



NEWSLETTER OF THE SEATTLE RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

# Seattle Rhododendronland

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February 2008

## February Meeting

February 6, 2008  
Center for Urban  
Horticulture, begin-  
ning at 7:00PM

Kristi O'Donnell  
presents "Dreams of  
Spring, Then and  
Now; a photo-stroll  
through Meerkerk  
Gardens"

## President's message

Today I got out and finally potted up the last of the tulip bulbs that I referred to in the last newsletter. They are snug in pots now but a good number had to be tossed because they were moldy. I was under a covered area in our wood shed while potting and was enjoying myself being back to gardening after all the holiday inside activities. It hailed briefly, but still my thoughts were turning to spring. We've had a mild winter so far and no big windstorms, at least here in Woodinville, so am becoming optimistic that we might escape the disasters of last winter and huge cleanup that followed. The witch hazel, *Hamamelis 'Pallida'* is blooming with yellow flowers. It is placed along the incoming driveway where the blooms can be seen from the car. The buds on the corylopsis are starting to swell. Rhododendrons seem to be well-budded so it should be a showy spring!

At our Holiday Potluck, we did something a little different this year for the program. Nine members put together short programs with slides or digital photos on subjects of interest to them. Marty McBrayer showed slides of her trip to Africa and some of the unusual native plants. Karen Swenson showed slides of her dad, Bernie Swenson, and his rhododendrons (we even got a to see Karen as a young girl in the garden!). Prudence Holliger did a very professional digital presentation focusing on their garden and Don King showed photos of magnolias. Jeff Bell showed slides of the construction of the new Vireya greenhouse at the Rhododendron Species Foundation. Thanks also to Deena Henkins (slides of English gardens), Garrett Richardson (digital presentation of Vietnam trip), Chip Muller (2006 China trip) and Jeanine Smith (2005 China trip). Thanks to all of the above for taking the time and effort to share their photos of experiences!

The SRS Board has invited the Cascade Chapter to join us in putting on an early rhododendron show at Wells-Medina Nursery the second weekend of April. Details are still to be worked out but we thought that it would be fun to put this event on together. This should result in even more flowers for display and more volunteers to share the work. Our regular Mother's

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Day Show will be held a month later at the RSF, as we did last year.

On a sad note, we lost one of our longtime rhododendron friends in December with the passing of Britt Smith. After his retirement as a Boeing engineer, Britt felt the need for a hobby and developed a passionate interest in collecting, exploring for, and hybridizing rhododendrons. He traveled seven times to Sikkim in the Himalayas, leading groups of plant lovers on three of those trips. Rex and I were fortunate to be on his last trip in 2000, which was one of the most memorable and exciting trips we've ever taken. Rhododendron lovers can credit Britt with being a strong influence on the Sikkimese government in realizing the need to preserve their native rhododendron species which were in danger of being lost to logging, grazing, etc. Also, for 16 years Britt and close friend, Dr. Frank Mossman, explored and collected *R. occidentale*, one of our native rhododendrons, along the Oregon-California coast. Many of the finest forms can be seen at the new Smith-Mossman Azalea Garden at the Lake Wilderness Arboretum near Maple Valley. For his exceptional contributions to the rhododendron world, Britt was awarded the ARS Gold Medal and the ARS Pioneer Award. His wife of 67 years, Jean, is now living in Kent. If you would like to send her a card, the address is: Inn at Arbor Village, 24205 116TH Ave. SE #211, Kent, WA 98030-4962.

I have a report on another of our longtime members, Elsie Watson. She is living in a nice group home near Evergreen Hospital in Kirkland and is doing very well. She has her own telephone number and would welcome calls and visits from old friends. Contact Karen Swenson or me if you want the phone number and address. Elsie is looking forward to visits to her beautiful garden as spring unfolds, and to continuing to host the Hybridizers monthly meetings there in the spring. Her daughter, Ann, will be flying up from Texas to help that happen. We'll keep you posted when the meetings are set.

Best wishes to you all for a happy, healthy New Year and many pleasant and satisfying days of gardening!

—Jeanine Smith



## February treats

The Valentine treats we will enjoy at the February meeting will be prepared by the talented Diane Thompson and Hazel Tarpley.

—Stan Hungerford



Best New Year wishes from the flowers, fauna, folks, and faeries at Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens!

Glistening frostlight  
reflects the moonbeams

Twinkling stars are  
beacons of love

Spires of conifers  
sway with the cool breeze

Sprinkling snowflakes  
from boughs up above.

May the light of the season  
Brighten your path  
And make evergreen  
Our hopes for joy and peace.



