

Rhododendron Society of Canada

ATLANTIC NEWSLETTER

www.AtlanticRhodo.org

Volume 24: Number 3

October 2000

This Issue is dedicated to the memory of John T. Meagher

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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|--------------------|---|
| 5 September | Meeting: Carol Goodwin: "Landscaping with Native Plants"
The Annual General Meeting will follow this talk. |
| 1 October | 14th Annual Steele Lecture: Kelly Dobson "Uncommon Perennials"
Nova Scotia Museum Auditorium, 3:00 p.m. Kelly resides near Poulso, Washington where he runs a nursery called Reflective Gardens. (See Special Notice in this Newsletter) |
| 3 October | Meeting: Kelly Dobson: "Plant Hunting in China" |
| 7 November | Meeting: Jenny Sandison: "Garden Design - Successful Plant Groupings"
Workshop: Anitra Laycock: "Simple Identification of Rhodies for Dummies" |
| 5 December | Meeting: Annual Christmas Wine and Cheese Party
(See Special Notice in this Newsletter)
Members Slides |

(The February Newsletter will be mailed in February)

ATLANTIC NOTES

ARS/RSC District 12 (National) Membership fees for 2001 are due on December 1 and 'Local' membership fees are 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 May 2000 Newsletter:

**Rita Appelboom
N.A. Cochrane
Patricia Demolitor
Gerry's Nursery
Victoria Healy
Susan Hoover
John & Virginia MacDonald**

**Lockport N.S.
Lower Sackville N.S.
Jorden Falls N.S.
Centerville N.S.
Shelburne N.S.
Shelburne N.S.
Halifax N.S.**



2000 R.S.C.A.R. SEED EXCHANGE

The deadline for submitting seed to the Seed Exchange is December 1, 2000. Members are encouraged to submit rhododendron and companion plant seed. All seed should be fresh, cleaned and properly labeled. Please give as much information as possible regarding variety, location, parent plants, and (if not a commonly grown variety) the expected hardiness.

Send your seed to:

**Kathy Chute
R.S.C.A.R. Seed Exchange
Box 45
Milton, Nova Scotia
B0P 1P0**

In Memoriam

JOHN T. MEAGHER
1921-2000

His passion for the Genus Rhododendron - both hybrids and species - was a source of inspiration for everyone in RSC Atlantic Region Chapter. His dedication to our Society since the early days of its formation benefited all of our members. His attendance at every meeting gave RSCAR a sense of continuity and commitment. His contributions to every Spring and Annual Truss Show enhanced their successes and gave great beauty and pleasure to members and the public. The popularity of our Genus has increased with his many donations of plants grown from cuttings and seed; these he donated to many public places around Halifax. He spent many hours driving to and from the Rhododendron Foundation to clear, dig, slog and plant. Members are fortunate, and breeders as well, because he grew their seed and crosses with diligence, patience, caring and expertise and then gave them back to members as door prizes at meetings and sales. When technical problems arose, he quietly disappeared only to return shortly with a brilliant solution. His garden is a source of pleasure and amazement to all. RSC Atlantic Region is proud to have had him as a member. John passed away on August 8, 2000. He will be greatly missed.



WEBSITE PROGRESS REPORT



Work has resumed on the AtlanticRhodo website after a period of several months inactivity. Yours truly has been learning the rather complex program (Adobe PageMill) used to create the site. There are two objectives in this endeavor. One is to lessen the time required of our volunteer web designer, mentor and guru, Rand Gaynor; the other is to be able to edit and update established pages, whenever needed. Both objectives have now been achieved. We can update the site whenever necessary from here on, and, except for preparing new graphics and special new pages, the time required of Rand has diminished considerably. Rand deserves a really big "Thank You!" from RSCAR for all the many hours he has graciously given to this project over the last two years. We would not have the great website we have today without his help.

We are also presently working on new areas, especially in the Tours and Hybridizers sections. These pages will be rich in photos. Well underway are pages on Mist Maiden, Exbury and Kentville Research Station. Many thanks to John Weagle for his help with the text and selection of photos for these pages. Pages on other gardens and hybridizers will follow. Also to come: we will soon begin publishing old Atlantic Newsletter articles to the website. These articles will be more than two years old and feature topics of lasting value with an Atlantic Canada focus. Our "Links" page also continues to grow, as we become aware of related websites. Mail response will soon become faster, after the end of this year, when the new Netscape browser becomes available, allowing enhanced email accounts management.

