



Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

Spring Newsletter—Vol. 44, No. 1

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Executive Director's Report by Steve Hootman

And the hits just keep on coming. The strange weather we have been experiencing through the seasons for the past few years has struck again, as we enter our busy spring season already in full watering mode following the driest March on record. Prior to this desertification of the RSBG we enjoyed the coldest February on record in concurrence with several snow events, which produced well over a foot of heavy wet snow resulting in considerable damage to many plants in the garden. On the bright side, the long cold snap nicely delayed what had looked to be a very early spring blooming season, as we had been enjoying an unseasonably mild winter up until that point and many plants were already showing color in January. This delay has resulted in an extremely colorful mid-spring as the flowering of the early species is now overlapping with that of the mid-season species – a spectacular cacophony of color well worth coming out to see if you have the opportunity.

Despite the vagaries of *Rhododendron* farming, things are going quite well and great changes and additions to the garden and nursery continue at a steady pace. A tremendous amount of new planting is taking place as we continue our renovations and add new taxa to the garden. We **have also created a new path through the Magnolia Grove so that you can now walk through this beautiful section of the garden instead of observing it only from the road.** In addition, we were recently gifted the species Vireya collection (tropical rhododendrons) from Bovees Nursery in Portland, Oregon. Bovees had the finest and most complete collection of vireyas in North America and we are honored to be able to preserve a large part of that collection here at the RSBG. A sincere thank you to Lucie Sorenson-Smith and her daughter Kathy who are retiring from the nursery business along with E. White Smith for their generosity and dedication to the genus *Rhododendron*.

I am pleased to welcome Jillian Demus as our new Assistant Horticulturist. Jillian comes to us from the Midwest with a degree in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Wisconsin. Jillian has an avid interest in plants and all things nature and will be working half time in the nursery and half time in the garden. Her interest in and experience with animals, native plants and fungus, among many other aspects of natural history, adds another layer to the level of knowledge on our staff.



The Stranger in the Garden

by Jo Laskowski, Curator of Hardy Fern Foundation

There are species rhodies and rare collections and little-known ground covers brought back by intrepid plantsman Steve Hootman from his overseas trips. In the midst of all of this there is another, less often recognized presence in the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden.

In 1989 a little subset of gardeners formed a new organization. They declared that it would be known as the HARDY FERN FOUNDATION, and it would be laser-focused on FERNS! By 1991, HFF had arrangements in place with the Rhododendron Species Foundation to locate its primary fern collection in the garden, and share office space in the administration building.

Many uncommon, rare, and ordinary ferns were planted out. In the early days, the garden was characterized by descriptors like “upper study garden” and “lower study garden.” Original collections of *Dryopteris*, or wood fern, were sited in the upper garden. In the lower garden was the collection of *Polystichum*, or shield ferns. Random throughout were ferns from *Blechnum*, *Adiantum*, *Cyrtomium*, *Woodwardia*, *Thelypteris*, and other genera.

Time has been both kind and brutal. Many of the original plants have done well, reaching mature sizes not often seen in cultivation. Some permanently checked out.

In 2009, HFF opened the Victorian Stumpery in the lower garden, near the pond. The nearly quarter-acre project took some nine months to complete. Strangely enough, the hardest thing to locate were the stumps themselves, which form the backbone and physical structure of the stumpery. Once that was done, the site was cleared of its cover of salal and regraded. Stumps were placed artistically (here read “in the eye of the beholder”) and trunks were chain-sawed into benches. Paths were defined and ferns planted. Today the Stumpery is a lap for the successes and failures of location, light, and moisture combinations, and a visual jewel.

So look at the RSBG with new eyes. Look beyond the flowers and indumentum, past the Japanese maples and *Iris* and *Ypsilandra*. Look to the complex, fascinating ferns that have been here all along.



Pictured: *Woodwardia unigemmata*

Click [HERE](#) for more information about the Hardy Fern Foundation, including a comprehensive fern database, propagation info, and Membership benefits.



2019 Rhododendron Species Symposium April 26 & 27



Last chance to [register!](#) Participate in a weekend of exploration into the world of rhododendrons! Hear from local and international experts on a wide range of topics, from plant hunting to garden restoration to the genetic makeup of *Rhododendron* species.

The symposium includes an opportunity to participate in a hands-on horticulture class or take a tour of the garden led by Executive Director and Curator Steve Hootman. The symposium concludes with a banquet and talk by keynote speaker Seamus O’Brien.

