

Indumentum

Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

Volume 34, Number 3, November 2002



The
Vancouver Rhododendron Society
is a chapter of the
American Rhododendron Society

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This Month's Meeting: November 21st at 7:30 pm

Peter Wharton and Steve Hootman: "Expedition to the Dulong Jiang, NW Yunnan, 2001"

Education Feature: Clive Justice: "The Rhododendron Improvers"

President's Message

I want to congratulate our Education Chair, **Louis Peterson**, for the excellent program at the October meeting. The attendance exceeded our expectations. I hope that Louis will continue to provide programs as excellent in the coming year. Also to be thanked are **Todd Major** and **Garth Wedemere** for their great presentations.

Congratulations to **Clive Justice** who recently completed his doctorate at Simon Fraser University, and **Francesca Darts** who was awarded an honorary doctorate from Kwantlen University College. The Governor General, in recognition of her contribution, also awarded a Royal Jubilee Medal to Francesca. Congratulations to both of you for your efforts; we hope that you will continue to share with us your knowledge and love of life.

Please welcome our speakers this month, **Steve Hootman**, Director of The Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden and **Peter Wharton**, Curator of the David C. Lam Asian Garden at UBC Botanical Garden, who will speak on their 2001 expedition to NW Yunnan.

We will also have the ceramic art of **Ron Feicht** and the artwork of **Rosemary Burnham** available this month. I think you will find their works are worthy of your home.

Although somewhat early, I want to extend on behalf of the VRS executive our warmest wishes for the coming holiday season. We hope you have the opportunity to share this time with family and friends. We look forward to you joining us in the new year.

Gerry Gibbens



For up-to-date news and views, log on to the **VRS website:**

<http://www.rhodo.citymax.com>. The website has been updated with a new membership form, new links and instructions on how to make a rhododendron screen saver.

November Program

We have a very special lecture for our meeting of November 21st – two speakers instead of one, working together to give us a comprehensive picture of the **‘The Expedition to the Dulong Jiang, NW Yunnan, 2001’**. How the speakers will choreograph their lecture is up to them; perhaps we will see a Pierre Trudeau pirouette or two! **Steve Hootman** and **Peter Wharton** are both familiar to VRS members; both have lectured to us several times, for the simple reason that they are excellent speakers who do fascinating things. This time they did it together, exploring for plants in a particularly botanically rich area of China. They will provide an account of that expedition from two perspectives, giving VRS members a unique opportunity vicariously, and comfortably, to share their experience.

For the benefit of new members, **Steve Hootman** is Co-Director of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden (RSBG) in Federal Way, Washington. In this role he, with his Co-Director **Rick Peterson**, has transformed the garden to by far the best state it has been in since its inception. Steve has also undertaken several trips to China, often with **Peter and Kenneth Cox**, exploring for new plants, re-collecting species already in cultivation—thereby increasing the gene pool and introducing new forms—but also discovering species entirely new to horticulture. I should again mention that such expeditions not only provide our gardens with beautiful new plants, but also contribute to the conservation of species in their dissemination among gardeners, when they might otherwise be brought to extinction by destruction of their natural habitats. All the plant material collected by Steve for the RSBG is propagated and the resulting plants eventually offered for sale. Especially beautiful clones of more familiar species are vegetatively propagated and distributed in a like manner. Steve is an active member on the executive of the Seattle Rhododendron Society, a chapter of the ARS.

Peter Wharton, Curator of the David C. Lam Asian Garden at UBC Botanical Garden, is at the centre of the great success of the Asian Garden, and has played a crucial role in giving the garden the international reputation it has acquired, and upon which it is constantly building. Like Steve, Peter has participated in several expeditions, exploring in Asia for new plants. Plants are now entering our gardens under both their collection numbers, which is good for conservation and the advancement of botanical and horticultural knowledge, as well as a boon to our gardens. The expedition to China in 2001 is the first that Steve and Peter have embarked upon together, though they have cooperated and shared plant material for many years. In fact, the history of the two gardens is closely intertwined, in that the first cuttings brought from England to start the Species Foundation collection were propagated by **Evelyn Jack** (now Evelyn **Weesjes**, and a life member of the



VRS) at a relatively young UBC Botanical Garden. The results were shared by the two gardens. Many VRS members will remember Peter guiding us on that lovely, rainy walk through the Asian Garden last May.

The primary value of Steve’s and Peter’s lectures, and of others on similar subjects, is to provide us with a view of natural habitats and thereby clues as to how we should use plants in our gardens—and also to share with us vicariously the very exciting experience of the expeditions themselves, so we get a sense not only of the plants, but of their human and geographical contexts, as well. And we experience this comfortably, without the exhausting treks, the wet and the cold, the leeches, and the bad, or nonexistent, plumbing!

Joe Ronsley

November Education

I am pleased that **Dr. Clive Justice** has agreed to give our Education talk at our next meeting on November 21st. I think that this will be a reasonably fitting recognition of his recent achievement of the PhD degree in History from SFU, based on his historical research into the development of English Gardens in Canada. His talk will focus on the “Rhododendron Improvers” that he deals with in one of his chapters.

