



RHODODENDRON
SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN



RHODODENDRON SPECIES
SYMPOSIUM

APRIL 25 & 26, 2025 • FEDERAL WAY, WA

*Made possible by the generous support
of the Helen G. Walker Foundation*



Rhododendron Species Symposium



Journey through the world of species *Rhododendron*. Hear from Keynote Speaker Seamus O'Brien and the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden's Executive Director of Horticulture and Curator, Steve Hootman.

Explore the world of conservation, rare and endangered plant species, garden management, biodiversity, climate change and taxonomy.

Symposium guests from all over the globe will exchange ideas with experts and enthusiasts alike.



All events take place at the:

Courtyard by Marriott
31910 Gateway Center Blvd S.
Federal Way, WA 98003
253-529-0200

-or-

**Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden
(RSBG)**
2525 S. 336th St.
Federal Way, WA 98003
253-838-4646

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Schedule

Friday, April 25

- 12 p.m. - 1 p.m.** Check In at Courtyard by Marriott
- 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.** Annual General Meeting
- 2 p.m. - 3 p.m.** Species Identification Contest, RSBG Silent Auction Begins, Refreshments, and Networking
- 3 p.m. - 4 p.m.** "The Moores of Glasnevin: The Irish Rhododendron Story" presented by Seamus O'Brien (see below for more details)
- 6 p.m.** Dinner on your own | Local options near the Courtyard: East India Grill (*garden staff favorite), Black Angus Steakhouse, Azteca Mexican Restaurant

The Moores of Glasnevin: The Irish Rhododendron Story



Dr. David Moore and his son Sir Frederick Moore were the greatest Directors of the Royal (now National) Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin in Dublin, between them they managed the gardens from 1838 to 1922, by which time the only botanic gardens that could match it for botanical and horticultural excellence were its sister gardens at Kew and Edinburgh.

From its earliest years Glasnevin was

involved in the introduction of *Rhododendron* species to British, Irish, and European gardens, introducing *Rhododendron arboreum* subsp. *zeylanicum* to cultivation in 1836 and continuing the process further through the collections of the Great Plant Hunters like E. H. Wilson, Joseph Rock, George Forrest, Captain Frank Kingdon Ward, and those of Lady Charlotte Wheeler Cuffe from Mount Victoria in the Chin Hills of Myanmar (Burma).

Image: The Broad Walk at Kilmacurragh with *Rhododendron* 'Altaclarensis', the Highclere rhododendron, planted in 1873.

Schedule

Saturday, April 26

- 7 a.m. - 8 a.m.** Breakfast on your own
- 8 a.m. - 9 a.m.** Check In at Courtyard by Marriott
- 9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.** "Yakushima" presented by Atsuko Gibson (see page 5 for more details)
- 9:45 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.** "Subsection Fortunea: A Fresh Look and a New Appraisal" presented by Steve Hootman (see page 5 for more details)
- 10:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.** Break and Refreshments
- 10:45 a.m. - 12 p.m.** Q&A Panel with Seamus O'Brien, Steve Hootman, Atsuko Gibson, Will Clausen, and Emily Joseph
- 12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.** Lunch provided by the RSBG and commute to the garden for workshops, tours and classes
- 1:45 p.m. - 3:35 p.m.** RSBG workshops, tours, and classes (see page 6 for more details)
- 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.** Plant Inspector Available for Phytosanitary Certificates for \$40

The garden is open to Symposium attendees until 5:30 p.m.

- 6 p.m.** Cash Bar Opens and Networking Hour Begins at the Courtyard by Marriott
- 7 p.m.** Dinner provided by the RSBG
- 7:45 p.m.** Keynote Address and Lecture "Travels in Yunnan: Frank Kingdon Ward Territory" presented by Seamus O'Brien (see page 5 for details)
- 8:30 p.m.** Silent Auction Ends
- 8:55 p.m.** Silent Auction Winners Announced
- 9:15 p.m.** Symposium Adjourns

Lecture Overviews

Yakushima

Atsuko visited Yakushima, home to *Rhododendron degronianum* ssp. *yakushmanum* or “yaks”, in the spring of 2024. All-day trekking was rewarded by the yaks in full bloom at 6,000 feet. The transition of *R. degronianum* with elevation gain from *v. intermedium* to ssp. *yakushmanum* was clearly seen. She will introduce you to the beauty of Yakushima and its majestic nature through a photographic tour.

