



Willamette Chapter American Rhododendron Society Newsletter

November 2025

Issue 8

Page(s)	Content
1	Meeting Time and Place; Upcoming Meeting Program
2-3	President's Report; Secretary's Report
4	November Chapter Night Program
5	Additional November Program Opportunity; December Potluck
6-7	ARS 2026 Spring Convention
8-9	Gone but Not Forgotten
9-10	Beauties of Fall
11	Statewide ARS Chapter Meeting Information; WCARS Chapter Information and Officers

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 meeting 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 November 12, 2025



Speaker: *Mike Bones*
Title: *Rhodies 101*

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 4



President's Report

November 2025

Looks like it is going to be a weak La Nina forecast this winter! Fall is finally here, the rains have begun, plus the wind has been wild the last couple of days and the leaves are falling. Clean-up in the yard!

We had a good turnout at the October meeting and our speaker, Linda Hardison from the Oregon Flora Project gave a very interesting presentation. At the November meeting, Mike Bones will be our speaker and his presentations are always fun and engaging.

Welcome to our newest members, Connie and Judith! Feel free to bring guests who are interested in learning more about the Chapter and the fun we have.

We are working on planning the December Potluck/Party – more details to come.

Save the Date - The International ARS Convention will be held April 21-25, 2026 on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. More information coming soon!

Looking forward to seeing everyone at our next meeting, November 12 at La Margarita in Salem!

Dana Malby - President

October Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2025

Greetings all! And Happy Fall! The lovely cool weather and moist soils have allowed the gardener in me to get back out and dig. Have fun planting bulbs and of course, rhodies!

Our October meeting was held at our usual place, La Margarita in Salem, and we were greeted by Susan Doellinger passing out nametags and numbers for drawings. As we settled and ordered our food, Dana passed out copies of the proposed budget, to peruse while we ate.

The meeting began with auctioning of rhodies that Thuy Chrestenson brought. Four beautiful rhodies selected by Thuy herself. Lucky for those that got one. We may have a chance to purchase more in the future. Thank you also to Ali and Keith who brought in plants for give away.

Program chair, Ali Sarlak, then introduced the speaker of the evening, Dr. Linda Hardison of OregonFlora Project. The project was initiated by Scott Sundberg in 1994, seeing a need for a comprehensive flora of Oregon. He worked on this until his death in 2004 when it was taken over by Dr. Hardison. The project is based at OSU utilizing its huge herbarium. Native plant species are described and documented based on location as well as taxonomically. The Flora deals with vascular plants only (no algae, mosses, lichen, or fungi). Over 4800 plants have been described with an ever increasing list.

Some interesting facts about the plants in the flora-

- 170 families
- 1096 genera
- 12,000 scientific names
- 11 % of the flora in the state belongs to Asteraceae

The goal of three published books is nearly complete after 25 years of work. The exhaustive volumes are divided into chapters for ease of use. Illustrations are beautiful. Volume one and two are available through OSU. It is used by professionals as well as local gardeners to identify, classify and use plants throughout Oregon. In addition to the impressive books, Dr. Hardison guided us through the website Oregonflora.org. Spending some time using the tutorials is time well spent. Dr. Hardison and her group have tried to make this vast information more accessible. Plants can be identified not only taxonomically but by geography, where the plant was found. Using the tutorials, is a fun and interesting adventure. Thank you Dr. Hardison. Since funding is quite dubious now, donations for the project are gladly accepted.

President Dana Malby then moved into the regular meeting, thanking our speaker and asking Treasurer Adele O'Neal for her report. Adele reported that we have \$4582.49 in checking and \$2419.94 in the Business Membership Account with donations from the Tallan's estate at almost \$700.

The proposed budget was discussed with the group. Bill Vagt motioned to accept the budget, seconded by Mary Ellen Ramseyer. Passed unanimously.

Dana thanked Carol McCarthy for her hard work as newsletter editor. We need a new newsletter editor – anyone interested? Mary Ellen has stepped in to be interim editor until someone else is found. Thank you Mary Ellen.

Membership.

Membership dues should have been turned in in September.

Adele reported that we are still missing dues of a couple of folks. She will be in contact with them.

Old Business.

Monthly Board Meeting was held via Zoom on October 5.

It was noted that long time friend, Wilbur Bluhm passed away in September. A memorial is planned for December 13.

New Business.

Keith commented that there was bad communication by the Portland Chapter to attend a work party at the Smith Garden at the end of September. Keith said he would talk with them about giving more notice to everyone. There is a work party scheduled for Saturday, October 18. Please let Chanda (the caretaker of the property) know that you will be coming as she makes glorious food for the workers.

Bill Vagt's new email address : william.vagt@gmail.com

Upcoming Events.

Ali reported that November's speaker will be Mike Bones, guiding us through Rhododendron 101.

December. Keith is busily trying to find a new venue for our annual Christmas party.

January will have Jack Olson speaking.

Meeting concluded at 8:07 pm

Next scheduled meeting is November 12, 5 pm at La Margarita.

Next Board meeting is November 5, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Burr - Secretary

November Program



Speaker: *Mike Bones*
Topic: *Rhodies 101*

November 12, 2025 Dinner: 5:00pm
Meeting and Program when dinner is finished (apprx 6pm)
La Margarita Restaurant and Grill

At the distribution time of this newsletter, I have no information on the topic of Mike's program, other than a title, so I will leave that to your imagination. I do have, however, some tidbits of information about Mike that came from the the Florence Chamber of Commerce and a newspaper publication, The [W](#) World.

