



NEWSLETTER OF THE SEATTLE RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Seattle Rhododendronland

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April 2009

April Meeting

April 18, 2009 Garden Visit at Carole and Bill Hicks' garden in Des Moines, WA.

Note special date and time!

President's message

Spring is coming! The days are longer, the birds are singing, buds are swelling, the nurseries are stocking new plants, and gardeners are happy and hopeful. At a nursery the other day, I asked an employee if the economy was affecting business, and she said that people seem to be buying as usual, investing in beautifying their gardens and turning to pleasures closer to home. That strikes a chord as there is nothing as peace inducing as a few hours spent working in the garden—or an hour in the evening strolling around the garden, a glass of wine in hand! I've read that seed sales have skyrocketed as families are turning for the first time to home vegetable gardening both for fresher healthy food, but to save money on the food budget.

We've had an interesting March so far—snow, sleet, cold temperatures in the 20s, and a number of beautiful, sunny crisp days. I suspect that we're in for a late spring. *R. calophytum*, and *R. sutchense*, both about 15 feet tall, are covered with swelling buds showing a little color. Usually they're in bloom by now. Last year's late spring resulted in early plants still in bloom when the mid-season rhododendrons opened—an orgy of color! Those large-leaf rhododendrons that have suffered the most in our garden, *R. macabeum*, *R. montroseanum*, *R. sinogrande*, *R. protistum*, *R. arizelum*, *R. mallotum*, *R. facetum*, and *R. arboreum* are now defoliating (mid-March), and some are bare sticks. Some of the leaf buds are viable, so I'm resisting the urge to yank them out. Several large *R. macabeum* were 15-plus years old, and the *R. arboreum* were young plants from my collected seed. Yesterday, I noted that some species planted on a slope fared better than the same plants in flat locations (due to cold air drainage).

Last month's program on lepidotes presented by Bill Hicks was a photographic and educational treat and our April program is going to be a field trip to Bill and Carole Hicks' garden in Des Moines on Saturday, April 18. (See Jeff's article for details). We're setting a time of 10:30AM, but Bill welcomes you to come any time that day. For those interested, after the tour, we will go to lunch, then on to the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Federal Way. The RSGB is looking very good and several new projects are underway that you will enjoy seeing, such as the stumpery and the tropical conservatory.

The big event of this spring is the ARS Convention held in the Holiday Inn in Everett, WA, April 28–May 3. Our district is hosting this event and we need your partic-

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ipation and support! Conventions are a lot of fun to attend, but occasionally we have to shoulder the responsibility of hosting. We have need of folks to help in areas such as the registration table, sales room, plant sales, truss show, etc.—please contact me if you want to help in some way (rexjeanine5@comcast.net) or 425-483-8272. If you haven't registered for the conference, do it now!! We're having great speakers in the evenings and the Saturday morning seminars, as well as tours to the RSBG and Bellevue Botanical Gardens, our garden (Smith) and Rhody Ridge, and Whidbey Island gardens. Some tours are filling up, so hurry! If you're not attending tours, we need you to help with some of the above-mentioned areas. Conferences are one of the best ways to meet and interact with a variety of like-minded (i.e., rhodoholics) people.

Also a number of generous folks are opening their gardens for the four days of the conference that you can visit by car with a booklet provided at registration with driving directions. The plant sale will be open to attendees all days and to the general public on Saturday and Sunday. Notify your friends about the fantastic selection of rhododendrons and companion plants that will be available. Its fun to stay at the hotel, but if you prefer to commute, Everett is an easy drive for most SRS members. Thursday evening there will be a no-host bar set up for a social time prior to the official welcoming address, followed by speakers, Steve Hootman from the RSBG and Kristi O'Donnell from Meerkerk Gardens. Friday night's buffet dinner sounds delicious and gives a chance to socialize prior to the evening speaker, Jens Birck, from Denmark.

Saturday evening banquet is the highlight of the conference, with Gold and Silver Medal Awards, presentation of new ARS Officers, announcements of raffle and auction winners, etc. The speaker is Dan Hinkley, creator of Heronswood Gardens, plant explorer, and writer. This is sure to be an entertaining program! For more details and registration form, see the Winter 2009 ARS Journal. Current information and on-line registration is posted at www.ars-2009-convention.org

—Jeanine Smith

From the Book Lady

Since the Book Lady will be on a cruise in April and because the next two meetings are garden tours, the books will not return until June, which will be the last time you'll see them this year. Prepare your lists for the June meeting!

