

RHODODENDRON
SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN

SPRING NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 51, NUMBER 1

- P2 **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**
- P3 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**
- P4 **SPRING CATALOG HIGHLIGHTS**
- P5 **SHOP OUR SPRING PLANT CATALOG**
- P6 **VISITOR CENTER & RETAIL NURSERY
UPDATES**
- P7 **UPCOMING EVENTS**
- P8 **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**
- P9 **VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION**
- P10 **DONOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT**
- P11 **RSF BOARD & RSBG STAFF**

Rhododendron moupinense



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden Exclusive Members Only Spring Newsletter

Executive Director's Report

Alpine mac update and a farewell to a beloved legacy rhododendron.

Spring Catalog Highlights

Early blooms, spring care tips, and nursery updates.

Shop Our Spring Catalog

The 2026 catalog is live online through April 29.

Visitor Center & Retail Nursery Updates

Rare plants, native selections, and new tropical arrivals.

Upcoming Events

Spring festivals, plant sales, and member-only experiences.

Welcome New Members

Thank you for supporting the Garden's mission.

Volunteer Recognition

Celebrating service hours and staff highlights.

Donor Acknowledgment

Thanking the donors who help our mission thrive.

RSF Board and RSBG Staff

Meet the leadership guiding the Garden.



Rhododendron ririei



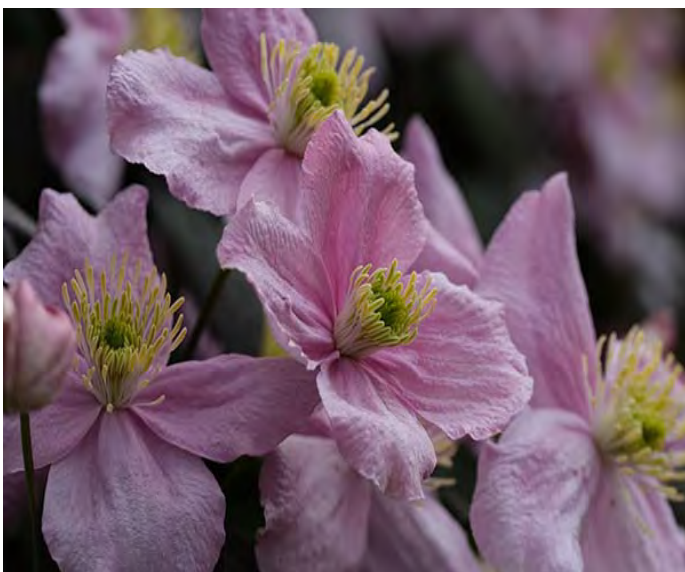
Executive Director's Report by Steve Hootman

I was walking in the garden recently, checking for swelling flower buds in the big-leaf collection. I was especially hoping to find buds on what is now commonly referred to as “the alpine mac”. These are plants grown from my collection of seed (NAPE#052) of *Rhododendron macabeum* in 2003 at an elevation of about 12,600 ft. in the eastern Himalaya. This is about 3000 ft. higher than it had been collected by Frank Kingdon Ward (the original introduction) and as expected, this new collection is proving to be more compact and more hardy in the garden. Unfortunately, even though we have at least 30 plants in the garden and considering that the majority of them are now 26 years old (from seed), I could not find a single flower bud. A not too uncommon occurrence when you are growing big-leaf rhododendrons.

One rather shocking thing I did notice, however, was that the oldest and largest *Rhododendron* in the entire collection was dying. This now massive specimen of *R. rex* subsp. *fictolacteum* was among the first, if not the very first, of the original rhododendrons planted in the garden following the move of the collection from Oregon to its current location in Federal Way, WA. From stories I had heard from some of the old-timers associated with the RSF way back in the early 1990s (I guess now I am an old-timer?), the plant was already quite large when it was placed on a large flatbed truck and driven north to its new home here in the garden. It was planted as the representative of its species in what used to be called the Study Garden which, in the 1970s, was the first portion of the garden to be planted. It is now around 35 ft. in height and at least 70 years old and was a highlighted feature on virtually every tour I have given since 1992. While I was understandably quite bummed in the moment, I immediately went positive and pictured it completely smothered with the bright pink or white flowers of *Clematis montana* some glorious May in the not-too-distant future. It should make a superb scaffolding and provide a dark corner of the garden with a stunning floral display. Thank you, old friend - for everything you have been and everything you will be.

