



# Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden Summer Newsletter—Vol. 45, No. 2

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# Executive Director's Report by Steve Hootman

Well, it has been a strange and trying spring, to say the least. With the advent of the coronavirus pandemic in early spring, we decided it would be prudent to close the garden to the public, to ask our volunteers to stay home, and to limit contact between staff to do our part in limiting the spread of the virus to keep us all safe and healthy. So, beginning in late March, right at the start of the peak blooming season, we did just that. We would remain closed until early May when we re-opened on a limited basis with new and necessary health and safety protocols in place and under which we are still operating.

Obviously, this was most unfortunate in many ways, one of which was that I would rate this spring to be our finest (so far!) in terms of amount of bloom and overall color. In addition, we had the almost perfect weather conditions that would normally entice the public to come and view the abundance of color, but with only the staff able to enjoy any of it. The lockdown did provide us with quite a bit of extra time to accomplish things in the garden and nursery that we would normally not have time for due to events, tours, plant sales, and all the other activities that normally consume most of our time during the spring bloom season. For example, the horticulture staff and I had time to key out plants that were blooming for the first time in hope of figuring out the identification of the unknown collection. To "key out" a plant is to run it through a series of questions that describe the plant - "leaves alternate, go to B" or "leaves opposite, go to C" until you arrive (or do not!) at a specific name.

Among a handful of new taxa that we were able to identify were the following species: *R. mackenzianum* CCHH#8100 – a member of section Choniastrum with lovely white flowers bearing a strong yellow flush, this was grown from my collection of seed made on the Yunnan/Burma frontier way back in 1997; *R. cavaleriei* CGG#14136 – another Choniastrum, this one with lavender flowers; *R. fuchsifolium* CGG#14124 and *R. rivulare* CGG#14120 – two evergreen azaleas grown from seed collected in the wild; *R. comparabile* – a vireya received from Bovees Nursery under an incorrect name. These are all new species in the collection of the RSBG and probably new introductions to cultivation.

In addition to our progress on our ever-expanding collection, we have also been spending quite a bit of time in updating our databases and have initiated staff blogs, educational videos and other forms of outreach in order to stay connected with you and with the community. Another very exciting project has been the planting of over a dozen hypertufa troughs which are now on display in the special garden area just in front of the Rutherford Conservatory. The troughs are each planted with a different set of very specific dwarf and alpine plant species, each a unique garden and each quite distinct and lovely. These hypertufa troughs were a donation made by our long-time friend Frank Fujioka, world-famous *Rhododendron* grower and hybridizer. The plants were either our own or were donated by our friends Rick Lupp at Mt. Tahoma Nursery or Kelly Dodson and Sue Milliken at Far Reaches Farm.



Even under the ongoing uncertainty and turmoil, we continue to make progress as an organization and to keep moving forward in fulfilling our mission of cultivation, conservation, and education. The staff, board, and volunteers of the RSBG wish you all good health and offer great thanks for your ongoing and vitally important support.

## Species Profile: *Rhododendron fulvum* by Will Clausen

*Rhododendron fulvum* is a highly regarded plant with exceptional foliage that is well suited to a temperate woodland garden. Two recognized subspecies of *Rhododendron fulvum* exist in the wild: *ssp. fulvum* and *ssp. fulvoides*. *Rhododendron fulvum* *ssp. fulvum* is found in western Yunnan and adjacent northern Myanmar where it occupies mixed forests from about 8,000-13,000 ft. *Rhododendron fulvum* *ssp. fulvoides* is generally found to the north of its counterpart, in northwest Yunnan and westward into Tibet. It carves out space in a similar habitat but reaches slightly higher elevation, up to nearly 15,000 feet. Of the two, *ssp. fulvum* is the more striking in broad terms with shiny dark green leaves and a thick covering of rich cinnamon-orange indumentum on the underside. The bright indumentum almost screams against such dark foliage. Without this indumentum the plant would feel leaden, but the dramatic character of each leaf surface plays well off one another to make this one of the best foliage plants in the genus *Rhododendron*. New growth shoots are also coated with the same nice cinnamon indumentum. Subspecies *fulvoides* differs in the leaves which are a lighter green with a plain matte finish and a thinner, less continuous covering of pale brown to fawn indumentum underneath. Their leaves are generally longer and narrower, less dramatic than *ssp. fulvum* though still lovely.