—Laura Kentala

What did YOU miss?

In his program, "Lepidotes in the Garden," Bill Hicks introduced us to a broad spectrum of lepidotes that live (or once lived) in his own garden. Lepidotes are distinguished by tiny scales, usually on the underside of leaves. From rhododendrons *mucronulatum* to *campylogynum*, 'Mary Fleming' to 'Patty Bee,' Bill demonstrated both the diversity of these plants and the characteristics many share: beautiful foliage, hairy leaves and stems, and stunning flowers (predominantly blues, pinks, and whites). For each plant, Bill gave a sense of the growth habit, expected size, blooming period, and hardiness.

Bill's familiarity with these plants reflected both a passion for collecting and an intimacy with his own garden. He drew our attention to texture and detail, the medicinal smell of leaves rolled between fingers. At times, this journey was tinged with regret for the plants that didn't make it, and ultimately Bill made a case for propagating, for perpetuating the nicest things in our gardens and making them available to each other. This program serves as a testament to Bill's patience and enthusiasm as a collector, as well as hard-learned lessons about reproducing and disseminating special plants that can't easily be replaced.

Prior to the program, Bill shared a stunning collection of early-blooming lepidotes in "Show and Tell," including rhododendrons 'Airy Fairy,' 'Bodego Crystal Pink,' and 'Winter Set.' Bill also graciously donated a large number of plants for auction, and many members left the meeting with a lepidote (or several) of their own. Bill urged the board to consider using the proceeds for a membership

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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 (08-10)	Loretta Goetsch	206.525.4714
Board Member (08-10)	Open position	
Board Member (09-11)	Prudence Holliger	425.837.8760
Board Member (09-11)	Katherine Thompson	206.932.4518
Book Chairperson	Laura Kentala	425.822.6269
Membership	Loretta Goetsch	206.525.4714
Honors	Gwen Bell	206.932.6016
Programs	Jeff Bell	206.363.1417
Nominations	Open position	
SRS Webmaster		
District 2 Director	Don Smart	425.333.6178
Newsletter	Prudence Holliger	prudenceholliger@mac.com

initiative (something in addition to recruiting the children of current members, I presume!). Involvement was a key theme at the meeting, as my mom urged us to consider membership in the Rhododendron Species Foundation, and to sign up to work at the upcoming ARS convention. We also welcomed a new member of our own, Phyllis Brookes.

This emphasis on connection and association resonated in Bill's program, as he looked back over 40 years of in-

volvement with the Tacoma and Seattle chapters. Bill's stories (in addition to being really funny) demonstrated the importance of building a community of collectors, enthusiasts, mentors, and disciples, with whom we can share our passion and our plants.

Please join us April 18th for a tour of Bill and Carol's garden. Take a moment to smell *R. russatum*!

—Erin Gayton (Reporter at large)

Watts with the species

Rhododendron ferrugineum and Rhododendron hirsutum

Rhododendron hirsutum was evidently the first rhododendron introduced from the wild into cultivation (1656). John Tradescant II is credited with this introduction (he was the son of John Tradescant, the royal gardener to King Charles I of England). The two species were described in detail by Carl Linnaeus in 1753.

Both rhododendrons have approximately the same geographical distribution, the mountains of west Yugoslavia, the Austrian Alps, the Pyrenees and the European Alps.

Both locally known as the Alpine (Alpen) Rose, these two rhododendrons bear a remarkable similarity yet can readily be distinguished from each other. *R. ferrugineum* has slightly larger leaves (28-40mm x 8-16mm) than *R. hirsutum*'s 13-30mm x 7-14mm leaves; *R. ferrugineum* leaves are densely scaly on the leaf under-surface while the under-surface of *R. hirsutum* leaves bear scales which are much more widely separated; the leaf margin of *R. hirsutum* is bristly (hirsute) while the leaf margin of *R. ferrugineum* is devoid of hairs.

