

SPRING 2017

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Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

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Rhododendron
Species Botanical
GARDEN

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Executive Director's Report

Steve Hootman, Executive Director & Curator

At the end of 2016 we bid a fond farewell to staff member Katie Swickard, our long-time Program and Outreach Manager who had filled that position in one capacity or another since 2011. Katie decided to join her husband in retirement in order to enjoy more travel, more gardening and more time with their young grandson. We all wish Katie peace and relaxation in her new life as a retiree! We would also like to say goodbye and many thanks to Tammi Finnick who had worked as our part-time Gift Shop Attendant for many years. Tammi also decided to retire at the end of the year and we wish her peace and prosperity as she moves into the next phase of her life. Part-time Office Assistant Chanelle Mikel will be increasing her hours and taking over the handling of Tammi's former duties in the Shop.

We begin the year with the announcement and introduction of the newest RSBG employee Amanda Glazer who has stepped in to take over the position recently vacated by Katie Swickard. Amanda and her husband recently relocated to the Pacific Northwest from Long Island, New York. Amanda has a strong interest and background in nonprofits with a solid degree in liberal arts and was looking for employment with a small organization where she could step right in and make a difference. She has adjusted to her tremendous range of new responsibilities quite quickly and ably and we look forward to new ideas and great things as our team of staff and volunteers continues to move forward.

In January, members of the Executive Committee met with representatives from the local non-profit group Save Weyerhaeuser Campus and were presented with a history and overview of that group's efforts to promote the responsible use and conservation of the unique character of the Weyerhaeuser campus. We look forward to working with this group, the city of Federal Way and many others as we continue to forge a new path and future with new property owners Industrial Realty Group.

The strange weather continues with numerous species coming into unseasonal flower late this past autumn. While there are certain species that do this almost annually, I was surprised at the large number of different species in flower in November and into December, many that I had never before seen blooming outside of their normal spring seasons. In contrast, the species we almost always see in gorgeous full bloom right after the end of the year holidays – *R. dauricum* 'Midwinter' is only now, at the end of January, just beginning to show a bit of color. It is normally already finished by this time of year. Yet another illustration of the complexity and variability of the systems that drive these sorts of things.

I hope to see many of you at our second annual **Rhododendron Species Symposium** taking place on April 7-8 right here in Federal Way with tours and classes in the garden and Dr. Hartwig Schepker from Germany as our featured speaker.

Love taking photos
at the
Rhododendron
Species Botanical
Garden?

Consider joining
our Photography
Committee!

We'd love to see
your work!

Photographers and Photo Labelers Needed

Keith White, Photography Committee Chair

The RSBG Photography Committee is recruiting for new Committee members who are willing to take photographs of several aspects of rhododendron and companion plants in the garden and conservatory and label the photos (using our required set of labeling instructions) so that the photos can be added to our photographic library.

This is important and ongoing work. I use the term work, because, besides the fun of taking photos and editing them, the work of labeling the photos must be done in order for the photos to be of use to the RSBG.

We would also welcome volunteers who

would be willing to put the labels on the photo images. This is an indoor job that can be done as time allows. Attention to detail is important, but easy to master. It would be a great service to the RSBG.

The Photography Committee is a fun group of photographers who love rhododendrons, love our organization and love its garden. Examples of the practical use of our work can be seen in the spectacular 2017 RSBG calendar that just went on sale at the Visitor Center and on line at our website.

Those interested, please e-mail Keith White, Committee Chairman, at rho-doc@msn.com or call me after 8 PM at 503-871-8281.

A Little Plant with Big Appeal

Ben Meersman, Gardener

As gardeners we are always on the lookout for new and exciting plants to populate our gardens. As many of us know, however, one of the problems with buying new plants is finding the space to put them. Most of us already have full gardens, and it can be difficult to incorporate that cool new plant into the landscape. Luckily, I have a solution to this problem, and its name is *Ypsilandra thibetica*! Because I'm sure you are wondering, here is quick note on the pronunciation: I say, "Yip-silandra" and haven't had any complaints, so I'm sticking to it.

Because of its small size and habit, *Ypsilandra* can easily be squeezed into a garden that may already be bursting at the seams. It forms a handsome rosette of strap shaped evergreen leaves, and come March, flower spikes appear that bear copious amounts of fragrant white flowers. Then, as the flowers fade they turn a beautiful copper color that will last through the spring. If that isn't enough, the anthers - i.e. the male reproductive parts on these

flowers - are blue! Need I say more?

