



Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

Summer Newsletter—Vol. 44, No. 2

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Executive Director's Report by Steve Hootman

It was a fantastic spring season here at the RSBG with sunny and warm weather for most of our always busy spring weekends and we enjoyed a nice boost in attendance and sales. Of course, this type of weather is not necessarily ideal for plant growth and garden management, especially during the spring when plants are flushing their soft new growth. It turned out to be one of the driest springs on record and I am starting to think that we are actually getting used to the whacky weather we have witnessed over the past several years. It was so dry in the middle of our rainy season that we had to turn on the garden's overhead irrigation in April, which is a first, at least since I have been here.

Our discussions with Industrial Realty Group (IRG) continue as we work together with the new owners of the former Weyerhaeuser Campus to produce a long-term solution to the needs of both organizations.

Atsuko and I were able to attend the American Rhododendron Society annual convention in Philadelphia this past May. It was great opportunity to visit with so many of our east coast members and to see some of the finest public gardens in the east. We welcome two new interns this summer – Zoe Buck and Kayla Roles. Their assistance in the garden and in the nursery is most welcome during this busy season of weeding, watering and sticking cuttings. Welcome aboard!

Book Review of *In the Footsteps of Joseph Dalton Hooker: A Sikkim Adventure* by Steve Hootman

Joseph Hooker was one of the greatest plant hunters and botanists of the 19th century. In 1847, Hooker left for the Sikkim Himalaya, a trip that changed the *Rhododendron* world forever. Seamus O'Brien is the Head Gardener at the National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh, County Wicklow, Ireland where many of Hooker's introductions are still cultivated. Over a series of several expeditions, Seamus set out to retrace Hooker's footsteps throughout Sikkim and the surrounding areas. This book is a tremendous piece of work full of fantastic photos of the spectacular mountain scenery, the fabulous flora, the native people, etc. Seamus uses alternate chapters, first from Hooker's perspective followed by a chapter of the same region as recounted by Seamus and his fellow travelers in the modern age. At 304 pages, this really is a monumental work and with the detail and tremendous amount of information included you will find yourself lost for hours, following alongside both botanists as they travel through one of the most beautiful places in the world. It really is a book worth having for anybody with any interest in traveling, plants and adventure.

Seamus was kind enough to provide two fantastic lectures at our most recent *Rhododendron Species Symposium* and we were able to provide many attendees with copies at that time. We have restocked this fantastic publication and it is once again available through the RSBG Gift Shop. A real bargain at only \$55 plus shipping. Contact the shop at 253-838-4646.

Fall Catalog Sneak Peeks by Atsuko Gibson

The 2019 Fall Catalog will be available soon. Here is a sneak peak of some of our new companion plant offerings.

Itea ilicifolia, known as Holly Leaved Sweetspire, is one of many exciting new additions of companion plants in our garden. When it bloomed for the first time in the late summer of 2017, the entire staff at the RSBG marched to this plant to witness the foot-long, fragrant racemes of flowers. This evergreen shrub is native to Western China and has glossy but soft holly-like leaves. It grows well in a woodland setting, where it has

some protection from the cold.

Another new offering in our latest catalog is *Lapageria rosea*, Chilean Bell Flower. We grew these plants from seeds collected from Steve Hootman's personal collection. I have heard Steve say several times that this is his absolute favorite companion plant of all, and you will know why when you see them in bloom. *Lapageria* is an evergreen vine with long-lasting, waxy flowers that are a whopping three inches long. It is in fact the national flower of Chile. It can be grown in a greenhouse if you don't live in a mild climate.

Lastly, *Leucothoe racemosa*, Swamp Sweetbells, is worth mentioning. This east coast native is easy to grow in full sun or the woodland garden. This is an offering of our best clone with the longest racemes and the showiest flowers. This plant provides something interesting in all seasons: pure white fragrant flowers in late spring, glossy handsome foliage in summer, fantastic orange to red fall color, and smooth blackish bark in winter.



Photo: *Lapageria rosea*

Don't be fooled by the common name, if you regularly water your garden in the summer, you do not have to have a swamp to grow it.

