should provide us with a much hardier 'Smoke Tree'. Huge purplish-pink flowers in panicles up to 14"h. x 11"w. in summer. The large 4-6" leaves are light red initially, darken to purple-red and then turn to scarlet in fall. A large shrub in time to 18' x 18'. Zone 5. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

22. *Daphne mezereum* 'Rubra' - This European clone of the 'February Daphne' has deep purple-red flowers. The small, highly fragrant flowers are born in clusters along the stems in early spring. These are followed by shiny red, highly poisonous berries. Foliage is dark blue-green and deciduous. Upright in habit. Can grow to 4' high. Daphnes resent being moved! Zone 5. (1 gal. - \$20.00)

23. *Fothergilla gardenii* 'Mount Airy' - A deciduous shrub with great fall colour. Erect spikes of fragrant, bottlebrush-like creamy white flowers in early spring. Red, orange and yellow fall colour. Upright, mounded habit. To 5' high x 4' wide. May be a hybrid with *F. major*. Hardy to -32°C (-25°F). A few only. Popular last year. (1gal. - \$15.00)

24. *Pieris japonica* v. *yakushimanum* 'Cavatine' - A genus of evergreen shrubs allied to rhododendrons with panicles of white, lily-of-the-valley-like flowers. Last year we offered 'Prelude'. This one is yet another in the dwarf series. It forms a dense mound of dark green foliage and reaches a size of only 2' x 2'. Very floriferous. Zone 6 but worth trying in colder areas with protection. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

25. *Pleioblastus argenteostriatus* - A dwarf variegated bamboo for shade to part shade. Its 6" long blue-green leaves are irregularly striped with white. Will grow 2 to 3' high but be forewarned that it is a spreader and will romp around! Root hardy in Zone 6 - cut back the previous years canes in early spring before new growth starts. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

26. *Ulmus x elegantissima* 'Jacqueline Hillier' (*glabra x plottii*) - This hybrid elm forms a small to medium sized shrub. It has a twiggy, dense, suckering habit densely clothed in toothed and pleated 1 - 1.5" leaves. Its arched branches give a layered effect. Beautiful soft yellow fall colour and smooth gray bark. Slow growing but will eventually grow 6 to 8' high. Very elegant. Z5. (1 litre - \$7.00)

Viburnum plicatum v. tomentosum (Doublefile Viburnum) A deciduous shrub with a horizontal arching habit and 4" dark green leaves. White flowers are produced in cymes (like lacecaps) along the branches in double rows. Spring blooming. Flowers are followed by red fruit ripening to black although some sources state two clones are required for good berry set. To 10' tall. For sun to part shade but avoid very dry sites. Dirr speculates that this is perhaps the most graceful flowering shrub. Zone 6. A few only of each variety are available.

27. 'Mariesii' - A highly rated cultivar with a beautiful, horizontally tiered habit to 10' high. Flowers are large and creamy white. Dark maroon fall colour. (2 gal. - \$20.00)

28. 'Popcorn' - This cultivar has white flowers in cymes shaped like golf balls but slightly larger. Extremely floriferous - the flowers can obscure the foliage. Selected by Leach. (2 gal. - \$20.00)

29. 'Shasta' - Another excellent cultivar with very large white flowers in cymes to 6" wide. To 6' high x 11' wide. (B&B 50cm. - \$30.00)

30. 'Shoshoni' - A cultivar more suited to the smaller garden in that it is more compact, growing to 5'h. x 8'w. Purple-red fall colour. (2 gal. - \$20.00)

CONIFERS

Chamaecyparis lawsoniana (Lawson False Cypress) A highly variable species, the majority being upright and pyramidal in shape. They require a sheltered site with plenty of sun. They must be protected from the

wind and salt spray. The hardiness of these cultivars has not been tested here but given a protected site they should be hardy in Zone 6 if not in Zone 5. There are some large specimens of *C. lawsoniana* around Halifax. At these prices why not give them a try.

