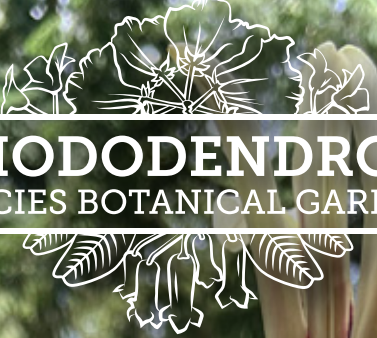




RHODODENDRON
SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 49, NUMBER 2

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Cardiocrinum giganteum

Executive Director's Report by Steve Hootman

What a tremendous spring we have had here at the RSBG. The flower bud set was the best we have ever seen and, thanks to the accommodating weather (not too hot, not too cold), the flowers that resulted were spectacular, both in quantity, quality, and longevity. We are now in the midst of that time of the year that I particularly enjoy – the emergence of the new growth on the *Rhododendron* species and their companion plants. The new foliage on many of the species is as beautiful as the flowers and often quite colorful or at least eye-catching. In addition, at least personally, just seeing the new growth and realizing the plants have made it through another year in good health is quite comforting. All of this flowering, in addition to some awesome marketing and outreach as well as our growing reputation, resulted in the greatest number of spring visitors in our history – lots of happy people!

Thanks to a very successful 2023 Fall Capital Campaign we were able to purchase a brand new Kubota All-Terrain vehicle for use in the garden and nursery. This tool is indispensable in a large garden such as ours and is used for hauling plants, mulch, soil, and tools among many other uses. Many thanks to all who so generously contributed to this important fund drive.

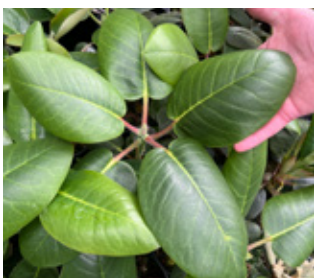
Our hoop renovation in the production nursery is well underway with the first of the three planned new hoops completed. This hoop has been named in honor of Rollo Adams, long time board member and volunteer who did so much to help the organization over a more than 30-year span. The groundwork for the remaining two new hoops has been completed as well as the layout. Now the building begins! Many thanks to the staff and volunteers as well as your donations which have made this Capital Campaign Project such a success.

A final note, it is with great sadness that I report the passing of two long-time supporters of the RSBG. This past spring we lost June Sinclair on April 26th. June was a long-time member of the Board of Directors and an ardent supporter of everything rhododendron. June had the most extensive private collection of *Rhododendron* species in North America, and she was a great friend to many of us – her energy and upbeat spirit will be greatly missed. We also lost Treasurer and Executive Committee member Robert (Bob) Gust on May 22nd. Bob served for many years as the Treasurer of the Board and was a major factor in the organization getting onto solid ground in terms of financial accountability and management. Bob was a great friend and a mentor to many of us here on staff and on the Executive Committee and he will be sorely missed.



Fall Catalog Opens September 4!

This September, the RSBG is excited to offer the finest selection of species rhododendrons and companion plants in its fall catalog. Two stunning varieties offered this fall are *R. yuefengense* Affinity and *R. jingangshanicum*. The catalog will open to Benefactor and Sustaining members on Sep. 4th, and will open to all members on Sep. 11th. Members will receive an email with a link and password to shop the fall catalog.



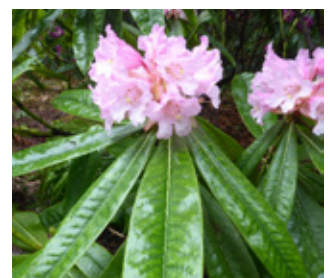
R. yuefengense Affinity



SNEAK PEEK



R. jingangshanicum



Nursery News by Atsuko Gibson

In Mid-May, we started cutting propagation for the 2024 season. Our volunteers, John and Craig, as well as our intern, Marissa, prepare the cuttings and stick them every Tuesday from now through mid-October. This small but mighty propagation team can stick as many as 1000 cuttings a day! Meanwhile we will continue to pot up seedlings into band pots (2.5 x 2.5 x 5). Once the seedlings are moved out from the propagation greenhouse, the rooted cuttings will be given that space on the benches in the greenhouse. It's all about finding the right space at the right time! Good thing I like playing Tetris.

