

Rhododendron Society of Canada

ATLANTIC NEWSLETTER

www.AtlanticRhodo.org

Volume 25: Number 2

May 2001

25th Anniversary Year

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.

- 3 April** **Meeting:** Joe Bidermann - Use of Natural Stone in the Landscape
Joe runs Joe Bidermann Landscaping Design in Sable River and specializes in natural stone paving
Workshop: Jenny Sandison - How to Photograph in the Garden
- 1 May** **Meeting:** Mary Helleiner: "Gardening in a Cold Climate", a discussion of the Helleiner garden in Pictou County, NS. Slides
Members' Plant Sale - Members may sell their own plants after the program.
- 19 & 20 May** **Annual Early Spring Mini-Show.** Nova Scotia Museum
(See Special Notice in this Newsletter)
- 20 May** **Annual May Plant Sale.** Nova Scotia Museum
(See Special Notice in this Newsletter)
- 26 May** **2001 RSC Annual Meeting and Flower Show.**
Niagara School of Horticulture, Niagara Falls, Ontario
- Early June** **Garden Tours:** This new event is being organized by Wendy Cornwall. Members will be informed of the details in a Special Mailing.
- Early June** **Pot Luck Supper:** Members will be informed in a Special Mailing.

NB: There will not be an RSCAR Flower Show this year.

(The October Newsletter will be mailed in October)

ATLANTIC NOTES

ARS/RSC District 12 (National) Membership fees for 2001 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 2000 Newsletter:

Susan Boyd	Bedford, NS
Donalda Cusack	Halifax, NS
Beverly Dalrymple	Middle Sackville, NS
Mary Lou Landry	Halifax, NS
Patricia Leader	Halifax, NS
Gwen MacKenzie	Upper Tantallon, NS
Jacquelyn Shaw	Halifax, NS
Dr. John C. Smith	Elmsdale, NS
Ruth E. Smith	Halifax, NS
J. Wesley	Halifax, NS



SPECIAL NOTICES

2001 MAY PLANT SALE

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

Sunday, May 20 - 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 and 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. 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 earlier than the 1:30 p.m. opening time.

Members whose dues are current can pre-order plants from the nursery grown rhododendrons, azaleas and companion plants we are bringing in for the sale. Please see the 2001 Advance May Sale article elsewhere in this Newsletter.

If you have not already volunteered to assist with either the Advance Sale or the public May Sale please contact **Ken Shannik** at (902) 422-2413. E-mail: **InsigneGdn@aol.com**. If you have already volunteered, you will be contacted very shortly.

2001 SPRING MINI-SHOW

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

Saturday, May 19 - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 20 - 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. Thanks to the generosity of our members who bring in plant material, and especially the show chair, Jenny Sandison, the display is always spectacular. This 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 have not already volunteered and can assist either with your time or by lending plant material, please contact **Jenny Sandison** at (902) 624-9013.

DEL AND RAY JAMES AND THE BARTO MYTH

By
Alleyne Cook

The Second of Three Parts

The Hybridizing

I have always considered the James to be the finest hybridizers that America has known. This is probably because I enjoyed their company and the results of their crosses. I doubt if many of their hybrids would have become popular. Grace, poise and subtle shades are not attributes appreciated by most gardeners. Instead they want masses of strident colour. Nothing wrong with that mind you, but certain beauties transcend the mass colour of these "cabbages". To my mind, the James were the foremost breeders of grace and refinement.

By 1956, I had become acquainted with Ted and Mary Greig, and for the next five years Ted and I would journey to the Annual Show in Portland. At one, Ted and I watched John Henny doing a "selling job" with all the other judges, clerks and anyone who could influence a change in the rules. John had entered 'Cotton Candy' and was determined to have his lovely truss get the Best in Show, then its picture and John's would be in every paper in Oregon. Good publicity.

Unfortunately one truss stood between Henny and his prize. This was the absolutely superb truss of *R. elliotii* entered by Del and Ray. Its scarlet flowers and full rounded truss with dark green foliage made it a sure winner. The only way for John to win was to change the rules. If it was a change from a show of trusses to a show of hardy trusses, that would do it. In the end he succeeded; John Henny was a power who got his own way. The James lost out in two ways. They missed The Best in Show and, because *R. elliotii* was tender, the Best Species Award went to a hardy *R. fortunei*.

How many times has *R. fortunei* been used to instill hardiness in hybrids? Where, for example, would the 'Loderi' group be without *R. fortunei*'s hardiness? That fateful cross between *fortunei* and *griffithianum*, raised by Sir Giles Loder, produced so many marvelous clones. Only once have I seen the pollen parent, the beautiful and huge pale pink *R. griffithianum*. It was growing against a wall at Bodnant and over it was a glass frame as it is not a hardy species. The wall and the frame protected it during the Northern Wales winters and from the late frosts that curse England. As I remember, *R. griffithianum* was as large and as pink as the average 'Loderi'.

'Sue'

Del selfed 'Loderi King George' and the offspring he named 'Sue'. It had all the characteristics of a 'Loderi' both in leaf and habit, with the same rich fragrance. It is, however, a much better and deeper pink. Del brought it to one of the Conference Shows in Portland where it created a small sensation.