31. 'Columnaris' - This is an excellent blue cultivar, very columnar in habit. To 8' high x 2' wide in 10 years. Will become quite tall with age but will remain very narrow. (4" pot - \$4.00)

32. 'Erecta Viridis' - A pyramidal, fresh green cultivar to 10' high or more in time. (4" pot - \$4.00)

33. 'Gimbornii' - This is a semi-dwarf cultivar forming a dense, compact, irregularly shaped pyramidal dome to 3' high. Foliage is glaucous blue-green. (4" pot - \$4.00)

34. 'Wisselii' - Broader and more open than 'Columnaris', this cultivar can be pruned to be more columnar. Bluish-green foliage. Definitely not a dwarf - the mother plant is now over 50' tall. Unlikely to reach that height here. (1 litre - \$5.00)

35. *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Crispissii' - This Golden Hinoki Cypress cultivar has a broad, loose, conical habit with fern-like tiered foliage - bright yellow in colour. To 10'h. x 4'w. in 10 years but will get much larger in time. Give it plenty of sun and protect from wind and salt spray. Zone 6. (1 litre - \$5.00)

Chamaecyparis thyoides (White Cypress, Atlantic White Cedar) Cultivation as per the above two species. Zone 6 or colder - reportedly doing well in Truro the past few years.

36. 'Heatherbun' - This cultivar has a soft fine texture similar to heathers. Bluish foliage with a bronze tone turns a rich purple in winter. Tight bun shaped habit. To 3' high. Vigourous. (1 gal. - \$15.00)

37. 'Meth Dwarf' - This cultivar has somewhat stiffer foliage and an upright conical habit. Grey-green foliage turns purple in winter. To 3' high x 1' wide in 10 years. (1 litre - \$5.00)

Juniperus communis - The two Junipers offered this year are very dwarf and dense pyramidal forms. Both are ideal for the rock garden or trough culture. Provide them with plenty of sun and plenty of air circulation. Like any juniper prune out any dead blighted foliage. A tedious job but well worth the effort, as these can be beautiful specimens. Zone 5 or colder. Will perform better in areas with warmer summers. Needs good drainage.

38. '**Compressa**' - This cultivar forms a very dense, narrow column with very fine silvery foliage. It is very slow growing but may eventually reach 30" in height. (1 litre - \$5.00/2 litre - \$9.00)

39. '**Sentinel**' ('Pencil Point') - Similar to the above but taller, coarser and less dense. May eventually grow to 6' in height. Hardier. (1 litre - \$5.00)

40. *Picea abies* '**Cy Wonder**' (Dwarf Norway Spruce) A very rare dwarf selection - so rare that I had great difficulty finding this brief description of it. Dark reddish-brown buds in spring. Slow growing. To 12" x 12" in ten years. A few only. Zone 4. Choice. (1 gal. - \$25.00)

42. *Pinus sylvestris* '**Globosa Viridis**' - This beautiful dwarf selection of the Scotch Pine forms a irregular mound or squat pyramid. It is densely clothed with green needles right to the ground. To 5' x 3' in 10 years. Zone 4. (1 litre - \$9.00)

43. *Thujaopsis dolobrata* '**Nana**' (Staghorn Cedar) This conifer resembles a cedar but has broader, flatter, fan-like foliage - glossy green on the top and marked with

white on the reverse. It has thin red bark which exfoliates in papery layers. This is a low-growing selection forming a broad dense mound to 2' high x 5' wide in 10 years. *Thujaopsis dolobrata* has garnered the nickname - battleaxe cedar - here. Zone 6.

(4" pot - \$4.00/1 litre - \$5.00)

Tsuga canadensis - In its typical form, the Canadian Hemlock is an towering and beautiful tree with dark green foliage. The following two selections are much smaller and ideal for the rock garden or shrub border. They will need some sun to keep their compact shape. Resents drought. Zone 5.

44. '**Bennett**' - A dense, low mounding selection with arched branches and pendulous tips. To 2'h. x 3'w. in 10 yrs. Very graceful. Similar if not the same as the selection '**Minima**'. (B&B - 60cm. - \$65.00)

45. '**Jervis**' - One of the slowest growing dwarf selections. Congested, dense irregular upright habit. Yellowish new growth. Very slow growing - to 15" high in 25 years! A superb plant for the rock garden or trough. (1gal.-\$20.00)



RSCAR 2000 TISSUE CULTURE

The plants will be available for pick up at Halifax at St. Andrews School on Bayers' Road. The time will be 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday April 1, 2000. You will be advised when the plants arrive. The final details will be provided at that time. Again this year your order will be available when you arrive. You will be able purchase additional plants if you so desire.

In addition to the published list, we have a quantity of Francesca (a great red) available. If you want to pre-order, contact me.