Nursery staff have been spending most of their time weeding and watering, as well as updating our nursery inventory. We lost some plants this past winter due to the three continuous days of below 20F in January, so those dead plants are being pulled to make space for other materials.

Some of you might wonder “Why not rely on the irrigating system for watering?” While we do have an automatic system for overall coverage, due to the nature of what we grow, we also hand water 98% of the time. This would be a different story if we grew 1000 of one plant, but we grow 50 of this, 25 of that, 3 of this, and they all have different watering needs. Among staff, we joke that you will not master the art of watering until you work here for three years! It is that finicky. If they are too wet or too dry, plants exhibit symptoms like marginal leaf necrosis, chlorosis, wilting, and even death at times, especially combined with our increasing summer heat. That fine line can be only achieved by good observation and the skill of our staff. After all, it is our mission to successfully grow species rhododendrons that come from around the world.

You can imagine our staff's happy dance when the rain is back in the forecast in September!



R. impeditum prepped for sticking



We start the cutting season with *R. luteum* 'Golden Comet'



Trays placed under the mist on a heated bench, waiting to develop roots before being potted into soil.

Species Profile: *R. thayerianum* Rehder & E.H. Wilson 1913

by Emily Joseph

Behind the pond along a narrow somewhat secluded path, a grouping of rhododendrons from subsection *Argyrophylla* form a dense barrier between the remote southern boundary of the garden and the busy commuters of highway 18. Containing rhododendrons from China, Tibet, and Taiwan, *Argyrophylla* includes but is not limited to such notable species as the section namesake *R. argyrophyllum*, the early blooming *R. ririei*, *R. insigne*, *R. formosanum*, and one of my personal favorites, *R. thayerianum*. Though rarely found in cultivation, *Rhododendron thayerianum* is an easy to grow species displaying some of the most stand-out (though disparate) characteristics of the genus. If you were to ask someone to give a general description of rhododendrons, it would not come close to describing the elegant and equatorial image of *thayerianum*.

At maturity, one can expect a 6ft (2m) shrub with a broadly rounded habit, dense branching and thick foliage retained for 2-6 years. Each leaf is long, up to 6in (15cm), and very narrow, only about an inch (1.5-3cm) in width. The dark glossy green leaves appear bent in half along the midrib, creating a fold down the center of the leaf, allowing the underside to display a smooth, pale tan



R. thayerianum



R. thayerianum

colored indumentum that distinctly contrasts with the deep jasper green surface above. Sometimes described as “canoe-shaped,” the overall foliage effect is stunning. Some may compare it to *Rhododendron insigne*, though the leaves are much narrower and longer, and the branches retain persistent perulae, or the dried vegetative bud scales along the stem. When the new foliage emerges in summer, they are coated in a silvery white pubescence that contrasts beautifully with the dark green leaves of previous years. In flower, the blooms are small but held in an upright truss of 10-20 funnel campanulate (bell-shaped) flowers, pink in bud opening to white. As if the foliage wasn’t enough, the late bloom time of June into July is yet another stand-out characteristic when compared to other species and hybrids. Described by some as underwhelming, the simplicity of the flower display seems to fit on a shrub that already has a lot of visual interest. The thick, leathery leaves allow for this *Rhododendron* to take more sun than most, which also contributes to a dense, heavily foliated habit. Like most

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Species Profile: *R. thayerianum* Rehder & E.H. Wilson 1913

garden-worthy species, *R. thayerianum* appreciates consistent moisture and a rich but well-draining soil. Reportedly hardy to -10 degrees F, this species should have quite a bit of utility beyond our Pacific Northwest maritime climate, though it is probably not hardy enough for those gardening in the furthest edges of the northeast.