See page 6 for Clive’s biography.

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Thomas Howard Brown

After a long and difficult period of failing health, Tom Brown died on October 10, 2002. With his typical sense of humour, Tom characterized the past almost six years since his diagnosis as being blessedly long, although it was sometimes awkward and inconvenient being the battlefield on which the doctors fought his cancer.

Tom and his wife Meg have been members of the VRS for over 20 years, also belonging to Fraser South for several years. Tom participated in many areas of our society. He was a director of our chapter, as well as vice president. He gave talks at our meetings on many subjects. Tom liked to experiment, and succeeded in taking a succession of cuttings in the spring for those plants that were very difficult to root in the fall; he also had great success in placing plants on top of the ground and covering the roots with bark mulch. As an associate professor of geology, specializing in geochemistry, his major contribution to us was in designing the correct formulation in rhododendron fertilizer for this area. For many years, when Meg was Book Sales Chairman, Tom brought all the books for the sale table and then home again until the next meeting.

Tom was an active birder and belonged to several birding societies. He also spent many hours woodworking in his basement workshop.

Following Tom's death, the flag at the Chan Centre was lowered to half-mast. A memorial service for Tom was held on November 5, 2002 at the University Centre (formerly the Faculty Club) at UBC.

Martie Irwin



Ginkgo biloba in autumn dress at UBC Botanical Garden
photo by Douglas Justice

Nominations for the VRS Executive (2003)

President	Ron Knight
Past President*	Gerry Gibbens
Vice President	Louis Peterson
Secretary	Bill Spohn
Treasurer	Barbara Sherman
Membership	Carole Conlin
Newsletter	Douglas & Karen Justice
Program	Joe Ronsley
Director (3 years)	Bill Herbst
Director (2 years)*	Todd Major
Director (1 year)	Joanne Ronsley (to complete Louis Peterson's term)

Joe Ronsley is the chairman of the VRS Nominating Committee. Any suggestions of people for various positions on the executive committee should be given to him. You can do this by any means of communication. If you wish to make a nomination on your own, you must do so by December 1st.

According to the VRS constitution, such nominations must be accompanied by the written agreement of the nominee to stand, and must be signed by at least five members of the society. A member may not be nominated for president until having served at least one term on the executive.

*Ratification not required

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Associate Membership (member of another ARS Chapter outside of Canada)	\$US 10.00

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◆ Contributions to the Raffle Table help offset the rental of the Floral Hall. Plants, books, fresh eggs, etc. are always welcome!

◆ For the Refreshment Table, donations of cookies, cakes, cheese, and other snacks are greatly appreciated.



Please contact **Joanne Ronsley** for information on advertising in *Indumentum*.

jrjr@techwest.com Fax and Phone: 604.921.9444

Membership

Please advise Membership of telephone, e-mail and address changes. Contact: **Carole Conlin**, VRS Membership Chair.

conlin@sfu.ca Phone: 604.921.7260



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Rhododendrons: Buying and Selling - Part 2

The following comments are those of your co-editor, **Douglas Justice** (pictured at right with one of his rhododendron heroes, VRS member **Ken Gibson** in Ken's garden; taken in September 2002 by co-editor **Karen Justice**):

On the subject of the amount of root in a pot, much ink was spilt in the last issue, but most horticulturists would agree that the ideal specimen for planting has sufficient root to fill the soil ball (be it in a pot or dug "B&B;" i.e., balled and burlapped), but not so much root that there is obvious crowding or congestion. The best plants are vigorous both above and below the ground.

Roots: Slip the pot off the root ball. If roots are crowded and matt-like, they have probably used up whatever nutrition was originally in the soil. Such roots may be difficult to establish in new soil unless they are teased apart before planting (not an easy job). Thus loosened, this allows them to grow into the surrounding soil, away from the main root mass and toward better conditions. Tougher rhododendrons—a number of commercial hybrids, for example—can tolerate the landscaper's trick of slicing the root-ball vertically every couple of inches around the ball before planting.

Plants that don't have many roots visible at the soil-pot interface are either newly potted (i.e., recently transplanted) or suffering from serious moisture, nutrition, disease or insect problems. In the first instance, you are relieving the grower of the significant cost of growing the plant on to a reasonable size, and should expect a break on the price. If the problem is another, it may be wise to keep your money. While the differences between other problems can be ascertained, this generally requires close examination and often, a dismantling of the root ball (not a popular activity on the sales table).