Left: Subspecies *fulvum*

Right: Subspecies *fulvoides*

The flowers which show early in spring are light pink, though sometimes range toward white or dark pink. Each flower is marked with a dark blotch and up to twenty of them are held in tightly packed inflorescences which can cover a mature plant. These gentle flowers are nice but maybe a little bit commonplace taken on their own. That said, they do a good job of balancing the dramatic foliage and the combination of flower and leaf gives an overall pleasing and distinct appearance to the plant. The two rhododendrons that look somewhat similar are *R. rex* *ssp. fictolacteum*, which features larger leaves, and *R. uvarifolium*, which is the one other member of subsection Fulva.

*Rhododendron fulvum* will enjoy the basic garden conditions that meet the needs of other large leaf species *Rhododendron*. Shade is good, though deep shade is not ideal. What's best is to have filtered sunlight through the day or limited direct sunlight in the morning with afternoon shade. Shelter from desiccating and damaging wind is important for healthy growth, so consider wind patterns before planting. For soil you will want something rich in organic matter and on the acidic side. Good drainage is a must, but consistent moisture is equally important so that the shallow roots do not completely dry out. Young plants can be fed a slow release fertilizer in early spring to encourage good growth. *Rhododendron fulvum* can survive temperatures down to about 5 degrees Fahrenheit given some lighter frosts first to harden them off for the winter. When temperatures dip below freezing, their leaves quickly curl into tight rolls. This response to cold is typical of certain rhododendrons and provides the plants with added protection but can be a little disconcerting to see.

## Species Profile continued

In a garden you can expect these plants to grow to be about five feet tall in ten years. In time they can become like small trees reaching around 15 feet, a decent size though not among the absolute tallest of rhododendrons. If possible, it is not a bad idea to plant *Rhododendron fulvum* on a slope slightly above your viewing spot to get a better look at its indumentum that develops even from a young age. As with many other rhododendrons and plants in general, a beautiful leaf can often match or surpass a flower for showiness and impact. The permanence of evergreen leaves can be especially impactful compared to fleeting flowers, and they generally do not require the years of waiting.



### **ACCESSIONS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE RSF:**

#### ***R. fulvum* ssp. *fulvum***

- 1964/048** Sunningdale Nurseries  
**1964/156** Crarae Lodge Gardens  
**1965/490** Corsock House  
**1978/053** Exbury Gardens  
**1980/079** Sunningdale Nurseries  
**1991/088** Warren Berg  
**Hu#20750** Hu—One accession. Nymans Gardens  
**CCHH#8136** Chamberlain; Cox; Hootman; Hutchinson—Five accessions from wild collected seed.  
**KR#7614** Keith Rushforth—One accession from wild collected seed.  
**SEH#25021** Steve Hootman—Two accessions from wild collected seed.  
**KR#10084** Keith Rushforth—Five accessions from wild collected seed.  
**KR#9861** Keith Rushforth—Five accessions from wild collected seed.

#### ***R. fulvum* ssp. *fulvoides***

- SB#9295** Warren Berg—Nine accessions from wild collected seed.  
**JN#296** Jens Nielsen—One accession from wild collected seed.

### **REFERENCES CONSULTED:**

Cox, Peter A. & Cox, Kenneth N.E. 1997. *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species*. Glendoick Publishing, Perth, Scotland. pg. 64.