Originally found in the woodlands of the western Sichuan Province of China, at 9000-10000 ft (2700-3000m) *R. thayerianum* was first recorded into western taxonomy by E.H. Wilson in October of 1910. This was his third expedition to China but only the first expedition working with the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard University. The species name was given in honor of the Thayer family, a historic Massachusetts lineage noted for their support of horticulture and expeditions focused on the flora and fauna of the region. On this expedition, Wilson collected seed which was propagated and grown at Caerhays where the species was later evaluated further and shared with a number of other botanical institutions. However, *R. thayerianum* has not been collected since Wilson's visit to Moupin, now modern-day Baoxing, leading to a limited genetic pool of plants in cultivation. Western Sichuan

holds some of the most botanically rich temperate forests in the world, but is caught within the confluence of societal expansion, tourism, and a heady mix of religious and socio-political significance. Luckily, the region is also the habitat of the nationally beloved giant panda, which was a major driver in the designation of 228,4489 acres (924,500ha) of habitat as a UNESCO world heritage site and official Sichuan Giant Panda Sanctuaries. "However the property is particularly important for flora...with some 5,000 – 6,000 species recorded. Many species are relicts, such as the dove tree, and there is significant diversity in groups such as magnolias, bamboos, rhododendrons, and orchids. The property is a major source and gene pool for hundreds of traditional medicinal plants, many now under threat" (UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 2006). As we continually navigate our place as a conservation focused organization, it is more vital than ever that we continue documenting, cataloging, collecting, and propagating species rhododendrons and the shared flora of this incredible habitat.

ACCESSIONS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE RSF:

1966/605	Caerhays Castle (F. Julian Williams)
1966/617	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

Chamberlain, D. (1982). *Notes from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh*, (Vol. 39, No. 2). Bell and Bain Ltd.

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

Davidian, H.H. (1989). *The Rhododendron Species*, (Vol. 2: Elepidotes, Part 1: Arboreum-Lacteam). Timber Press.

Rhododendron thayerianum. Trees and Shrubs Online. Retrieved June 24, 2024, from <https://treesandshrubsonline.org/articles/rhododendron/rhododendron-thayerianum>.

Sichuan Giant Panda Sanctuaries - Wolong, Mt Siguniang and Jiayin Mountains. UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Retrieved June 24, 2024, from <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1213>.