So: keep clicking on www.AtlanticRhodo.org--it is now being updated regularly and new items are always being added.

Tom Waters
STWaters43@aol.com

Rhododendron Society of Canada - Atlantic Region

Cash Flow Report (9/1/99 through 8/31/00)

Income

Interest	14.55
May Plant Sale	13,599.50
Membership	2,088.07
Seed Exchange	565.58
Tissue Culture Sales	6,951.75

Total Income 23,179.45

Expenses

Admin. & Social	719.94
Donations	1,425.40
Flower Show	297.57
Library	510.30
Member	100.00
Newsletter	1,813.52
Notices	191.62
Plant Sale	10,657.87
Program	1,612.88
Seed Exchange	7.93
Service Charge	22.50
Steele Lecture	1,141.55
Tissue Culture	5,114.17
Web Site	385.18

Total Expenses 24,000.43

Overall Total (-820.98)

Budget 2000 - 2001

<u>Category</u>	<u>Budget \$ (00-01)</u>	<u>Actual \$ (99-00)</u>	<u>Actual \$ (98-99 Restated)</u>
Income			
May Plant Sale	3,000.00	2,902.00	3,420.00
Membership	2,100.00	2,100.00	1,857.00
Seed Exchange	600.00	558.00	495.00
Tissue Culture	2,000.00	1,838.00	1,328.00
Bank Interest	20.00	13.00	36.00
Total	7,720.00	7,411.00	7,136.00
Expenses			
Admin/Social	600.00	720.00	452.00
Donations	500.00	1,425.00	495.00
Flower Show	300.00	298.00	586.00
Library	400.00	510.00	586.00
Memberships	100.00	100.00	0.00
Notices	200.00	192.00	551.00
Newsletter	2,300.00	1,814.00	1,878.00
Program	1,600.00	1,613.00	1,460.00
Steele Lecture	1,200.00	1,142.00	1,050.00
Web Site	400.00	385.00	604.00
Bank Charges	25.00	23.00	26.00
Total	7,625.00	8,222.00	7,688.00
Surplus/Loss	95.00	(-811.00)	(-552.00)

Budget Notes:	Goal	- To create a small surplus from annual operations
	Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A constant membership of approximately 140 - Continuing good sales results - Reduce donations to a normal level - Provide \$500 for a handbook in Newsletter - Balance of expenditures similar to prior years

SPECIAL NOTICES

14th ANNUAL STEELE LECTURE

Guest Lecturer: Mr. Kelly Dodson

Auditorium, Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History
1747 Summer St. Halifax

Sunday, October 1, 2000 - 3:00 p.m.

"Uncommon Perennials"

Tuesday, October 3, 2000 - 7:30 pm

"Plant Hunting in Yunnan (China)"

Kelly Dodson, a plantsman for most of his life, is the owner/operator of Reflective Gardens, near Poulsbo, Washington. He specializes in uncommon perennials and shrubs - many raised from seed he has collected in China. In the 1980's, Kelly worked as chief propagator for the Rhododendron Species Foundation.

Species peonies, woodlanders, rhododendrons, iris, lilies, hydrangeas, meconopsis, epimediums and alpinas are just a few of his specialties!

You will see some of the most incredible cutting-edge plants and perhaps get tips on propagating some of the more difficult rhododendron species. This is sure to be the speaker of the year. Please plan to attend and tell your friends.

All are welcome.



17th ANNUAL R.S.C.A.R. CHRISTMAS WINE & CHEESE PARTY

December 5, 2000

**N.S. Museum of Natural History
Summer Street, Halifax**

Come out and enjoy an evening of good food, wine and conversation.

There will not be a speaker. Members are encouraged to bring in a few slides of their gardens, favourite plants, etc.

Metro members will be contacted to coordinate food (i.e. finger foods and sweets). R.S.C.A.R. will provide the wine due to Liquor License Board regulations.

RSCAR 2001 TISSUE CULTURE ADVANCE SALE

It's time to order your Tissue Culture plants for Spring 2001. This year we have some new varieties of rhododendrons, azaleas and the companion plants. The cost of the plants will be approximately \$4.75 to \$5.00. We try to keep the cost as low as possible. (For our newer members, Tissue Culture plants are small lab propagated plants which usually come in 2" pots.)

DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY WITH YOUR ORDER. YOU WILL BE BILLED WHEN YOUR ORDER IS SHIPPED OR PICKED UP (Special shipping charges may apply.)

The plants will be available for pick-up at St. Andrews Community Centre on Bayer's Road in Halifax. The tentative pick-up date will be Saturday, March 31, 2001 at 3:00 p.m. A definite date will be announced, once we receive confirmation of when the plants will arrive. Again this year your order will be ready when you arrive at 3:00 p.m. You will also be able to purchase additional plants on that day if you wish.

An order form is included with this Newsletter. Please make sure your telephone number is included on the form. If you would like your order shipped, please indicate this on your order form. Sorry, this Sale is only available to our members in the Atlantic region.

Orders that are not picked up in Halifax on the pick-up date will be sent collect by the method indicated on the order form. Where shipping options are limited, parcels will be shipped by Canada Post at your cost (payment in advance). Please remember to make a copy of your order for your own records.

The orders will be filled on a first-in first-filled basis. All orders should be in to me by mid-December, 2000. Please send your orders to:

**RSCAR
c/o Audrey Fralic
RR 1
Port Mouton, NS B0T 1T0**

Remember that these plants have not been hardened off. We recommend that you give them a good watering and then pot them up into 3" pots. You can use a mixture of one part commercial mix, one part peat and one part perlite. Do not overwater. Keep them inside under lights until all risk of frost is passed. In June, gradually place them outdoors. Do not leave them in their pots. Plant them in the ground in a coldframe or some other well protected area. We strongly suggest you use some mulch. Make sure they are kept watered

For their first winter, provide some protection. Use a coldframe, burlap or conifer bows and make sure you provide some mulch. Do not use clear plastic as it will cause burning and may even kill them.

Good luck with your plants! Please take notes on how they do. We would appreciate some feedback on their performance.

Happy Gardening,
Audrey Fralic

RSCAR 2001 TISSUE CULTURE

RHODODENDRONS (All rhododendrons are lepidotes unless noted otherwise)

Variety	Hybridizer	Description
'Aglo'	Mezitt	Peach-pink dauricum hybrid with rose spots. 3' x 3' in 10 years. Hardy to -25°F(-32°C). Sister seedling of 'Olga Mezitt'. A lepidote rhododendron.
'April Rose'	Mehlquist	Bright double rose-pink flowers set against a background of dark mahogany red foliage. Very early. Upright habit to 5'h. x 4'w. in 10 years. Requires excellent drainage. Hardy to -25°F (-32°C). A lepidote.
'Augie Kehr'		Wavy-edged double flowers are deep yellow with a green calyx. Dark glossy green foliage is held for 3 years. Floriferous. Upright habit to 3'h. x 2'w. in 10 years. Hardy to at least 0°F(-18°C).
'Bluenose'	Breuckner	A free flowering bright blue. Mid-May. Upright open habit. Yellow new growth. 6'h. x 3.5'w. in 13 years. Plant hardy to at least -30°F(-34°C), buds to -15°F (-26°C). A lepidote.
'Everestianum'	Waterer	2" wide rosy-lilac frilled flowers in rounded trusses. Free flowering. Vigorous, full, rounded habit. Deep green foliage. Hardy to -15°F (-26°C) or lower.
<i>mucronulatum</i> 'Crater's Edge'		A dwarf twiggly selection of this deciduous species. Magenta-purple flowers appear in spring before the leaves. Brilliant fall colour. To 2' x 2'. Great for the rock garden. Requires excellent foliage. Zone 5. A lepidote.
'Hot Dawn'	Brueckner	Vivid purplish-red flowers of heavy substance with frilled edges. A very hardy, upright plant with leaves somewhat typical of other 'Mars' hybrids. Blooms consistently from a young plant. To 4' x 4' in 10 years. Zone 6 or lower. ['Mars' x (yak 'Exbury' x 'Mars')]
'Mrs. Furnival'	Waterer	Light pink flowers with a prominent red blotch in large conical trusses that smother the plant. Deep green attractive foliage. To 4'h. x 5'h. in 10 years. Plant hardy to -9°F (-23°C), buds to -5°F (-21°C). Spectacular and worth a try in a protected spot from Halifax south.
'Midnight Ruby'	Mezitt	Wavy, reddish-purple flowers with a reddish eye. Winter foliage is a rich, dark, almost black colour. Wide and upright growing to 2' x 2' in 10 yrs. Zone 5. A lepidote.
'Milestone'	Mezitt	Frilled, bright purplish-red flowers in flat ball-shaped trusses. Very floriferous and early blooming. 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 -20°F (-29°C). A lepidote.