Bob Pettipas,
RSCAR
12 Edmond Drive
Dartmouth N.S.
B2W-2K2

E-mail: pettipas@ns.sympatico.ca



MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership fees for 2000 for both categories are now past due. If you have not renewed your membership please do so now, this is your final notice. If you are not sure if you have renewed, please contact **Betty MacDonald**, 902-852-2779. See Membership information at the top of page two.

MRS. BERRY'S BED

Part II

By Alleyne Cook

Editor's Note: What follows is a series of vignettes spanning the years of the author's friendship with the great plantswoman Rae Selling Berry

Berry and Her Sources

Mrs. Berry had certainly subscribed to the Asian plant collectors. I have seen it written that she subscribed to several of George Forrest's collecting expeditions. At no time did she mention any but the one. She was crossing the foyer of the Empress Hotel in Victoria, B.C. when she saw the manager beckoning to her. In his office he had a photo of George Forrest with his arm around his black Labrador dog. Forrest was preparing to depart on another expedition to China and the manager suggested she write to see if there was a share she could purchase. This she did. In reply, Forrest explained that the expedition was fully subscribed but he would sell her a half share for \$500. That was in the 1930's!

In the course of time her share arrived. Forrest has always been remembered for the incredible amount of seed he dispatched from his collecting areas. Employing a number of trained natives he harvested on a grand scale. Mrs. Berry needed 1200 six-inch clay pans to accommodate her seeds. How many species this represented she never said, but knowing Forrest's reputation one species probably needed several pans.

She then loaded the lot into her car and drove up into the snow on Mt. Hood. Being very wealthy, she would have had a very large car. Even so, back in the 1920's and 30's that road was not of high standard. Nor were car tires! Nor do we know how many loads it took! For six weeks they stayed buried in the snow. Then she drove up, retrieved them and brought them home. Never, she always said, had she ever had such wonderful germination. She never mentioned going to that trouble again.

Berry's Deafness

Because Mrs. Berry was completely deaf, conversations tended to be one-sided. It is not generally realized that men don't move their upper lips when speaking, which makes them harder to lip read than women. Ted had trained his mouth to be mobile and could talk with her. Ray James and Barbara would hold a near normal conversation. This inability to converse easily meant many questions went unasked. She was also left out of all group conversations.

Ted once went collecting in the Lost River Range of Idaho when the only way to get to the collecting country was by long and hot hikes. At a very high altitude he came across a scrap of paper on which was written an incomplete short cryptic message. All referred to plants and were to be found all over the mountains. At the time, he had not met Mrs. Berry but was to learn shortly afterwards that this was the way most men (including myself) communicated with her.

The U.K. Trip

After the war, when it became possible to travel again, Mrs. Berry journeyed to England. Her companion was, if I remember correctly, a man called Jack. She had a number of English friends, all of whom treated her well, but the trip was not a success.

She was a superb grower of alpines with a massive knowledge; every winter she read Farrer's English Rock Garden from cover to cover. It was not only Farrer's knowledge but his unequalled use of the English language that so intrigued her.

When she got to England, it was obvious that her knowledge meant nothing. It is an attitude a great number of colonials know, usually justifiable, but not with Mrs. Berry. She also got herself in trouble at the R.H.S. Show. At that time there were several very fine strains of *Primula polyanthus* being sold in North America. Wonderful bright oranges, reds, blues and other vibrant colours were all available. In England; there was no progress from the brown-reds and dull yellows that had been around since before the war. At the Show, Mrs. Berry who could not follow a multiple conversation, wandered away and came in front of a *polyanthus* display. Because of her deafness she had no control over the volume of her voice, so the entire hall was startled when she bellowed "Jack" and everyone turned to look at her. What they saw was Mrs. B. standing with her fingers holding her nose in a gesture of disgust and pointing at the *polyanthus* display.

After telling this story, she never failed to burst into peals of laughter and then become serious and explain that she had as much knowledge as anyone in England.

An example of the English attitude. It was probably not until the 1980's that the English started to give serious lectures here on the West Coast. The most pathetic I've ever sat through was one given by Francis Perry.

The other event that amused Mrs. B. was her visit to the House of Commons. She belonged to an American ladies organization and they had arranged the tour. It happened that the guide was both a member of the House and a titled Gent. Because of the multiple conversation problem she missed this point. A wonderful tour it was and when it came time to thank the guide she noticed that no one was tipping him, so, when shaking his hand, she slipped him £10. He looked at it, reared back, handed it back, spoke his piece and departed. The tour organizer explained who he was. That night she wrote a letter explaining her problem and enclosed a cheque for his charities. Mrs. Berry laughed.