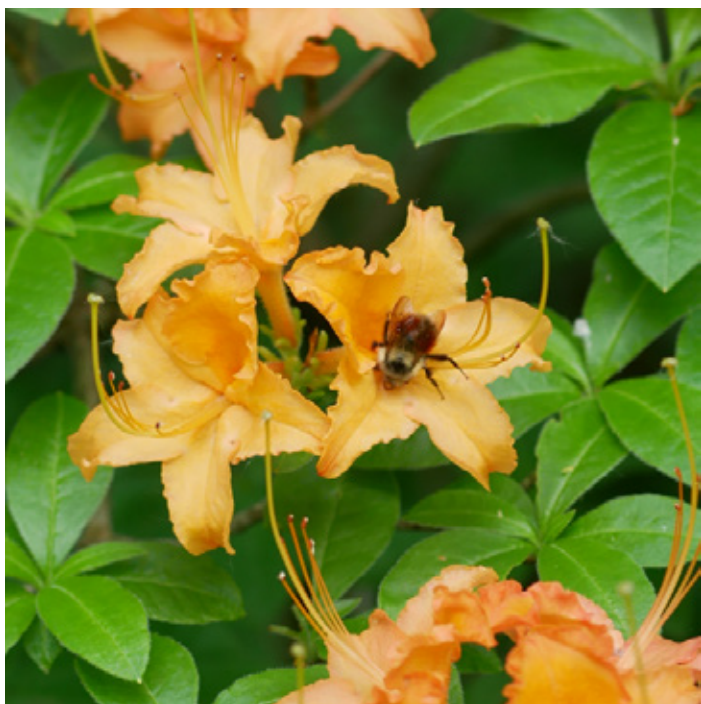


R. thayerianum

Summer Garden Spotlight by Will Clausen

Summer is a month of transition in the garden. Even though peak flowering has passed for rhododendrons, there are still plenty of species that put on their show at this time of year, and a few that will wait for an even later date. And of course, we have plenty of other plants in the garden in addition to rhododendrons, and lots of these bloom throughout the summer. So, even as we say goodbye to spring, the garden still has plenty to offer and is worth a visit to see.

Azaleas: From the Visitor Center, head toward the sprawling big leaf maple, *Acer macrophyllum*, just west of the Conservatory. Here, a mass of different evergreen azaleas crowd in together. Summer brings a lot of color to this area from the different forms of *Rhododendron kiasuanum* among others. Moving downhill into the Azalea Collection, you will see that the first wave of azaleas has finished but there will still be good color from a few different species including the vibrant orange *R. calendulaceum*, whose common name flame azalea offers a pretty good depiction.



R. calendulaceum

Also blooming is *R. prunifolium* and *R. cumberlandense*, both with bolder red to orange flowers. Other highlights in this part of the garden are the *Kalmia latifolia*, mountain laurel, which will be in bloom, and the

dusty silver-blue new leaves on *Zenobia pulverulenta*, honeycup, which is completely unique and hard to miss. Also check for massive white flowers on the bigleaf magnolia, *Magnolia macrophylla*, at the far end of the Azalea Collection.

Upper Garden: Follow the side trails that snake through the upper garden. Here you can find a noteworthy plant that would be easily overlooked. *R. smokianum* is a recently described species that is found in the wild along rocky ridgelines in the Great Smoky Mountains along the North Carolina and Tennessee border. Our plants are still very young but already flowering. Another oddity found here is *R. chapmanii*, a broadleaf evergreen rhododendron that grows in the wild in Florida. Along the path, you will find several different species of *Stewartia* that bloom through June with white flowers reminiscent of *Camellia*, to which they are closely related. We have a number of *Stewartia pseudocamellia* in particular. These trees have outstanding bark which peels as the tree ages to create a patchwork of colors as the green outer bark falls off and reveals earthy clay colors underneath. Coming into the Meconopsis Glade, is a great spot to see our native pacific rhododendron, *R. macrophyllum*, which is blooming profusely this year.



R. macrophyllum

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

Summer Garden Spotlight cont. by Will Clausen

Just a few steps down the path you will find *Hydrangea angustipetala* 'Golden Crane', an unusual and beautiful hydrangea. Heading farther down the path, you will come to a grove of tall and lanky plants laden with red-orange tubular flowers hanging from the branches. This is *R. keysii*, a late blooming hummingbird magnet. Keep an eye and an ear out for these territorial little birds. Across the trail, look for the large white flowers of *R. decorum* ssp. *diaprepes*.