RSCAR 2001 TISSUE CULTURE

RHODODENDRONS (All rhododendrons are elepidotes unless noted otherwise)

Variety	Hybridizer	Description
'Pink Parasol'	Leach	Dark pink buds open to soft pink and fade to white. Bluish-green foliage with thick tan indumentum beneath. Dense rounded habit. To 10' w. x 5' h in many years. Resembles <i>R. yakushimanum</i> . Hardy to -20°F (-29°C).
'Trinidad'	Leach	Striking tricolour blooms. Rose-pink buds open to ball shaped trusses of 14. Each creamy yellow flower is edged with bright cherry-red. Free-flowering. Compact habit. To 4' x 4' in 10 years. Hardy to -20°F (-29°C).
'Vernus'	Shammarello/Leach	Early flowering plant with attractive large shell pink flowers, each with a dark red centre blotch. Plants are compact, vigorous with glossy foliage. To 5' x 5' in 10 years. Hardy to -25°F (-32°C).

DECIDUOUS AZALEAS (All hardy to -25°F & of medium habit)

Variety	Hybridizer	Description
'Arneson Ruby'	Arneson	Large 4' wide red-pink flowers. A mix of choice Exbury and Mollis hybrids. Standard shape and size.
'Strawberry Ice'	Rothschild	Deep pink in bud opening to flesh pink with mottled dark pink edges and a yellow throat.
'Totally Awesome'	Bunnell	Deep red buds opening to two shades of yellow with vivid reddish orange edges and a bright yellow blotch. To 4.5' x 4.5' in 10 years. Superb fall colour.

COMPANION PLANTS

Variety	Description
<i>Halesia tetraptera</i> v. <i>monticola</i> 'Arnold Pink'	A rare, choice selection of the 'Mountain Silverbell' with pink bell-shaped pendulous flowers in spring. Stems and twigs also have a rose coloration a striking winter attraction. This will be a large tree in time and may eventually grow 60' high or more. Zone 6.
Hemerocallis 'Pardon Me'	A miniature daylily with small bright red ruffled flowers in mid-season and intermittently through late September. Fragrant. 18".
Hosta 'Guacamole'	An exciting new hosta, the reverse variegation of 'Fragrant Bouquet'. Vigorous plant with gold foliage and a wide green edge. Almost pure white flowers in late summer. To 18" h x 54" w. Note: Special Price - \$6.00 ☒

Bloom Dates in Atlantic Canada: The 2000 Season

By Bob Pettipas

The following list of rhododendrons was compiled after the 2000 blooming season. Seasons vary and bloom times differ from one year to next. In the more southern regions of the Atlantic Provinces the bloom time maybe 20 days ahead of the more northern regions. The list below is based on an average of all the Atlantic regions.

The season usually starts in late April and extends to Late July. The hardiness rating follows the plant name. Plants in italics and with an * are of exceptional quality.

Varieties starting with a capital are hybrids, lower case are species.

Listed are those varieties that perform well are commercially available, although some are more difficult to find than others.

Late April

Variety	Hardiness	Color	Size
<i>mucronulatum Cornell Pink</i> *	Z5	pink	tall
dauricum	Z5	white or purple	medium

Early May

Variety	Hardiness	Color	Size
<i>April Mist</i> *	Z5	light lilac	small
<i>April Rose</i> *	Z5	dark rose	small
<i>April Dawn</i> *	Z5	white	small
Westons Pink Diamond	Z5	pink	medium
<i>Babylon</i> *	Z6a	white with blotch	tall (tender) (great foliage)
<i>mucronulatum Crater's Edge</i> *	Z6	dark pink	dwarf
Malta	Z5	pink	small
<i>Spellbinder</i> *	Z5	pale pink	huge (great foliage)

