



Willamette Chapter American Rhododendron Society Newsletter

Volume 4

December 2022

Issue 9



Willamette Chapter ARS
Rhododendron Hillside Garden
Bush Pasture Park

CHAPTER MEETINGS: Our current chapter meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from September through May. Socializing begins at 6:30pm, with the meeting and speaker at 7:00pm. Due to Covid 19, our meeting may be in person or via Zoom. Meeting information will be sent to members via email and available in this newsletter. This form of meeting will continue until more permanent plans are made.

Willamette Chapter ARS Potluck

Saturday, December 17, 2022

Redgate Vineyards and Winery

Full Details on Page 4



November Minutes



Mary Crofts Secretary November 9, 2022

We zoomed up nicely at 6:30 pm for chit-chat and at 7 pm we started the business part of our meeting. Our evening's speaker, Kevin Vaughn, was also "in the house". He looked like he was in Keith and Mary Ellen's living room. Knowing those two, that's a real possibility.

President Dana Malby opened with a question about the amount we had decided to donate to the RSBG for the coming year. Our usual donation is \$400. Your Secretary reported the amount to be \$750 instead, to include the \$400 and an additional \$350 for donations in honor of the many members who died this last year.

Treasurer Adele O'Neal reported that 21 of our rhody souls had renewed their member/associate dues. She is working with President Dana exploring the possibility of shifting our finances to a situation that would provide us with better interest. She also reported that our membership account was at \$2066 and our business account was at \$3318.

Next came a welcome surprise. We need a new Board member to replace Tom Bailey. Ali Sarlak volunteered to do it !!! I scanned the computer screen closely. Didn't see anyone near him with a hot poker saying "Do it ! Do it!" so we will welcome Ali to fill that spot.

We needed to decide on a date and place for our annual Christmas Potluck. We have spent so many years doing it at the Reeds that it seemed downright weird to think of another spot. But last year we held it at Red Gate Winery in Independence and Steve Dunn, the owner, was agreeable to have us there again

this year. There was a lot of discussion as to the date since we had to consider Red Gate's schedule as well as ours. It was finally decided to hold it on Saturday, December 17th with Sunday, December 11 being the "back-up" date.

And then it was the "hybridizer on the loose", Kevin Vaughn, ready to speak to us. Kevin said his friends call him an "interior decorator" because he looks at a plant and decides what parts he will keep or use elsewhere.

According to Program Chair, Keith White, Kevin is an "accidental speaker". Keith met him at a lunch at the Wild Pear in Salem that was hosted by the Landers, who are members of the WCARS. Keith said that after the usual small talk when you first meet someone, Kevin talked about his experiences hybridizing iris. The iris is one plant Keith would like to learn more about, so Kevin had his full attention.

The Schreiners, of Schreiners' Iris Garden fame north of Salem, had encouraged Kevin to move here after his retirement (Kevin has a PhD in Genetics). Or maybe it was after his first retirement when he was thinking about his second retirement. I got the impression that he's one of those scientists that never ever really stops "working". Kevin had already published several books about the iris.

Kevin accepted Keith's invitation to speak and I think I can say that we are NOT sorry that he did. I will never be able to look at iris in the way I used to.

Your Secretary would include much more about Kevin at this point, using the material Keith and Mary Ellen had in the newsletter. But my computer decided to "eat" about 50 emails that I'd saved, including the newsletter. I do remember that his genetics background has played a big part in his ability to "create" new plants from old. The iris themselves show his skill. Kevin does things with iris that make me feel he's more magician than a scientist. He works with little iris...no more than 3 inches tall and plants them as ground cover.

It's his jewel-like combinations that are jaw-dropping:

**deep-blue petals edged in white with orange throats*

**black iris with unique patterns of color*

**green iris with white petals edged in yellow*

**purple iris with red spots*

**grey-white petals with dark-edged stripes and yellow centers*

Kevin's "art work" includes more than iris. He designs color combinations for daffodils, succulents, and day-lilies.

And it is at this point I'm closing the minutes. I'd planned to do a review of his talk but the password and the video aren't working with each other so I can't look at his program again and fill out my notes.