Pests: Personally, I have a zero-tolerance for root weevils. Foliar notching generally indicates adult weevil feeding, which suggests an infestation by their larvae (grubs), a serious problem that can easily escalate in your garden. Test the plant by holding the pot firmly and gently flexing the stem. If there is significant slop, this usually indicates an absence of roots at the crown (where the roots and stem meet), which could be evidence of a weevil party. In the cool of winter, many rhododendrons can look healthy despite such infestations, but once out of dormancy, the transpirational demand exerted by the leaves will exceed what the roots (or remnants of the roots) are capable of supplying. In warm weather, this can lead to wilting leaves and eventually, complete collapse. Phytophthora-infected plants behave similarly (but without the notches), flagging noticeably in hot or dry weather because infected roots can't conduct moisture effectively. I recommend returning infected or infested plants.

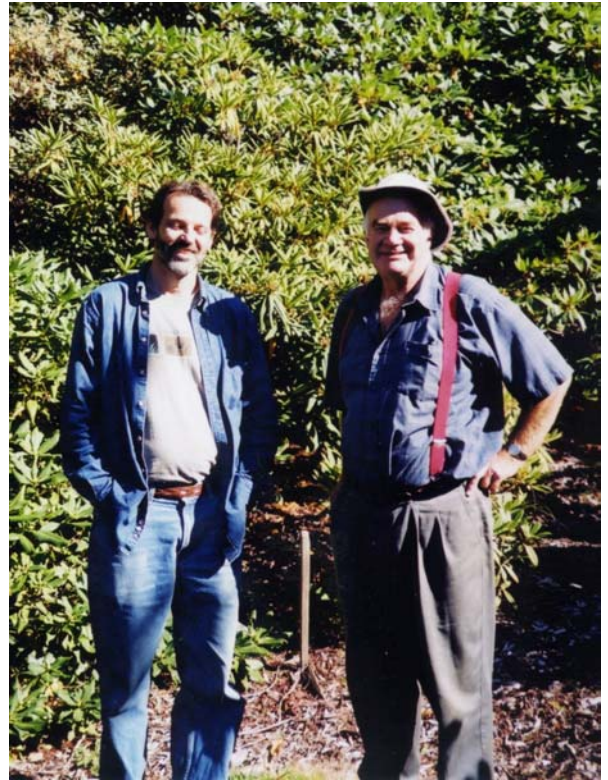


R. cinnabarinum subsp. *cinnabarinum*
by Walter Hood Fitch
from Curtis' Botanical Magazine

Names: The correct name of a plant is only important to the person who wants to communicate with other people about that particular plant. Novice growers often consider correct names to be an unnecessary complication to the enjoyment of a beautiful plant, but they generally regret later on not making the initial effort to record correct names and tag their plants with permanent labels.

The distinction between seed grown plants from wild and garden sources is also commonly ignored, but the differences are profound. Garden collected seed is invariably "open-pollinated" (i.e., pollen is from an unknown source). Since rhododendrons are promiscuous and don't generally self-pollinate, garden plants normally produce hybrid seed. While open pollinated seedlings often resemble their female parent, the **only** valid name for seedlings of open pollinated seed is "seedling of *R.* ___"

Comments, anyone?



November Education, continued

Clive L. Justice, Ph.D., FCLSA

Some 60 years ago, while serving in the Canadian army in England, Clive Justice saw the English countryside and decided, “this is what the world should look like.” Over the next six decades, as a landscape designer and artist, he nurtured his passion for garden plants in the creation of striking English gardens and landscapes throughout Vancouver and around the world.

Now, our very own retired landscape architect has just completed a PhD degree at SFU, based on a comparative study of the historical development of English Gardens in two distinctive Canadian climates—the West Coast and the Prairies. Many congratulations, Clive!

“While the choice of plants was almost unlimited for southwestern BC, suitable ornamental garden trees, shrubs and flowers had to be invented—found and developed—in order to produce a permanent garden landscape in the prairies,” says Clive, whose thesis documents the efforts of both amateur and trained horticulturists in the creation of prairie gardens, and traces the story of his own grandparents and great-grandparents, who grew gardens in both environments.

Clive studied to become a landscape architect in California during an era when “gardens were for people, not plants.” He returned to Vancouver to found one of the city’s first landscape architectural firms. His firm, Justice & Webb (later, Justice, Webb and Vincent) Landscape Architects was responsible for creating several showcase parks and grounds throughout the city and beyond, including the botanical gardens at UBC and campus gardens at the University of Saskatchewan.

His keen interests led him to study the origins of rhododendrons and to trek into the Sikkim Himalayas and China, where many familiar species and the parents of common hybrids originated. He considers gardens to be true art forms. “They are works in progress,” says Clive, who now plans to write about the history of key landscape projects around the city.

When he retired, Clive became a volunteer with the Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO) and served as a consultant and advisor for parks, gardens and other landscape restoration projects in Malaysia, India, Ukraine and the Philippines. He is a regular contributor to the American Rhododendron Society Journal, his latest being on “Rhododendrons and the Various Hybrids,” Vol. 56, No 4, Fall 2002.

The above material is largely taken from an article in SFU News, October 3, 2002, Vol. 25, No. 3—read it all and see the pictures at www.sfu.ca/mediapr/sfu-news10030218.html.

LKP



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