



NEWSLETTER OF THE SEATTLE RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Seattle Rhododendronland

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February 2009

February Meeting

February 4, 2009
Center for Urban
Horticulture, begin-
ning at 7:00PM

Program:
Chip Muller: "The
Spring Flowers in
Wolong, Sichuan"

President's message

It's been suggested to me that what many of us garden lovers need is a group therapy session after the heavy snow and cold weather that wreaked havoc on many of our gardens in late December. If you escaped unscathed, then please forgive my going on with my tale of woe below.

As I had feared, the cold weather descended without preparatory frost to harden things off. With predictions of temps in the teens, Rex and I hustled outside to wrap up some of the most tender plants using floating row cover and clothespins; plants such as *R. seingkuense*, *R. edgeworthii*, *R. montroseanum*, a newly transplanted *R. sinogrande*, among them.

After the first snow accumulation we went outside and knocked off snow on the medium and tall rhododendros that were still showing above the snow. We enjoyed the magical beauty of the snow on the large conifers and blanketing every twig and leaf. The grandkids had a blast sledding down the driveway, with admonitions to avoid the lumps (small plants) under the fresh snow in the adjoining beds.

However, I didn't figure on the second heavy snow accumulation later, bringing the total to about two feet. Trying to fish out azaleas just led to breakage so will just have to wait until the melt to assess the damage to dwarf and low plants. It's hard to not worry about the crushing effect on formerly shapely plants. Some of the most heart-breaking damage was to a group of 30-year old *Acer palmatum* by our front entrance. Two large trunks broke off at the base. The *Betula jacquemontii* group in the back garden are splayed about, no longer the regal white sentinels but now looking a bit tipsy. I have even more admiration for our gardening friends in the eastern and snowy climates who deal with this on a regular basis! Come to the next meeting and tell us your garden weather stories--you can bet on sympathetic ears.

Needless to say, spring will come and there will be plenty of bloom. A few plants may defoliate, but will re-sprout. Some sprawling plants will benefit from tying up and some corrective pruning will need to be done. Fertilizing and garden-cleanup will be in order when we get a spell of amenable weather.

Our program in February will be by our own long-time member, Chip Muller. Chip's skill as a photographer adds to the pleasure. See Jeff's article on the program for more details.

Happy New Year!

—Jeanine Smith

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February program

For the SRS February meeting, Chip Muller presents “The Spring Flowers in Wolong, Sichuan.” Chip visited this fabled area in 1986 and then again 20 years later in 2006, before the devastating earthquake. Home to pandas, rhododendrons and much more, the Wolong and nearby areas on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau offer a range of environments for a splendid assortment of life. Now a protected area popular with tourists, in 1986 the area was largely closed, dams being built and its forests being logged. You’ll see some of the contrasts, and lasting natural beauty of the Wolong. Come join us on Wednesday, February 4 at 7PM at the CUH, NHS Auditorium.

—Jeff Bell

What did you miss?

Our January meeting was well attended, about 50 of your Rhody friends gathered to enjoy sweet treats and social chatter, including reflections on our somewhat less than normal winter weather.

Diane requested for co-operation and volunteerism when it comes time to help out with the 2009 convention being planned for Everett this spring.

Steve Hootman provided us with a wonderful photographic tour of Bhutan. He took us through charming towns with smiling local citizens, unusual foods, precarious roads, and lovely scenery. Once we got out of the “civilized” area we began a trek upwards through the fields, forests, meadows, cliff sides, and across *very* frail-looking swinging bamboo bridges. He showed us the full range of Rhododendrons that can be found in Bhutan, from *R. griffithianum* at the lowest elevations to *R. nivale* in the alpine meadows. In the forests we saw the beautiful peeling bark of huge plants of *R. griffithianum*, and the beautiful red blossoms of my personal favorite, *R. barbatum*, which also exhibits lovely peeling bark on its trunks. Of course we were treated to images of the tallest plant, *R. arboreum*. We also enjoyed images of many other beautiful flowering plants found along the way, among them orchids, primroses, cassiopes, vacciniums and Himalayan poppies.

—Stan H.



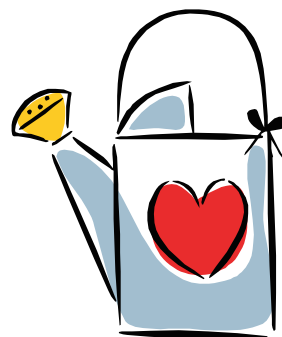
Treats

February Refreshments—Don King and Diane Thompson will be treating us to sweet Valentines prepared by hand [you wish!] in their home kitchens.

From the Book Lady

It’s that time of year! Stop by the and browse for a nice Valentine gift for your sweetie.

—Laura Kentala



SRS Officers and Board Members

President	Jeanine Smith	425.483.8272
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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		
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December holiday party

The SRS holiday party on the afternoon of December 7 at the Center for Urban Horticulture was a very festive social event for those who attended. It was in keeping with our Society's tradition of Christmas parties going back to its inception, encouraging friendships among members with similar interests. I remember as a young adult attending with my parents, to see a program that was of particular interest, and socializing with many of my parents' friends in the society. That experience was part of the reason I later became a member myself. This year's party provided much of the same feeling of a beautiful space, old, new, and warm friendships, and a great program.

Many old friends, of whom we don't see enough, were there including Judy Young, Lynn and Marilyn Watts, Gwen Bell, and Marty McBrayer. It is always good to catch up.

The board did an exceptional job of decorating this year. Members have commented since on how lovely the tables were decorated. Katherine and Diane Thompson outdid themselves creating the lovely arrangements, as did Loretta Goetsch who provided lots of gorgeous red cyclamen that most of us got to take home!