'Tumalo'

Another magnificent 'Loderi' hybrid was his 'Tumalo'. This time *R. decorum* was the seed parent and 'Loderi King George' the pollen parent. I can never understand why *R. decorum* is so rare. Its outstanding feature is its shovel-shaped foliage, distinctly different from any other large growing species within the Fortunei Group. The wide open flowers are usually white. Even though there are mentions

of pink forms I personally do not remember ever seeing one. 'Tumalo' was incredibly free flowering. So much so in fact, that for the health of the plant, large numbers of buds should be removed each year. In the late fifties it was way above my head and a solid dome of white.

'Fawn'

Del used *R. fortunei* with 'Fabia' to create 'Fawn'. 'Fabia' is a hybrid between *R. griersonianum* and *R. dichroanthum* and it has always been a popular plant in the West where it is hardy. The first nursery I worked at in Vancouver in 1954 sold just four rhododendrons and one of them was 'Fabia'. Its free-flowering comes from *R. griersonianum* and its flower shades from salmon pink to the near orange of its parent *R. dichroanthum*. 'Fawn' was certainly Ray's favourite hybrid. The basic colour is salmon pink and this shades into orange. More important, I think, than the colour is the shape of the flowers. What Lionel de Rothschild did for the Exbury azaleas, the James did for rhododendrons. Both made wide open, shallow flowers that now appeared much larger and the truss proportionately so. Del had increased the width at the expense of the depth, what is termed in England as 'flattening the flower'.

A bit of background on the parents of 'Fawn'. *R. griersonianum* was thought to be the greatest gift that China has given to hybridizers. Reasonably hardy it has attractive foliage, medium habit and lots of flowers. It flowers at an early age and passes this trait on to its hybrids. The progeny are easy to propagate. The flower colour is described as geranium red and at least one form raised at Exbury is a true red. Its worst feature, which it also passes on, is a sprawling, untidy and ungainly habit. In Vancouver many years ago I grew upwards of 300 seedlings of *R. griersonianum*. These were grown under cover for three years and then were taken to Stanley Park and planted randomly in the Ted and Mary Greig Garden. The idea was to try to find a hardy form by exposing them to Vancouver's winters. After four cold seasons not one plant remained alive. I think we may conclude that *R. griersonianum* is not hardy in the Vancouver area.

In my younger days, about sixty years ago, there was *R. dichroanthum*. There was also *R. apodectum*, *R. herpesticum*, *R. scyphocalyx*, *R. septentrionale* and probably others. I've always considered the only difference between them was the writing on the labels. Their mature habit is a flat-topped rigid spreading mushroom about four feet high. The leaves are especially neat, half as wide as long and covered with a greyish film. They hardly ever flower and the results when they do are rather dull. It was the orange flowers that the hybridizer wanted to reproduce. Kingdon Ward called the colour that "of hated marmalade". (Now it just happens that this is the only jam that I enjoy. So when talking to garden clubs, if the opportunity arises I explain Ward's dislikes, my likes and the fact that my wife Barbara won't make me any. A lie, but over the past 35 years I've received many pots of marmalade.) Orange marmalade is a combination of red and yellow. Red is dominant, so first crosses are usually of pink or salmon and it is the second generation that creates yellow shades. This is what Del found when he produced 'Fawn'.

There are at least 15 named hybrids with 'Fawn' as a parent. This includes 'Cookie' which, in 1980 Ray named after this article's writer, who has yet to see it in flower. It is carried by Shannon Nurseries and a small plant is now in our garden.

Rothschild's 'Jalisco' Grex

Other hybrids were used extensively. In 1959, the year when *R. 'Jalisco'* must have bloomed in his garden for the first time, twenty crosses were made. Here again we have a second cross involving *R. dichroanthum*. There are several forms of 'Jalisco' (pronounced Halisco), all of which are different shades of yellow. That year he used it 16 times. 'Hendrick's Park', 'Comstock', 'Amber Gem', 'Tioaga',

'Sherrill' (see the reproduction of Ray's letter), are some of the progeny and all but 'Comstock' have 'Fawn' as the second parent. R. 'Jalisco' is a first class Rothschild hybrid, excellent in habit, foliage, flower and truss. It is nearly impossible to propagate and grafting is the reliable way to reproduce it. The specimen in the Ted and Mary Greig Garden is about 12 feet tall and is now about 35 years old. Every year it suckers from the understock, shooting from the ground at the base of the plant. The flowers are described as nankeen yellow, primrose yellow, pale yellow, canary yellow, buttercup yellow, apricot yellow and mimosa yellow - all colours that Rothschild put descriptive names against.

When one goes through the lists sent to me from Harold Greer it is astounding the multitude of plants used in Del's hybridizing. He seems to have crossed everything in sight. His annual lists make absolutely fascinating reading. Starting in 1945 with 9 crosses and ending in 1963, the year he died, he made about 650 crosses. All these crosses yielded only 40 registered hybrids. This small number has increased with those named by Ray and others.

'Jenny'

I came across an interesting cross in Ray's lists, 'Elizabeth' (aka 'Jenny') x *elliottii*. The former hybrid I had given them and when Del died it went on to Golden Gate Park. The original 'Jenny' was growing at the upper end of a path in the Valley Gardens at Windsor Great Park. One can presume it was given to W.G.P. because Aberconway considered it to be an inferior seedling. The flowers were inferior to the F.C.C. form but its creeping habit made it unique. In 1955 or 56 I imported six small plants of 'Jenny' from Hillier's of Winchester and one of these I gave to the James. This because it was obvious that the 'Elizabeth' sold throughout the U.S.A. at the time was an inferior seedling. I also imported at the same time six plants of the Wisley form of 'Elizabeth'. It had received an F.C.C. Two of the original plants are in the Ted and Mary Greig Garden in Stanley Park and thousands of plants from the original six have been sold throughout America.