I am not sure why this specimen, which had not shown any obvious signs of decline prior to this, suddenly kicked up its heels. The location in which it is growing is at the lower end of a long slope in a fairly moist area and I suspect that the “soil” there finally degraded enough to lose the porosity necessary to keep plants such as rhododendrons healthy. Or, it might have just reached the end of its life. However, I strongly suspect the former.

Thank you for your continued support and I hope to see you in the garden sometime soon.



Clematis montana



R. macabeum (Alpine form) NAPE#052

Spring Catalog Highlights by Atsuko Gibson

It is an exciting time of the year in the nursery as plants begin to wake from dormancy. You can feel the warmth building in the hoop houses, and the soil is starting to warm up. Trilliums and *Cardiocrinum* lilies are pushing up glossy new growth (a slug favorite!), and the buds of early-blooming species are beginning to swell. Plants under the hoops haven't received a drop of water for the past 2 months, but all of a sudden, they seem thirsty. This is the time of year when we start seeing that the hard work of caring for our plants through the winter has paid off.

It's a good time to apply your choice of fertilizer to plants in containers or in the ground. We use one teaspoon of slow-release, granular fertilizer for a 1-gallon container, or a handful over the root ball for plants in the ground. This early application of additional nutrients is important, as plants are developing their root systems before the new foliage emerges.

There are a few exciting offerings in the current spring catalog. *Rhododendron tsusiophyllum* is a wonderful addition for smaller gardens, containers, or even as a bonsai specimen. Only reaching 2 feet tall in 10 years, this semi-evergreen azalea has tiny and glossy foliage with golden hairs. It is native to northern Japan and the Korean Peninsula where they grow on open mountain slopes. White, delicately hairy, and tubular flowers appear in late spring to early summer.

Rhododendron calostrotum ssp. *riparium* (Calciphilum Group) is another plant for small gardens. Its greyish green, evergreen foliage offers year-round interest. This particular group of plants is only known from northern Myanmar. Large, pinkish-purple flowers appear later in the season than those of other subspecies of *R. calostrotum*. It tends to grow taller than wide, reaching only 2 feet tall in 10 years.

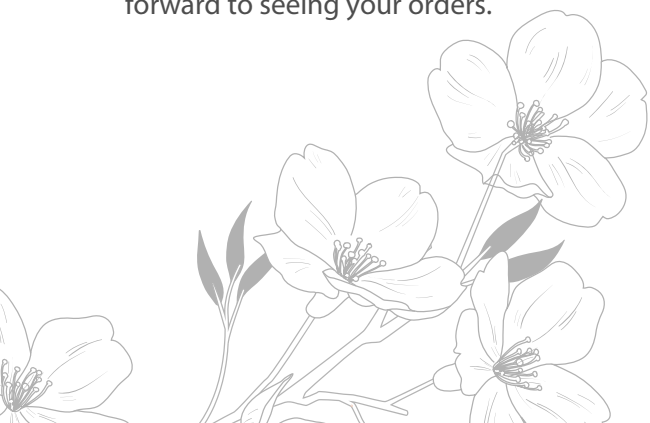
Our spring catalog closes on April 29. We look forward to seeing your orders.



R. calostrotum ssp. *riparium* (Calciphilum Group)



R. tsusiophyllum



Shop Our Spring Plant Catalog

Spring Catalog Ordering Ends April 29 - [Click here to shop now!](https://shop.rhodygarden.org)

We're thrilled to share that the 2026 Spring Plant Catalog is open, and even more exciting, it's the first catalog utilizing our new order processing system. Visit <https://shop.rhodygarden.org> to enjoy a smoother, faster, and more enjoyable way to shop for your favorite plants.

The updated site allows you to browse by category, filter by traits such as fragrance or fall color, and place orders in just a few clicks. You can also check real-time availability and view crisp photos whether you're browsing on your phone, tablet, or computer.

The Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden offers the largest selection of documented *Rhododendron* species in North America, along with a wonderful variety of companion plants. While our onsite nursery carries a diverse selection year-round, our biannual catalogs provide a special opportunity to purchase some of our rarest species rhododendrons and companion plants. Every plant purchase directly supports our mission.

This year's catalog features exciting newcomers and longtime favorites loved by many RSBG members, including *Meconopsis* 'Lingholm' (blue poppy), which we can't wait for you to discover.

The Spring Catalog closes April 29, so be sure to place your orders before then!



R. degronianum ssp. *yakushmanum* 'Exbury Form' 1975/260



R. occidentale



Visitor Center & Retail Nursery Updates by Emily Joseph

It may still be a few weeks until the vernal equinox, but with our mild winter weather and sunny days, it already feels like spring in the retail nursery. Plants are arriving from some of our favorite vendors, and we've stocked more rarities from our own production than ever before.

For the rhododendron collector, we've created a dedicated section featuring compact and dwarf varieties, bold big-leaf types, and shrubby, multibranched forms, including many species that are rarely cultivated or offered for sale. If you're looking for hybrid rhododendrons with larger, showier blooms and the resilience needed for urban landscape conditions, you'll also find a curated selection of tried-and-true classics alongside hard-to-find cultivars. Beyond trees and shrubs, we're fully stocked with a wide range of perennials and ephemerals suited for shade gardens, challenging dry shade, and areas in need of reliable groundcover.



Vaccinium-Hellebore-Ypsilandra-R occidentale-R macrophyllum

Coming this March: We've selected some of the finest forms of Japanese maples, unique conifers, and Satsuki azaleas, perfect for bonsai training, containers, and small-scale garden projects. We've also heard your requests and are expanding our selection of native plants, including evergreen huckleberry cultivars (*Vaccinium ovatum*), flowering currants (*Ribes sanguineum*), deciduous western azalea (*Rhododendron occidentale*), and the broadleaf evergreen (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*).

More of an indoor plant lover? We've brought the outdoors into the Visitor Center with new tender and tropical houseplants, including the stunning *Schefflera* 'Mato,' *Aeschynanthus*, *Agapetes*, *Microsorium*, *Primulina*, *Petrocosmea*, *Scindapsus*, and more.

In addition to propagating and producing plants you'll rarely find anywhere else, we're continuing to grow this year by curating a more diverse selection from local and regional growers. Stop in throughout spring for the best selection, or visit us anytime. We're open and stocked year-round for your next special find.



Hybrid rhododendrons in our Retail Nursery



Upcoming Events

POP-UP PLANT VENDOR WEEKENDS

Saturday & Sunday; March - May | 10 am – 4 pm

Shop from featured local nursery vendors for rare plants, perennials, natives, houseplants, trees, and plants for all growing conditions.

MOTHER'S DAY WEEKEND

Saturday & Sunday; May 9-10 | 10 am – 4 pm

Bring the whole family for our most popular weekend of peak bloom. Enjoy live music, an outdoor art market, and dine from sweet and savory food trucks.

BLUE POPPY DAY

Saturday, May 16 | 10 am – 4 pm

The mystical Himalayan blue poppy, *Meconopsis*, will grace us with its ethereal beauty once again. Enjoy an outdoor art market, food trucks, and plant sales in a woodland garden at peak-bloom.

ANNUAL SUMMERFEST & PLANT CLEARANCE SALE | FREE ADMISSION!

Saturday, June 20 | 10 am – 4 pm

Come experience a free community event like none other. Enjoy family-fun activities for all ages, dance and music performances, art market, food trucks and more! Come celebrate with your neighbors this summer in a wonder-filled woodland garden!

EVENING IN THE GARDEN

Saturday, August 8 | 5 – 8:30 pm

RSBG Members and volunteers are invited to join the staff for tours, drinks, and dinner on the Rutherford Conservatory terrace with a live rare plant auction.

FALL CLEARANCE & RARE PLANT SALE

Sep. 30 - Oct. 4 | 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; Nov. 7-8 | 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, and kids activities, as you learn and play on a perfect PNW autumn day.

MEMBER-ONLY EVENTS

MEMBER-ONLY Q&A

Thursday, March 11 | 5pm

Join us live with Steve Hootman, Executive Director of Horticulture and Curator, and Atsuko Gibson, Nursery Manager and Assistant Curator. Come prepared with your plant-related questions, from cultivation and propagation to general gardening and RSBG-related topics, and get answers straight from our experts in real time.