MID May

Variety	Hardiness	Color	Size
<i>PJM</i> *	Z5	purple	medium
Azuray	Z6	light blue - lilac	tall & narrow
Bluenose	Z5	close to true blue	tall
keiskei	Z6	light yellow	dwarf (some exceptions)
Patty Bee	Z6	light yellow	dwarf
<i>Dora Amateis</i> *	Z6	white	small
racemosum	Z6	pink	small
bureavii	Z6	white	medium
<i>Ginny Gee</i> *	Z6	pink	dwarf
<i>Aglo</i> *	Z5	pink	small
<i>Olga</i> *	Z5	pink	small

Late May

Variety	Hardiness	Color	Size
Wren	Z6a	yellow	dwarf (tender)
<i>carolinianum</i> *	Z5	pink or purplish	medium
<i>Ramapo</i> *	Z5	lilac	small
<i>Purple Gem</i> *	Z5	lilac	small
<i>Grand Pre'</i> *	Z5	pink	medium
<i>Manitau</i> *	Z5	pink	small
<i>yakushmanum "Ken Janeck"</i> *	Z5	pink fading to white	medium (great foliage)
<i>yakushmanum "Mist maiden"</i> *	Z5	pink fading to white	medium (great foliage)
<i>yakushmanum "Yaku Angel"</i> *	Z5	pink fading to white	medium (great foliage)
Morgenrot	Z6	pink	medium
<i>Centennial Celebration</i> *	Z5b	lilac	medium (great foliage)
<i>Mardi Gras</i> *	Z6a	pink fading to white	medium (great foliage)
<i>metternichii</i> *	Z6	pink	medium (great foliage)
Firestorm	Z5	red	medium
Scarlet Romance	Z5	red	medium
<i>Golfer</i> *	Z6	pink fading to white	medium (great foliage)
Hello Dolly	Z6	mix of yellow and pink	medium
<i>Elvira</i> *	Z5	red	dwarf (very hardy)
Jericho	Z5	ivory	medium
<i>Azalea schlippenbachii</i>	Z6	white	medium (great foliage)
<i>Azalea poukhanense</i>	Z6	pink	medium

Early June

Variety	Hardiness	Color	Size
Anna Hall	Z5	white	medium
Sumatra	Z5	red	small
Schneekrone	Z6	white	medium
<i>Vinecrest</i> *	Z5b	yellow	medium
<i>Scintillation</i> *	Z5b	pink	medium (great foliage)
<i>fortunei</i> *	Z6	pink	tall (fragrant, great foliage)
<i>Brown Eyes</i> *	Z5	pink	tall
<i>Solidarity</i> *	Z6	pink	medium
<i>Normandy</i> *	Z5	pink	medium to large
<i>Hong Kong</i> *	Z5	yellow	tall
Hawaii	Z5	pink	tall
<i>Parker's Pink</i> *	Z5	pink	large
<i>Haaga</i> *	Z5	pink	large (very hardy)
Hellikki	Z5	red	large (very hardy)
Helsinki University	Z5	pink	large (very hardy)
Mikkelli	Z5	white	large (very hardy)
Peter Tigerstedt	Z5	white	large (very hardy)
Kullervo	Z5	?	tall
<i>Party Pink</i> *	Z5	pink	tall
Skookum	Z5	red	medium

Mid June

Variety	Hardiness	Color	Size
<i>Rio</i> *	Z5	pink with blotch	medium
<i>Bellefontaine</i> *	Z5	dark pink	tall (great foliage)
<i>Mrs. W.R. Coe</i> *	Z6a	dark large pink	tall (tender)
<i>kiusianum</i> *	Z6	various colors	small
<i>Calsap</i> *	Z5	white purple blotch	tall
Blue Ensign	Z5	lilac & white lilac blotch	medium
Blue Peter	Z5	lilac & white lilac blotch	medium
Madrid	Z5	pink	tall
<i>Casanova</i> *	Z5	light yellow and pink	medium
Henry's Red	Z5	red	large
White Peter	Z5	white with dark blotch	medium
Mrs. Funnival	Z6	pink with blotch	large

Late June

Variety	Hardiness	Color	Size
Connecticut Yankee	Z5	Purple	medium
catawbiense	Z5	white or purple	tall
Roseum Elegans	Z5	pink	tall
Nova Zembla	Z6	red - rose	large
English Roseum	Z5	pink- purple	tall
<i>Golden Gala</i> *	Z5	ivory	medium
Trinidad	Z5	pink-yellow	medium
Lady Louise x kiusianum (Berg)	Z6	pale pink/white bicolor	small