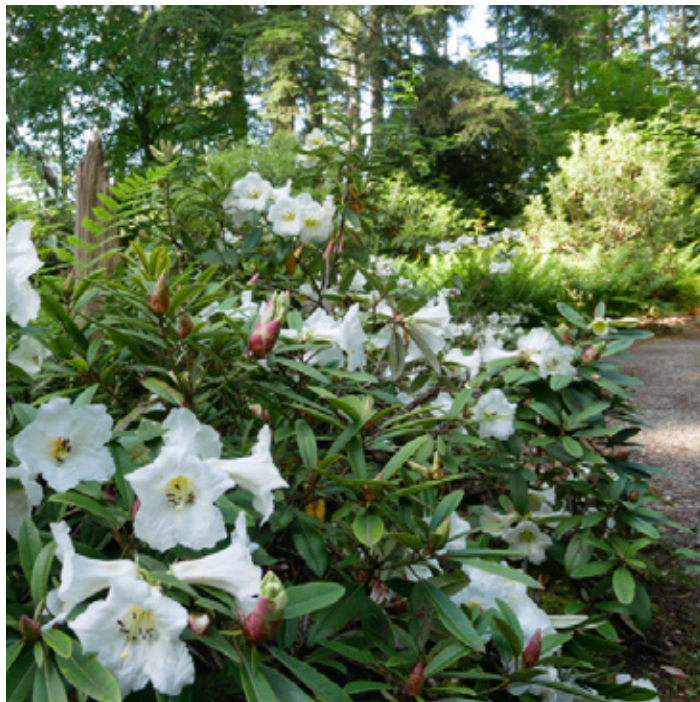


R. arizelum

Pond: Heading downhill toward the Pond, take the smaller side trail near the towering climbing hydrangea. Down at the bottom of this path, bend down and stick your nose into the large white flowers of *R. liliiflorum* to enjoy a sweet scent. A stand of giant Himalayan lilies, *Cardiocrinum giganteum*, has stalks shooting up and are currently flowering. An old thicket of two species from subsection *Irrorata* makes a wall of rhododendron in this area.

From here, wander the garden enjoying the sights of early summer. Don't forget to also take in the new growth that is emerging on most of the rhododendrons now. Through the Lower and Upper Woodland Garden in particular you can see these beautiful tender leaves on species from subsection *Grandia* and *Falconera* such as *R.*

arizelum, *R. falconeri*, *R. montroseanum*, and *R. sinogrande*, among many others. Feel free to gently touch any of these that can be reached from the trail. It is really amazing to see and feel these fuzzy new leaves and think about the big job they have ahead of them.



R. liliiflorum



Cardiocrinum giganteum

Upcoming Events



The graphic features a dark green background with a central yellow-bordered box containing the text "Rhododendron Species Foundation 60th ANNIVERSARY". Above this box is a small logo for the "RHODODENDRON SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN". The entire central text is surrounded by a decorative wreath of green leaves and yellow flowers. Below the wreath, the text "Evening in the Garden" is written in a large, bold, white font, followed by "Saturday, July 27 • 5-8:30 pm" in a smaller white font. At the bottom of the graphic, a thin white line separates the event details from a black bar containing the text "Online registration coming soon." in white.

Rhododendron Species Foundation
60th
ANNIVERSARY

Evening in the Garden
Saturday, July 27 • 5-8:30 pm

catered cuisine • wine & beer • silent plant auction • garden tours

Online registration coming soon.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Do you enjoy construction and maintenance projects? If so, we have a fun project for you to show off your talents! We need one to two people to help with the construction of two new 30'x90' hoop houses, which includes mechanical and electrical maintenance and repairs.

A general knowledge of buildings, familiarity with carpentry, electrical and mechanical systems, plus ability to work safely around equipment and machinery would be very helpful. Additionally, knowledge of engine maintenance and repair on tractors and small engines such as mowers and chainsaws would be great.

We're looking for someone who enjoys fixing things and problem solving, with varied experience and knowledge. We are a small and fun crew to work with, rain or shine (mostly), and we always have a good time... and sometimes donuts!

For more information and to sign-up please email dennis@rhodygarden.org.

EVENING IN THE GARDEN "RSF 60th ANNIVERSARY"

Saturday, July 27 | 5 – 8:30 pm

RSBG members and volunteers are invited to join us for this exclusive event as we celebrate the Rhododendron Species Foundation's 60th anniversary. Guests will enjoy a catered dinner, wine and beer (cash bar), garden tours, and a rare plant auction. Registration will be available online soon.

MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

Sunday, Sep. 22 | 10 am – 4 pm

Membership makes us grow and thrive! As a way of thanking our loyal members for their continued support, we invite you to join us for our Member Appreciation Day featuring lunch, discounts on plants, garden tours, and a rare plant silent auction.