MEMBER-ONLY GUIDED TOUR

Saturday, March 28, April 18, June 13 | 11:00 AM & 2:00 PM

Tours led by RSBG Executive Director of Horticulture and Curator, Steve Hootman. During these special tours, Steve will highlight what's in bloom, share fascinating stories about the plants, and explore the history of RSBG and RSBG-related topics.



Blue Poppy Day Event

Membership Matters

Welcome New Members November 1, 2025 - February 31, 2026

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.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS

Andrea Goffin
David Cain
Elin K Jacob

SUSTAINING MEMBERS

Heidi Barth Markus

FAMILY MEMBERS

Deborah & David Knipschild
Joan Hardy & Greg Ruggerone
Randy & Madelynn Cummings
Rebecca Guthrie & Brendan Arntz
Sidney Markus
Todd & Sylvie Currie

DUAL MEMBERS

Casey Drobnick & Katrina Herzog
Cindy Johnston
Diane Schairer
Dixie & Randy Baeth
Doris & Park Thede
Erik & Teresa Berg
Janet Jin
Javier Perez & Brian Anderson
Jon Breitenbach-Patch
Joshua Farley
Lisa & Catrina Wold
Michael Shook & Cynthia Perk
Monica & Joe Develin
Nyasha Sarju
R. Theo Margelony & Kevin Gepford
Raymond Denecke & Jay Colin Faulk
Robin Dean
Ryan & Steven Christensen
Sara Farinelli
Sen Cong & Ruiwen Tang
Timothy Morehouse
Vicki & Esko Cate
Wendy Fein

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Andrew Iles
Ann Amato
Barrett Clausen
Bryan Premont
Cris Cannestra
David Trail
Donald Powell
Donna P. Wylie
Ellen Alexander
Elton Liles
Emmett Burke
Franklin Simpson
Gretchen Blanchard
Guy Woods
James Everett
James Hutter
Janine Ray
Jillian Knutson
Kris Hirschmann
Laurel Zeller
Leslie Galloway
Loyda Zamalloa
Madeline Couture
Mary Willis
Mary Ann Hanson
Melanie Coulson
Michael Yales
Morgen McLaughlin
Paul Smith
Pedro Huertas
Ron McFarland
Rose Tobin
Ryan Kartheiser
Scott Crosney
Tanya Nozawa
Teresa Hoyer
Todd Harding
Yoko Arakawa
Zunyu Zhang

Volunteer Recognition & New Staff Member News

2025 VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS

In 2025 our dedicated volunteers generously donated more than 2,300 hours of hard work. Thank you to everyone for your time and enormous effort to help the garden fulfill its mission. We couldn't do it without you!

Trina Colburn	277
Craig Cummings	231
Stephanie Sallaska	213.5
Jo Laskowski	191
John Parker	188.5
Nong Sastrasinh	150
Susan C. Cook	86.5
Paul Thompson	85
Karl Hilsenberg	73
Florence Williams	70
George Lewis	53.5
Ann Caughey	36
Beth Cummings	26.5
Clarice Clark	22
Kaiulani O-Sawka	20.35
Gina Koerner	15
Will Lenhardt	11.5
Ronald Ungewitter	11
Alli Richner	3.5
Scott Vangerpen	8
Mark Tarlton	250
Dennis Bottemiller	40

THANK
you

MEET OUR NEW VISITOR SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE

Meet Maddie Van Buskirk

I grew up in Indiana, on the edge of a big city. As a child, I was frequently found running barefoot in a muddy creek and hosting tea parties in my treehouse. I attended Purdue University and completed a degree in Planetary Sciences, which allowed me to grow my love for the natural world in a new way.

After graduating, I relocated to Seattle to work in the museum industry, where I had the incredible opportunity to develop and lead nature programs for children and families. I now live in Des Moines with my wife, a pet ball python, and a garden that is still very much a work in progress. In my free time, I love drawing botanicals and studying languages. I am so happy to be starting a new adventure at RSBG, and I look forward to meeting you the next time you stop by the Visitor Center.