'Yellow Creek'

One weekend, when staying with the James we drove out from Eugene towards the coast. As I remember, it was a long way from any settlement. When we came to a halt we were on one side of a broad pastoral valley. Del explained that when his father homesteaded in the area at the turn of the century the entire valley floor was a mass of *R. occidentale*. Nothing now remains. Beside the road stood a huge walnut. "I put the seed of that tree in the ground when I was a boy" said Del. Pointing to a small stream that flowed under the road, "And that is Yellow Creek". I thought he was saying "Yellow Crick" but it was after that stream that a very fine hybrid was named.

'Yellow Creek' has an interesting parentage, 'Idealist' x 'Sarita Loder'. 'Idealist' is a first rate Rothschild hybrid. It is the offspring of the pink *R. fortunei*, a red *R. thomsonii*, the pink *R. griffithianum* by the yellow species *R. wardii*. The second parent is 'Sarita Loder', a cross of the very dominant red species *R. griersonianum* crossed with 'Loderi' and the latter includes the two pink species (*R. griffithianum* x *R. fortunei*). One yellow species among four pink and two magnificent reds and the result yellow! Not as strong a yellow as 'Crest' but a good yellow and the most exciting yellow at that time. Again, by flattening the flowers Del had achieved a truss that rivalled the 'Loderi's in size. Interestingly, six of the James' registered yellow hybrids had 'Sarita Loder' as a parent.

'Penny'

'Penny' was 'Sarita Loder' x 'Idealist' - the reverse cross of 'Yellow Creek'. I remember it because it was an incredible shade of orange, a rhodo colour I'd never seen before or since. It must have flowered

in 1957 because twenty-two crosses were made that year using it as one parent. It does not appear to have been a good parent as none of the progeny were named.

'Miss Jack'

My wife Barbara and I stayed the night with the James and we were wandering around their garden when we came across a very lovely plant. Barbara called it the colour of opulence, more mundane creatures would call it ivory. It was 'Ole Olson' x (*lacteum* x 'Mary Swaythling'). Del named it 'Miss Jack' after that very unique lady and propagator. She had created the Rhododendron Species Foundation and the U.B.C. Asian Garden from scions sent from England by Dr. Milton Walker. For this, while still in her youthful thirties, the A.R.S. gave her a Gold Medal. When we informed her of Del's decision she was not pleased that someone should name a rhododendron after her without permission. It is likely that the only 'Miss Jack' exists in the large rhododendron garden of several acres on Vancouver Island that Evelyn Jack created for her retirement. The specimen in the Ted and Mary Greig Garden was moved to parts unknown after my retirement.

'Ole Olson' is in fact 'Lady Bessborough'. Haldan Lem, the Seattle hybridizer, could not remember hybrid names and so he confused the world by renaming 'Lady Bessborough' after an Alaskan friend! In those far off days, I would drive down from Vancouver and spend an evening with him. After sleeping the night on the back seat of the car, I'd be off early in the morning. Everything Lem had was unique, everything was wonderful, everything was beautiful. Physically he was a big man with an expansive nature and his best hybrids were a mirror of the man himself.

The James had a plant of the rare and difficult *R. lacteum*, a species that incorporates everything good and bad in a species. The flower can range from a most magnificent yellow to a pale cream. I've only ever seen two superb coloured forms, the James' plant and the large specimen moved in 1952 from Tower Court to Windsor Great Park. The foliage is attractive, thick leathery, eight inches long with a fawn underside. Unfortunately these leaves which are retained for two years of growth, are clustered near the terminal and this makes the bush look rather stick-like. Seedlings seem to stay alive for a very short time. It would appear to be a poor parent and Del made very few crosses with it. I can find only find two named James hybrids from *lacteum*.

To be continued.....



A *Primula vulgaris* hybrid seedling provides early colour in the Rock Garden.
[Photo S. Levy]

COMPANION PLANTS FOR RHODODENDRONS

By Carmen Varcoe

Part I - Perennials

Companion plants can come in all sizes and varieties - herbaceous perennials, evergreen shrubs, bulbs or even vines. Any plant that will enhance the foliage and perhaps blooms of a rhododendron can be considered a companion plant. Rhododendrons are wonderful back drops to the smaller spring carpeters such as *Anemone nemerosa* ranging in colour from pristine white, pink through to the lovely deep blue of *Anemone* 'Robinsoniana'. For a bright yellow statement try the *Anemone ranunculoides* equally at home under a rhododendron. Keep in mind that these little plants will go dormant in July and then reappear next spring. For all season interest, try the bright chartreuse bracts of *Chrysplenium davidianum* - a creeping little plant ideally suited to a woodland garden.