Early to Mid July

Variety	Hardiness	Color	Size
Azalea Late Love	Z6	pink	dwarf
Azalea Alexander	Z6	pink	dwarf
<i>Summer Glow</i> *	Z5	pink	very tall
Summer Summit	Z5	white	very tall
Azalea Weston's Innocence	Z5	white	medium
Azalea Pink and Sweet	Z5	pink	medium
Monaco	Z5	pink -orange	tall
maximum	Z5	pink (can be white)	tall
brachycarpum	Z5	white	tall some exceptions dwarf or medium)
Komo Kulshan x Lady Louise	Z6	pink/purple	low

Late July

<i>Azalea viscosum</i> *	Z5	white tubes	medium (very fragrant)
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Gentians.....the 'Blues' from Spring 'til Fall

by Todd Boland
St. John's, NF

Like all of you, I too have a fascination with the genus *Rhododendron*. Thanks to people like John Weagle, Dick Steele and Jamie Ellison, this obsession has increased dramatically in recent years. However, as many of you can appreciate, rhododendrons provide blooms in the garden for only a couple of months. Unless you are a purist, it's nice to have some form of floral display in the rhododendron border throughout the entire season, not just Spring and early Summer. So what to grow to fill in the gap from July until Autumn? Thankfully, there are many plants that require the same growing conditions as rhododendrons, and thus make wonderful companion plants. If you are lover of the colour blue (as I am) there is a genus of plant perfectly suited to provide this service in the rhododendron garden: the genus *Gentiana*.

The genus *Gentiana* (including *Gentianella*) occurs worldwide. While most are perennials with predominantly blue flowers, there are annual and biennial species, and their colour range extends to pink, purple, white and even yellow. With some 400 species, you can find a gentian to suit almost any situation and provide blooms from early Spring until late Fall. Most, but not all, are perfect companion plants for rhododendrons since many prefer moist, yet well drained, organically-rich soil that is on the acidic side. Most also prefer bright light to full sun. While many are easy to accommodate, some can be downright impossible in cultivation -- *Gentiana verna* has been particularly tragic for me over the years. However, there are enough easy species that more than compensate for the finicky ones.

There are far too many species to mention all the easy or good ones, so I'll stick to those I've grown myself in St. John's, Newfoundland. I'll start with the Spring 'trumpet' or 'acaulis' gentians. There are 7 main species that all look superficially the same, producing large, deep blue, solitary, trumpet-like flowers in May-June. All produce low mats of leaves and need full sun to do well.

Much confusion surrounds this group. Many are offered as incorrectly identified plants or seeds. *Gentiana acaulis* is the best known in this group, but I've grown many *G. acaulis* over the years, with 90% turning out to be *G. angustifolia*. No matter, only the gentian connoisseur would appreciate the subtle differences. Unfortunately, *G. angustifolia*, is the one species in this group that is a lime-lover. However, if the soil is not too acidic, I find they still do reasonably well. My largest clump is between my *R. Balalaika* and *R. globigerum*, and is doing quite well. Species in this group include *G. acaulis* (syn. *kochiana*), *G. alpina*, *G. angustifolia*, *G. clusii*, *G. dinarica*, *G. ligustica* and *G. occidentalis*. And while this group may bloom concurrently with many rhododendrons, their intense blue colour is always appreciated.

In my garden, the next gentian to bloom is *G. decumbens*, in late July (about 2 weeks after my last rhododendron, *R. 'Weston's Innocence'*, has faded). Like the trumpet gentians, there is a large group of mid-summer blooming gentians that are similarly misidentified when sold as plants or seeds. These include *G. decumbens*, *G. gracillipes*, *G. dahurica* and *G. cruciata*. Thankfully the last is fairly distinct with its four-petalled flowers rather than five. These four species all produce a leafy rosette and 15-25 cm, somewhat weak, stems. Flowers are mid-blue, rather than the intense blue of the 'trumpets'. They bloom late-July to mid-August, producing flowers both terminally and among the upper leaf axils. While not as stunning as some gentians, I find they help fill the gap until the next major group of gentians open: *G. septemfida*.