Keith asked Kevin for a list of places where we could find his creations to purchase for ourselves. Kevin did that; here are his iris sources:

Aitken's Salmon Creek Nursery, Vancouver, WA (bearded and sura irises)

Louisiana Iris Farm, Lafayette, LA

These are sources for his succulents:

Mountain Crest Gardens, CA

Perennial Obsessions, Salem, OR

The Chick Charm series is available at many nurseries including the "big box stores".

Most of the other perennials are still in the selection/propagation stage as they need big numbers in order to market.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Crofts - Secretary - WCARS

Addendum to February 2022 Minutes

There was a WCARS Board Meeting in February, 2022, called by Program Chair, Keith White, to discuss the Chapter office of President. The current President, Wally Reed, was too ill to continue his duties and had stepped down. A successor needed to be elected. Dana Malby, Treasurer, volunteered to be the President. He was unanimously elected by the remaining Board Members: Mary Crofts, Secretary; Keith White, Program Chair; Susan Doellinger, Board Member; and Bill Vagt, Board Member.

Dana immediately assumed his duties as President and continued his duties as Treasurer until Adele O'Neal was elected to that office on October 12, 2022.

Mary Ellen Ramseyer -
WCARS Newsletter Editor

Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells, Jingle all the Way

With a name like Jingle Bells, it seems this hybrid rhododendron should be red and bloom in December but that is not the case. It blooms in late spring and the flowers are tubular funnel-shaped, 3" across, orange with vivid red throat, orange fades to light yellow with age. Black anthers and stigma. Held in lax truss of 8-10 flowers. It prefers semi shade with a peaty acidic soil.





WCARS DECEMBER POTLUCK

When: Saturday, December 17th, 2022
Arrive at Noon, Eat at 1 PM

Where: Redgate Vineyards and Winery,
8175 Buena Vista Rd, Independence, OR 97351
Click [here](#) for directions
<https://www.redgatewinery.com>

What: Prime Rib courtesy of WCARS Chef, Dana Malby
Wine provided by Redgate/WCARS

Please bring a side dish, salad or desert of your choosing

RSVP: to Dana Malby (if you haven't already done so)
at www.tdsamal@msn.com



From last year's
potluck:
Good food, Good
company and
Good wine





President's Report

Happy Snow Day!

After being at the cabin and shoveling snow for 3 days, I am happy to be back home! Hopefully, I can get caught up with more of my yard work in between snow and rain storms! Hope everyone is having fun planning their celebrations with their families and friends for the upcoming holidays. Make sure you have your garden wish list and if you have been good, Santa will bring it!

We are still hoping to start meeting in person at the First Methodist Church. I will contact them again to see if that is available and what costs are associated with it. Otherwise, we will continue to meet on Zoom. We have had some incredible speakers in 2022, and I am looking forward to more great pictures, stories, and technical information from presenters in 2023.

Dues have been paid to National ARS (wait, that is American Rhododendron Society...remember when you write a check to the club, it has to be totally spelled out - LOL! So far, we have 67% of the members paid, and 100% of the associate members. I will be contacting the few members left who have not paid. Thanks to all our members for making 2022 wonderful! The things I am thinking of that make our club so fun include, the Smith Garden, the Truss Show, the Convention, the May potluck/plant auction and of course, the upcoming December potluck. A big thank you goes to Keith for organizing the Hendricks Park and nursery tours event (which I unfortunately missed).

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the potluck on December 17th at the Redgate Winery.

Happy Holidays!

Dana Malby - President

Since this is December, I definitely think I would be remiss if I didn't include this picture of Rhododendron Christmas Cheer.



Photo by Stuart Imrie

Extremely early pink flowers attract plant enthusiasts to this rhododendron. Tough, medium size leaves densely dress the well-shaped plant. Please note that it doesn't bloom at Christmas time as the name might indicate. Its blossoming is closer to the roaring of the March lion.

What do you call a blind reindeer?

No eye deer



Light the Lights!

Rhodies Don't Mind Night Light

Steven Nikkila and Janet Macunovich are a husband and wife team from White Lake, Michigan, who host a website called "Garden A to Z".

The following is a question posed by one of their followers regarding Christmas Lights around a Rhododendron and their reply.

Question:

I was told recently that the reason my rhododendrons don't bloom is because we put lights on them for the holidays. They need total darkness, this person said.