Ypsilandra thibetica is a *Trillium* relative and hails from the wilds of SW China where it grows in the shady crevices of mossy cliffs. It has been used in Chinese medicine to help stop bleeding, and interestingly enough, this ornamental species was introduced into cultivation by none other than our very own Steve Hootman. It is an easy grower with average water needs that will thrive in shade to part shade. *Ypsilandra* is a show stopper of a



Ypsilandra thibetica

plant that will provide your garden with year-round interest, and if you do have the space I recommend grouping a few together for an instant ground cover. These plants also do really well in containers, which will allow you to conveniently place it near your front door so that you can enjoy the wonderfully fragrant flowers as you come and go. I can't say enough good things about this plant, and so I'll leave you with this...you will LOVE it!

Greetings from the Visitor Center

Pat Whempner, Visitor Center Manager

This year as we continue our transition from “gift shop” to Visitor Center, we have many projects underway that are relevant to the mission of the Garden and reinforce our identity as a world-class *Rhododendron* species collection.

One such effort is reevaluating our inventory, and eventually moving toward only carrying merchandise that either emphasizes our mission or promotes our brand. The first steps of this new product development are underway, and we have already begun requesting samples and comparing prices. Similarly, we have commissioned local botanical artist Margaret Trent to do drawings of three of our plants this spring (see a sample of her work to the right), which will be used for unique promotional materials and custom items for sale in the coming months.

Expect to learn more about the involved discipline of botanical drawing in our next newsletter where we will report on Ms. Trent's methods and provide updates about her progress.

In addition, we are asking the West Seattle Garden Tour organization for a grant to fund a youth-focused project. As you may remember, last year the WSGT very graciously provided funding to install interpretive panels in the Visitor Center, which have been great talking points for engaging and educating visitors. This year, some very interesting folks have joined us to help with the potential grant project, including Entomologist Dr. Danny Najera, from Green River College and an early

childhood education specialist, Shoshanna Milne, from Technology Access Foundation. Having their support provides a very exciting opportunity for us to devise a special program aimed at explaining the reciprocal adaptation of plants and pollinators using our own plants and pollinators from around the Garden.

This funding will allow Dr. Najera and his students to document our pollinator population this spring. Ms. Milne and the STEM teachers she organizes will team with us to develop classroom orientation tools and activity backpacks for kid's tours. The STEM teachers and STEM high school aids will also guide the kids in the garden. We anticipate a very successful educational program based upon a trial run conducted in 2016.

Keep your fingers crossed we get the grant!



Community Support

Ian Walker, RSF Board Member

Some companies give a percentage of the price of your purchases to a charity of your choice. Although it was not much, last year we received \$126 from Amazon Smile, which was .5% of your purchases of about \$25000. The key to make this work for you, is to go to smile.amazon.com, (not Amazon) which provides the same products, prices and service. You will be asked for the identifying number of the charity you wish to support. The identifying number for the Rhodo-

dendron Species Foundation is 93-6033854. The next time you log into smile.amazon.com they will remember your charity and it will pop up on the screen.

I am not promoting Amazon, but I am promoting the concept that if some money is available to us to support our mission, we should take advantage of this gift which has no cost to us. Thanks.

Interested in volunteering with the RSBG?

We are currently seeking volunteers to help out in our Visitor's Center!

Contact Pat Whempner, Visitor Center Manager, at pat@rhodygarden.org or (253)-838-4646 x 140 for more information.

Hope Never Fades

Dennis Bottemiller, Nursery Manager/Propagator

Did you know:

Sphagnum moss is high in acidity, a characteristic that makes it able to inhibit the growth of bacteria.

For this reason, it was often used in conjunction with garlic (one of the best natural antiseptics) to treat wounds during World War I.

During a recent and collaborative “brainstorm,” Steve and I had been lamenting that the seedlings of the vireya, *R. saxifragoides* he had collected and we had successfully grown since 2011 were beginning to dwindle. We began six years ago with around 80 seedlings, and are now down to 41. It is well known that *saxifragoides* is difficult in cultivation, but starting out with a good number of seedlings, I had hoped to make some headway in learning to grow this plant in an artificial setting.

During this “brainstorm,”- or maybe it was just a flurry, you know how the weather forecasters like to spout hyperbole these days - Steve was talking about how this plant always grows on hummocks in sphagnum bogs, so we thought why not try growing it in pure sphagnum? And the idea was had.