Gifts To Mrs. B.

Eritrichium

Ed Lohbrunner, Canada's foremost plantsman, and his wife Ethel had been Mrs. B's traveling companions for years but the time came when she became too old to take along. Ted Greig and I, when we returned from our raids, would call in to see her. It usually meant a night on those dreadful beds but I think she got a lot of pleasure from our visits. We would also open the trunk of the car and let her take what she wanted. One time we had been to Montana. Climbing a bank I had grabbed at a plant on the bank's edge just as my feet slipped from under me. The plant, *Eritrichium howardii*, peeled off the bank and came down with me. No way would I ever collect this species and certainly not a specimen 12 inches across. However the root was wrapped up and it was made ready to bring home to Iva Angerman. It didn't make it. In Portland, Ted showed it to Mrs. B. "For me?" she exclaimed and there it stayed. She went off clutching it like a doll. We couldn't refuse her.

Perfect drainage and extensive knowledge of habitats made it possible for her to grow many rarities. Between the *Primula* frames and the house, in the open, she built a number of raised beds 2-3 feet high. To construct these a similar sized pit was dug about 3 feet deep. Starting with large coarse clinkers she built up at least 5 feet of perfect drainage. At age 90 she redid 2 beds, then left them for 2 years to settle before planting.

Asarum and Lewisia

In Northern California there grows *Asarum hartwegii*, one of the treasures of our garden. Strange that it is hardly known, so little in fact that Alfred Evans, who was in charge of the RBGE Alpine section, had never seen it and went back with Mr. Green's plant. Why is it so good? Well, it has foliage which, in its class, is the finest there is. *Asarum caudatum* of our B.C. woods is well known and is also a magnificent ground cover. So, take those six inch heart-shaped leaves, mottle and marble them until they are finer than any cyclamen, grow it in a sunny location and there you have one superb garden plant.

We had this plant for years, so the only reason for my collecting yet another was to fill in the time while waiting for the other members of the family to stir themselves. We finally moved on and in due course arrived at Greer Gardens in Eugene, Oregon. Harold Greer operates this nursery, with a comprehensive collection of rhododendron species, and is also a friend. He also grows Lewisias, a strange combination when one thinks about it. It was he who showed us how easily cuttings of *Lewisia* root and the futility of expecting collected Lewisias to do well. Any side cuttings placed in sand will root. No need to bother about watering regularly; they will root in their own good time. These produce plants as good as any grown from seed and better than any collected wild.

Harold had a white *Lewisia cotyledon*, a vastly superior thing to *L. oppositifolia*. So we decided to trade. He took the *Asarum hartwegii* and we took a small plant of the white *Lewisia*, which was planted in a hole drilled in a piece of pumice - a light rock blown from volcanoes.

The Wallowas and P. Cusickiana

And so we came to Mrs. Berry and she, as was her custom, examined our loot. Because she had always been so incredibly generous, there was never a time when we refused her anything. This time it was the white *Lewisia* that she would like. In return she gave us an apparently empty pot full of soil containing *Primula cuisickiana*.

The Wallowas are a very special area located in NE Oregon, more beautiful than the Teton Range of Wyoming. Coming from Vancouver, the road climbs several thousand feet out of the canyon of the Grand Ronde River. There, across the plateau, jutting thousands of feet, are the jagged outlines of the Wallowa Mountains. The entire scene is exquisite - and so are the flowers.

Early in the season there is *Fritillaria pudica*, always finished by the time we arrived. Once there was a whole slope of *Cypripedium monatum*. Not the showiest species, with its white flowers with brown sepals, but certainly spectacular when hundreds crowd a hillside. *Sisyrinchium grandiflorum* were growing there with *Primula cuisickiana*. There were lupines and miles of *Balsamorhiza sagittata*. By summer all these wonderful herbs have retired below ground. The only plants I remember seeing were the onions.

In July the flora of the peaks is at its best. *Eritrichium nanum* is up there, several willows, penstemon species along with the masses of wild flowers found on all the western mountains.

To be continued

SEED SECRETS REVEALED!

by Joe Harvey

STRATIFICATION

A long word that most people can't spell, let alone explain what it means. It refers to the process by which certain dormant seeds can be made to germinate. The problem arises particularly with the seeds of many wild plants. By contrast, the commonly sold vegetable and flower seeds have no dormancy or have had the trait bred out of them during domestication.