For late winter foliage *Cyclamen hederifolium* and *coum* are perfect companions for smaller rhododendrons. They have marbled and beautifully patterned leaves. The bright cerise pink *coum* blossoms in late winter and the pink or white blossoms of *hederifolium* in late summer give lots of colour. Also, for winter interest, the hellebores are good companions for rhododendrons. *Helleborus niger* (the Xmas rose), is a perfect complement for rhodos. Give this plant some overstorey protection from rain so the beautiful white blossoms will not be marred. *Helleborus orientalis* gives excellent foliage when not in bloom but provides a wonderful range of colour and patterns when blooming from as early as January to April. Be sure to site the deep purple hellebores where they can catch the low winter and early spring rays of sunlight and they will be even more appreciated.

Ferns are great additions to the woodland border and come in a vast range of sizes and varieties. One of the smallest and most delicate in pattern is the evergreen *Adiantum venustum*. This fern is often called the Himalayan maidenhair fern, an excellent partner for any rhododendron. Another evergreen fern with bright green new foliage and great texture is the bird's nest fern - *Asplenium scolopendrium* ... seek out the form called 'Crispum' which will give even more interest with its rippled fronds. Foliage daintiness can also be found in the Dicentras - two recommended for not only great texture but glaucous blue leaves are 'Boothman's' and 'Langtrees'.

For contrast whether it be colour or variegation, there is a vast assortment of perennials that provide lots of interest throughout the summer. *Pulmonarias* or lungworts are notable for their pewter and silver markings on their leaves. Two favourites of mine are *Pulmonaria* 'Spilled Milk' and 'Excalibur' which has almost entirely pewtered leaves. Another variegated beauty is *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Variegata' which has clearly defined white and green foliage. This plant really relishes deep shade and lots of moisture. For purple foliage the *Euphorbia dulcis* 'Chameleon' is very adaptable to shade and full sun and looks especially good beside some golden grass or golden foliaged hosta such as *Hosta* 'Abiqua Recluse'. Another golden large hosta is 'Sum & Substance' - outstanding for its puckered foliage and sun resistance. For a variegated hosta try the *Hosta* 'Patriot' relatively tolerant of slugs. It also keeps its clear white and green markings all through the summer.

For structural contrast there is the tall *Polygonatum commutatum* or Solomon's Seal-a good plant for its slug resistance and easy care. For lushness and large leaved effect the *Diphylleia cymosa* gives impressive leaves, red stems and purple mahonia-like berries. Another recent Chinese introduction is the *Podophyllum pleianthum*...a relative of our east coast Mayapple it provides glossy toothed umbrella-like leaves that never fail to draw attention in the garden.

If one wishes for unusual stature or impressive foliage, I would recommend the *Arisaema taiwanensis* for its sinister mottled stems and flattened leaves each ending in a long "drip tip". Another arisaema reminding one of a cobra is the *Arisaema ringens* with its hooded purple spathes and glossy trifoliate leaves.

Part 2 - Shrubs, Vines and Trees

The category of shrubs is vast but there are some particularly good ones that complement rhododendrons. Species peonies such as the yellow *Ludlowi lutea* and the deep burgundy *Delavayi*. Both accept shaded conditions readily. Neither need staking and their fern-like foliage and large seed heads can add another dimension when interplanted with rhododendrons. A lesser known shrub needing little care is *Neillia tibetica* which has a pendant habit with rosy pink racemes. The genus *Rubus* provides some very good companion plants. *Rubus lineatus* has wonderfully pleated foliage and frosty white 'indumentum'. *Rubus henryi* is a vine with trifoliate leaves reminiscent of bamboo. Both these rubuses are semi-evergreen requiring a sheltered situation.

For sheer glory in the summer garden the *Sambucus nigra* 'Guincho Purple' will give great pleasure. Its deep purple new foliage is handsomely topped with broad pink panicles of blossoms which are then followed by shiny clusters of black berries. The variegated form *Sambucus nigra* 'Albovariegata' is equally impressive in deep shade with its creamy white markings - great for those dark green rhodo leaves.

The next exceptional group of companion plants has to be the hydrangeas. Relishing similar conditions needed for rhododendrons, they can provide the garden with extra interest when it is most often needed - late summer. The lacecaps come in a large range of colour from 'Blue Wave' a deep blue if soil is acidic enough, clear white as in 'Lanarth White' or deep pink with dark foliage - *Hydrangea serrata* 'Grayswood'. *Hydrangea* 'Ayesha' with its glossy leaves and dense pink blossoms is another distinctive plant that can look very good at this time of year. The hortensias or mopheaded hydrangeas also have some very good cultivars. *Hydrangea* 'Emile Mouilliere' is clear white but has bright purple-blue eyes in the center of each scalloped petalled blossom. For a treelike variety of hydrangea the *Hydrangea aspera macrophylla* is very impressive with its hairy apple-green leaves and its enormous mauvy-pink lacecaps in late summer. Remember to site these plants out of the wind.

For all year interest, the shiny deep green leaves of *Azara microphylla* would be perfect companions for rhododendrons. Provide a sheltered spot for this plant so you can enjoy their tiny bright yellow blossoms, vanilla-scented in early spring. The variegated form of this small tree is equally as impressive. Taking variegation to the ultimate is the almost devoid of chlorophyll *Acer* 'Ukigomo' (floating Cloud) which really lights up a densely shaded spot. Be mindful of its constant need for shade and moisture. And lastly, for the patient, try the variegated forms of dogwoods: **Cornus mas variegata**, *Cornus alternifolia argentea* and the wedding cake tiered tree, *Cornus controversa* Variegata. ☒

Reprinted from The Victoria Rhododendron Society Newsletter - September 2000.