About Seamus O’Brien:

Seamus is Ireland’s best-known plantsman and has traveled extensively across the world to study plants in their native habitats. He has grown plants since childhood and has wide-ranging interests, though plants from warm-temperate and temperate areas of the world are his primary focus. He manages the National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh, in County Wicklow, an 18th-century estate long famed for its historic collection of rare and exotic plants. He is the author of *In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry* (Antique Collectors Club, 2011) and was awarded the Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland’s Gold Medal of Honor in 2018.



2019 Spring Events



Spring Plant Sale—April 12 & 13



Mother’s Day Weekend—May 11 & 12



Blue Poppy Day—May 18

Preparing for Summer Plant Stress by Atsuko Gibson

Over the last few months, I have received many e-mails and phone calls about mature rhododendrons that are not doing so well in residential settings. Many have told me that they have aged, mature rhododendrons that have been in their yard for years but they don't know what kind. All the sudden, the plants start to look unhealthy so they contact us to ask why and what can they do in order for the plants to regain their vigor.

As for why, I have one thing to blame---the record breaking summer heat. I felt that the last few summers in the Pacific Northwest have been sort of extreme, whether it was the hottest on record or the longest without any measurable precipitation. Even for mature rhododendrons that have never shown summer stress, the last few summers have been rough, especially if they are aged plants. Plus, with the stress from the summer, they are more susceptible to disease and pests.

So what can be done? You could reduce the summer stress on plants by adequately watering your plants during the growing season and provide enough shade so the plants are not exposed in full sun all day. If the plants are in too much shade, then limb up the surrounding trees to get more light. If you haven't fertilized your plants for years, perhaps the soil could use some nutrients. Dead-head your rhododendrons, so the plants can put more energy on growth rather than seed formation. If any of this works, your plants will slowly start to recover from the stress. But remember, the magic doesn't happen overnight. If the plants continue to struggle, it might be time to pull out your chainsaw and start a new planting. Let's all hope for a "regular" summer this year!

Botany Talk at Seattle Art Museum

Learn more about famous botanist George Forrest and his longtime collaboration with botanical expert and farmer Zhao Chengzhang.

Location: Plestcheeff Auditorium, Seattle Art Museum

Saturday, April 27 from 10 AM – 11:30 AM

[The Golden Mountain Gate: Text and Experience in the Botanical Exploration of Southwest China](#)

Erik Mueggler, University of Michigan

This talk examines the scientific collaboration between the Scottish botanist George Forrest and China's most accomplished botanical explorer of the 20th century, a farmer from northern Yunnan Province named Zhao Chengzhang. For nearly three decades, George Forrest employed Zhao Chengzhang and a team of Naxi-ethnicity men to explore the gigantic mountain ranges of Northwest Yunnan for alpine flowers. Under their guidance, Forrest attempted an unprecedentedly detailed map of correspondences between species and geography over the region. The key to this goal, he thought, would be the "center of origin" of the Rhododendron, up beyond the mountains where Yunnan meets Tibet.

Tickets: \$10, SAM members \$5 — Available at SeattleArtMuseum.org

Welcome New Members

10/1/2018 — 1/31/2019

Connie Landers

Paul Young

Bill Colter

Charlotte Jacobson

Gregory Santos

Jay Galvin

Emily Zisette

James Lemieux

Rainier Audubon

James Edwards

Robert Ward

Melanie Brauner

Marya Galvin

Landry Corkery

Del & Star Gamler

Cathy Cadd

Nancy Rivera

Kylee Peterson

Melissa Dyvig

Leah Marston

Loren Milliman

Bill Moore

William Pinnix

Jeff Wagner

Julie Harris

Carolyn Laskowski

Annual Meeting

Members are invited to attend and participate in our Annual Meeting to learn updates about goings-on at the RSBG.

When: Friday, April 26 from 1-3pm

Where: Hampton Inn & Suites
31720 Gateway Center Blvd S
Federal Way, WA 98003

Symposium to directly follow the Annual Meeting. Registration is required.