The problem of dormant seed is much misunderstood. You sow some seeds, they fail to come up, so it was obviously bad seed - problem solved. Many people have thrown out pots of such seeds only to have them come up on the compost heap the next year.

The advantage to the plant of a delayed germination is that it prevents the seed sprouting in the summer or fall as soon as it is scattered. Germination is thus delayed until a more advantageous time in the spring.

The mechanisms causing delayed germination are various. Some are as simple as a tough seed coat which has to decay before the seed can germinate. For instance the tough seeds of the dove tree, *Davidia*, can sometimes have their sprouting accelerated by giving them a good whack with a 2 lb. hammer.

More frequently there is a physiological mechanism involved. For instance, hellebore seeds are shed with the embryo at a very immature stage but surrounded by a mass of endosperm (a nutritional tissue). If the seeds are kept moist and sown as soon as they are shed, the embryo will continue to grow and the seed will germinate the next spring. However, if the seeds are dried, the embryos go into a state of suspended animation and, when re-moistened, may take two years to germinate.

Most of the seeds from the north temperate zone with delayed germination require what is called cold stratification. This is achieved most simply by sowing the seed in the fall in a soilless mix and keeping the pots cool over the winter. This usually does the trick. Sometimes it takes two winters.

One problem is that many people obtain their seeds in the spring and then get annoyed when nothing comes up. The solution is to keep the pot until the fall and then keep it moist over the winter. There has to be cool temperatures and moisture.

There is some incredibly bad advice handed out on the subject of cold stratification. I have heard over the radio, and seen in magazines, that putting seed packets into the fridge or the freezer for a few days or a week, or two will aid germination. Well, the process is, as I said, a physiological one, so moisture has to be present. Putting dry seed into cold does nothing - except that keeping seed dry and cold is the best method of storing it.

The temperature at which cold stratification takes place is in the region of 4 to 8 °C. The vegetable crisper of the fridge is often used. The time period is months not days. Three to five months in the fridge may be required - i.e., about the length of the winter. I have a lot of seeds (and a hostile wife) so I use one of our outbuildings, which are unheated, for the purpose.

The bad news is that some seeds may take two or more years to germinate. I have had Japanese maples germinate the first spring and then failed to transplant the seedlings (a common failure of mine). The

next spring a whole lot more of the seeds came up. As a biologist who studies evolution I should point out that a delayed or irregular germination such as this will be a advantage to a plant in that it spreads out the risk. The longest I have had to wait for seeds to germinate is five years. These have included violets, *Iris versicolor* and *Cyclamen rhodifolium*.

I just sow my seeds in soil and wait. With over 200 pots on the go at any one time, each spring gives me plenty to do. For the less patient I can recommend putting the seeds into a sealed plastic bag with a spoonful of moist Perlite. Throw the bags into the bottom of the fridge and inspect them every few weeks. At the first signs of germination put the seeds into a pot with seedling soil and bring into warmth and light.

LABELING SEEDLINGS

There is a problem of how to label pots with seeds obtained from clones; i.e., cultivars which should have names written in single inverted commas (not always done). Since a clone has to be a graft, cutting or tissue culture, the seedling offspring cannot have the parent's name. Best get over this problem by putting "ex" in front of the name (e.g., ex-Joseph Rock), from the Latin meaning "from".

GERMINATING RHODODENDRON SEEDS

Use a soilless mix such as 3 parts peat to 1 part Perlite. It is important to avoid unsterilised soil because this introduces spores of damping-off fungus and if you get this little beastie your pots the seeds germinate and then a few days later keel over dead. Some people water with the proprietary anti-fungal agent No-Damp to avoid damping off.

Whichever method is use, moisten the mix, press into the pots to make a level surface and sprinkle the seeds very thinly over the soil. I like to just cover the seeds with 1 mm of dried Sphagnum leaves rubbed through a fine kitchen sieve. Lacking Sphagnum, fine sand may be used and even leaving the seeds uncovered works quite well. Cover the pots and put them into a warm cupboard until signs of germination appear - generally 2-8 weeks. Inspect the pots every few days, and if they show signs of drying, spray them with water from a mister.

Newly germinated Rhododendron seedlings are delicate, with thin leaves. Do not expose them to direct sun. They shrivel up in minutes. Fluorescent tubes are the best form of light to use for the first nine months. Fluorescent lights give off a cool, diffuse light which has proven useful for getting young delicate seedlings through their first stage. I use 'cool white' tubes. The more expensive Gro-Lux and similar tubes do not seem to produce any better growth.