If that's the case it would solve a long standing mystery but we're seriously doubting it. Lots of people in our neighborhood go all-out on lights, yet there are rhododendrons in bloom on our block every spring. We can't say for certain that the bushes we see bloom are the same ones that we see lit up but we think they are.

So what's the straight scoop? Okay to light the lights? -

Reply:

Does it affect shrubs' bloom, to bear holiday lights? Not in winter, when flower buds are already set to go for spring. But take care as you decorate to avoid physically damaging the plants or garden.

The decrease in day length as summer wanes does spur Rhododendrons to form their flower buds but they don't need such a long night as some species, including poinsettia and garden mum. They are also less sensitive to nighttime light during bud formation than some other plants.

By winter, Rhododendron flower buds are set. Then the plant is indifferent to night lights. At that point, all it needs is cold (40F or below) for six weeks or more to finish flower development.



Once the big flower buds are set on a Rhododendron's branch tips, you can be pretty confident of the next spring's bloom. By the same token, it's too late by winter to coax flower buds to form on branches that set only small vegetative buds (arrow).

After that, those buds will open after being consistently warm for at least a few weeks. Early blooming rhodie varieties bloom 3 weeks into spring. Later varieties need more time.



When the plant resumes growth in spring, the big buds open into flowers while smaller buds become new shoots and leaves. Those new shoots will be ready to form their own flower buds later that summer for the next year's show.

It's light-ers, not lights, that pose potential trouble

When it comes to holiday lights, our worries revolve around broken branches, girdled trunks and ruined soil:

*Limbs break when people yank wires in a hurry to be done removing the lights.

*Girdling can happen when cords that encircle branches or trunks are left in place into the growing season.

*Ruined soil comes from heavy feet on cold wet ground.



We love the look of a light-encrusted tree but see that the monumental task of wrapping all those lights leads many people to say, "Let's just leave them there until next year..." ...a leaving that sometimes goes on for years. Trunks and branches can increase significantly in girth each spring, and even a string wound tight around can girdle the limb, killing everything above the constriction.



Do it, light those lights! But be aware:

These three trees are at risk for breakage, either when the extra weight of snowy or ice-crusted wires comes to bear on the thin branches, or when the de-lighting technician gets impatient in spring.



This tree is a likely candidate for damage due to its holiday decor. However, most people wouldn't know to link the tree's later decline to the lighting. Here's the connection: If the spruce is in a bed -- as it should be since its feeder roots are concentrated just outside the drip line and do not compete well with lawn grass -- then the wet, cold soil there can easily be trampled to root-killing airlessness by lots of circling and jumping up to poke lights into place.

Now, for things that can quash a Rhododendron show:

*Too much shade. (Only a few Rhododendron varieties perform well in full shade, such as those with lots of R. maximum in their lineage.)

*Nutritional deficiencies. (Often related to high pH; rhodies need acid/low pH.)

*Harsh winters. (Can freeze-dry the buds; such plants would show leaf damage, too.)

*Being sheared or having all their branch tips clipped back after early August. (When too little growing time remains for new shoots to form flower buds.)

So go ahead and light that rhododendron, show off it's beauty and enjoy the holidays. Just do it carefully, thoughtfully and with the love of the plant in mind.

A favorite quote of Janet's that I found interesting:

If you cut a shrub down because it's too big, and it dies, you haven't lost anything but a plant that couldn't live by your rules.

January Program 1/11/2023



Please join us in January for a very informative program presented by Delen Kitchen, Director of Operations for the Oregon Garden. As the garden celebrates it's 25th Anniversary since groundbreaking, Delen will outline the history of the Garden and the challenges faced along the way, as well as highlight their recent successes and where they hope to grow as they look to the future. Full details in the January newsletter.

Choosing a Rhododendron of the Month

Every month Mary Ellen and I discuss which rhododendron to choose for rhododendron of the month. Since I have been in this longer, she usually relies on me to make a suggestion. I try to suggest a rhodo that is blooming now. In the spring it is easy. There are thousands of rhododendrons and azaleas to choose from. But in the winter, the pickin's are slim. What is blooming are not the most showy, glorious, big-blossomed plants (amongst the hardy, outdoor types). But, as Herb Spady was quoted when asked (in an article published in Smithsonian Magazine) what his favorite rhododendron was, he said, "My favorite rhododendron is the one that is blooming now". This leads me to think of Vireyas, in which there will always be several favorite rhododendrons blooming. This time of year, you can visit the conservatory at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden for a delicious treat of beautiful, blooming rhododendrons and spectacular "companion plants" in a wonderfully landscaped setting. This experience may even stimulate you to take up vireyas et al...Not a bad way to keep you off the streets and out of the bars in the cold months.