FALL FOLIAGE FESTIVAL

Saturday & Sunday; Oct. 26-27 | 10 am – 4 pm

Come see one of the finest displays of fall foliage color on the west coast. Enjoy guided tours, pop-up plant vendors, food trucks, a costume contest, and kids activities, as you learn and play on a perfect PNW autumn day.



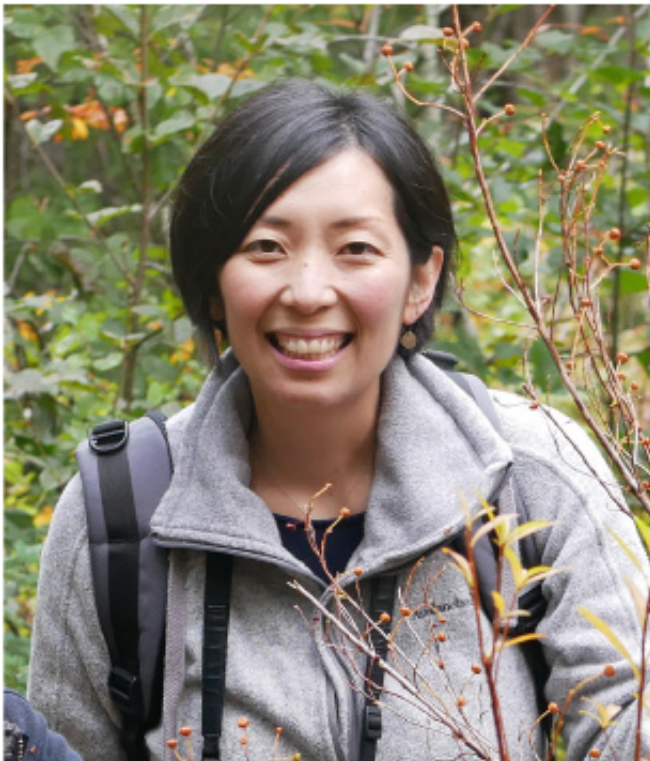
WE NEED VOLUNTEERS

RSBG IN THE NEWS



South Sound Business magazine reached out to RSBG Executive Director of Business Operations Grace Pham, to share her business advice for their June issue. Read her “Lessons from a Leader” column online now!

[Click here to read the full article.](#)



This May, KUOW's Patricia Murphy and Caroline Gomez came out and talked with RSBG's Nursery Manager and Assistant Curator, Atsuko Gibson, to learn all about the garden with the world's largest collection of wild species rhododendrons.

[Click here to listen to the podcast.](#)



Membership Matters

Welcome New Members February 1, 2023 - May 31, 2024

The garden is grateful to all its members, whether you have been with us since the beginning, a loyal member who renews each year, or a brand new addition to the RSBG family - Thank You! Your legacy of support ensures we can continue to fulfill our mission of conservation, research, acquisition, evaluation, cultivation, public display, and distribution of *Rhododendron* species.

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Sound Credit Union

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

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Adrienne Rosenthal
Alec Metteer
Alma Rivera Sarmiento
Amy Bates
Annette Anderson
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Steven Whitcher
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Toni Rios
Tsan Lee

William De Guzman
Yuko Chartraw

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Matthew Gonyea
Meera Ramayya
Mei Huey Wang
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Zenny CM Chen
Zoe & MB Velasquez-Lehman
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Valerie Hardy
Victoria Alley & Geoff Olmstead
Whitney Winchester
Stephan Bohacek

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Darris Hupp
Martha Dibblee
Denise Gudwin

Partnership Post



The RSBG is proud to partner with the American Rhododendron Society to help share the news about the many wonderful benefits that come with an ARS Membership.