### SRS Officers and Board Members

President	Jeanine Smith	425.483.8272
Vice President	Jeff Bell	206.363.1417
Secretary	Karen Swenson	425.775.0863
Treasurer	Deena Henkins	206.284.6978
Past President	Chip Muller	206.368.7868
Board Member (06-08)	Loretta Goetsch	206.525.4714
Board Member (06-08)	Open position	
Board Member (05-07)	Prudence Holliger	425.837.8760
Board Member (05-07)	Open position	
Book Chairperson	Laura Kentala	425.822.6269
Membership	Loretta Goetsch	206.525.4714
Honors	Gwen Bell	206.932.6016
Programs	Jeff Bell	
Nominations	Open position	
SRS Webmaster		
District 2 Director	Don Smart	425.333.6178
Newsletter	Prudence Holliger	prudenceholliger@mac.com

## February program—

### Kristi O'Donnell

Join us Wednesday, February 6<sup>TH</sup> at the Center for Urban Horticulture for Dreams of Spring, Then and Now; a photo-stroll through Meerkerk Gardens with Executive Director, Kristi O'Donnell. Get a preview of spring, new plantings and beautiful structures that now grace the gardens.

Kristi O'Donnell was hired by the SRS in 1993 as the first professional horticulturist/garden manager and now celebrates her 15<sup>TH</sup> year with Meerkerk. The Every Member Rainbow Capital Campaign began the major improvements to the infrastructure of the gardens including upgrading the electrical services, installing a new well and irrigation systems. The current Rainbow Campaign is "Raising the Roof" to replace the roof on the Meerkerk residence.

Horticulturally, the Gardens have expanded the collection to showcase dwarf rhododendrons in the Ramsey Rock Garden, an exhibit of exotic arboreal 'big leaf' rhododendron specimens in the Big Leaf Valley, and the display of companion plantings of over 100,000 spring bulbs and perennials along with a summer lily show.

Meerkerk has also revitalized its rhododendron hybridizing program, originated by Ann Meerkerk, under the direction of Meerkerk horticulturist, Oriana Simmons Otness with inspiration from Frank Fujio-ka, Elsie Watson and Jim Barlup.

The Seattle Rhododendron Society meets at the Center for Urban Horticulture at 7<sup>PM</sup>, the first Wednesday of each month. CUH is located at 3501 NE 41<sup>ST</sup> St. Seattle, WA 98105. For information call Jeff Bell 206-363-1417 or Jeanine Smith 425-483-8272.

Or, visit the website:  
[SeattleRhododendronSociety.org](http://SeattleRhododendronSociety.org)



## News from Meerkerk

### Important Dates for Meerkerk Gardens

#### February 9

Work Party at Meerkerk Gardens planting new rhodies in the Hybrid Test Garden and chain sawing winter logs.

#### February 16

Dreams of Spring Horticultural Gala, Dinner and Auction—Freeland Hall, Whidbey Island  
[www.meerkerkgardens.org](http://www.meerkerkgardens.org)

#### March 5, 12, 19

Conifer ID Class. For details, email [deborah@prosceniumgardendesign.com](mailto:deborah@prosceniumgardendesign.com)

#### March 8

Work Party to get ready for Spring Sale and opening!

#### March 15–16

Spring Rhodie Sale 9AM-4PM—"Beautify the World!"

### Thursdays and Saturdays in March jonquil, daffodil, or narcissus?

Did you know that daffodils are deer resistant? Or that narcissus are aerodynamic? Learn the correct names of these early spring dazzlers and the culture of daffodils infused with historic and mythical stories from Garden Director, Kristi O'Donnell.

The 1-hour tour views thousands of daffodils landscaped in the woodland gardens. Participants will learn how to design, plant and care for daffodils in their home gardens and how to combine companion plants with them for a succession of bloom. Wear shoes and warm clothing suitable for outdoors. Hot beverages will be available.

Jonquil, daffodil or narcissus? Guided Educational Tours are available Thursdays 10-11AM and Saturdays 10-11AM. The cost of this tour is \$10 per person with a group of at least 5 and up to 20.vtv

Advance registration required. To register using PayPal, visit [www.meerkerkgardens.org](http://www.meerkerkgardens.org)



Seattle Rhododendron Society  
Loretta Goetsch  
6209 30th NE  
Seattle WA 98115  
ADDRESS CORRECTION AND FORWARDING REQUESTED

## **Coming Up**

**February 6, 2008**

**Monthly Meeting at the Center for  
Urban Horticulture (see story inside)**

**Meerkerk Work Party**

**Second Saturday of every month**

**Meerkerk**

**Thursdays and Saturdays in March  
Jonquil, daffodil, or narcissus? (see  
story inside)**