Prick out the young seedlings at about the four-leaf stage with a tooth pick and move them to a larger pot or tray spaced a centimetre or two apart. The Plant Propagators Group produces an excellent soil mix which accelerates seedling growth. Continue to keep the pots covered and mist frequently. At this stage very dilute soluble fertiliser may be given.

Only when the plants are 2-3 cm high should they be moved to open, less humid, conditions. They may then be transplanted again and moved outside in shade.

Arbutus and Menziesia are treated in the same way as Rhododendron. It is a little uncertain whether they need some stratification. ☒

THE SCALES OF INJUSTICE

By Norman Todd

Scaly-leaved rhododendrons are not so popular as the non-scaly ones. I suppose the two main reasons for this are the smaller flower truss, or the absence of a truss, and the smaller sized leaves. Most of us are initially attracted to rhododendrons by their big showy burst of many flowers all stuck together in a multi-based mammiform and the aim of most hybridizers (not only those working with rhododendrons) has been to produce bigger, more obvious blossoms. Bold and dramatic foliage are also desirable attributes.

The word 'lepidote' means having scales. These are found on the leaves, mostly on the underside, and often on the twigs and flowers. 'Leprosy' has the same root. The elepidotes - not having scales - include all the big-leaved species - like *R. macabeum* and *falconeri* and *fortunei* and many with the most interesting foliage. The indumented species are nearly all elepidotes - e.g., *yakashimanum*, *pachysanthum*, *fulvum* and *arboreum*. Go to any garden centre and you will find only a few lepidotes. You can probably find 'PJM', 'Curlew', 'Blue Diamond' and perhaps *impenditum* but the vast majority being offered for sale will be non-scaly ones. Azaleas are elepidotes too.

Most breeding effort with elepidotes has gone into the low, dwarf varieties. The Birds and the Bees are renowned world-wide. Cox's Birds include 'Curlew', 'Chikor', 'Ptarmigan', 'Wren', 'Egret', 'Phalarope' and 'Razorbill'. Warren Berg's Bees started with 'Patty Bee' and went on to include 'Too Bee' and 'Not Too Bee' (now called 'WeeBee') but Warren went on to muddy the waters, for purposes of this article anyway, by giving his 'Bee' moniker to elepidotes when he registered 'King Bee' and 'Wanna Bee'. This roiling of the waters is just typical of the classification - the taxonomy - of rhododendrons, and Warren Berg may even have a justifiable claim to consistency.

By and large elepidote rhododendrons not cross with lepidote rhododendrons. The evolutionary lines of the two groups diverged long ago. Most elepidotes have the basic number of chromosomes ($2n = 26$) i.e., they are diploids. Most lepidotes are polyploids, with the greatest number of species having $2n = 78$ and the next most frequently occurring about half of the former with $2n = 52$. Some go as high as 156. This is one of the reasons that there are not as many lepidote hybrids as it helps to be a mother if your intended mate has the same number of chromosomes as you do. W. J. Bean, the late great English plantsman put it this way: Lepidotes are less indulgent to the hybridizer... and seemingly unpredictable".

But there are other significant differences between the two main groups of rhododendrons - the flowers are curled up one way in the bud in scaly rhodos and the opposite way in the non-scaly ones. The seeds have different shapes too. The natural world is a bit too complicated to fit into neat boxes that would make the lives of those of us who are row-and-column accountants cosy and predictable. We just have to accept the fact that there is a lot of chaos out there and that there are a lot of exceptions to the rules that we so cleverly devise.

According to the Senior Registrar for the genus rhododendron there are over 20,000 hybrids on his list. (He is still struggling to get them onto a computerized data base.) I would guess that only a small percentage are of the scaly persuasion. Just because the elepidotes are so numerous and so many are so similar (man-made chaos) the lepidotes stand out by their individuality. Our club logo is a lepidote - 'Transit Gold'. Its profile of hanging bells at least narrows one's guess at the plant's identification to something manageable. (What more could one say of an outline of 'Trude Webster' than that it was a rhododendron?) The most damaging and insulting misconception about

the lepidotes is that they are often confused with azaleas. I suppose it is asking too much to have gardeners carry around a small magnifying glass in just the same way as they carry pruners, but a sneak peek would quickly show the difference. Azaleas don't have scales, but they have long hairs lying on the tops of their leaves pointing towards the tip just like a cat's hairs point towards its tail. This is easy to see with a 10 power glass.