RSBG DECEMBER COOKIE EXCHANGE

Last December, RSBG staff and volunteers celebrated the holiday season together at our annual holiday party and cookie exchange. Each participant baked a different type of cookie to share, and then everyone got to take one, or more if they were lucky, of each other's treats.

While it wasn't an official competition or a Food Network bake-off, there were certainly some impressive standouts, and it almost felt like we should audition next year. The variety was incredible, featuring unique and delectable options like ube, amaretto, and matcha cookies, along with pumpkin snickerdoodles (proof that pumpkin can still be enjoyed long after Halloween), plus classic holiday favorites such as peppermint and gingerbread. Every cookie was enthusiastically sampled, and by the end of the event, nearly all had disappeared. With well over 100 cookies to choose from, it was safe to say no one left empty-handed. It was so much fun and definitely worth the sugar rush, and maybe even the slight stomach ache.

It was the perfect way to celebrate the season and recognize all the hard work our volunteers and staff contribute throughout the year. Thank you to our staff and volunteers!

Donor Acknowledgement 11/01/25 - 1/31/26

GENERAL OPERATIONS

Cash Contributions

ARS Pilchuck Chapter
Bradbury, Christopher
Cale, Edward and Carolyn
Cook, Susan
Everett, James
Foster, Susanne
Giustina, A. J.
Gray, Scotty
Gross, Kenneth W.
Hansen, Bill
Hasche-Kluender, Hans
Hudson, Laura
Lichter, David
Markert, Ruth
Miller, Ladeen
Morehouse, Timothy
Moulton, Martha
Norcross, Rita
Powell, Don & Roberta
Robbins, Dorothy
Robbins, Martha
Stine, Margaret
Thompson, Walter
VanGerpen, Scott
Walker, Ian P.
Wall, Carol
Welte, David & Cynthia
Wolfenden, Timothy

Extraordinary Gifts

Benjamin & Margaret Hall Foundation

RESTRICTED

Intern Program

ARS Delaware Valley Chapter
ARS Seattle Chapter
ARS Siuslaw Chapter
Bartlett, Robert A. Jr.
Bayless, Hayne
Bemis, Michelle
Blair, Rick & Jane
Candiotta, Patty
Cavender, Karen
Clark, Susan
Clausen, James
Ecklund, Earl
Fairchild, J. Scotty
Fairchild, Richard
Farbarik, John J.
Feagin, Jean
Forslund, Charlene
Forslund, Charlene
Foster, Susanne
Groendyke, Mollie
Henkins, Deena J.
Joseph, Clyde
Kaperick, Maggie
Kintgen, Mike
Koblenz, Lillian
Lintault, Katherine
Love, Ralph
Maw, Keith W.
McGill, Patricia
McNally, Cathy
Muir, Jean
Muller, Chip

Nelson, Margaret & Allen
Olsen, Sue
Parker, John
Russell, Craig
Sanchez, Seon
Swenson, Karen
Thompson, Diane and Paul
Trent, Andrea
Wall, Carol
Westley, Carol
White, Keith A.
Williamson, Lee
Wilson, Richard

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!

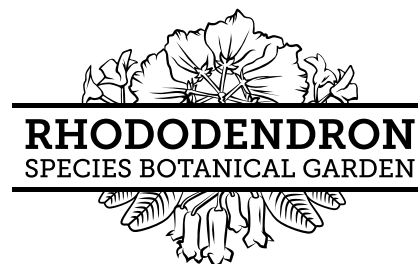
[Click here to give today!](#)

RSF Board & RSBG Staff

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Executive Director of Horticulture & Curator
Executive Director of Business Operations
Nursery Manager and Assistant Curator
Marketing and Outreach Manager
Horticulturist & Assistant Curator
Assistant Nursery Manager & Retail Sales Manager
Administrative Assistant
Visitor Services Representative
Rutherford Conservatory Horticulturist
Assistant Horticulturist
Facilities & Maintenance Coordinator

Steve Hootman
Grace Pham
Atsuko Gibson
Makenna Gallucci
Will Clausen
Emily Joseph
Janey O'Neil
Maddie Van Buskirk
Kim Farmer
Marissa Swindler
Emilio Pascua



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