Subsection Fortunea: A Fresh Look and a New Appraisal



Steve will discuss recent introductions and taxonomic changes in this horticulturally significant subgroup of *Rhododendron* species.

Image: *Rhododendron species nova* | Subsection Fortunea | N Guangxi, China

Travels in Yunnan: Frank Kingdon Ward Territory



A mid-summer Expedition to Yunnan

Yunnan province in western China is home to half of all China's plant and animal species and 25 distinct ethnic groups. This lecture is based on an 18 day visit in June-July 2024 – peak flowering season during the height of the Indian monsoon – retracing routes taken by Captain Frank Kingdon Ward in 1911 and 1913.

From the ancient city of Lijiang the lecture recounts visits to the Tibetan frontier region to see sacred peaks painted by the blossoms of rhododendrons and blue poppies, lakes fringed by meadows full of candelabra primulas and glades of giant Himalayan lilies beneath a diverse canopy of ancient trees.

Image: *Rhododendron selense* below the Dokar La, Northwest Yunnan.

Workshops, Tours, and Classes

AT THE GARDEN
1:45 p.m. - 2:35 p.m.
CHOOSE ONE OPTION:

1. Grafting Workshop with Atsuko Gibson
2. New Plantings Garden Tour with Will Clausen
3. Fern Collection and Stumpery Tour with Emily Joseph
4. Follow-Up Tour with Steve Hootman

AT THE GARDEN
2:45 p.m. - 3:35 p.m.
CHOOSE ONE OPTION:

1. Grafting Workshop with Atsuko Gibson
2. New Plantings Garden Tour with Will Clausen
3. Fern Collection and Stumpery Tour with Emily Joseph
4. Follow-Up Tour with Steve Hootman

Grafting Workshop

In this hands-on workshop, you'll gain practical experience in the art of rhododendron grafting. We'll cover a variety of grafting techniques, essential tools, suitable rootstocks, and the optimal timing for successful grafts. All necessary materials will be provided for you. Participants are welcome to bring their own scion; just be sure to store it in a sealed plastic bag and keep it refrigerated until the workshop.

This class is limited to 10 participants.

New Plantings Garden Tour

Gardens are ever-evolving, and while we work to maintain our established collection of species rhododendrons at the RSBG, change is always a part of the process. This tour will highlight areas we've created or rehabilitated in recent years to enhance and expand our collection of species rhododendrons and woodland companion plants. We'll explore new species, revisit old favorites we're aiming to improve, and delve into the thought process behind these exciting projects.

Fern Collection and Stumpery Tour

Take an in-depth tour of fern species at the RSBG, including a walk through the world's largest public stumpery. The intentional arrangement of woody material like stumps, old logs, and twisted root masses creates exceptional habitat for ferns and other shade-loving plants.

Follow-Up Tour

A tour of subsection Fortunea including several of the newer species in cultivation. This will be a "hands on" follow-up of Steve's morning lecture.

Keynote Speaker

Seamus O'Brien



Seamus O'Brien is head gardener at the National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh, Co. Wicklow, the country estate and rural annex of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin in Dublin. He received his formal horticultural training at Glasnevin and also holds an International Diploma in Botanic Gardens Management from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

In the past, he has been head gardener of several notable Irish gardens with historic plant collections, including Glanleam on Valentia Island, Co. Kerry famed for its southern hemisphere trees and shrubs, and Beech Park in Clonsilla, then renowned for one of the largest collections of herbaceous and alpine plants in Britain and Ireland. He returned to Glasnevin as

a staff member in February 2000 and from there moved to manage the gardens at Kilmacurragh in May 2006.