I found a suitably aged hypertufa container, assumed that all of its alkalinity had leached out over the past 15 years, then cleaned it up. Next I gathered some left-over sphagnum from our recent seed sowing operations, and went to work. Stripping away the excess medium after removing my subject from its pot, I found a well-developed root system that had grown along all the surfaces of the square container but had almost no roots in the center of the mass. After stuffing the hypertufa full of sphagnum, I spread the sheet of roots over it, tucked more of the moss up against

the stubby trunk, and covered the roots - simple planting. Earlier we had talked about submerging the base of the pot in the upper pond in the conservatory, so we mustered the entire horticultural staff and made a ceremonial march to the pond with subject in hand. Atsuko, Ben, Steve and I were in attendance as we placed the newly planted container in about 2 inches of water in the upper pond, easily visible from the bridge, and declared it reasonable. Both the sphagnum and the hypertufa pot are very absorbent and will wick water from the pond up to the root zone of the plant, which is about 5 inches above the waterline. Sphagnum moss has the magical ability to be wet but not too wet, and as long as the moss remains alive it will sustain the plant in a way that cannot be achieved with ordinary potting mix. Our hope is that this method will more closely mimic the way this plant grows in the wild, and maybe we can keep one alive to see it bloom!



R. saxifragoides

RSBG CALENDAR 2017

Rhododendron Species Symposium
April 7-9, 2017

Spring Plant Sale
April 14-15, 2017

Mother's Day Weekend in the Garden
May 13-14, 2017

Blue Poppy Day - Art in Bloom
May 20, 2017

Foliage Festival & Plant Sale

October 21-28, 2017, 10 am - 4 pm

Opening Day Sale Sat. 21st

Fall for Maples - Sun. 22nd

Monday Open - Mon. 23rd

Fall For Ferns - Fri. 27th

Spring Plant Sale

Celebrate the start of Spring by joining us for our annual Spring Plant Sale! Over 30 Puget Sound nurseries will be offering a wide range of locally grown plants, meaning there is sure to be something for both novice collectors and seasoned gardeners alike. The RSBG will also be hosting a "Rare Plant Raffle" featuring some of the most choice and rare plants from both our nursery and from our vendors. Free admission to the Garden is offered during the plant sale with ANY purchase, so bring your wagon or garden cart and get ready to capture some choice selections!



32nd Annual
Spring Plant Sale

Where the
WILD
Things Grow

Friday, April 14th, 3 – 6pm
(Members enter at 2pm)
Saturday, April 15th, 9am – 3pm
Food Truck Saturday

WIN!: Rare Plant Raffle
Over 30 specialty nursery vendors
Details at: RhodyGarden.org & 253-838-4646

Held on the former Weyerhaeuser Campus
West Upper Level Parking Lot
Off South 336th Street, Federal Way, WA

Sponsored by Round Table Pizza & Trader Joe's

Rhododendron Species Botanical
GARDEN

Become a Friend of the RSBG on Facebook

Peek into the daily world of the Garden through photos and comments on our Facebook page. Learn about unique plants, read interesting facts about *Rhododendron* species, stay up-to-date on special events and discover what's happening in the Garden all year round.

www.facebook.com/RhodyGarden

Welcome New Members (9/1/2016 to 1/31/16)

Jill Anway
Kandy Ahrens
Jason Adolf
Linell Arbuckle
Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticulture Society
Andre Chevalier
Bruce Clyburn
Lauralyn Croom
Jessie Deou
Gretchen Dennison
Robyn Hendrickson
Karen Hirsch
Jong Young Ham
Suzanne Hattery
Elizabeth Hughes
Bret Hansen
Debra Hansen
Carli & Mark Heggen
Christopher & Margaret Hodgson
Nirvan Hope
Albert Hendley, Jr.
Deann Kachman
Danielle Kubo

Kozo Kawano
Pablo & Kristine Lambinico
Paul Leland
John Lumsden
Karen Landen
Melanie Mairs
Ann & Bill Mangels
Rachel Ostheller
Amy Peterson
Kelly Patton
Mary Frances Painter
Neel Parikh
Bobby Pearson
Patricia Reh
Joshua Ray
Dina Scheel
Saroja Strand
Jason & Amy Storrs
Johnny Svensson
Janet Sweet
John Waskiewicz
Brendan Wilce
Timothy Wolfenden



Contributions - Thank You! (9/1/2016 to 12/31/2016)

Director's Priorities

Brian L. Adams
Allan Anderson
Paul W. Anderson
ARS Eureka Chapter
ARS Massachusetts Chapter
Robert A. Bartlett, Jr.
Dianne Bell
Werner Brack
Daniel W. Brady
Joan Buhler
George & Kathleen Burtchett
Neil Christianson