Rhododendron ferrugineum. From H. H. Davidian's The Rhododendron Species, Volume I—Lepidotes.

Both species have flowers that are rosy-pink and both species have white flowered forms. An attractive double-flowered rosy-pink form is distributed in the Pacific Northwest as *R. hirsutum flore-plena*. However, on close inspection one soon discovers that this is not *R. hirsutum* but probably a form of *R. ferrugineum*.

Both species are attractive landscape plants for the small garden or for the flower bed border. Compact and slow growing these attractive dwarf rhododendrons will eventually attain a height of approximately three feet. These two rhododendrons will be welcome additions to your collection and are particularly desirable for their June blooming.

—Lynn Watts (reprinted from a much earlier issue of *Seattle Rhododendronland*).

—Ed. note: Maybe we will see some of these plants in the Hicks' collection.



15. *R. ferrugineum*
nat. size

a. section. b. stamen. c. ovary, style. d. capsule.

April Program

Instead of our monthly meeting at the Center for Urban Horticulture, SRS members and friends are welcome to join us in touring the garden of Carole and Bill Hicks on Saturday, April 18. Bill and Carole will open their garden at 10:30AM but you're welcome to visit anytime during the day.

Bill and Carole specialize in collecting lepidote rhododendrons and small azaleas. They live and garden in the Des Moines area of the Puget Sound area, south of SeaTac airport.

After lunch at a local restaurant, in the afternoon we plan to tour the Rhododendron Species Foundation Botanical Garden in Federal Way. Please contact Jeff Bell at 206.363.1417 for directions to both locations.

At the end of the month is the ARS Conference in Everett, WA. So instead of a meeting the first week of May we plan to visit another garden later in the month,, perhaps the azalea collection at the South King County Arboretum at Lake Wilderness in Maple Valley.

—Jell Bell

Here's what Carole and Bill say about their garden:

Our property is small, very small—less than 1/3 acre. The majority of the garden is on top of a steep hill (41 steps to top). We don't want mem-

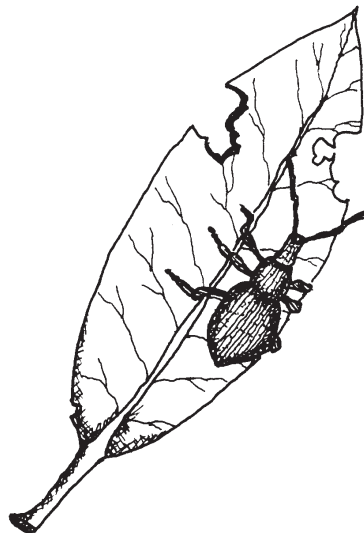
bers misled, thinking ponds, fountains, woodland, ornamentals, sophisticated landscaping, etc.—we have none of that! We collect plants, dig holes and put them in the ground (sometimes in pots). We grow rhododendrons and azaleas almost to the exclusion of all other plants. There are hundreds (or maybe thousands of them). Many are small plants not long removed from the cutting bench.

