



Willamette Chapter American Rhododendron Society Newsletter

January/February 2026

Issue 1

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WILLAMETTE CHAPTER ARS MEETINGS

Our regular chapter meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from September through May, excluding December. We meet at La Margarita Restaurant and Grill, 545 Ferry St. SE, in downtown Salem for dinner at 5:00 pm. The program and speaker begin when we finish eating, usually around 6:00pm. Our meetings are in person unless otherwise stated. Meeting information will be sent to members via email and available in this newsletter. Everyone is welcome.

CHAPTER MEETING January 28, 2026



Speaker: Jack Olson
Title: *Things that are Different and Unusual about Rhododendrons and How to decide which plants to register*

Dinner at 5:00pm at La Margarita Restaurant and Grill, 545 Ferry St. SE, in downtown Salem. The Program and Business Meeting begin when we finish eating - approximately 6:00pm. Complete details on Page 5



President's Report

January 2026

Happy New Year, 2026! Hope everyone had a wonderful holiday with family and friends.

We had some interesting weather in December, an unexpected windstorm. I lost power for about three hours, but fortunately, no big limbs came down on my house. Hope everyone else was okay.

The Chapter has been fairly active in 2025. We participated in the Yard, Garden and Home Show at the Fairgrounds in March. We are planning on participating in this again in 2026.

Smith Garden cleanup was done in April and May with several members attending.

Also, in April there was the Rhododendron Species Symposium in Federal Way. A number of our members attended.

I missed the ARS Convention in Nova Scotia, but it sounded like a fun event.

Our May dinner was held at La Margarita instead of having a potluck outside somewhere.

Our summer potluck was held at Keith and Mary Ellen's in July, which was great fun!

We had a November bonus speaker and gathered at La Margarita to hear Atsuko Gibson talk about her trip to Yakushima in 2024.

We had our December potluck at Thuy and Dale's. We had prime rib (sorry I was late!). But it appeared that everyone had a great time!

A big thank you to everyone who participates in the meetings and helps with all the events. Thank you to Ali for finding wonderful speakers for our meetings! Thank you to Susan for keeping the name tags and bringing wonderful chocolates to our meetings! Thank you to Nancy for taking all the notes at the meetings! Thank you to Keith for bringing and operating the equipment for our programs! Also, thank you to Keith and Thuy for printing the plant stakes and to Keith for distributing them to nurseries!

Save the Date! The ARS 2026 Spring Convention will be held at Vancouver Island, BC on April 21-25, 2026. Theme is Rhododendrons & Companions in a Changing Climate.

Dana Malby - President



December Potluck

Our potluck was held at the home of Thuy and Dale Chrestenson, former owners of Bear Creek Nursery. As always, there was more food than needed, great attendance, great conversation, laughter, etc. Thuy, her mother Quy' and Dale were fantastic hosts. In addition to our members, we were joined by Thuy and Dales's neighbors, Lee and Debbie, Dana's Grandson, Benjamin and Mike Mulholland from the Salem Hardy Plant Society. I think the pictures taken by Ali Sarlak and Mary Ellen Ramseyer speak for themselves with no further explanation needed. Obviously the turkeys in the field knew it wasn't Thanksgiving with no worries about being part of the meal.





P.S. Even though Benjamin is of the younger generation, I can tell you that he loves his Grandpa's prime rib and he can carry on a conversation with the best of us. Possibly he will inherit his Grandpa's love of Rhodies and plants and replace him as our Chapter President some day!



January Program



Speaker: Jack Olson
Topic: *Things that are Different and Unusual about Rhododendrons and How to Decide Which Plants to Register*

January 28, 2026 La Margarita Restaurant and Grill
Dinner: 5:00pm Program and Meeting when dinner is finished (apprx 6pm)

On the Rocky Knoll Farm website it states that "Jack Olson is the inspiration for our family nursery business. As a lifetime member of the International Rhododendron Society, he has dedicated decades of his life to studying and hybridizing rhododendrons and various other plants. His passion and expertise in the field have led him to register many of his rhododendron hybrids internationally. While traveling the world (including Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America) he has studied many plant species."