# Gardening Tips by Jillian Demus

## Watering Rhododendrons in the PNW Climate

Moisture is essential to understanding how to keep rhododendrons and other plants alive and healthy at the RSBG. Rhododendrons in the wild are found in the most abundance and in greatest diversity in the Himalayas and adjacent regions of China. There, it is a monsoon climate of wet summers and drier winters--the opposite of the PNW. Generally, rhododendrons that are well established with a large root system require less additional watering than newer plantings. Newly planted rhododendrons may not be well-established until a few years after planting. So, plan on watering these plants about 2 times a week in the dry season to keep them healthy and thriving. When watering, shoot for 30 minutes to 1 hour of irrigation to get the soil saturated enough. Usually sunny spots need to be watered for longer than 30 minutes, depending on the size of the area. For your potted rhododendrons, do a quick "pre-soak" water and maybe water 1 or 2 more times if they are extra dry. You can often tell how wet the soil is by the weight of the pot or feeling the soil's moisture 1 inch or so down.

The ideal time to plant is in autumn when plants will get watered all winter and spring, giving the plant time for establishment before the dry months kick in. This will prevent you from needing to water as much in the summer. Mulching after planting will help keep the moisture in the soil, decreasing the watering frequency. For mulch, we use woodchips from trees and branches taken down in the garden throughout the year. However, Douglas fir bark mulch is readily available and works well in a woodland garden. Mulching to a depth of 2 or 3 inches is sufficient at retaining moisture and cooling down the roots, while also keeping weeds out.

Usually you can tell when your plant is thirsty by a slight wilting in the leaves. This is causing stress, so another sign could be an infestation of pests or disease. These come and attack plants when they are stressed and vulnerable. Although many other factors may also cause stress, such as too much afternoon sun or the wrong soil type. In the garden, you will want sandy loam, rich in organic matter and well-drained. In the garden, when putting in new raised beds, we use a mix of about three parts coarse sand and one part composted bark with a thick top-dressing of our own wood chips. This eventually forms a perfect sandy loam. In pots, we use a mix of 75% Douglas fir bark and 25% lava rock. Additionally, there is evidence that mycorrhizae put into the soil can provide drought resistance as well as disease defense and many other benefits. Although most of the time mycorrhizae arrives on its own in a garden.



Left: Garden mix, Right: Potting mix.

## Gardening Tips continued...

Over-watering is also a problem. This causes a lack of oxygen around the root system, inhibits gas exchange, and therefore 'drowns' the plant. This would likely only happen in a situation where drainage is inadequate. So, you will see that this happens much more often in a pot or in clay-like soil. Here, you may also see wilting and a possible discoloration in the leaves. Rhododendrons **need** good drainage.

Be aware of other plants living amongst your rhododendrons. Some native trees, such as the Pacific madrone and Pacific dogwood, will not tolerate irrigation in the summer and may become stressed or even die. Trees including Douglas fir and western hemlock are more tolerant of extra water but can be impacted by over-watering leading to issues with fungus or disease, like honey fungus. However, consider planting some areas of your yard with natives like *Rhododendron macrophyllum* (Pacific rhododendron—see photo) so you rarely need to water in the summer. Native plants are adapted to our wet winter, dry summer climate as well as having resistance to disease and pests. RSBG grows many other drought tolerant species like *Epimedium* spp. (barrenworts) and hellebores.



Overall, having the right soil type, location, mulching, and planting your rhododendron at the right time of year are ways to avoid underwatering or overwatering. Pay attention to your plants and water as needed. This will make for happy, beautiful rhododendrons.

## Evening in the Garden—Canceled

As you might have guessed, the RSBG has made the difficult decision to cancel Evening in the Garden. Prior to this life-altering pandemic, the garden was already considering ways that we might revitalize this event in the future. We will have a fresh take on Evening in the Garden to share with you in 2021. If there's something that you'd like to keep about the existing event OR something you'd like to change, we'd love to know! Send your ideas to [Info@RhodyGarden.org](mailto:Info@RhodyGarden.org).