MY RHODY'S TOO BIG

Pruning Tips: Seven Solutions to the 'Too-Big' Rhododendron

The problem with rhododendrons is, well, they're touchy. Sometimes you head back a branch to a node, and when you return next month you find that, instead of sending out new shoots, the branch simply gave up and died. On other occasions people reduce their rhodies to the height or width they want, only to discover that by the time the plants have developed decent, full leafy crowns, they're back up to about the size they were before. The hardest to prune are old previously chain-sawed rhododendrons. The new growth looks like spaghetti. Although many can be brought back to semblance of beauty with years of rehabilitative pruning, these casualties are often so indisputably ugly that removal is a more realistic solution. Just to confuse matters, radical reduction sometimes results in growth which is bushy, compact, healthy, AND shorter. Much depends on whether the species in question is healthy and of a compact habit to begin with, and if it receives sufficient sunlight to re-establish. Another commonly seen situation is that of a large-growing, open-habit rhododendron which someone is trying to keep shorter and more compact. The hapless pruner tries in vain. Even when following the 'rules' by selectively heading back branches to shorter laterals, the result is a 'funny-looking' plant, which is to say it starts to grow in a roughly v-shaped pattern. With the above caveats in place, let's review seven solutions to the too-big rhododendron.

1. Prune it. Most people think their rhody is too big, but really it's just too oppressive and/or crowded. Real pruning for health and good looks often solves the problem. The horticulturally correct pruner takes out all the dead wood. Do this first and always. Prune out a few of the worst rubbing/crossing branches. Often it helps to take off some of the lowest branches, slowly working up and out from the inside. Also concentrate on thinning out the worst, most interfering branches which crowd into nearby shrubs, the house, the window, the gutter, or the walkway. See if that just doesn't do the trick.

2. Move it or the bed it's in. Given the touchy nature of the beast, it is often a better and longer lasting solution due to the removal of the sod involved. Rhodies have broad, flat, fibrous root systems and are a relative dream to move. Landscapers often move plants that are larger than people. It may require up to four strong backs and a tarp to slide the offending rhody out of its present home and to its new one. Don't be afraid to cut off 50% or more of the roots, both large and small. Immediate watering and lots of water throughout the first year is essential. Moving is the only logical solution for situations where shrubs have been planted too close together to begin with - as commonly seen in new landscapes.

3. Selective reduction. Is it under the window? You can try to 'work back' your rhody. You thin and shorten a little every year. Locate the tallest branch and follow it down inside the shrub to where it meets a lower and shorter lateral. Cut it off there. Repeat with the next tallest branch. Continue until you sense you've gone too far. Quit, then come back next year.

4. Stop it in its tracks. If the plant in question borders high traffic areas - paths, stairs and such, you might try snapping off the new growth. After the plant has finished blooming you can either pinch out the new end-bud, or let the new supple shoot extend and snap it off with your fingers soon thereafter. Landscapers attest that this will not prevent blooming next year, though it is hard to understand why not. It is also exceedingly time consuming and must be done every year to restrict growth.

5. Arborize. On special occasions a 'too-big' rhody can be thinned-up and turned into a nice small tree. The plant in question should be very big and old. It should have a thick, curvaceous trunk. Be sure to meticulously deadwood it as well, and perhaps thin the upper canopy to prevent the 'lollypop' look.

6. Radical renovation. In especially desperate and hopeless situations, it is sometimes appropriate to cut the entire plant nearly to the ground and start it over. Like surgery, it is a serious move and you should exhaust other possible solutions first. Sometimes the plant dies. Most often it does not. Renovation works best on old and/or previously mal-pruned shrubs. It will take several years to recover and look like anything. It will still need almost as much room to live and look good. Do it in the early spring. Do not fertilize. Water well throughout the next year.

7. Adjust your attitude. Most often the only thing a rhododendron is too big for is somebody's idea of how big it should get to be. In this case, the cheapest and best solution is to learn to appreciate 'mature' plants. ☒

*Reprinted from The Victoria Rhododendron Society
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USING LATIN NAMES

By

Marnie Flook and Dick Brooks

Wilmington, Delaware and Concord, Massachusetts

Many beginning gardeners, and not a few expert ones, are uneasy, or even downright intimidated, when a colleague uses Latin names in discussing plants. They think such behavior is put on for the purpose of displaying the user's superior intellect, or even worse, for the purpose of showing up the listener's lack of knowledge. There is ready no reason for any feeling of inferiority, and we hope in this brief article to dispel the mystique which seems to surround the use of this unfamiliar tongue in a familiar context.

Latin was the international language of scientists and scholars when the present system of naming plants (and animals) began, in the middle 1700's. The formation of Latin names is now governed by the universally accepted *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature*.

Latin names of plants are precise, and can be understood by professional and amateur botanists and gardeners anywhere in the world. By use of its Latin name, a plant can be positively identified from among over 200,000 known plant species.