Douglas G. Crane
Robert Dean
Yasuyuki Doi
Lucille Fleischmann
Loretta Goetsch
William S. Greer
Kenneth Gross
H. Hasche-Kluender
Paula & Ted Hewitt
Stanley Hungerford
Lloyd D. Jacobs
E. White Smith, Jr.
Barry S. Kast
Howard R. Kline

Anita Lockhart
Bill McMillan
William Norris
Sue Olsen
James P. Olson
John W. Parker
Rachel & James Pellicer
Beverly Pierson
Mildred Russell
Chuck Sheaffer
June Sinclair
Siuslaw Chapter ARS
Canfield & Georgene Smith
Rex & Jeanine Smith

Stephen Smith
John Stephens & Stephen McCormick
Glenn Sutt
Karen M. Swenson
Marcia Zech
Michael & Carol Wall
Keith White

Contributions Continued

Thursday Crew Fund

Brian L. Adams
 Rollo & Winnie Adams
 Michael & Lavonne Campbell
 Ruth Enticknap
 Myke & John Farbarik
 Robyn Hendrickson
 Carl & Betty Hogan
 Maggie Kaperick
 Roger & Kathy Lintault
 Robert & Katherine Mclean
 Nancy Meyer
 Rachel & James Pellicer
 Beverly Smith
 David Smith & Sari Spencer
 Ramona Soule

Paul & Diane Thompson

Endowment

Brian L. Adams
 Wilbur Bluhm
 Rachel & James Pellicer
 Ian Walker

General Donations

Gwen Bell
 Lady Anne Berry
 Craig Clarke
 Laana & Barry Fishman
 Patricia Galligan
 Jean Greig

Gordon Hogensen
 Wren & Lee Hudgins
 Ramona Machluak
 Percival B. Moser III
 Rachel & James Pellicer
 Robert Ramik & Laura Grant
 Liz Robbins

Legacy Circle Members

Anne Guelker
 Deena Henkins
 Donald King
 Peter Norris
 Ian Walker
 Keith White

The Rhododendron Legacy Circle

The Rhododendron Legacy Circle is open to new 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 and to access an enrollment form, go to:

<http://rhodygarden.org/cms/get-involved/planned-giving/> or contact Grace@RhodyGarden.org.

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 amanda@rhodygarden.org.

RhodyGarden.org

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Executive Committee

President: Michael Stewart
 1st Vice President: Sean Rafferty
 2nd Vice President: Joshua Green, III
 Treasurer: Bob Gust
 Secretary: Deena Henkins
 Members at Large:
 Anne Gross
 Joseph Ronsley
 Jeanine Smith
 Immediate Past President: Charles Muller

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 Fred Whitney
 Martin Wilke

Board of Directors (Honorary)

George Weyerhaeuser
 Peter Cox
 Honore Hacanson
 Patricia McDowell
 June Sinclair
 Herbert Spady

Please let us know if you have made the Rhododendron Species Foundation part of your estate planning. We want to say thank you!

RHODODENDRON SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN

P.O. Box 3798
Federal Way, WA 98063



Rhododendron *Species Symposium*

April 7 - 8, 2017, Everyone Welcome!

At the Best Western Plus, Federal Way, WA
and Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

Featured Speaker: Dr. Hartwig Schepker,
Scientific Director of the Botanic Garden and
Rhododendron-Park Bremen, Germany

Information & Registration

<http://bit.ly/Symposium2017>
Early Bird till February 10: \$125.

253.838.4646 x140
info@rhodygarden.org



Did you miss the 2016 Rhododendron Species Symposium? From the Field Laboratory Horticulture Classes to the lively discussion at the Species Symposium to the casual conversations with other *Rhododendron* enthusiasts, the Symposium is educational, inspiring, motivating and just plain fun! Last year's attendees would recommend that you mark your calendars for the 2017 Symposium, April 7th to the 9th, and start planning your trip to the Seattle area.

Dr. Hartwig Schepker, the Scientific Director of the Botanic Garden and Rhododendron-Park in Germany will be the featured speaker. He is also the Secretary of the German Rhododendron Society and co-editor of the society's publication "*Rhododendron und Immergrüne*." Hartwig has been on several rhododendron trips in South East Asia and North America, including four journeys to Arunachal Pradesh between 2005 and 2012.

Lodging may be booked at our event hotel, the Federal Way Best Western Plus by calling 253-529-4000 and ask for the RSBG group rate of \$119. The deadline to book lodging at this rate is Friday, March 17, 2017. Watch our event page for updated details: <http://rhodygarden.org/cms/our-events/rsbg-events/>