We'll miss seeing your faces, but we hope to continue to stay in touch with you throughout this unusual year. Here are selection of photos from 12 years of Evening in the Garden:



# Spring Drive

Like most of us, the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden has faced a tough spring. The garden was closed between mid-March and mid-May—precisely our peak bloom season and the time of the year when we pull in the vast majority of our annual income.

With every sensitivity to the financial circumstances we all face as a collective, we are humbly asking that, if you can, you'll consider [supporting](#) the garden this year. Every dollar counts and every dollar will be allocated to directly supporting our mission of conservation and education.

**Help us reach  
our goal:  
\$50,000!**

We completed our Matching Challenge! Thanks to the generosity of private donors, the first \$10,000 raised was matched. Our sincerest thank you to everyone who has already contributed to the Spring Drive.

**Our progress, as of 6/23: \$22,601**

# Legacy Circle

Members of the Legacy Circle:

Deena J. Henkins  
Peter Norris  
Donald King  
Jean Muir

Keith White  
Ian Walker  
Anne Guelker

Established in 2013, The Rhododendron Legacy Circle is open to all members who have made provisions for the Rhododendron Species Foundation (RSF) in their financial or estate plans. The Legacy Circle enables the RSF to recognize and show appreciation for our friends' generosity during their lifetime. For more information and to join the Legacy Circle, contact Grace Pham at [Grace@RhodyGarden.org](mailto:Grace@RhodyGarden.org).



# The Virtual Garden

During the closure, and beyond, the RSBG has brought the beauty of the garden to you at home, while also sharing educational content for all levels of learning—from kids to hardcore gardeners. See below!

## Educational Videos:



## Activities for Kids:

**Tired of being stuck indoors?**  
Become Nature Explorers with your kiddos!

- Find a notebook.
- Decorate your Nature Journal cover.
- Head outside to your yard or neighborhood!
- Practice safe social distancing.

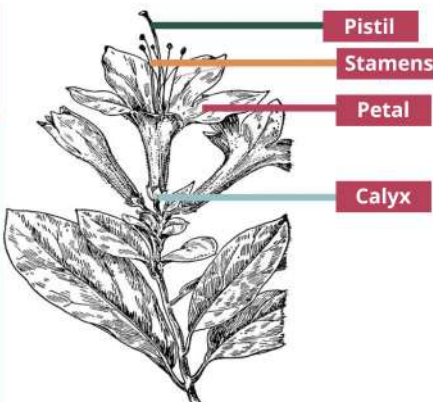


- Draw the plants you find in bloom.
- Take a leaf rubbing.
- Track the daily growth of spring plants.
- Create a nature-inspired poem.

## Virtual Tours:

**What do the parts of a flower do?**

- Pistil** - collects pollen, helps the plant make seeds
- Stamens** - make pollen
- Petal** - attracts pollinators
- Calyx** - protects the flower



# Welcome New Members—2/1/2020—5/31/2020

Kelly Randall  
John McCallen  
Linda Plankinton  
Anne Kenny Plankinton  
Jo-Anne Doknjas  
Buddy Lee  
Ross Adams  
Charles Zachau  
Edward Smyth  
Lincoln Hatfield  
Tanner Harris  
Jennifer Charles  
Jo Ha  
Sue Chan  
Martha Sjogreen  
Beatrice Ellis  
Teresa Pottmeyer  
Mariann Vineyard  
Erin Gayton  
Tara Robinson  
Yvonne Meziere

Michael Grey  
Julia Greely  
Justin Bergman  
Mary Barker  
Karen Wilson  
Alejandro Viveros  
Gilda Stark  
Chiamchit Phrakaysone  
Michelle Olivier  
Adria Jones  
Valerie Hitch  
Jack Kropp  
Richard Fejeran  
Brian Watson  
Susan Bittner  
Richard Beckett  
Aaren Purcell  
Anurag Chawla  
Adele Bolson  
Nancy Beachler  
Karey Wolber

