



Macrophyllum

FEBRUARY 2009

Newsletter of the
Siuslaw Chapter
American Rhododendron Society
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UPCOMING Chapter Events

Meeting Topic- Slide show "The Better Forms of Macrophyllum and Gene Cockeram's Creations"

Chapter Meeting – Tuesday, February 17 at the Presbyterian Church, 3996 Hwy 101 Florence.

Pre-mtg Dinner- Our February 17th dinner will be at the Brown Hen. They will open that evening just for us with a special menu just for our Rhody Club group! It is important that Rosemary have an accurate count by February 13th on attendance. Notify her at 997-6167 or tonyrosemay@charter.net Don't miss this dinner!

Gallagher Park Work Party – Wednesday February 18 (weather permitting) from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The park is at the corner of Spruce and Hwy 126. Gene Cockeram- City Park Commissioner.

flowerman@q.com

Cookie Team- Phyllis Dickson, Stephanie Nordin, Nancy Fullmer, Judy Johnson

Trophy Donation Form – see page 5 of this newsletter to be a supporter for the early flower show trophies.

February... The Month of Love

I introduce your *Editor's Choice* for this month... **Frank Abbott**. This delicate but vibrant dark pink spicy scented flowering azalea appears nearly red from a distance. The plant boasts large mildew resistant foliage that may turn reddish orange in the fall before dropping. Hybridized/Introduced By: Mezitt Parentage: (prinophyllum x a red mollis)

ARS describes this beauty as: flower openly funnel-shaped, about 1 3/4" across, fragrant, vivid purplish-red; held in flattened ball-shaped trusses with 6 flowers. A midseason bloom time. Height in ten years is 4 ft. Cold hardiness temperature is -30°F (-34°C). Leaves are elliptic, broadly acute apex, cuneate base, down curved margins, 3" long, glossy. Hairy petioles. Deciduous. Registration Reference: ARS 992

Now aren't you glad you learned all those fancy rhody words a couple of months ago so you know what they mean



Frank Abbott

Bionic Man Recovers!

Our fearless webmaster, Paul Wilson, has just been inducted into the Bionic Man Club as he recovers from heart surgery. He should be 4x as powerful now! He's almost back to his happy-go-lucky self and will soon be cracking jokes once again at the monthly chapter meetings. Paul has recently teamed up with two other web-pro's who will all help each other maintain their websites in future. We miss you, Paul. Get well soon so JoAnn can finally relax and stop worrying about you!

Fertilizing Rhododendrons the *Organic Way*

Editor's Note: I found this article on the National ARS website: written by Terry Richmond, Port Alberni, British Columbia

When fertilizing rhododendrons we should look to nature to show us the way. In nature mulching and fertilizing is a continuous process with the current year's mulch being gradually transformed in subsequent years to usable fertilizer. Nature's rhodo food begins with a leaf, needle, twig, petal and fruit fall - in short, any and all matter that falls to earth or flows into their area in ground water.

Rhododendrons, because of their environment and the shallow layer of organic matter in which they grow, have evolved a massive root system consisting of literally thousands of tiny, shallow running feeder roots. These roots are extremely efficient in extracting life sustaining plant nutrients from their immediate area. Root systems will be much smaller in a benign climate because a smaller amount of nutrients is required to maintain plant health. Conversely, rhododendrons in exposed and/or harsh conditions will have a vastly increased root system to extract every ounce of nourishment from their surroundings. So how do we fertilize rhododendrons in our garden? First, any literature on fertilizing rhododendrons assumes that your plants are growing in the correct medium. Again, as in nature, this medium should be extremely high in organic matter, well drained, well aerated and moderately to slightly acidic.

Fir and pine bark, composted oak leaves and evergreen needles, decayed wood, well rotted sawdust, coarse peat moss, reed sedge and topsoil high in organic matter are some of the materials that can be combined in endless combinations to provide excellent growing mediums. Growing medium acidity or pH value is not nearly as critical when growing plants in an organic medium using primarily organic fertilizers. One good, quality compost for rhododendrons contains oak leaves, evergreen needles, alfalfa and washed seaweed. Between the various layers, organic nitrogen such as canola meal, fish meal or blood meal can be added. A word of caution! Rhododendrons, because of their previously mentioned tiny feeder roots, can be easily damaged through over-fertilization, especially when using high analysis chemical fertilizers. Elements to be cautious using include nitrogen, iron, sulfur, boron, sodium and calcium. Contrary to popular belief, rhododendrons do not hate calcium. In actual fact the reverse is true. They will gorge themselves on available calcium until they make themselves sick.

