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BOTANICAL GARDEN

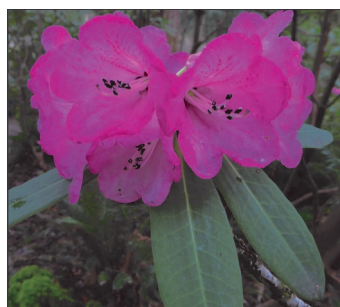
P.O. Box 3798
 Federal Way, WA 98063

Office: 253-838-4646
 Fax: 253-838-4686
 Info@RhodyGarden.org

Executive Director's Report

Steve Hootman, Executive Director & Curator

As I write this in early February, the temperatures in the Puget Sound region have been quite a bit above average since the long cold-snap in November when temps were well below freezing for several days in a row and the ground was frozen a couple of inches down which is fairly unusual in our mild climate. Since that time, it has been quite pleasant if gray and rainy and the flower buds are quickly swelling and bursting forth with color. In bloom already this season are the *Rhododendron* species *ririei*, *dauricum*, *lapponicum*, *hylaeum*, *mallotum*, *micronulatum*, etc. In the Conservatory and nursery greenhouses, there are many other, mostly semi-tender to tender species in bloom including a great assortment of big-leaves such as *grande*, *magnificum* and the first flowering of one of the true giants in the genus – *R. protistum* (formerly *R. giganteum*). The plant is in a container and is one of a batch of seedlings grown from my own collection of seed on the Yunnan/Burma frontier. It has the typical huge truss of deepest pink – and I only had to wait nineteen years!



R. hylaeum

Speaking of the flowering of the big-leaf species, I have never seen so many flower buds on any and all of the big-leaves, due primarily to the extremely hot and dry summer conditions last year. Some of them have even “hammer headed” which should be spectacular.

In the garden, as always, we are in the

midst of several renovation projects and new plantings including finishing the new Blue Poppy Glade near the recently renovated Garden Gazebo. We are also in the midst of expanding the Big Leaf Rhododendron Garden moving many of the more tender species up the hill to take advantage of the frost drainage and thus gain a few degrees of warmth as our collection of this always exciting group continues to expand with new acquisitions and even new species.

I have just recently returned from a very successful three and a half week plant-hunting expedition to China. This was a trip designed to cover a great deal of territory in a short amount of time, all made possible by the increasing number of modern paved highways now being completed throughout the country. As with my past several expeditions to China, this was organized to concentrate on some of the outlying regions where *Rhododendron* species are native, away from those regions where *Rhododendron* species diversity is highest and thus that have been the most explored.

On this expedition I had five primary goals with the foremost being to locate and observe the virtually unknown *Rhododendron shanii* which is an outlying member of Subsection Taliensia known from only a few mountains in Anhui Province, far to the east of any of its presumed

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New Landlord for the RSBG

Steve Hootman, Executive Director & Curator

"The sale, redevelopment, and reuse of this iconic property by IRG is important for the future of Federal Way," said Jim Ferrell, Mayor of Federal Way. "We look forward to working with IRG to bring additional jobs, businesses, and sustainable development to Federal Way. Our strategic location, support for business, and quality of life available to our citizens enable us to be well-positioned for the future."

In August of 2014, the Weyerhaeuser Company announced their intent to sell their corporate headquarters in Federal Way, WA. On February 9, 2016, the RSBG and the community at large received the news that the campus had been sold to Industrial Realty Group (IRG).

The Weyerhaeuser campus has been home to the RSBG since 1975. It is our intent to remain here, continuing to develop our Garden and its conservation-based collections of rare and endangered species and educating the public about the natural world around them, much of which is under threat from ongoing human activities.

Please join us in welcoming our new landlord who brings creativity, connec-

tions and resources to not only the RSBG but to the greater Puget Sound Community. The RSBG will work with IRG to establish a partnership that will support, strengthen and advance our mutual goals. More information on IRG can be found on their website. If you have further questions feel free to reach out to us.