2019 RSF Board and EC

2019 RSF Board Continued

Executive Committee:

President: Sean Rafferty

1st Vice President: Ian Walker

2nd Vice President: Charles Muller

Treasurer: Robert Gust

Secretary: Garratt Richardson

Immediate Past President: Mike Stewart

EC Members-At-Large:

Anne Gross

Jean Muir

Paul Thompson

Board of Directors:

Jerry Ackerman

Rollo Adams

Chris Brickell

Al Campbell

David Chamberlain

Ken Cox

Susan Davies

Harold Greer

Anne Gross

Robert Gust

Benjamin D. Hall

Henry R. Helm

Don Hyatt

Douglas Justice

Board of Directors continued:

Donald E. King

William Lindeman

Robert Mast

Jean Muir

Charles Muller

Peter Norris

Tom Nosella

Sean Rafferty

Garratt Richardson

Martha Robbins

Charles Sale & Margaret Charlton

Hartwig Schepker

Don Smart

Valerie Soza

Mike Stewart

Diane Thompson

Paul Thompson

Ian Walker

Tim Walsh

Garth Wedemire

Keith White

Martin Wilkie

Restricted Contributions

Endowments & Extraordinary Gifts

ARS Seattle (SRS), *Donation to Intern Program*
ARS Tualatin Valley, *Donation to Intern Program*
Garratt Richardson, *Alpine Garden Renovation*
Pat McDowell, *Alpine Garden Renovation*
Walker Foundation, *Curator Travel*
Walker Foundation, *Research & Education*
Walker Foundation, *Yearbook*

Hall Trust
Stephen Hall
Robert Mast
Martha Robbins

Extraordinary Gifts:

Benjamin Hall
Robert Mast

General Operations

AmazonSmile Foundation

Lynne Bell

Harold Broman

Joan Buhler

Patricia J. Galligan

Joshua Green Foundation, Inc.

Kozo Kawano

John Lumsden

Shanon Matson

Kevin McIntosh

Gerald Nemanishen

Mark A. E. Nixon

United Way

Garden Campaign:

Rollo & Winnie Adams

Dr. Paul W. Anderson

ARS North Island

ARS Pilchuck Chapter

Dianne Bell

Gwen Bell

Bonnie Berk

Wilbur Bluhm

Bonnie Campbell

Patty Candiotta

Richard Cavender

Carol F. CHapen

Susan Clark

David & Wendy Close

Jean & Pat Cummins

Mary Beth Dahl

Robert A. Dunning

Earl Ecklund

Kenneth Everding

Loretta A. Goetsch

Cindy & Dave Hackett

Hans Hasche-Kluender

Deena J. Henkins

Ron & Barb Hinton

Eric Hirsch

Carl & Betty Hogan

Donald Hyatt

Clarke Isackson

Ian Keck

Peter Kendall

Howard R. Kline

Katherine Lintault

Ron & Ginny Mapes

Robert Mathey

Keith W. Maw

Stephen McCormick

Robert & Katherine McLean

David R. Morel

Suzanne Morgan

Jean Muir

Beth Nakatsu

Margaret & Allen Nelson

Sue Olsen

James Olson

John Parker

Pam Perryman

Beverly Pierson

Debbie Powell

Sherry Retherford

Martha Robbins

Millie Russell

Canfield Smith

Garden Campaign continued...

Ramona Soule

Dean H. Stout

Karen Swenson

Diane & Paul Thompson

Dennis Tully

John Van Den Meerendonk

Scott VanGerpen

Jennifer A. Velinty

Charles V. Waid

Ian P. Walker

Carol Wall

Leslie Walt

Kathe Watanabe

Jean Weaver

Withey Price Landscape & Design

Ellen Wright

Legacy Circle

Members of the Legacy Circle:

Deena J. Henkins

Peter Norris

Donald King

Chuck Sheaffer

Ian Walker

Anne Guelker

Keith White

About the Rhododendron Legacy Circle:

The Rhododendron Legacy Circle is open to all members who have made provisions for the Rhododendron Species Foundation in their financial or estate plans. Established in 2013, the Legacy Circle enables the RSF to recognize and show appreciation for our friends' generosity during their lifetime.

Legacy gifts are an impactful and vital means to ensure the RSF's future success. There are many creative ways to provide a contribution to the RSF while enhancing and safeguarding one's own financial situation. Planned giving helps maximize the tax benefits of charitable giving, allowing people to provide a gift they may not have thought possible. For more information, visit: <http://rhodygarden.org/cms/get-involved/planned-giving/> or contact Grace Pham at Grace@RhodyGarden.org.

Spring Distribution — Closes May 1

Whether you're a seasoned hybridizer, budding garden enthusiast, or novice, gardeners of all skill levels will find useful information and plants that suit their needs. Find YOUR new favorite plants [here](#).