Membership benefits include:

- Quarterly Journal with valuable plant and Society information
- Conferences offering lectures, tours and networking opportunities
- Visits to gardens and nurseries, both public and private
- An outstanding seed exchange program
- Participation in local chapter meetings
- Plant auctions and sales. Purchase plants at discount prices.
- Involvement in local and national flower shows
- Support of test and display gardens
- Discounts on rhododendron and azalea reference books
- Information how to grow and care for your rhododendrons
- Meet and socialize with others with common interests

[Click here to find an ARS chapter in your area.](#)



JULY 18-21, 2024

The RSBG is proud to be a sponsor of the 2024 Puget Sound Garden Fling. Over 100 guests from 28 states, including Canada and the UK will converge upon the Puget Sound to visit our region's gardens.

The Garden Fling is an event for garden bloggers and online self-publishers on Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, podcasts, or other public social media.

Fling attendees will visit the RSBG on July 20 to discover what makes the garden so special and help amplify the garden's story worldwide.

[Click here to learn more about The Garden Fling.](#)

Donor Appreciation January 1-May 31, 2024

GENERAL OPERATIONS

Cash Contributions

Aaring, Richard
Adams, Brian
Arbuckle, Linell
DelMarter, Teanna
Dibblee, Martha
Duke, Frank
Flavell, Richard A.
Fox, James
GS/BC
Hansen, Debra
Hertz, Clem
Kaczmarek, Steven
Keck, Ian
Kennedy Jenks
Kinoshita, Margie
Kroger
Larson, Charles
Love, Ralph
Robbins, D. Ann
The Blackbaud Giving Fund
Waltman, Terry & Nancy
Wild Hair Studio

Engraving Program

Adams, Erick
Meyer, Gregory & Barbara

In Honor of

ARS Massachusetts Chapter in
Honor of Don Hyatt

Utility Vehicle Campaign

Thompson, Walter

Spring Garden Campaign

Alonzo, Javier
Bemis, Michelle
Bland, Don
Boldizar, Shannon
Brown, Stanton and Gwen
Brown, Stanton and Gwen
Cook, Susan
Dahlgren, Ruth
Dale, Elaine
deSpoelberch, Phillippe
Diener, Eva
Eggers, Susan
Feagin, Jean
Gray, Laura
Green, Joshua
Gust, Robert
Henkins, Deena J.
Kinoshita, Margie
Morris, Tom & Linda
Morris, Tom & Linda
Olsen, Sue
Parker, John
Parson, William
Petersen, Robb
Read, J. Rosemary
Read, Kate
Seattle Garden Club
Spiker, Cathy
Van Den Meerendonk, John
Walsh, June
Watne, Conrad
Watne, Conrad
Whitehead, Diane
Williamson, Lee

RESTRICTED

Intern Program

ARS Seattle (SRS)
Bruso, Joseph
Fidelity Charitable
Smith, Rex and Jeanine
ARS Seed Exchange
WSNA Scholarship & Research Charitable
Fund

RSBG JOURNAL FUND

Walker, Ian P.

LEGACY CIRCLE

Anne Guelker
Deena Henkins
Jean Muir
Peter Norris
Keith White

A planned gift is a way to extend your support of the RSF beyond your lifetime. This kind of long-term provision ensures that the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden will be here to share the inspiring stories of the natural world with generations to come. [Visit our website](#) to learn more and enroll.



Show your love for the RSBG!

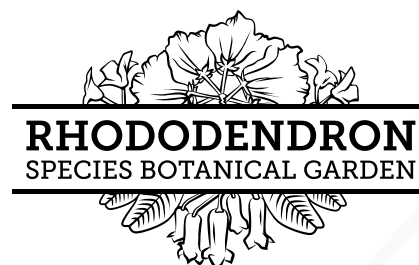
[Click here to give today!](#)

Rhododendron Species Foundation & Botanical Garden Staff

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Executive Director of Business Operations
Nursery Manager and Assistant Curator
Marketing and Outreach Manager
Horticulturist & Assistant Curator
Assistant Nursery Manager
Administrative Assistant
Visitor Services Representative
Rutherford Conservatory Curator

Steve Hootman
Grace Pham
Atsuko Gibson
Natalie Ries
Will Clausen
Emily Joseph
Janey O'Neil
Kellen James
Dennis Bottemiller



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