Many azaleas have five stamens while most other rhododendrons have ten or more and that is often diagnostic. But this article is not intended to be about taxonomy; it is really about discrimination. I can understand the small ones being confusing but to call an *augustinii* an azalea is very demoralizing to that noble plant.

Augustinii belongs to a pretty distinctive group called the Triflorum Series, or if you prefer the latest revision, the Triflora sub-section; a group that is among the most garden-worthy in the whole genus. The colour range is from white through yellow, pink, near blue, purple and almost red. The smallest form of *keiskei* is tiny, but most are in the 2 to 3 metre range. February brings *lutescens* in a good clear yellow that rivals *forsythia*, then comes the white elegance of *rigidum*, the pink of *davidsonianum*; white and coral of *yunnanense*, the sheets of blue *augustinii*; more yellow of *ambiguum* and ending the season in June with the smokey purple of *tricanthum*. Most of these are never seen in garden centres. Their leaves are willow-like, as is the growth habit but the foliage is not without interest year-round. *Lutescens*' new foliage is red while *oreotrephes* and *rigidum* are quite blue.

Broad generalizations always need retractions. The claim that the lepidotes are distinctive falls down when it comes to the 'blue' hybrids. *Augustinii* will cross with every rhododendron in the Lapponicum Series. *Impeditum*, *russatum*, *fastigiatum*, *intricatum* et al., love to get together not only among themselves but with *augustinii*.

And so, perhaps in an effort by hybridizers to show that they know lepidotes exist, they have gone to town with this group. Blue hybrid confusion reigns - absolute man-made chaos. 'Blue Diamond', 'Blue Tit', 'Bob's Blue', 'Songbird', 'Blue Chip', 'St. Breward', 'St. Tudy', 'Oceanlake', and on and on. It's almost as bad with the elepidotes where, to give one example, I counted 32 registered hybrids of 'Mars' x *yakushmanum*. The best blue hybrids in my opinion are 'Crater Lake', 'Blaney's Blue', and 'Ilam Violet'. If you have a mind for the more evocative try 'Passionate Purple' or 'Vibrant Violet' - maybe even put them in the same bed.

All of the *Vireyas*-the tropical species that we don't see too many of here in Victoria, as they can't take frost - are lepidotes. Some of them rival the orchids in their exotic flamboyance and where they can be grown outdoors- in Australia or California for example, breeding of *Vireya* hybrids is an exciting business. There are physiological problems in crossing the hardy lepidotes we can grow with the tropical show-offs, but where similar problems exist in other genera e.g., lilies, ingenious ways of making them compatible have been found. Also, we are on the threshold of gene splicing and all that genetic engineering that we are reading about so my guess is that it will not be long before we see very different and luxuriant lepidotes. Furthermore *Vireyas* can bloom at almost anytime of the year, presenting another great opening to the rhododendron hybridizer.

In the meantime if you have a space of say, ten square metres, try a planting of one *augustinii*, one *davidsonianum*, one *yunnanense*, one *ambiguum* and one *concinnum*. Draw lots for which goes where; put them where you can see them from the kitchen table and drag in all your neighbours for ego-gratification and a cup of coffee. ☒

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COMPOST

By Judith Asmundson

Let's think about how organic matter breaks down. In nature leaves, branches and even trees fall to the ground where they decompose. The speed of this decomposition depends upon many variables: temperature, humidity, and size of the pieces for example. Composting garden debris simply speeds up this natural process, resulting in a very useful product. I use compost all around the garden. Rhododendrons love coarse compost. In my greenhouse I mix a potting soil using fine screened compost.

There is no wrong way to make compost; some methods will simply take longer than others to achieve a useful product. A compost should fit the garden and since every garden is different, every compost is different. A number of factors to consider when building a compost are: the site, the size and number boxes or piles, construction of these boxes, what to put in the compost and what not to put in, how to put material into the compost, and turning the compost.

Site

A compost will work in any garden. We have found that a compost in the sun will dry out too fast, so a shady or semi-shaded area works easiest, but if it must be located in the sun simply check regularly and water when necessary. We have also found that it is easier when gardening on a hill, to site the compost at the top, the material going in to the box is much lighter than the finished compost. A heavy wheelbarrow is easier to push downhill. In a large garden it may be easier to have several small composts spread throughout the property than one huge one.