Each of the topics in this presentation would be a program in itself, so I can only imagine this will be an information packed presentation done with energy and enthusiasm. In a prior program in November of 2023, Jack said "I have been gardening now for over 60 years. Rhododendrons have been my passion. I have been hybridizing rhododendrons for over 25 years". I once asked him how he determined which plants to register and he said the plant needs to be better than either of the parents.

We will learn what that means and much more, so please plan to attend!



Rhododendron Prism's Sister

Rhododendron Slim B



February Program



Speaker: Harry Fuller
Topic: ? at this time, but it will be Bird related

February 11, 2026 La Margarita Restaurant and Grill
Dinner: 5:00pm Program and Meeting when dinner is
finished (aprx 6pm)

The following is an excerpt from the Salem Reporter, Local News that Matters:

"Harry Fuller is an Oregon birder and natural history author of three books: "Freeway Birding," "Great Gray Owls of California, Oregon and Washington," and "San Francisco's Natural History--Sand Dunes to Streetcars." He leads birding trips for the Malheur Field Station. He is a member of the Salem Audubon Society, and leads bird trips locally."

Harry also writes frequent articles for the Salem Reporter and you can read some of them at:

<https://www.salemlreporter.com/author/harry-fuller/#:~:text=Harry%20Fuller%20is%20an%20Oregon,for%20the%20Malheur%20Field%20Station.>

The topic of his program is unknown at this time but hopefully there will be more detailed information at our January meeting.

ARS 2026 Spring Convention

The following excerpt is from Linda Derkach, the newsletter editor for the Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society and on the planning committee for the 2026 Spring Convention:

The ARS Chapters on Vancouver Island plus the Rhododendron Species Foundation are working together to offer a different kind of convention with many options depending on whether you want "The Grand Garden Tour of Vancouver Island" or just one or two days of gardens.

For those wanting to see it all, the week will start on Tuesday, April 21 in Victoria with two days of tours around Victoria and out to Sooke and Shirley, BC. On Thursday morning, folks can drive leisurely to the Cowichan Valley and enjoy some spectacular country gardens on a late morning/afternoon tour, chauffeured by members of the CVRS. Later that same day, continue driving up island to Qualicum Beach for a welcome at the Shady Rest Pub on Thursday evening.

Friday is the convention day at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre followed by a tour of gardens from Qualicum to Nanaimo return on Saturday.

Those wanting just a few gardens can sign up for the Convention on Friday in Qualicum Beach, then choose any or all of the one-day tours offered.

Convention link: <https://marsrhodos.ca/2026-ars-convention/>

Linda has a fantastic description of all the gardens on the tour, along with pictures, in the January Rhodovine newsletter: <https://marsrhodos.ca/newsletters/2026-01-rhodovine.pdf>



ARS 2026 Spring Convention

Vancouver Island, BC, Canada

***Tuesday, April 21
to Saturday, April 25, 2026***

**Please join us for this fabulous 5-day event on
Vancouver Island, British Columbia**

Register for the **ARS Convention in Qualicum Beach**, and then choose one or all of the pre- and post-convention garden tours. Each day of garden tours is individually priced, lunch included. Dinners are optional.

More detailed information on travel and accommodation on the website soon.