Gentiana septemfida starts to bloom around early August, and depending on the cultivar or subspecies, may bloom well into late September. This species is characterized by leafy, decumbent stems, that have a tendency to radiate from the center of the plant. Stems may be relatively short

(15 cm) and stand more upright, but most have 20-30 cm stems that lie on the ground. They produce a terminal cluster of bright blue flowers. There are many cultivars of this gentian and when growing several purchased plant or growing from seeds, you may get a mixture of forms and sizes, all which are generally quite attractive. *G. septemfida* var. *lagodechiana* is fairly distinct with solitary flowers both terminally and axillary. One variety I have appears to be 'Hascombensis' and has upright 15 cm stems rather than the floppy stems which are more typical of the group.

Closely related to *G. septemfida* is *G. paradoxa*... and it's a paradox why you so rarely get the real McCoy! *Gentiana paradoxa* has leafy stems like *septemfida*, but the leaves are very narrow and crowded along the stem. Their flowers are larger and more starry. In reality, quite distinctive. So why is it almost every time I grow them from seed or order a plant via mail-order, I end up with *G. septemfida* or a hybrid between it and *paradoxa*?! The hybrids themselves are still very attractive plants and bloom about the same time as the *septemfidas*. The hybrids have stiffer stems and narrower leaves than is typical of *septemfida* (*septemfida* leaves are oval to triangular). The real *G. paradoxa* blooms after most *septemfidas*, peaking in mid-late September locally.

The end of the gentian display is provided by the popular and lovely group of gentians known as the Chinese Autumn-flowering gentians. Again, there are many very similar species and as many hybrids. All have very prostrate stems with crowded, very narrow leaves. They produce relatively large solitary trumpets in October and into November. Flowers are bright blue even tending to sky-blue in some cultivars. The outside of the flowers are often striped dark blue. *Gentiana sino-ornata* is the most popular and demands a lime-free soil, making them perfect companions for rhododendrons. Other excellent species and hybrids in this group are *G. ornata*, *G. farreri*, *G. ternifolia* 'Dali', *G. 'Kingfisher'*, *G.*

'Drake's Strain' and *G. 'Juwel'*.

All of these previous gentians are relatively low growing. There are several attractive gentians that grow much taller and are perhaps better suited to a perennial border or placed behind dwarf rhododendrons. Of these, the best is the willow gentian, *G. asclepiadea*. This species produces willowy stems that reach to a meter in length. Trumpet-like flowers arise singularly or in clusters of 2 or 3 among the upper leaf axils in mid-August. This species will tolerate more shade than the previous species, although, stems are stiffer if grown in full sun. The typical colour is mid-blue but I have a white form and I've seen a pink and a pale blue form as well.

Gentiana lutea is definitely the most unique and dramatic species, even if its floral display is a bit wanting. If grown from seed, the plant takes several years to reach flowering size. Year after year you get a larger and larger rosette of blue-green conspicuously ribbed leaves. After several years, the plant may have 30 cm leaves and produce a flower stem up to 2 meters high! The upper leaf axils produce clusters of rather small, yellowish, starry flowers. While it may not be a floral knockout, it would certainly be a conversation piece in your garden, if you have the space!

There are many other attractive (and not so attractive) gentians that you can grow. These mentioned previously are generally readily available in seed exchanges and some are available at local nurseries. All survive quite happily in eastern Newfoundland, so should do well throughout the rest of Atlantic Canada. Remember that you may not always get what you think you have since the genus *Gentiana* is plagued with mis-identifications. So, to fill in the 'blue' gap among your Rhododendron floral display and to maintain flowers among the rhodies throughout the rest of the growing season, try some gentians. ☒

Farewell to *Peonia suffruticosa*

A Book Review

M. J. Harvey

An extraordinary story concerning the tree peonies has come out in only the past decade. One of the investigators, G.L. Osti, has written a book detailing his part in these discoveries.

The first tree peony in Britain was introduced from China by Sir Joseph Hooker who, 'engaged Mr. Duncan, a medical gentleman attached to the East India Company's service, to procure a plant for the royal garden at Kew, where it was first received, through Mr. Duncan's exertions, in 1787'. It died.

