
RHODODENDRON

SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 47, NUMBER 2



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President's Corner by Ian Walker

We recently lost Harold Greer, who passed away on August 10, 2021. One of our long-term Members, Harold was involved with the Rhododendron Species Foundation from the very early days when the garden started at Pleasant Hill, Oregon. Harold was a major contributor, author and presenter. Our best wishes go out to his spouse, Nancy, during this time of grief. Harold will be greatly missed.

On the good news side, we recently received a wonderful gift of property from a couple, rhododendron enthusiasts, who wished to provide support for the mission and goals of the Rhododendron Species Foundation in this way.

The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors has established two committees to help us update some of our programs. Mike Stewart is heading up the Membership Committee with the goal of developing recommendations as to how we can better recognize Members for their various contributions and how we can grow our Membership. Chip Muller is heading up a By-Laws Committee with the goal of reviewing our by-laws and recommending any modifications.

The By-Laws effort is a project which should be done periodically, as the purpose and responsibility of the Board is governance and audit. This includes establishing and confirming the mission of the organization and assuring that the organization is accomplishing its mission as described in the Articles of Incorporation by developing and auditing policies which guide the operation of the organization and are compliant with all applicable laws. Let me know if you have any thoughts or suggestions!

In November we will be beginning our Fall Fundraising Campaign. Fortunately, we had a good year for plant sales and this has helped with ongoing expenses. However, we need to increase our Endowment Fund to smooth out the 'bumps' between a good year and a not so good year, so your support is very welcome.

Our primary concerns now are about COVID and forest fires, so stay safe and spend time in the garden!

Ian Walker, Board President
ianwalker-rhodyfdn@att.net



Right: *Galax urceolata*

Executive Director's Report by Steve Hootman

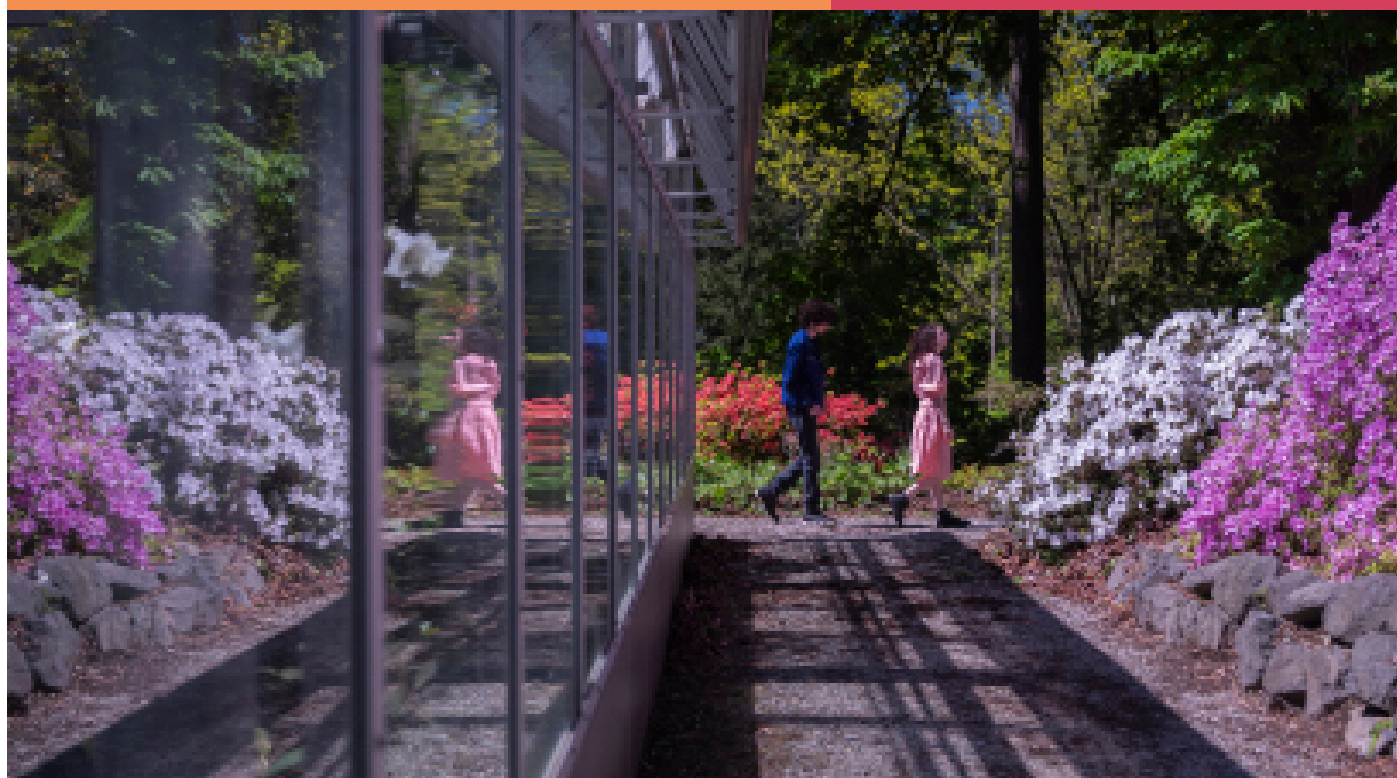
I am very happy to report that we have had another incredibly busy and very successful spring season here in the garden. Even with the abnormally cool and wet conditions in our region, which stretched well into June, we still recorded record attendance and plant sales. Our very cool and moist spring has, of course, been a boon to the growth and appearance of the rhododendrons and other plants in the garden. This sort of spring was exactly what was needed after a very difficult 2021 which featured both a record-setting “heat dome” in late June and a very sharp drop to 16F in mid-December, neither of which were well received by the plants in the garden and nursery. The big-leafed rhododendrons look especially beautiful this year with lush new growth and enormous new leaves.