"Our experience in redeveloping corporate campuses and leasing is extensive," said John Mase, Chief Executive Officer of IRG. "We understand the importance this site has in Federal Way and the region. The architecture and surrounding land is impressive and will be highly-desirable for future tenants. We are also excited about forging ahead with the city in preparation for the property's next chapter."

We thank you for your continued support and look forward to a bright future together.

Executive Director's Report Continued



R. lanigerum

relatives in that large group. Secondary to this was to relocate the equally isolated and rare *R. roxieoides* which is also an outlying "remnant" member of Subsection Taliensia. Thirdly, as I was to be in the mountains of Anhui anyway, was to find the endemic *R. anhweiense*, a species not collected since it was first introduced almost 100 years ago.

My final two challenges were to find the "classic" forms of both *R. fortunei* ssp. *fortunei* and *fortunei* ssp. *discolor*, both of which are thought to be widespread throughout central and eastern China but which have only rarely been collected. In fact, almost our entire collection of these two taxa at the RSBG consists of garden origin material.

A full report and lots of great stories will follow but I can sum up the expedition as being very successful, both in terms of my primary goals (locating all five species other than *roxieoides*) but also in furthering our cumulative knowledge about this amazing genus and the plants they occur with. I will add that it was a particularly good "tree trip" with exciting genera like *Cyclocarya*, *Staphylea*, *Daphniphyllum*,

Sycopsis, *Pterostyrax*, *Sinojackia*, *Acer*, *Meliosma*, *Stewartia* and *Euptelea* all making the list as it were.

Over the past dozen years or so, we have enjoyed and benefited from the volunteer participation of the now famous "Thursday Crew" led by retired electrician Paul Thompson. This innovative, knowledgeable, and very hard-working team of volunteers shows up every Thursday (whether or not we have fresh doughnuts) to tackle the various construction and maintenance issues that always arise in the management and development of a constantly expanding and improving organization. To be honest, these fellows have become part of the staff and it is difficult to comprehend the fact that many of them are reaching the point in their lives where they may no longer want to climb ladders and dig out broken irrigation pipes. With that in mind, we could sure use a few new members to join the RSBG's Thursday Crew and help out the staff and the entire organization. We would not have made the progress that we have made over the past several years if it were not for this volunteer team and you can imagine that we have ever-growing needs in maintenance and building as we continue to increase our nursery facilities and office expansion.

"I can sum up the expedition as being very successful, both in terms of my primary goals but also in furthering our cumulative knowledge about this amazing genus."

Spring Renewal

Dennis Bottemiller, Nursery Manager/Propagator

Spring is a time of renewal as the cliché goes, and, after five years of existence the soil mix in the conservatory is in need of renewal.



So, on a wet, cold and windy day in early February what could be better than re-designing and doing some serious gardening surrounded by the splendor of tropical rhododendrons next to a clear running stream ... inside where it is warm and dry!

Steve, Atsuko, Ben and I laid plans to remove all the plantings and the rocks and logs, excavate the old soil mix, haul and barrow in the new mix, recently purchased, rebuild the rockery and re-do the plantings in one day. Of course we are not talking about the whole conservatory, only about 200 square feet of it which was most in need.

The teamwork and comradery were something rare to experience in gardening and I had nearly as much fun as I've ever had gardening short of the opening day event and the week prior in the Rutherford Conservatory, it was nearly a choreography.

We began by taping off our work area to exclude visitors and got to work. As we dug, it was interesting to note the extent of root growth in plants only five years out of containers. Long roots ran through the formerly porous medium. Plant removal went quickly with four of us and soon we got down to shoveling the old mix and hauling it out in wheelbarrows to fill holes in the garden, a great exercise program for someone my age. We scraped down to

native soil and decided to make a change in the grade so that irrigation water would not drain toward the stream. For this we built up a small rock retaining wall with a nice specimen stone in the middle. This successfully changed the slope so water will run into the planting bed not away. Task completed, we turned our attention to the big *nuttallii* which has developed a lean toward the bridge making it feel crowded to cross. We dug out the soil underneath the root mass on the lean side and with the effort of all four, managed to move it back to vertical by packing rocks and soil under the low side. I think it will work, it looks great now. That plant will have a fantastic bloom season this year as it has a fat bud at nearly every terminal, stay tuned.