Please remember, these plants are quite rare in cultivation and in the nursery trade. Please place your order before the allocation date so it will be allocated before non-member's orders. Our fall shipping starts at the end of September.

New Faces at the RSBG

We are thrilled to welcome three new employees! Get to know them below.

Jillian Demus—Assistant Horticulturist

My name is Jillian Demus and I moved from the Chicago area a little over a year ago. I graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point with a major in Wildlife Ecology and a minor in Conservation Biology. I worked at the campus greenhouse and was a teaching assistant for plant taxonomy. I also participated in an ethnobotany club and a gardening club. Following these experiences, I became more interested in plants and worked a seasonal field botany position in Oregon. I then moved to Washington because of its natural beauty and for something different.

I am very interested in alpine and bog plant species, and the Ericaceae is my favorite plant family. I saw the sign for the garden off the highway and had always wanted to come to the garden. I even told people it would be awesome to work at the RSBG. Later, searching for a job, I found the perfect opening here.

As the new Assistant Horticulturist, I work half time in the nursery and half time in the garden. I spend one day a week working in the stumpery and alpine garden. Recently, because of Atsuko's pregnancy and maternity leave, I have been mostly in the nursery. This has been a great place to work so far and I am learning so much.

Zoe Buck—Garden Intern

Hello! My name is Zoe and I'm one of the new interns this summer. I'm 25 years old and was born and raised in Seattle, though I recently moved back after living and skiing in Taos, New Mexico for the past couple years. While living in Taos, I was lucky enough to be a part of a community where sustainable practices in food cultivation and farming are put into action rather than being seen as unrealistic. It opened my eyes to the possibilities of a sustainable agricultural system that doesn't exploit workers or damage the eco-system, which is part of the reason I was initially interested in working for RSBG. Though it's a botanical garden and not a food producing one, I applied to work at RSBG because I thought it would be a great opportunity to learn about the real world practices and management of a large garden, regardless of the type. I've had a great time here at the RSBG so far!

I've learned so much already while working these past two weeks, from propagation and pruning to the chemical composition of different soils to how to properly wash a greenhouse roof. In addition to this more hands on knowledge, working at RSBG has also given me a different perspective on horticulture itself which I didn't expect. As someone who was initially interested in horticulture and botany as a means to improve our food system, I had no idea how "dynamic" the field was, to quote Steve Hootman. Before I started working at RSBG, I thought that all there was to know about different plant species and their cultivation had been already discovered. I've since realized that horticulture and botany are constantly evolving, full of new developments, new knowledge, and new species that need to be protected. This new perspective has given me a deeper appreciation for the conservation work RSBG does, and I'm looking forward to learning more, and working together this summer!

Kayla Roles—Garden Intern

My name is Kayla Roles, I am a student at Tacoma Community College studying honors botany and horticulture. I work as a horticultural assistant at the W.W. Seymour Botanical Conservatory where I study rare tropicals and other exotics. I am 25 years old. I was drawn to the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden to learn about native flora and other rare species from around the world. I have always had an interest in plants and how humans interact with them; and even more so how they respond to our presence. I truly believe that horticulturists, botanists, and even mycologists, can make the world a better place by sharing the amazing things that plants and fungi can do. There is something admirable about the persistence of nature that we could all draw a little bit of inspiration from. I'm enamored by plant adaptations and the intrinsic intelligence of their design. It's important for me to teach others that plants are active participants of their environment rather than just being ornate, therefore educating others on conservation in a more meaningful way as we face critical issues like climate change. My dream botanical job would be studying how to grow plants in outer space so that humans can go deeper into the cosmos! For me, being a student of the natural world is one way to be a lifelong learner and to ask big questions that are often overlooked. My absolute favorite part of my work is getting young and old alike excited about the wonder that surrounds us; and showing how plants can bring us together whether it is in the garden, the forest, or even around a kitchen table.

Spring Highlights

We had an eventful spring! 2019 was a record setting year for attendance for two of our cornerstone events —we welcomed nearly 2000 visitors over Mother’s Day weekend and more than 2200 on Blue Poppy Day. We also hosted an exciting symposium with keynote speaker Seamus O’Brien from National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh in Ireland. He shared stories from his journeys that paralleled famous plant hunter Joseph Dalton Hooker’s travels 150 years prior, noting the striking similarities and experiences as well as the marked environmental changes in Sikkim. We also heard from Board Member Valerie Soza, who adeptly explained the unique genetic properties of rhododendrons and ongoing work at Ben Hall’s lab at the University of Washington.