All of these weather issues are, of course, just some of the factors that must be dealt with when you are a rhododendron farmer, or a farmer of any kind. As with any other kind of crop management, even local wildlife must be dealt with when cultivating plants on such a scale. The native mountain beavers regularly visit the garden to sample a bit of *Rhododendron rex*, a bit of Chinese food to complement their normal home-grown fare of salmon berry and salal. This spring we had an even more damaging episode when a native song sparrow found a tiny hole near the floor next to the door of our propagation greenhouse. Within minutes upon entry he had discovered and scratched up (like a chicken on a farmyard floor) the majority of the small pots filled with sphagnum peat moss containing this year's crop of tiny *Rhododendron* seedlings. You can imagine the horror when we discovered this destruction. It will be several years before we will be able to fully sort out the mixed seedlings. And those represent only the portion we actually managed to salvage. Ahhhhhh, the life of a farmer. And yes, the hole has been plugged.

I would like to thank you in advance for your contributions to our Spring Garden Campaign. Any amount helps tremendously, and your continued support is so very vital to our ongoing success. Click the link below to make a contribution through our website. With best wishes for a pleasant and healthy summer.

Show your love for the RSBG:

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Species Profile: *Rhododendron leucaspis* by Will Clausen

For many gardeners working with a small space, a low mounding evergreen which covers itself in flowers is a dream plant. While some species *Rhododendron* are impractical or undesirable to the average gardener due to size, habit, or care requirements, there are others that can be slotted with ease into a tight yard along a pathway, a shadier spot beside a house, or even a container. One such rhododendron is *Rhododendron leucaspis*, one of the finest of the smaller *Rhododendron* species.

With adequate sunlight *Rhododendron leucaspis* maintains a compact shape and can eventually achieve a height between 2 and 3 feet, usually growing slightly wider than high. The leaves, growing to 2.5 inches in length and about an inch wide, are broadly elliptic. The most noticeable feature of the leaves are the long bristly hairs that densely fringe the margins and are found across the upper surface. Bristly hairs and scales are also found on the new stems and leaf petioles, with just a few stray hairs scattered along the midrib on the underside of the leaf. Otherwise, the bottom of the leaves is hair free and dotted with tiny kidney-shaped scales that vary in size and are deeply sunken in pits. These kidney-shaped scales are characteristic across species in subsection Boothia, the taxonomic subgroup where *Rhododendron leucaspis* is placed. New leaves feature a



Above: *Rhododendron leucaspis*

nice slivery green color below which contrasts well with the rich green on of the upper surface. Flowering occurs somewhat early in the spring roughly coinciding with the first big wave of color from *Rhododendron* species, though usually a month or so after the earliest of species like *Rhododendron dauricum* and *R. moupinense*. Bright red-pink bud scales, which are showy in their own right, expand and open to show bright white flowers which can be nearly 2 inches across when fully formed. These flowers, besides being numerous, are also somewhat large in relation to the size of the plant itself. A plant in full bloom is a remarkable sight, but I think *Rhododendron leucaspis* is actually at its best just before peak bloom. At that point the plant shows a range of colors with some of the flowers being fully opened while others are still unfurling and still others remain more or else encased in the colorful bud. When fully open, the flowers can have a hint of yellow at their center and are sometimes tinged slightly pink. Maybe the most notable thing about the flowers is the anthers, which are chocolate-brown and make an interesting color combination against the white petals. The style bends sharply downward, which is another characteristic of plants in subsection Boothia, a group of largely yellow flowered plants in which the white flowered *Rhododendron leucaspis* is an outlier. It is closely related to *Rhododendron megeratum*, sharing the characteristic of having only 2 or 3 flowers per inflorescence which is much less than other species in the subsection. In the wild, these two species seem to merge into one another, leading to some speculation that they should be considered variants of a single species, but *Rhododendron megeratum* is smaller in general, has fewer hairs on the leaves, and is most often yellow flowered.