That accomplishment led us to begin hauling new soil mix in and again, with four of us, we could tractor the mix from down in the nursery, haul it into the conservatory and build the new rockeries simultaneously. Atsuko and Ben got to try their hands at rockery design with helpful instruction and advice from the Master, Steve. We brought up many new plants which had been waiting in the nursery and placed and planted until the end of the day and sure enough, we completed the whole transition in one day.

Sweeping and scrubbing done, we all stood back and admired our work and I felt very happy to be part of the hort team at RSBG!



Atsuko and Ben work on rockery design.

The teamwork and comradery were something rare to experience in gardening ... it was nearly a choreography.



Rhododendron Species Symposium

May 20 - 21, 2016 *Everyone Welcome!*



Peter Cox along the DuLong Rd.

Come discover up-to-the-minute information as well as the back story on how plant explorers have discovered an amazing variety of species rhododendrons from around the world at the **first annual Rhododendron Species Symposium**.

Rhododendron enthusiasts, serious gardeners and horticulturists will all enjoy the emphasis on educational time and tours in the RSBG during the rhododendron species flowering season, in what has become an internationally renowned botanical garden, containing the most comprehensive collection of natural rhododendron species in the world.

Saturday afternoon Field Laboratory Horticulture Classes:

"Big-leaf Rhododendrons," "Secrets of Species Propagation," and "Successful Cultivation of Rhododendrons – the RSBG Way."

- Saturday night banquet with hosted bar
- "My Travels in Search for Rhododendrons" presentation from **Peter Cox** (presented by Steve Hootman)
- Impressive **video tour with Peter Cox** at Glendoick Gardens, Scotland!
- RSF Annual Members Meeting on Saturday morning
- Cost: \$125 or \$110 if registered before March 30th (*No cost if attending ONLY the Annual Members Meeting.*)
- More info and Symposium registration: <http://bit.ly/2016Species>

Lodging, meetings and meals will be at the Hampton Inn & Suites in Federal Way, just 2 miles away from the Garden.

Reserve your lodging at our special room rate of just \$119.00 for a standard room or \$139 for a suite. Book lodging online: <http://bit.ly/2016Hampton>, or call: +1-253-946-7000 Request code RSB.

REGISTRATION IS DUE BY May 10th.



RSBG CALENDAR 2016

Third Thursday Garden Mingle

Free for the general public
March through September 4-7pm

Spring Plant Sale

April 15, 3-6pm (members enter at 2pm)
April 16, 9am-3pm

Rhododendron Species Symposium

Hampton Inn, Federal Way
May 20, 7-9:30pm
May 21, 9am-9:30pm

Annual Meeting

Hampton Inn, Federal Way
May 21, 9:30-11:30am

Native Plant Appreciation Week

April 24-30, 10am-4pm

Mother's Day Weekend in the Garden

May 7-8, 10am-4pm

Blue Poppy Day - Art in Bloom

May 14, 10am-4pm

Evening in the Garden

Members and their guests only
August 6, 5-8:30pm

Foliage Festival & Plant Sale

October 15-22, 10am-4pm
Sat. 15 Opening Day Sale with Dan Hinkley's Plant Selections
Sun. 16 Fall for Maples
Mon. 17 Monday Open
Fri. 21 Fall for Bonsai
Sun. 22 Fall for Ferns



R. shanii



RHODODENDRON SPECIES SYMPOSIUM

including RSF Annual Members Meeting

MAY 20 - 21, 2016

REGISTRATION FORM

Registration includes all sessions, classes, Friday Meet & Greet, Saturday Lunch, Saturday Banquet and Speaker.