It turns out in retrospect that the tree peonies introduced to Europe, from Chinese and Japanese ports, were the end product of maybe two millennia of migration, hybridisation and selection from a cluster of wild species in the interior of Asia. Sorting out what the original tree peonies were is the subject of this book. The name 'suffruticosa', used for over 200 years is now abandoned, at least as a species, since it represents a variable cluster of hybrids.

We lack a local exemplum which we can visit, admire and envy. The role of envy in gardening is seldom discussed but is a primary stimulus. It makes us go home and copy or attempt to beat. Envy gets a bad write-up in the Bible, but my own experience is that it is a vice with many positive aspects. Do we have too many *Rhododendron* gardens and not enough other types?

My own exposure to superb tree peonies was at a reception given for members of the Magnolia Society in Vico Morcote, at Sir Peter Smither's home in Switzerland. Not only does Sir Peter breed Magnolias and Nerines among other plants, but his original cultivars of tree peonies are dazzling and were flower in pots on the patio. I was envious - which is why I now grow tree peonies. I should add that he is also an expert photographer and his exhibition of very large photographs of tree peonies has circulated internationally.

Victoria has an ideal climate in which to grow tree peonies but so far they have not caught the local imagination. Tree peonies are in the same marketing mode as *Rhododendrons* were in Nova

Scotia when I started gardening there in the 1960's - there was a choice of red, or pink, or white, or purple. The peonies come in waxed cardboard cartons and have no varietal names. A few enterprising nurseries have imported named Chinese varieties but the expense and lack of any local tradition or expertise have been discouraging. I predict that with this book interest in tree peonies will increase.

The book itself is a delightful easy read. It is written in a discursive non-technical-manner in much the same style as some of the great gardening travel-writers. Originally published in Italian in 1997, the English translation is impeccably done. There are a large number of colour photographs taken on location in China and also a supplement of 152 Chinese and other cultivars with a close-up of a flower and a brief description of each.

My complaints about the book - and this is the scientist in me - are that the five nuclear species are described but in non-technical terms. It is difficult to get a clear picture in the mind of them apart from *P. rockii* with its black spots, and *P. ostii*, the easy-to-grow upright, with unspotted white flat flowers that is so important in Chinese herbal medicine. In this respect, the book is at the other end of the spectrum from recent books such as those on *Galanthus* and *Cyclamen* with their almost obsessive scientific detail. In addition, there is no index.

But Mr. Osti is a relative rarity these days: an expert amateur who has contributed extensively to his chosen subject - hence the species named for him. This is an important book on what the Chinese call "the King of Flowers".

Gian Lupo Osti, **The Book of Tree Peonies**, English edition 1999, Umberto Allemandi & C. Turin, 126pp \$67.50 Can. ☒

This review was originally written for the Hardy Plant group of The Victoria Horticultural Society

AWARD WINNERS

2000 R.S.C. ANNUAL FLOWER SHOW

Halifax, Nova Scotia - June 3, 2000

Atlantic Region Award.: Best in Show

Rhododendron 'Goldfort'

Tony Jackson

Don Craig Award: Best Atlantic Canada Produced Hardy Rhododendron

Best Canadian Produced Hardy Rhododendron

Rhododendron 'Barbara Hall'

Diana Steele

George Swain Award: Best Rhododendron in Commerce

Rhododendron 'Firestorm'

Bob Pettipas

Best Species Award: Elepidote Rhododendron

Rhododendron yakushimanum

Dianna Steele

Best Species Award: Lepidote Rhododendron

Rhododendron oreotrephes

John Meagher

Ken Hall Award: Best Hybrid Azalea

Purple evergreen azalea

Hilda Owen

Best Hybrid Award: Lepidote Rhododendron

Rhododendron 'Barney's Blue'

John Meagher

Boulderwood - Steele Award: Most Outstanding Entry by a Home Gardener

Rhododendron 'Manitau'

Ken Shannik

Award for Exceptional Qualities

Rhododendron yakushimanum wardii

John Meagher

Ruth Wainwright Award: Best Companion Plant

Pieris japonica 'Scarlet O'Hara'

John Weagle

Award: New/Rare/Difficult

'Phyllis Korn'

John Meagher

Judges' Award for Exceptional Qualities

'Sodilarity', 'Centennial Celebration' - Bob Pettipas

'Maybelle' - John Cornwall

'Mother Greer', 'Russatini' - John Weagle

'Sunrise' - Beth Trost

'Albrechtii' - John Meagher

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