In southeast Tibet where it is found in the wild, *Rhododendron leucaspis* often grows from moss on rocky cliffs or even epiphytically. Given that epiphytic plants are often difficult to cultivate, *Rhododendron leucaspis* is surprisingly easy to grow so long as it is given excellent drainage, which is a pretty standard requirement for *Rhododendron* species. It can take both sun and shade, though the plant is more likely to maintain a compact habit with more sun. Its water and soil requirements are in line with most other *Rhododendron* species. Because of its early flowering period, the flowers can be susceptible to damage from late frosts, but the plants are hardy down to about 5 degrees F.

Given its many desirable characteristics, it is no surprise that *Rhododendron leucaspis* has been selected to create some useful hybrids including 'Bric-a-Brac', 'Lucy Lou', 'Lemon Mist', 'Ptarmigan', 'Snowlady', and 'Goldilocks'. These plants are generally heavy bloomers with compact growth, and white or yellow flowers.

At the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, visitors can see a remarkable display of *Rhododendron leucaspis* along the trail between the Meconopsis Glade and the June Garden. More than twenty plants were planted near one another and have subsequently grown together to create a great mass that is really a showstopper and reliably covered in white flowers in early spring.

Living Accessions at the RSBG

1965/398 Crarae

1977/577

2008/169 APA#042A

2008/257 APA#042A

2008/323 APA#042A

2008/347 APA#042A

2008/366 APA#042A

2008/378 APA#042A

2008/381 APA#042A

2010/070 APA#042B

2010/102 APA#042B



Above: *Rhododendron leucaspis*

References:

Cox, Peter A. & Cox, Kenneth N.E. 1997. *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species*. Glendoick Publishing, Perth, Scotland. pg. 102.

Good, John. 2020. Rhododendron Choices for Small Gardens. Alpine Garden Society. <https://www.alpinegardensociety.net/plants/rhododendron-choices-for-small-gardens/>

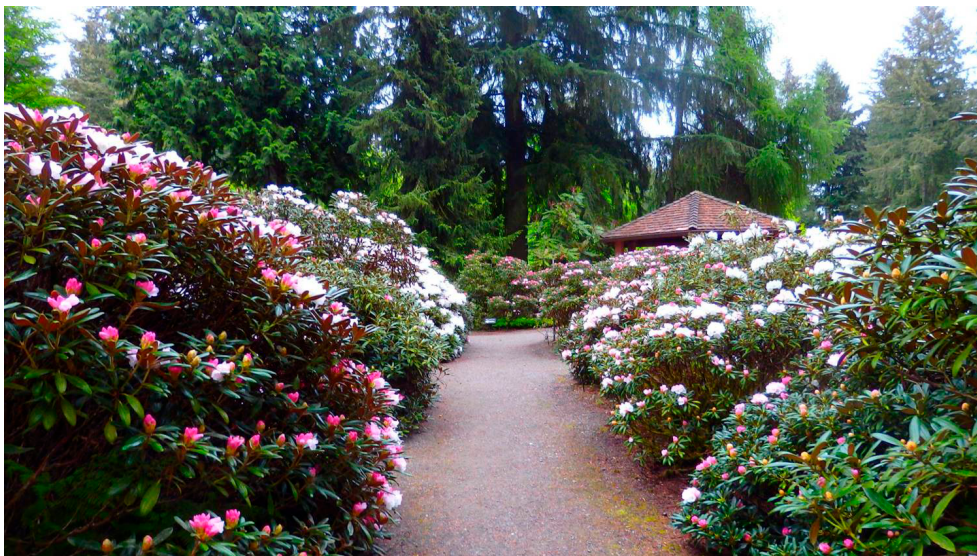
Rhododendron leucaspis. Trees and Shrubs Online. International Dendrology Society. <https://treesandshrubsonline.org/articles/rhododendron/rhododendron-leucaspis/>

Smith, Parker. 1986. California Rhododendron Hybrids. Journal of the American Rhododendron Society. 40(2). <https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v40n2/v40n2-smith.htm>

Deadheading: is it necessary?

by Atsuko Gibson

Every spring is different, but we have had a heavy-bloom season here at the RSBG this year. Our big-leaf rhododendrons are finally mature enough that they are starting to produce more flowers. The yaks (*R. yakushimanum*) had flowers on every single branch, and *R. niveum* put on a show that I have never seen before. Now the glorious season has passed, and deadheading is in full-swing. Visitors often ask me, “How do you deadhead a 22-acre garden?” My answer is simple: “We don’t deadhead everything.” Some rhododendrons benefit from deadheading more than others. Here are the factors to determine if you need to deadhead your rhododendrons or not.