Attendee Name(s): _____

Email: _____

Registration fee per person:

TOTAL

\$110.00 *before* March 30th times number attending _____ U.S. \$ _____

\$125.00 *after* March 30th times number attending _____ U.S. \$ _____

Do you have special meal requirements? # vegetarian _____ # gluten-free _____

Registration for ONE Saturday Field Laboratory Horticulture Classes

ONE CLASS PER PERSON PLEASE

Class	Participant's Name	Participant's Name
"Big-leaf Rhododendrons"		
"Secrets of Species Propagation"		
"Successful Cultivation of Rhododendrons – the RSBG Way"		

Method of Payment: _____ Cash _____ Check (US Funds) _____ Visa _____ MasterCard

Account Number: _____

Exp. Date: _____ V Number: _____ (3 digits over signature on back of card)

Signature: _____

Name on Card: _____

Lodging, if needed, must be reserved through the Hampton Inn, Federal Way, WA

Rooms are \$119 per night and suites are available for only \$139. Make your hotel reservation directly with the Hampton Inn by calling 1-800-HILTON and use reservation group code **RSB** to register at the group rate.

Room reservations need to be made by April 22nd in order to receive the group rate.

Register online: <http://bit.ly/2016Hampton>

Please submit registration: Scan and email to: Info@RhodyGarden.org

or Fax to 253-838-4686 or Mail to RSBG Species Symposium, PO Box 3798, Federal Way, WA 98063

Garden Gift Shop

Pat Whempner, Garden Shop Coordinator



Cheryl Wolff birdfeeder.

Spring is for the birds!

In March our Visitor Center Shop will be setting up a special display of bird related crafts from local and distant artists.

There will be charming bird print plaques by local popular artist Cody Blomberg. In 2012 Mr. Blomberg was awarded the Seattle City Artist Project Grant.

Kathryn Hunter of Blackbird Letterpress in Baton Rouge is sending us bird themed

journals produced on a 1904 platen press. We will have several beautifully designed hand-built ceramic bird feeders from Cheryl Wolff of Northern California.

Pop in and take a PEEP!

The Garden Gift Shop is undergoing a transformation to become our new Visitor Center Shop. Interpretive panels that communicate the RSBG mission and story are in production and will be installed later this year.



Cody Blomberg print

31st Annual

Spring Plant Sale

April 15, 3-6pm

(members enter at 2pm)

April 16, 9am-3pm

Held on the Weyerhaeuser Campus

West Upper Level Parking Lot

Off South 336th Street, Federal Way, WA



Over 25 vendors!

Amazing variety of plants

Rare Plant Raffle

Two Food Trucks



Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

The RSBG Newsletter is published in spring, summer and fall by the Rhododendron Species Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Submissions are due by the first of the month, 8 weeks before publication.

Email submissions to newsletter editor
katie@rhodygarden.org.

RhodyGarden.org

PO Box 3798
Federal Way, WA 98063
2525 S. 336th Street
Federal Way, WA 98003
253-838-4646

Garden Hours

Tuesday through Sunday
10am - 4pm

RSBG Staff

Steve Hootman
Executive Director/Curator
steve@rhodygarden.org

Grace Pham

Asst. Director/Accountant/HR
grace@rhodygarden.org

Dennis Bottemiller

Nursery Manager/Propagator
dennis@rhodygarden.org

Atsuko Gibson

Assistant Curator
atsuko@rhodygarden.org

Katie Swickard

Program & Outreach Manager
katie@rhodygarden.org

Ben Meersman

Gardener
ben@rhodygarden.org

Pat Whempner

Garden Shop Coordinator
patw@rhodygarden.org

Tammi Finnicks

Garden Shop Attendant
tammi@rhodygarden.org

Chanelle Mikel

Office Asst./Garden Shop Attendant
chanelle@rhodygarden.org

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In Honor of Gwen Bell
Beachcombers Garden Club

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"Where the Wild Things Grow"

RHODODENDRON SPECIES SYMPOSIUM

**FIRST
ANNUAL**

**Everyone
Welcome!**



**REGISTER
NOW**

**May 20-21,
2016**

.....
Featuring:

- Field Laboratory Horticulture Classes at the RSBG
- "My Travels in Search for Rhododendrons" presentation from Peter Cox (presented by Steve Hootman)
- Impressive video tour with Peter Cox at Glendoick Gardens, Scotland!
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SPECIES
BOTANICAL GARDEN**