Keith White



Photos from the Rutherford Conservatory at the RSBG



Praecox is the Flower for December



Photo by Notcutts Garden Centres

'Praecox' is a small, more-or-less ever-green shrub, to 1.2m tall or more, with dark, glossy oval leaves and widely funnel-shaped, rosy-purple flowers, 4cm in width, in small clusters at the branch tips from late winter

Predominant Flower Color: Lavender

Flower/Truss Description: Flower broadly funnel-shaped, about 1¾" across, rosy-lilac, darker reverse, unmarked. Held in clusters each composed of 2-3 flowers.

Fragrant: No

Bloom Time: Early

Foliage Description / Plant Habit: Leaves ovate, 1" to 2¾" long, glossy dark green.

Height: 4 feet in 10 years

Cold Hardiness Temp: -5F (-21C)

Parentage (Seed Parent x Pollen Parent)
ciliatum x dauricum

Elepidote (E) or Lepidote (L): L

Hybridized or Selected by: Unknown

Cultivation:

Grow in moist but well-drained, leafy, humus-rich acid soil, best in part shade with shelter but grows well in full sun if soil remains reliably moist.

Propagation:

Propagate by semi-ripe cuttings in late summer, layering in autumn or grafting in late summer or late winter.

Pests:

May be attacked by vine weevil, rhododendron leafhopper, pieris lacebug, scale insects, caterpillars and aphids.

Diseases:

May be affected by various Rhododendron diseases including powdery mildews, rhododendron petal blight, rhododendron bud blast, silver leaf and honey fungus



Wishing You All a Most Merry and Blessed Holiday Season!

Click [here](#) for a special Holiday Greeting

Online Shopping and the ARS Store - A Reminder to Help

Anytime you shop online for just about anything, please consider first going through the American Rhododendron Society Online Store. The ARS Online Store is reached by the link <http://arsstore.org/>

On this **site you will find** a range of merchants who have agreed to give the American Rhododendron Society a referral fee back on each sale "referred" by ARSStore.org. Just use a link from the ARS Online Store site to go to a merchant's site and buy something like you normally would. You get the same low price and help the ARS.

MONTHLY CHAPTER MEETINGS

EUGENE CHAPTER

Third Wednesday from Oct to March at 7:30pm

PORTLAND CHAPTER

Third Thursday from Sept to May at 7:00pm
Reedwood Friends Church, 2901 SE Steele Street
Portland 97202

SALEM HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

First Tuesday from Sept to May at 7:00pm
Dye House at Willamette Heritage Center, 1313
Mill Street SE, Salem, OR

SUISLAW CHAPTER

Third Tuesday at 7:00pm
First Presbyterian Church, 3996 Highway 101,
Florence, OR

DISTRICT 4 CHAPTER WEB SITES

Willamette Chapter	arswillamette.com
Eugene Chapter	eugene-chapter-ars.org
Portland Chapter	rhodies.org
Siuslaw Chapter	siuslawars.org

All other web sites can be found on
rhododendron.org
Under "chapters" under web sites

ARS BULLETINS are available online at:
<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/>

WILLAMETTE CHAPTER ARS AWARDS HISTORY - 1978 to 2019

GOLD ---

Herb Spady	1991
Betty Spady	2001

SILVER ---

Richard "Dick" Cavendar	2003
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BRONZE ---

June Brennan	1987
Jason Ashford	1990
Constance Hansen	1991
Betty Spady	1991
Bob Grasing	1997
Sharon Leopold	2002
Wilbur Bluhm	2006
Chuck and Maxine Dehn	2006
Keith White	2007
Helen Malby	2008
Anne Gross	2009
Dick and Carol Lundin	2011
Wally and Kathy Reed	2012
Syd and Don Wermlinger	2013
Dick and Carol Lundin	2019
Mary B. Crofts	2019
Roger and Kathy Lintault	2019

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