He has traveled extensively across the globe to study plants in their native habitats, most notably to China, Nepal, Tibet, California, Bhutan, Myanmar, Chile, Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, and, in more recent times to India, including successive trips to the Sikkim Himalaya. From these expeditions he has published two award winning books; *In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry and his Chinese Collectors* (2011), and, *In the Footsteps of Joseph Dalton Hooker: A Sikkim Adventure* (2018). He also contributes to several publications including Curtis's Botanical Magazine, The Irish Garden, the Irish Garden Plant Society newsletter and the International Dendrology Society Year Book.

He lectures on garden history and botanical travel internationally and is a member of the Royal Horticultural Society's Woody Plant Committee and is a judge of the RHS Early Spring Shows. Rhododendrons are a passion and he is Irish Branch Chairman of the Royal Horticultural Society's Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group and a trustee of Exbury Gardens in England.

In 2018, Seamus was awarded the Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland's Gold Medal of Honour, in 2021 he was made a Fellow of the Explorer's Club (New York), in 2022 he was awarded the Royal Horticultural Society's (UK) Loder Rhododendron Cup and in 2023 was made a Fellow of the Linnean Society.

RSBG Staff



Steve Hootman

Steve Hootman is the executive director of horticulture and curator of the RSBG. He has worked at the RSBG since 1992 and has participated in or led at least 30 expeditions into the world's remote regions looking for rare and new taxa of rhododendrons and other plants. Steve is considered one of the world authorities on the genus *Rhododendron* and woodland gardening and has introduced dozens of rhododendrons and other ornamental plants into cultivation.



Atsuko Gibson

Atsuko is the nursery manager and assistant curator at the RSBG. Originally from Japan, she holds a degree in horticulture from the University of Arkansas and gained valuable experience as an intern at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Specializing in the propagation of species rhododendrons through seeds, cuttings, and grafting, Atsuko oversees the management of the RSBG's two-acre nursery, where she combines her expertise and passion for plant cultivation.



Emily Joseph

Emily Joseph is the assistant nursery manager and retail sales manager at the RSBG, as well as the nursery and sales manager for the Hardy Fern Foundation. A Washington state Certified Professional Horticulturist, she holds degrees in Environmental Horticulture and Fine Art. As a visual artist, Emily enjoys photographing plants and gardens, incorporating botanical illustration into her painting, printmaking, and design work.



Will Clausen

Will is the RSBG's horticulturist and assistant curator. He has worked as a field botanist, habitat conservationist, and horticulturist across the northern part of the United States. Outside work, he enjoys photographing and writing about wild plants and backpacking to see them in their natural settings.

Symposium Registration

Participate in a weekend of exploration into the world of species *Rhododendron*. Hear from local and international experts on a wide range of topics.

For registration assistance, please email info@rhodygarden.org or call 253-345-2515.

For information about RSBG memberships, [please visit our website](#).

RSBG Member Rate

\$180

Non-Member Rate

\$200

REGISTER NOW



Register by April 11, 2025 to secure your spot!

Courtyard by Marriott



Courtyard by Marriott
31910 Gateway Center Blvd S.
Federal Way, WA 98003
253-529-0200

Book your room by April 4, 2025 to take advantage of the discounted rate!

BOOK NOW



Support Local Gardens



Supporting local gardens helps our entire community grow. Whether it's visiting your favorite spots in your area or contributing to their efforts, every little bit makes a difference. Local gardens not only provide beauty and tranquility, but they also support biodiversity and sustainability.



Scan the QR code to plan your next visit to more local gardens of the Puget Sound.

Ways to Give



The RSBG's small but dynamic team carries out the work of *Rhododendron* species conservation and education. With your continued support, we can continue our dedication to researching the world's more than 1,200+ *Rhododendron* species.



Scan the QR code to learn more on Ways to Give.

thank
you