The species name consists of two parts: the generic name (genus: plural = genera) and the specific epithet. In writing, this two-part name is either italicized or underlined. Many familiar generic names are Latin or Greek words, such as *Crocus*, *Anemone*, *Trillium*, and *Rhododendron*. These words describe groups of plants that have similar characteristics. Sometimes the generic name honors a person, such as *Jeffersonia* for Thomas Jefferson, or *Kalmia* for Peter Kalm, a Finnish botanist of the eighteenth century. Sometimes the name describes the plant's appearance, such as *Hemerocallis* (Greek *hemeros*, a day, and *kallos*, beauty) or *Rhododendron* (Greek *rhodon*, rose, and *dendron*, a tree). Sometimes the name describes the plant's supposed medicinal qualities, such as *Pulmonaria* (Lungwort) or its imagined resemblance to parts of the body, such as *Hepatica*, whose lobed leaves are supposed to look like the liver (Greek *hepar* = liver). The name can also come from mythology, such as *Narcissus* or *Andromeda*.

Specific epithets often describe some aspect of the plant, such as its size (*minus* = small); color (*luteum* = yellow); habit of growth (*arboreum* = tree-like); leaf shape (*orbiculare* = round); or where it comes from (*canadense* = from Canada). The specific epithet can also commemorate a person, such as *Rhododendron fortunei*, after Robert Fortune, an Englishman who explored for plants in China in the mid-nineteenth century. Often the specific epithet helps to identify the plant and makes it easier to remember. An example is *Linnaea borealis*, the twinflower. The generic name commemorates Carl Linnaeus, whose binomial system of naming plants (genus plus specific epithet) is the one we use today. The specific epithet (*borealis*) means "of Northern regions", which is where this lovely little plant is found.

If a number of plants in the same genus are being discussed, the genus name is often abbreviated, after its initial use, for example: *Rhododendron catawbiense*, *R. macrophyllum*, and *R. maximum*

Common names are confusing since one may refer to two or more different plants, depending on where you live and with whom you are talking. If you asked an English nursery to send you a "blue-bell", you would receive *Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*, a bulb in the lily family; a Scottish nursery would send you *Campanula rotundifolia*, the "Bluebell of Scotland". In the eastern US. you might receive *Mertensia virginica*, the "Virginia Bluebell". Conversely, one plant may be known under several different names, in different parts of the country. For example, here in New England we refer to our native

Rhododendron maximum as the "Rosebay", but in the south-eastern states it is called "Great Laurel", and in that same region our native azaleas are often called "Wild Honeysuckle".

In some cases, common names are identical to the Latin generic name, for instance *Narcissus*, *Anemone*, *Magnolia*, and *Rhododendron*.

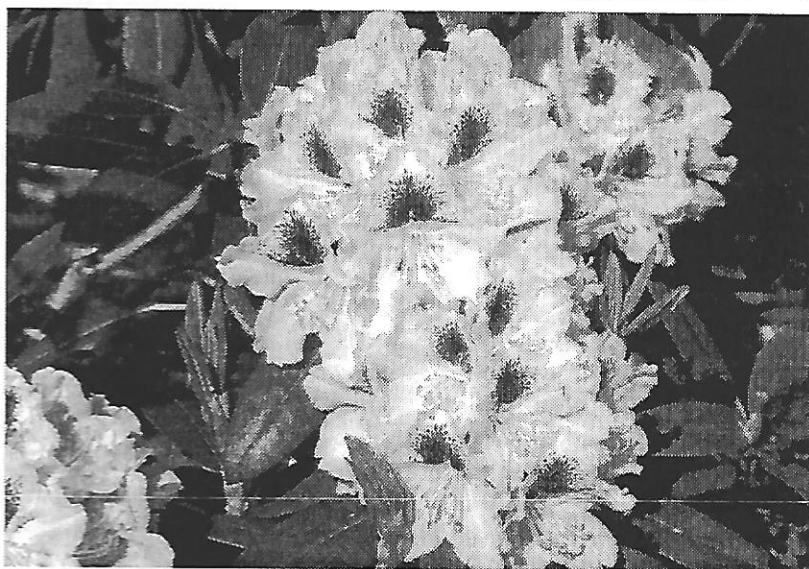
Major plant genera, such as *Primula*, *Campanula*, and *Rhododendron* each contain many hundreds of species. It would be impossible to identify positively a particular plant in one of these groups without knowing its Latin name. There cannot be common English names for the thousands of plants which are found in all the countries of the world; where common names for these plants do exist, they may be in the local language or dialect, for example, for the Chinese *Rhododendron praeevernum* "zao chun dujuan"

Often, horticulturally different or superior forms of plant species are given "fancy" names to distinguish them from other forms of the same species. These fancy names, or cultivar names, are not italicized or underlined, but rather are set off by single quotes, for example: *Rhododendron yakushmanum* 'Yaku Angel'.

Hybrids between different species may also be given fancy names: In the genus *Rhododendron* there are many thousands of hybrid cultivars so named. The naming of such plants is now governed by a different code, the *International Code of Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants*. Sometimes nursery catalogs and garden literature make the mistake of listing a hybrid cultivar as if it were a selected form of a species, for example: *Rhododendron yakushmanum* 'Yaku Princess'. Since this cultivar is a hybrid between 'King Tut' and *R. yakushmanum* the correct designation should be simply *Rhododendron* 'Yaku Princess'.

Once you begin reading about these plants, seeing them in gardens, and growing them in your own garden, you'll find that the Latin names become increasingly familiar, and you'll no longer feel inferior when talking about plants with your gardening friends. For further enlightenment on the subject you should read the excellent introduction to A. W. Smith's *A Gardener's Book of Plant Names* (Harper & Row, 1963). ☒

Reprinted from Toronto Region Newsletter (RSC), November 1993.