Erika Sheffield  
Norman Schoener  
Kelly Cook  
Conrad Bruns  
Maria Rash  
Jenny Pang  
Kristin Fitzpatrick  
Midori Emerson  
Paula Clark  
Marcos Gonzalez  
Trina Colburn  
Bruce Clark  
Daniel Del Rosario  
Steve Czeck  
Lanae Lien  
Linda Clarke  
Tessa Stemhagen  
Vicki Szemkus  
Diane Whitehead  
Tom & Elise Barker  
Marisa Clark

## Restricted Contributions

4Culture, Grant for Visitor Center & Nursery Renovation  
WSNLA, Retail Intern Grant  
Garratt Richardson, Undesignated Gift  
Garratt Richardson, Tree Removal

# Contributions

## Garden Campaign

Richard Aaring  
Rollo & Winnie Adams  
Stan Beckman  
Abby Board  
Brittany Board  
Steve Butdorf  
Edward and Carolyn Cale  
Clarice Clark  
June Coloff  
Kelsey Cross  
Carol Duke  
James Ellison  
Cheryl Estes  
Joshua Green  
Bill Hansen  
Hans Hasche-Kluender  
Deena J. Henkins  
Carole Kellerman  
Constance Klein  
Katherine McLean  
Julie McQuary  
James Olson  
James and Rachel Pellicer  
Don Smart  
Canfield Smith  
Rex and Jeanine Smith  
Jeffrey Thompson  
Charlie Torres  
DJ Traver

Ronald Ungewitter  
Scott Van Gerpen  
Ian P. Walker  
Rosemarie Wedlund  
David and Cynthia Welte  
Christina Westpheling  
Angela Zentefis  
Oregon Community Foundation

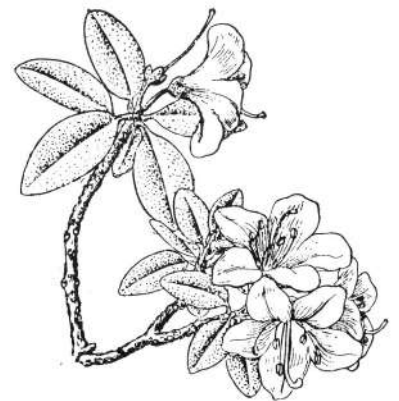
## Endowment Gift

Dr. Peter Edward Norris

## General Operations

AmazonSmile Foundation  
ARS Juan de Fuca  
Megan Aumiller  
Stanton and Gwen Brown  
Buchholz & Buchholz Nursery  
Bonnie Campbell  
Matt Crosby  
James Ellison  
Jean Feagin  
Cynthia Fischer  
Richard A. Flavell  
Leonard Foltz  
Kenneth W. Gross  
Robert Gust  
Ted Herrington  
Ian Keck  
Judi Keyser  
Kroger

Chip Muller  
Mark A. E. Nixon  
Beverly Pierson  
Lydia Pozzato  
Nan E. Ray  
Sherry & Franklin Retherford  
Ann D. Robbins  
Cathy Spiker  
John Stephens  
Karen Swenson  
Laurus Traas  
John Van Den Meerendonk  
Pat Whittaker  
Timothy Wolfenden



## 2020 RSF Board and EC

## 2020 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  
Don Hyatt  
Douglas Justice

### **Board of Directors continued:**

Donald E. King  
William Lindeman  
Robert Mast  
Stephen McCormick  
Jean Muir  
Charles Muller  
Peter Norris  
Tom Nosella  
Sean Rafferty  
Garratt Richardson  
Joseph Ronsley  
Charles Sale & Margaret Charlton  
Hartwig Schepker  
Don Smart  
Valerie Soza  
John Stephens  
Mike Stewart  
Diane Thompson  
Paul Thompson  
Ian Walker  
Tim Walsh  
Garth Wedemire  
Keith White  
Martin Wilkie