Construction

A compost can be as simple as a pile on the ground to one of the large black plastic bins that you can turn. I like to have a rigid box with removable boards at the front for ease of turning. Where we are able to have two or more boxes in a row between the adjacent boxes, I like to use wires or leave spaces between the boards so the worms and micro-organisms can move to where the conditions are more favourable. We also leave spaces in the outer boards unless we don't want debris falling behind the compost box (for example if the box is against a wood fence), this debris will eventually rot wood or be a nice nesting spot for rats. If wood is used, cedar or pressure treated will last the longest. I have seen them made of concrete blocks but these take a lot more room than wood. In one garden where I do the compost we use temporary wire rings of about one metre diameter, for extra room for leaves in the fall and extra grass clippings in the spring. These are stored flat when not in use.

Size And Number

The minimum size should be 1 m x 1 m x 1 m (3ft x 3ft x 3ft); any smaller will not generate enough heat to work properly. How often are you going to turn your compost? Infrequent turning requires larger boxes than frequent turning. The smaller the box, the more often it needs turning, but the quicker it is to turn. The boxes do not have to be the same size. The box where fresh material is added should be the biggest. As compost breaks down the volume reduces. I like to have at least two boxes side by side; when one side is full I turn it into the other, mixing it well, then I fill the first side again while I wait for the turned side to work. At home I have four compost boxes, all in one area. Fresh material goes in to the first box. When that box is full I turn it into the second, which then gets turned into the third box. If I have an abundance of fresh debris the third box gets turned again, otherwise I use the fourth box to store extra manure and bagged dry leaves from the fall.

What To Put In

Garden debris of all sorts may be added to the compost. The best composts are layers of brown, green and soil. Brown are high in carbon and low in nitrogen. Some examples of these are: dry leaves, dried clippings from garden, dried grass cuttings. Stems and twigs up to 4cm (1 1/2 inches) in diameter can be added, though I generally chop them into 15cm (6inch) lengths. There are all sorts of shredders and chippers available commercially but I just use my hand clippers to chop the material. But whatever method you choose just remember that the smaller the pieces the faster you will have finished compost. Greens are high in nitrogen. Grass clippings, vegetable peelings and household compost (coffee grounds for example) and green trimmings from the garden are all examples of green. The third component is soil. the soil contains the micro-organisms and worms that decompose the fresh material. The soil may come from the garden or simply on the roots of weeds pulled from the garden or adding some finished compost. These three elements need to be layered; too much of one will lengthen the time required to finish the compost. The layers should be: brown 10-15cm (4-6 inches); green 5-7.5cm (2-3 inches); and soil up to 5 cm (2 inches). When I have too much green or brown to put in at one time, I stock pile it in bags or in wire rings. It is then available to mix in when required.

What NOT To Put in

Cooked vegetables and other food will attract rats so I do not recommend them for the compost. Stems and branches over 4cm (1 1/2 inches) in diameter take too long to breakdown. Animal wastes (cat and dog) should be put in the garbage not the compost. Some gardeners do not put diseased plant materials in the compost: these can be buried or taken to a commercial composter where the temperature is much higher than can be achieved in a home compost. Weed seeds are another taboo item with some gardeners but I put them in; I wish I could say I weeded them out before the seed formed but I am not that meticulous at home. When they germinate in freshly spread compost they are easy to hoe out.

Turning

An unturned compost, if layered as outlined above, will take about one year to breakdown. If turned once the time is cut in half. At home I turn mine only when the box of fresh material is full and by the second turn the compost is almost perfect. When turning the compost, I try to mix the layers and make sure any dry material is in contact with wet. The lumps are broken up with my pitchfork as I layer it in the second box. The fastest way to make compost is to turn it often, but no more than once each week. If turned more often the heat never gets a chance to build up inside the pile.

Watering

If a compost pile is very dry it needs to be watered as it is being turned. The compost should have the moisture of a damp (not wet) sponge. When a compost pile is damp it should be watered after turning. If the pile is very wet do not water and if available mix in some dried leaves (chopped if large). As mentioned above if the compost is located in the sun dig into the pile regularly to check on the moisture levels and water when necessary.

Covering

It is not necessary to cover a compost pile but it will keep in moisture and heat. In the winter a cover will keep out excess rain.

My favorite place in any garden is usually right in front of the compost box with a handful of finished compost under my nose; the smell is so clean and earthy. The best compost I look after is in a small garden framed by Garry oak trees. We stockpile all the leaves which are gradually mixed in throughout the year. The last thing I do there each week is to put a few pitchforks of leaves on the pile. ☒

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