The Spring Plant Sale proved an exciting weekend, to say the least! The wonderful weather we experienced on Friday was balanced out with whipping winds and rain on Saturday. We are so thankful to our volunteers for sticking it out and working through what was a very Pacific Northwest day.

Here’s a glimpse of our spring in photos...



Recognition for Steve Hootman

Executive Director Steve Hootman wins prestigious award from the Royal Horticultural Society

Steve Hootman has been named as the 2018 recipient of the Loder Rhododendron Cup from the Royal Horticultural Society. Here is the citation used in the award presentation which was kindly received by Keith Rushforth on behalf of Steve who was unable to attend the award ceremony.

“For those unfamiliar with his name, Steve Hootman – a very long-standing member of our Group – has been Curator of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Washington for over 25 years and Executive Director since 1998. Under his dynamic leadership, the garden has become the centre of *Rhododendron* excellence in cultivation and conservation. Rivalling the RBG Edinburgh, it now hosts one of the largest living collections of *Rhododendron* in the world – 700+ species including vireyas. He is one of the foremost plant hunters in the world and has introduced many species into cultivation that you may well be growing in your garden under the SEH name. If not, you might have encountered the acclaimed RSF yearbooks which Steve initiated in 2006 or visited the excellent RSF website he oversees: www.rhodygarden.org

Steve is a true ‘giant’ in the rhododendron community; highly regarded across the globe, he is a ‘go to’ person for information, advice and opinion on all matters *Rhododendron*. He has been of immense support to the Group during my tenure as yearbook editor, providing images and sharing his unrivalled knowledge with absolute generosity. Steve is a rare beast – a genuine expert in his field with none of those all too familiar ‘diva’ qualities! This award would represent a perfect recognition of our respect for his ongoing contribution to the world of rhododendrons.”

In Memory

We are sorry to have to report the passing of some long-time supporters of the RSBG. Over the past few months we have lost Dr. Ben Hall, Dr. George Argent, Hank Helm and Stan Hungerford. Ben was a contributor to the RSBG in many ways, as a board and EC member, as a donor and as a research scientist utilizing the collection at the RSBG in his studies on the genus *Rhododendron*. These studies continue even today through the Hall laboratory at the University of Washington. George was a botanist at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh where he specialized in the botany of tropical plants. He was considered the world expert on *Vireya* rhododendrons. Hank was a long-time member of the board of the RSBG and was the founder of the Western North American Rhododendron Species Project. Stan was another long-time donor and supporter of the RSBG.

The *Rhododendron* community has taken a huge blow with the loss of these important contributors. We will miss these tremendous individuals and friends and send our thoughts to their families and friends.

Welcome New Members

2/1/2019 — 5/31/2019

Betty Ann Addison
Marie Adlhoch
Darren Anderson
Fred Anderson
Cherise Aumack
Tess Avalos
Bent Ernebjerg
Roger Bessey
Olga Bonilla
Glenn & Natalie Bottemiller
Tom Boulanger
Marilyn Bower
Amber Boyd
Dave Brastow
Stephen Brice
Gioia Browne
Sharon Burnett
Cherie Christensen
Kirstin Coffey
June Coloff
Lirong Dai
Denise DeRose
Anna DeThomas
Sue Dickson
Patricia Dougherty
Kristian Duenez
Lyn Duncan
Beth Edward
Sandra Eilbes
Mary Engeset
Jean Feagin
Aarom Fossum
Brian Fox
Patricia Frank
Mellisa Gonzalez
Burlton Griffith
Stephen Hedt
Holly Hirzel
Brian Holland
Melissa Holzhauer
William Jaback
Sandra Jacobson
Thomas Johnson