Above: *R. yakushimanum* specimens loaded with flowers and buds

1. Big-leaf rhododendrons and other species/hybrids with large trusses: We always deadhead our big-leaves. The seedpods are as big as my thumb, so you can imagine the energy put toward the ripening of those seedpods. By removing them, the plant will put more energy toward root formation, and this will result in stronger growth. It will also “realize” that it has failed to make “babies” and so will typically put more energy into flower bud formation to try again the next year instead of using all of that energy to ripen the seed pods and the seeds within. We have made the effort to remove as many spent flowers as possible, even if that means bringing out the ladder! And there is nothing more satisfying than snipping off the large truss.

2. Stressed rhododendrons: If your plant suffers from pest/disease issues or just has poor health, it will benefit greatly from being deadheaded for the same reasons discussed above. Stressed plants tend to bloom heavier, in an attempt to produce more seeds as they “feel” that they are dying and so put on a sort of “last chance” effort at procreation. It is just what nature does to ensure generations keep going century after century.

3. Newly planted rhododendrons: If you moved or planted rhododendron within a year, removing the truss would be beneficial for the same reasons discussed above.



Above: Spent flowers on *R. yakushmanum*

4. Want to ensure a good bloom next year? Removing spent flowers means removing the seeds, which is how plants regenerate. If you remove them, (in most cases) plants will produce flowers again the following year. This might not be always true, since the flower-bud formation is caused by a number of factors such as stress caused by summer drought or high temperature. Some species (such as *R. huanum*) tend to bloom heavy every other year, regardless of the status of deadheading.

5. Mind the appearance of your plant. Large trusses of rhododendron flowers are fantastic, but the spent flowers can be an eyesore. On some species, the truss will hang on for a few years and it can be a distraction from the appearance of new growth.

Small flowered species such as *R. racemosum*, *R. augustinii*, and *R. williamsianum* do not need to be deadheaded. Same goes for deciduous and evergreen azaleas. When you deadhead, you would want to use a needle nose snips and be cautious not to harm the emerging new growth rising from right below the truss, at the base of the petiole (leaf stem). If you wait to deadhead until the new growth is extended, it will be more challenging to get your snips into the base of the truss without damaging the new growth. Also rhododendrons set flower buds before mid-summer, so you don't want to wait too late. Now is the time to go out to your garden with a pair of snips and start deadheading!



Left: Deadheading party, courtesy of our amazing volunteers
Right: New growth on *R. yakushmanum*

General Operations- 1/1/2022 - 5/31/2022

Aaring, Richard
AmazonSmile Foundation
ARS Connecticut
ARS De Anza Chapter
ARS Juan de Fuca
ARS Olympic Peninsula
ARS Valley Forge
Baker, Brandon
Brown, Stanton and Gwen
Cavender, Richard
Clark, Susan
Clark, Thomas & Sandra
Duke, Carol
Fairbanks, Izumi
Feagin, Jean
Fidelity Charitable
Frank, Patricia
Haldeman, Martha
Harwell, Richard & Shawn
Henkins, Deena J.
Herrington, Ted
Hinton, Ron & Barb
Joshua Green Foundation, Inc.

Keck, Ian
Knudsen, Will and Winona
Koblenz / Al-Mateen
Kroger
Larson, Charles
Nevler, Susan
Paypal
Portland Garden Club
Read, J. Rosemary
Riggs, Rudy
Rupp, Mary
Seattle Garden Club
Sloan, William
Tacoma Garden Club
The Benevity Community Impact Fund
The Blackbaud Giving Fund
Topham, Karen
Traas, Laurus
Wagner, Jeff
Willard, Loretta
Wittenberg, Nancy
Wolfenden, Timothy

Endowment - 1/1/2022 - 5/31/2022

Mathey, Robert
Van Patton, Peg
Thompson, Diane and Paul
Hirsch, Eric
Bell, Dianne

Campbell, Bonnie
McLean, Robert & Katherine
Weyerhaeuser, George
Norris, Dr. Peter Edward

Legacy Circle

Anne Guelker
Deena Henkins
Donald King
Jean Muir

Peter Norris
Ian Walker
Keith White

Restricted Contributions- 1/1/2022 - 5/31/2022

Norris, Dr. Peter Edward
ARS Seed Exchange
ARS Massachusetts Chapter
WSNLA

Donation for Seed/Pollen Intern
Donation for Seed Intern
Donation to Intern Program
Retail Intern Grant

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