With respect to iron, a few years back a respected rhodo grower suggested I supply more iron to help combat the effect of full sunlight in my exposed garden. He was undoubtedly right, but I supplied so much iron sulfate that severe leaf scorching occurred. A little fertilizer goes a long way, especially with small plants. I fertilize in early spring around the end of March using all the organic fertilizer and soil amendments that I can obtain. When I combine ingredients I try to duplicate natural fertilizer analysis. For instance, in canola meal (6-2-1) and in fish meal (3-2-1) the nitrogen is two to three times that of phosphorus and three to six times that of potassium. Three advantages of organic fertilizers over their chemical counterparts are in their trace element and humic content and in their extended time release of nutrients.

Terry's organic fertilizer and filler recipes and fertilizer elements list.

My base organic fertilizer and filler recipes in volume parts are as follows:

Fertilizer Recipe:

- 2 parts fish meal
- 2 parts canola meal
- 2 parts alfalfa
- 1 part worm castings
- 1 part dolomite lime
- 1/2 part rock phosphate
- 1/2 part bone meal
- 1/2 part kelp meal
- 1/2 part green sand

Filler Recipe:

- 5 parts sand
- 5 parts double screened fir bark or 5 parts composted fish waste. The filler, equal in volume to the fertilizer total, is used to prevent clumping of the meal type fertilizers and to minimize the dust problem associated with mixing finely ground or powdered materials.

February is traditionally the month to begin fertilizing your rhododendrons and azaleas in the greater coastal Florence area.

Some fertilizers in the fertilizer recipe contain up to 34 trace elements, while seaweed is reported to contain every element presently known.

- Blood meal: nitrogen and trace.
- Bone meal: phosphorus and calcium and trace.
- Fish meal: complete N-P-K and calcium and trace.
- Canola meal: complete N-P-K and trace.
- Cottonseed meal: complete N-P-K and trace.
- Powdered alfalfa: complete N-P-K and trace.
- Worm castings: complete N-P-K and trace.
- Powdered rock phosphate: phosphorus and 32 trace.
- Green sand: potassium and 34 trace.
- Kelp meal: potassium and all trace.
- Dolomite: calcium and magnesium.

The Oregon Garden Resort- in case you didn't know, there is now a resort at the wonderful **Oregon Garden** just outside Silverton, Oregon. Here is their March event package:

Mar 14/15- Spring Gardening Retreat w/presentation, room, dinner, breakfast is \$129 per room.

For more information and to register, call 503-873-5475.

Tip of the Month

Mike Bones has a great tip to share for all of those coffee drinkers in the chapter!

Take your used **coffee filters** and save the **coffee grounds** to mix with potting medium for your rhodies. Save the used filters to place in the bottom of your pots to keep mix from draining out the bottom of the pot when you water.

Merilee Mulvey adds this tip for those who do the laundry at home!

If you use **dryer fabric softener sheets**, after a few rounds in the dryer they are perfect for putting in the bottom of any plant pot indoors or outdoors to keep mix from draining out the hole in the bottom of the pot.

SPRING 2009 ARS CONFERENCE

Everett, Washington

Here is the website for the latest information about the spring 2009 ARS conference

<http://www.ars-2009-convention.org/>

Early Flower Show Update-

The early show this year is on Easter weekend. Those of you who can give the chapter a few hours of assistance are greatly appreciated. Several volunteers will begin calling in February and March to see if you can help out at various stations such as hospitality, plant sales, poster distribution and recording teams. We hope you will be able to assist and have a great time while doing so!

The chapter storage unit has been totally organized by Ron & Cheryl Prchal and it looks fabulous. Large rolling carts built by Gene Cockeram hold boxes of materials the chapter uses when putting together the flower shows.

Keep saving those Starbucks coffee jars for the flower displays. We can also use those ventilated heavy plastic crates that will hold the bottles so well. If you have anything else to donate, just contact any chapter board member or bring your crates/bottles to any chapter meeting.

Remember, bonsai will be introduced as a trophy entry category this year. *Only at the Early Flower Show, though.*

The last page of this newsletter is a form you can use to send in a donation for more trophies to be given out at the early flower show. The community gets so excited to see all the winners, and trophies and ribbons! You can make someone so happy for \$15.