Rhododendron 'Calsap' [Photo Don Craig]

SITE SELECTION AND PLANTING OF RHODODENDRONS

By J. Brueckner

This worthwhile bit of information appeared in the RSC Journal twenty years ago as part of a larger article "Site Selection and Planting of Rhododendrons", by the late Dr. Joe Brueckner. Joe was an hybridizer's hybridizer; his creations, Azuray, Bluenose, Charme La, Lionel's Red Shield and Isola Bella are but a few that grace gardens worldwide. This "little" article helped me, more than any other, to pursue my dream of growing rhododendrons successfully. It taught me to dig up and examine recalcitrant rhododendrons and azaleas and to take immediate and drastic action. Yes it seems to defy logic but Joe's method works. We therefore decided to reprint it so that all can learn from this legendary and consummate plantsman. - John Weagle

There was not much information floating around on how to plant a rhododendron when I acquired my first specimens. Neither did I know anybody who was knowledgeable about rhododendrons. It was only later that I got in touch with Captain Dick Steele whose vast knowledge of this group of plants and most instructive advice became a never ceasing source of invaluable information and help to me.

Anyway, in my isolation I reasoned that rhododendrons are shrubs and, therefore, must be planted as we plant shrubs. Well then, how do we plant a shrub, say a forsythia? -- First, we pick up a nice plant at a garden centre which, as a rule, is sold bare root. Next, we dig a hole in the garden, wide enough and deep enough to accommodate the plant, set the roots in the hole to the correct depth, fill the earth back, firm it down, especially around the roots, give the plant a bucket of water, and that is it. If we are very meticulous we even scatter some fertilizer in the planting hole and soak the roots in water before planting.

This was essentially the way I planted my first rhododendrons and I am convinced that even today many rhododendrons are planted in much the same manner. Of course, rhododendrons were very expensive in those days, a 15 to 20 inch plant costing about ten dollars or more when one could buy a forsythia for a dollar or less. I have even paid \$27. -- for my first *R. yakusimanum* and it barely measured six inches. Added to this came shipping costs, since they were not available locally. Needless to say, the plants so received were handled with extreme care. When they were planted the rootball was set with the utmost gentleness in the planting hole after the burlap cover was removed, paying much attention not to disturb the delicate root system. For this same reason the plants were watered in with a fine spray from a watering can.

All was well for a few years, when several of the plants stopped growing, showed increasing signs of distress and finally died without any specific symptoms of disease. A post mortem examination revealed that the roots remained confined to the original root ball; no new root growth occurred and, as a whole, the root system appeared quite lifeless.

This peculiar misfortune did not remain a puzzle to me for long, since about the same time my attention was drawn to sporadic remarks in the literature which emphasized the importance of blending the rootball, or more precisely the earth within, with the earth in which the plant is set. If not done the roots may not grow out of the rootball and into the new planting medium, which will eventually lead to the death of the plant.

I am going to spare the reader from following the details of the evolution, with all its variations, of my planting technique and simply give the end result, the method I use today.

No longer do I handle the plants with extreme care. If a few small roots break off so much the better. It has no adverse effects. On the contrary; it seems to induce new root formation and this is exactly what we want the plant to do.

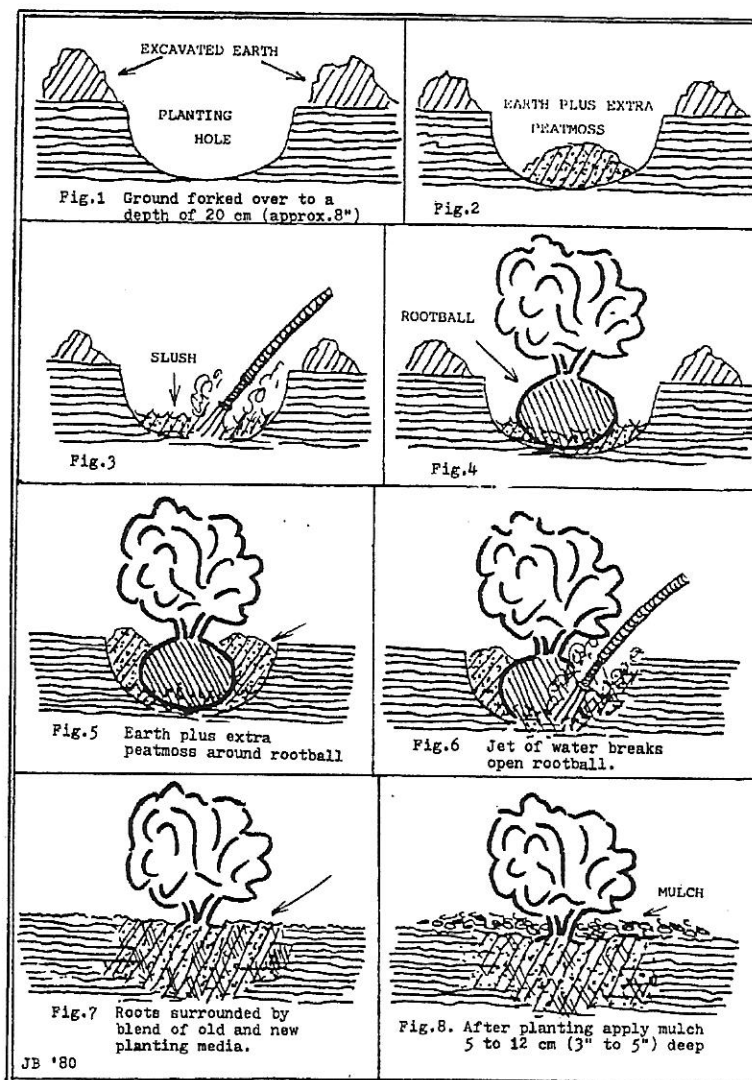
This then is the procedure:

A 5 to 8 cm layer of good quality sphagnum peatmoss (or as much as one's budget can afford) is spread over the ground. Fertilizer, 1 to 1-1/2 kg of something like 15-8-8, containing trace elements, is scattered on top of the peatmoss for every 10 square meters of planting area. In New Brunswick the nitrogen of the fertilizer was derived from urea and 200 g of pulverized dolomitic limestone, with some variations to the quantity, was also added for every 100 liter of peatmoss used, since the soil was very acid. Here in Ontario an ammonium sulfate base fertilizer

is used. The soil is then thoroughly worked over with a fork to a depth of 20 cm in order to loosen it up and to mix it with the additions.

Depending on the size of the rootball an appropriate, shallow and rather wide hole is excavated (Fig. 1). A shovelful or two of earth is thrown back in the hole, mixed with the same amount of peatmoss and with enough water to make a fluid slurry (Figs. 2 and 3). Into this slurry the plant is plopped with its rootball, but after removing from the rootball any containers, burlap, plastic, or other covering (Fig. 4). The rest of the excavated soil is now mixed with additional peatmoss and shovelled or pushed with hands into the hole to completely surround the rootball (Fig. 5).

The most important stage in the process of planting a rhododendron is now reached. With a jet of water, as forceful as a nozzle can deliver, the rootball is broken up (Fig. 6). Not only is the jet directed against the top of the rootball, all around its sides and into it, the nozzle is even pushed into the slush and as much underneath the rootball as possible to dislodge all soil within it. In this way the two growing media, the one contained in the rootball and the earth-peatmoss mix, are thoroughly blended in a fluid slush surrounding intimately every root or rootlet of the plant. Truly a messy affair and I never fail to dress in my 'Sunday Bests' for this occasion which previously was always on the weekend s.



Illustrating Dr. Brueckner's slush method of transplanting.

It is advisable to wait now for 15 minutes or even for a day before completing the task of transplantation. The time interval gives a chance for the water to seep away and for the plant to settle. Minor level differences can be adjusted at this time by scraping some of the surrounding earth away from around the plant if it sits too low, or adding more if it sits too high (Fig. 7). Transplantation is completed by covering the ground with a layer of mulch 5 to 12 cm deep (Fig. 8).

I do not plant in the fall later than the very first days of September. I feel rhododendrons need sufficient time to reestablish, before our severe winter sets in, after this major disturbance of their root systems. On the other hand, I see no reason why a rhododendron could not be transplanted throughout the year where winters are mild.

The described procedure is my way of transplanting rhododendrons. It may not suit everybody and, as it is with so many things, what works well for some may not work well for others. For me it works so well that I now plant trees and shrubs with a simplified version of the same technique, even (and quite unnecessarily) the indestructible forsythia. ☒

An abridgement from Rododendron Society of Canada Bulletin 1980 (Vol. 9 No. 2).

THE ORIGIN OF RHODODENDRON 'P.J.M.'

By Edmund V. Mezitt, Hopkinton, Mass.

Rhododendron 'P.J.M.' is a cross between *Rhododendron dauricum* and *Rhododendron carolinianum*. However, the results of many other crosses made by myself and others have never before or since produced the vigor and beauty of 'P.J.M.' The obvious reason for this is in the choice of the parent plants.

In 1939 my father, Peter J. Mezitt, and I spoke to friends of missionaries who told of unusual and interesting plants growing in the mountains of Northern China. We gave them \$50 to send us a few seedlings. Among these was one outstanding plant that proved to be a very evergreen form of *Rhododendron dauricum*.

Several years later I saved some pollen on a camel's hair brush a number of weeks later remembered to dab the pollen on a flower of *Rhododendron carolinianum*, which we were using as seed stock. This was the first cross I ever made. Fortunately, I remembered to gather the seed pod that fall and germination that winter was successful. We had all but forgotten this hybrid over the next several years until one Sunday in early May in 1945, We were just Developing our nursery in Hopkinton, and we were visiting it that morning, Having been tied up during the busy season at Weston for most of the week, My heart still skips a beat when I recall the reaction of our entire family when we saw that ribbon of brilliant pink running, across the hill. My dad was so enthusiastic about these little dwarf plants- only six to eight inches tall-in full bloom, that he immediately made the remark that this was the most spectacular rhododendron of our time. We named it 'P.J.M.' right on the spot and those of us who knew him can see the vigour, excitement and showmanship he possessed perfectly reflected in this plant. ☒

Two interesting related articles:

Journal A.R.S. Vol. 48 No. 4 1994 pp. 203/204
Lynn Watts: "Plant portrait: *R. dauricum* and *R. mucronulatum* "

Journal A.R.S. Vol. 49 No. 3 1995 pp. 127-132
Jiri Dostalek : "The Rhododendrons of North Korea."

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Rhododendron 'P.J.M.' at the Kentville Research Station. [Photo Don Craig]

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