John Kinney
Cindy Konigson
Heidi Krzyzaniak
Allison Leadabrand
Denise Liftin
Laura Little
Kellen Maiuri
Kirsten Martin
Tim McAnulty
Robert McKay
Amy & Michael McMillan
Wes & Judy Naillon
Sandra A. Nelson
Rebecca Norton
Ramona Okumura
Denise Pacilli
Janet Paige
Steve & Kay Pedersen
Robb Petersen
Cassie Phillips
Amy Platt
Saran Pomianowski
Marjorie Raleigh
Meera Ramayya
Calen Randall
Erica Rickard
Mary Rolfe
Heather Ruolo
Hannu Saarilahti
Sean Sanchez
Salvador Sanchez
Mary Schindler
Paula Schwartz
Lee Seeger
Virginia & Kevin Shields
Paul & Kathleen Shipley
Marie Skoor
Robin & John Stevens
Caleb Streur
Shella Swain
Loreen Tabbutt
Alicia Talley
Jerry Tangren

Joe & Nancy Teeples
Ozgu (Debra) Tokgoz
Izabella Tursko
Violetta & Jeffrey Walker
Marietta Whitely
Erin Whorton
Sharon Wilson
Nancy Wittenberg
Jane Woodard
Lacey & Matt Wright
Thomas Yee
Samantha Yeun
Michelle Zachary

**You're invited to our Member
exclusive annual event...**

Evening in the Garden!

Join us for Mexican cuisine, tours, and more at 2019's Member appreciation event. Evening in the Garden is held annually to celebrate our wonderful Members and volunteers, who are the very heart of our organization.

Register online [here](#).

Evening in the Garden includes:

- Taco & enchilada bar
- Garden tours
- Rare plant auction
- Wine & beer cash bar

\$35 for Members, \$40 for non-Members. Non-Members must be accompanied by an RSBG Member to attend.

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

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

Restricted Contributions

ARS Connecticut—*Internship Program (Garden)*

ARS Seattle—*Internship Program (Garden)*

Garratt Richardson—*Alpine Garden Renovation*

Glendoick—*Internship Program (Retail)*

WSNLA— *Internship Program (Retail)*

Extraordinary Gifts

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Garratt Richardson—Donation for Woodland
Gardens Books

General Operations

Richard Aaring
Brian Adams
Betty Addison
AmazonSmile Foundation
ARS Connecticut
ARS De Anza Chapter
ARS Juan de Fuca
Wilbur Bluhm
Mary Boatwright
Glen & Natalie Bottemiller
Stanton & Gwen Brown
Ronald & Barbara Burch
George & Kathy Burtchett
Bonnie Campbell
Kathleen Crabtree
J.M. Davis
Robert & Judith Dean
Jan Dobak
Yasuyuki Doi
Emerald City Wanderers
Jean Feagin
Joyce Fingerut
Richard A. Flavell
Lloyd Gilmore
Robert Gust
William Hansen
Ted Herrington
HillToppers Garden Club
M. Hudson
Donald Johnson
Judi Keyser

Patricia McGill
Al, Joy, & Lauren Mendoza
Sandra Nelson
Gerald Nemanishen
Network for Good
Shuichi Niihara
Richard Organ
Steve & Kay Pedersen
Richard Pierson
Rosalie Preble
Patricia Pugnetti
Rosemary J. Read
Salesforce.org
Donald Selcer
Beverly Smith
Cathy Spiker
David Streatfield
Karen Swenson
The Benevity Community
Impact Fund
Boeing Company
Laurus Traas
Michael Van Winkle
Charles & Dean Wegener
David & Cynthia Welte
Timothy Wolfenden

2018 Garden Campaign:

Buchholz & Buchholz Nursery
Clarice A. Clark
Stanley W. Hungerford
Linda McDonald
Al, Joy, & Lauryn Mendoza
Janis Nelson
Ann D. Robbins
Yin Chun Shen
Rex & Jeanine Smith
Harold Sweetman

Legacy Circle:

Deena J. Henkins
Peter Norris
Donald King
Chuck Sheaffer
Ian Walker
Anne Guelker
Keith White

The Rhododendron Legacy Circle is open to all members who have made provisions for the Rhododendron Species Foundation in their financial or estate plans. For more information, visit: <http://rhodygarden.org/cms/get-involved/planned-giving/> or contact Grace Pham at Grace@RhodyGarden.org.