The food, as usual, was outstanding. It never ceases to amaze me at what great food we have, and how evenly the food is always dispersed among entrees, salads, and desserts. As usual, I tasted almost everything, including each of the great desserts!

The program was a nice mix of shorter programs, displaying the wide variety of experience and interests of our group. Bill Heller provided a program that demonstrated his quest for rhododendrons while living for a year and a half in southern Italy. We were taken all over Italy on that search seeing great pictures of some of the best places. It was fun and beautiful. We did see a few pictures of rhodies found in Germany and purchased by Bill.

Katherine Thompson's husband Long Nuygen, another accomplished photographer took us to the country of his birth, Vietnam, along with Katherine and other family members and friends. It was his first visit since leaving as a child and he was able to visit immediate family, familiar places, and reconnect with his culture. It was a fascinating window for all of us into the tradition of Vietnamese families, their homes, and the improving situation of their lives. I felt privileged to go along, and learned a great deal.

Loretta Goetsch then took us on her adventure this fall to Borneo. We joined her on a strenuous climb of Mt. Kinabalu, 4095 meters of rock, and we saw the incredible flora found at lower elevations, including numerous species of orchids, Vireya rhododendrons, carnivorous pitcher plants, ferns, oak trees. She then took us to Crocker Range Park to view a Rafflesia, the world's largest flower, not gorgeous but amazing in its size. Poring Hot Springs provided a treetop canopy walkway suspended 41 meters above the forest floor. On the east coast we visited the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Center to view the feeding of orangutans. She and her friend got to spend the night on Selingan Island Bird and Game Sanctuary to view green turtles lay their eggs at night on beaches, and then two nights in Sukau Rainforest reached by boat down the Kinabatangan River. The Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary has the highest density and diversity of wildlife in Malaysia including, pygmy elephants, proboscis monkeys, macaque monkeys, crocodiles, wild orangutans, and numerous colorful and unique birds. It was another window on a world most of us will never get to see or experience.

I hope I have enticed you to consider joining us next December, and I thank all of the board members for their contributions to a fun event.

—Karen Swenson



Another snow story

Life at the “higher elevations”

Frances Burns

The McKenzie River rumbles past our front lawn and woodland in a brown muddy swirl. Flotsam from low-lying banks bobbles along in the water, rushing melting snow to the Willamette River in Eugene. There it joins a larger muddy flow to Portland and the Columbia River. If a floating log makes it that far without snagging onto something, the Columbia will carry it high and mighty to Astoria and the Pacific Ocean.

The foot of snow that fell well before Christmas has been loathe to leave, but a steady downpour of rain for the past few days has cleared the roof, and only two or three slushy inches remain. All the summer pruning of the rhodias and the big trees along the edge of the lawn has prevented a lot of snow damage. The one plant I felt compelled to rid of snow was the *Cornus involucrata* variagata with its far-reaching linear limbs—even one branch broken would be sorely missed.

A loud bang on the house woke me at 3AM, December 21. It sounded like snow sliding off the roof. (I wish!) Back to sleep. At daybreak we found the 56-year old English walnut tree split asunder from top to bottom, our power pole jerked out, taking the main wiring to the house with it. The power company warned it would be several days before they could fix it. So with hot wires down, no running water, no heat—and you get the picture—sons and daughters plotted via a conference call what to do with “Mothah” (that would be me). With a few things stuffed in a bag, dressed in high boots and heavy coat, I was sent trudging over foot-deep snow and through the woods to daughter Nancy’s house 0.2 mile over yonder. (To be utterly forthright, I was escorted.)

Nancy had electric power, two bathrooms and kitchen with hot and cold running water, five dogs, three cats, tomato soup and toasted cheese sandwiches ready. She shoveled snow at the barn, hauled water to her horses and dug out the driveway to the highway, while I sat on the couch with three lap dogs so very glad to see me. We watched the weather, Oprah, and a movie. When Nancy returned to the house it was dinnertime. A snowplow had cleared the highway, so, with stud tires on her 1985 CRX SI Honda, with sunroof and well over 200,000 miles, over the snow we dashed (laughing all the way!)—15 miles to Aunt Ding’s Cafe. It was virtually empty, but prime rib, garlic potatoes, salad, sautéed veggies and coconut cream pie never tasted better!

Arriving home safely, we retired early. Nancy with two cats, and I in the guest room with a guard dog, a Mal-

tese, a Yorkshire terrier and a 20+ year old Macaw, Adeline, who rang her bell, hollered “Hello, Dear” in five languages, hung by her beak from her stand, upside down by her talons, and waved High Fives to me with her foot—all tricks I once had taught her. One could say, “my chickens had come home to roost.” Out with the lights, no reading tonight!

By some miracle, while we slept, the power company relented, set a new pole, and had the power on at Dunroamin by midnight! After a good breakfast with Nancy, “Mothah” waded home through the snow to join Mary, Douglas, and Bogey dog in the little house in the country with no English walnut tree.

(Reprinted with permission from the Eugene Chapter newsletter)



Don King took this photo of his down, but not out, big-leaf Rhododendron.

January 2009 Flood Photos

Images from Long Nguyen (from top left to right: overflowing Snoqualmie R.; Snoqualmie Falls, the town of Duval)



Top: Duval and Hwy. 203; Bottom: Flood Plain. If you'd like to see more of Long's flood pictures, e-mail him: lbnguyen@hotmail.com



The Seattle Rhododendron Society

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ADDRESS CORRECTION AND FORWARDING REQUESTED

Coming Up

February 4, 2009, 7:00PM

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

April 29–May 3, 2009

ARS Convention, Everret WA

Meerkerk Work Party

second Saturday of every month