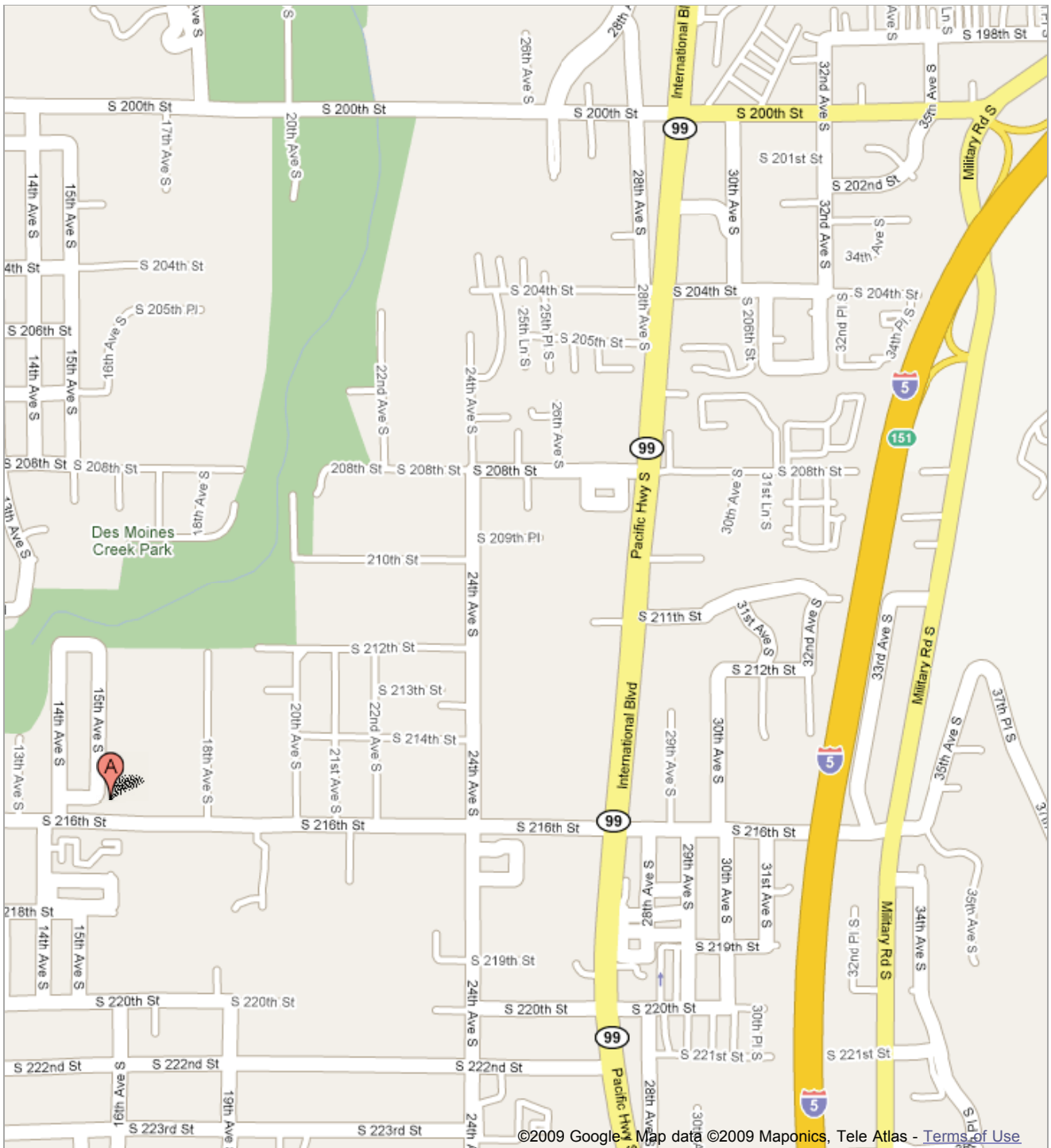
The majority of the collection are lepidote rhododendrons and evergreen azaleas (primarily Satsuki). We especially like the smaller rhododendrons, some have been in the garden 25 plus years, however, their size belies their age.

Many of our rhododendrons, especially the species, bloom early, from late February through mid April; the azaleas will not bloom until May. Therefore, it is hard to predict how many plants will be in bloom on April 18. Our best guess is somewhere between 50 and 100.

The schedule is Saturday, April 18, anytime after 10:30AM. However, members are welcome at any time convenient for them and to stay as long as they like. The garden is open to the wind from the south sound, therefore it can be chilly. Bring warm jackets! Our driveway is able to provide parking for up to four vehicles.

—Carole and Bill Hicks





Directions

- On I-5 heading north or south to Exit 151 (South 200TH/Military Road)
- Southbound, turn left (south) on Military Rd—northbound, turn right (south) on Military Rd; continue (approx. 1 mile—a little less for northbound drivers) to South 216TH
- Turn right (west) on South 216TH, continue west (approx. 1 mile)
- Turn right on 14TH Ave. South
- Turn right immediately onto S. 215TH and proceed up the hill
- House is at top of the incline @ 21444-15TH Ave. South Phone: 206.824.3884

The Seattle Rhododendron Society

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

Coming Up

April 18, 2009, from 10:30AM
Garden visit in Des Moines (see story
inside) NOTE SPECIAL DATE

April 28–May 3, 2009
ARS Convention in Everett

Meerkerk Work Party
second Saturday of every month