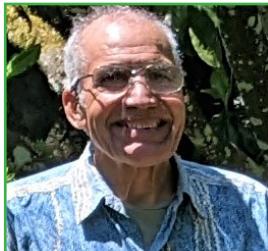
- **Tuesday** – Pre-tour of gardens from Victoria to Shirley, BC with the *Victoria Rhododendron Society (VRS)*
- **Wednesday** – Pre-tour of public and private gardens in Victoria with VRS
- **Thursday** – Pre-tour of country gardens by car in the Cowichan Valley with the *Cowichan Valley RS*, starting late morning.
- **Thursday evening** – Early arrivals in Qualicum Beach are invited to join us for no-host beverages and/or dinner at the Shady Rest Pub on the Salish Sea.
- **Friday** – ***ARS Convention & Rhododendron Species Foundation AGM at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre***: Welcome breakfast, speakers, plant sale, prizes, lunch, Milner Gardens & Woodland tour, social time with friends, ARS Awards and optional buffet dinner. All organized by *Mount Arrowsmith RS* and *Nanaimo RS*; Plant sale managed by *North Island RS*.
- **Saturday** – Post-tour of gardens from Qualicum Beach to Nanaimo organized by the *Nanaimo RS*. Optional dinner in the evening at a local restaurant.

Convention link: <https://marsrhodos.ca/2026-ars-convention/>

Registration Opens in early January 2026

Everyone Welcome!

Mt. Arrowsmith RS – Nanaimo RS – Cowichan Valley RS – Victoria RS – North Island RS - RSBG



Oregon Garden on Christmas Eve

Ali Sarlak

My wife and I made a booking at the Moon Stone Resort to stay on Christmas Eve and have a view of the fantastic Christmas lights around the resort. This showing has become an annual event during the Christmas holiday's with many vendors on-site.

We had in mind to visit our beloved garden (The Oregon Garden). We found out the garden was closed for a couple of days during the holiday but, since we were staying at the resort, we were given access to see the garden!!

The Oregon Garden is the showiest garden that I have seen, even during the winter season. It was very peaceful. We almost had the whole garden to ourselves. We felt the serenity, peacefulness and tranquility of being in such a paradise site, but excitement as well.

There were still a few blooming plants in the garden such as: a Mahonia variety, Camellia type sasanqua, Hamamelis, Kaffir Lily, Prickly Pear, Hellebores, Garrya Elliptica, Calla Lilies and many more.

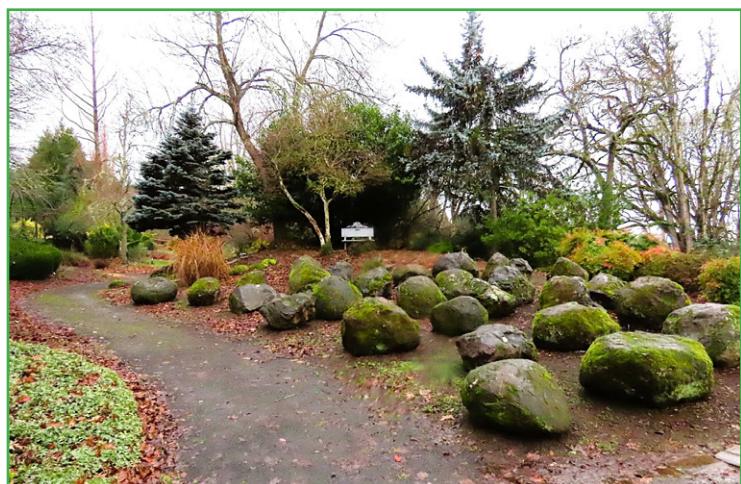
There is a huge, fantastic, beautifully displayed conifer garden.

Also some rare fruit trees: Fruiting Quince, Pomegranate, Kiwi, to just mention a few.

The Oregon Garden is a place of beauty, education and fun for the whole family to visit. Certainly, my wife and I enjoyed our times when we visit the garden.

Ali Sarlak





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 Wednesday from Sept to May at 7:00pm
Scottish Rite Center, 4090 Commercial St. 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
Eugene Chapter
Portland Chapter
Siuslaw Chapter

arswillamette.com
eugene-chapter-ars.org
rhodies.org
suislawars.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 2024

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
Mary Ellen Ramseyer	2024
Keith White	2024

WILLAMETTE CHAPTER OFFICERS

President: Dana Malby503-480-9807
V-President &
Programs Chair: Ali Sarlak.....541-758-9190
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Anne Gross: 503-581-1909
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