SECRETARY'S REPORT By: Kathy Bones

Here it is already the New Year and your board is hard at work keeping the Chapter business going. Gene Cockeram is ending his term as a City Park Commissioner this month. Never fear, though, as he is reapplying for the position for another term! He keeps a watchful eye on Gallagher's Park for the City and the Rhody Society! Work parties started up again last month for Gallagher's Park, *weather permitting.*

Ron and Cheryl Prchal are thanked for their reorganizing of the storage unit. It looks wonderful and so much more user friendly than ever before! A person is needed to be in charge of the key to the Florence Events Center and opening and closing of the facility during the flower shows. There is a form in this newsletter for you to use if you'd like to donate money for a trophy for the early show. A person or people will be needed this spring to take posters around town advertising the upcoming flower shows. We have Lee Cheatel, the Bonsai expert that spoke at one of our meetings recently, as a judge for the Bonsai section of the early show. This is a new area for the early show! Bill Hennig has been appointed as the replacement Vice President for Linda Swarz. Thanks to Linda for her hard work. Welcome aboard, Bill.

Mike and I got to attend the memorial service for Dr. Jim Gerdemann, a long time member of our Chapter and lover of nature. Many people spoke how he touched their lives in a variety of ways. One old adorable gentleman shuffled up to the microphone and related a story about himself and Jim traveling in Washington State. They had to get gas so they stopped at a station. He then stopped, looked up from his stooped position and said with a twinkle in his eye, "Do you know how many PHDs it takes to pump gas?" Never underestimate your intelligence in anything!

Creating a Butterfly Garden

Butterflies have been treasured by humans for centuries. Ancient people referred to them as messengers from the gods. The early Greek word 'psyche' referred to both the soul and butterflies. They felt the butterfly was the emblem of the immortal soul as it passed through a kind of death when it changed from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly, yet the same soul remained.

The natural habitat of butterflies has diminished tremendously through human development of the world's wilderness areas. The *Garden Helper* website had this to say about butterfly gardens:

"Butterflies don't need anything fancy or expensive; just a large, open, sun-filled area; some flowers, for adults; some food sources, for caterpillars; shelter; puddles; and rocks. You might consider planting an herb garden if you enjoy herbs - many butterfly species do too. Reserving a section of your yard for native flowering plants and for weeds like dandelion, nettle, and milkweed should also help guarantee a good variety of butterflies. It's best to avoid using any pesticides at all.

One note for dedicated gardeners who may be appalled at the idea of actually inviting caterpillars in for lunch: very few butterfly species cause harm to garden plants. If they do become a nuisance - for instance, if cabbage whites are decimating your nasturtiums - picking the larvae off by hand is a simple task.

About puddles; butterflies can't drink from birdbaths or other open water. But give them a damp spot of wet sand or dirt and they'll often flock around it. In some species, young bachelor butterflies most commonly exhibit this "puddling" behavior - perhaps the equivalent of visiting the local pub after work.

Butterflies need shelter from predators and wind. Ideal are hedges; groups of small trees or shrubs; or walls, fences, trellises covered with vines. Possible plantings include honeysuckle and butterfly bushes; and for vines, passion flower, pipevine, or hops."

Many of the companion plantings in rhododendron gardens are flowers and shrubs that attract butterflies. I have found three good websites for you to investigate if you are interested in creating an atmosphere for butterflies in your garden. I have several types that frequent my garden and they are a delight to see flitting around from plant to plant. I have never had any damage from them.

Enjoy!

<http://www.thegardenhelper.com/Butterflies.htm>

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/components/DG6711e.html>

<http://www.monarchwatch.org/garden/index.htm>

If you are interested in butterflies, there is a special on NOVA, Oregon OPB/PBS channel on Tuesday, January 27 at 8pm.

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Siuslaw Chapter ARS Mission Statement

The Mission of the Siuslaw Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society is to promote the genus Rhododendron by:

- Creating enthusiasm for the genus Rhododendron through meetings, shows, publications, and social activities that provide the opportunities for members to share experiences and build friendships.
- Providing educational opportunities to successfully grow and enjoy these wonderful plants.
- Encouraging propagation and hybridizing of species and hybrid rhododendrons.
- Furthering the planting and use of rhododendrons and azaleas in home, business, and public landscapes.
- Advocating the conservation and preservation of superior plants of our native Rhododendrons and their habitat along the Oregon Coast.
- Advancing and supporting the mission of the American Rhododendron Society.

Flower Show Awards Supporter Form

Siuslaw Chapter ARS

2009 Early Show

One of the best ways to encourage community participation in the early flower show is to present awards in as many categories as possible. Through your generous support, those lucky award winners would really appreciate the recognition, as we see on their smiling faces each year.

Would you like to be a supporter for the awards categories at the early flower show? The chapter would really appreciate your donation toward the purchase of awards. Please fill out this form and send it with your check to the Siuslaw Chapter ARS, PO Box 1701, Florence, OR 97439.

Yes, sign me up as a flower show **supporter for a \$15 donation**. Please indicate whether you would like your name listed as the award donor.

Name _____ (please print)

_____ Yes, please list my name as the award donor.

Thank you!