Mike Bones started out in the gardening business when he was a teen-ager. He earned his spending money by pulling weeds and keeping people's yards trim and neat. Then, Bones met Agnes McCornack and rhododendrons. McCornack was a woman familiar to just about every longtime gardener who made it a habit of visiting Florence-area nurseries. While Bones' mom was into plants, it was McCornack who introduced Bones to what has become his life's passion.

"My pay was half in rhododendrons and half in money. I got 50 cents an hour," said Bones. He wasn't making a lot of money in those days, but he was amassing quite a collection of rhododendrons. Over the years, Bones cultivated so many of the shrubs he had to start a nursery (1978), in addition to keeping his full-time job as a ranger with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Division. Mike retired from his State job in 1999 to devote full time to his nursery business.

In 2023, the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce selected Mike as the grand marshal for their annual floral parade.

"Mike Bones personifies this year's 'Rip Roarin' Rhodies' theme, said Bettina Hannigan, Florence Chamber president and CEO. He is tremendously gregarious with an infectious spirit, a lot of fun, and is known to many in these parts for his longtime interest and expertise with our famous flowers. He's also a lot like our logo for this year--bright, colorful, beautiful, and he really pops."

The chapter puts on the second largest rhododendron show in the world behind only Chelsea, England.

Bones has won international recognition for his interest in rhododendrons by being awarded the ARS Silver Medal for his accomplishments in educating others about the flowers, and for his years of dedication and service to the Siuslaw and American Rhododendron Societies.

"During Covid, when the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce was unable to host the Rhododendron Festival, Mike walked the parade route both years, pulling a wagon full of rhododendrons while waving to those passing by. He single-handedly kept the event alive through all that adversity."



**Mike pulling his wagon
full of rhododendrons**

November "Bonus" Speaker



Speaker: Atsuko Gibson, Nursery Manager and Assistant Curator of the RSBG

Topic: Yakushima, 2024

12:00 Noon, Thursday, November 20, 2025 at La Margarita Restaurant and Grill

The following is quoted from the Rhododendron Species 2025, The Journal of the Rhododendron Botanical Species Garden:

"It had been a bumpy ride as I began to write this journal at the Kagoshima airport in Kyushu, Japan. As I sat there at the airport, I wondered if I could make it to my final destination, Yakushima, that same day."

"Yakushima (or Yaku Island) is located in southern Japan and home to the queen of *Rhododendron* species (in my opinion), *Rhododendron degronianum* subsp. *yakushmanum* (syn. *Rhododendron yakushimanum*.) Just in time for my very first anticipated visit to this sacred island in late May, a tropical system had been upgraded to become the first typhoon of the 2024 season. This had caused many flight cancellations in southern Japan."

Please join us on Thursday, November 20 at noon for a Special Meeting at our usual meeting room at La Margarita Restaurant and Grill to see and hear Atsuko's spellbinding and interesting story. I am now quoting Martha Dibblee, editor of the Portland Chapter ARS newsletter:

Yakushima 2024

a photographic tour and talk

by Atsuko Gibson

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden Nursery Manager & Assistant Curator.

"Atsuko visited Yakushima, home to *Rhododendron degronianum* ssp. *yakushmanum* or "yaks", in the spring of 2024. All-day trekking was rewarded by the yaks in full bloom at 6,000 feet. The transition of *R. degronianum* with elevation gain from v. *intermedium* to ssp. *yakushmanum* was clearly seen. Atsuko will introduce you to the beauty of Yakushima and its majestic nature through a photographic tour." Approval to print via Martha Dibblee, Newsletter Editor for the Portland Chapter

WCARS December Potluck

Your WCARS Board has been vigorously working to find a place for the December potluck, unfortunately hitting many potholes in the road. The past few years it has been at Redgate Winery in Independence. However, Steve sold the winery and vineyard last year. We approached the new owners and can have our potluck there at no charge if they serve their food (pizza and charcuterie board) or pay \$250 if we want to bring our own food. Many other venues have been investigated with similar results - either cost prohibitive, they want to cater the food and/or no alcohol allowed.

Then, as I am finishing this blurb, Thuy Chrestenson graciously offered to host the potluck at her home. You may recall that Thuy and Dale hosted our summer potluck at their home in Scio in 2024. The WCARS Board will discuss this further at their Nov 5 Board meeting and will provide the final details at our monthly chapter meeting on November 12. Stay tuned.....



SAVE THE DATE !

American Rhododendron Society
2026 Spring Convention
Vancouver Island, British Columbia
Rhododendrons & Companions
in a Changing Climate
April 21 - 25, 2026\$

Highlights:

- Garden Tours in Qualicum Beach, Parksville, Nanaimo
- Pre-tours of public and private gardens in Victoria and the Cowichan Valley
- Speakers, Plant Sales, Banquet in Qualicum Beach
- Partnering with the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden: Annual Meeting and Speakers from RSBG

Organized by the ARS Chapters
on Vancouver Island, British Columbia
More information coming soon!

Update: ARS 2026 Spring Convention Vancouver Island, BC, Canada

The five ARS chapters on Vancouver Island
along with the RSBG are planning the 2026 Convention.
Here's some preliminary information to put you 'in the loop':

**Convention Dates: Tuesday, April 21, 2025 to Saturday,
April 25, 2025**

- **Tuesday** – Bus pre-tour of gardens from Victoria to Shirley, BC
- **Wednesday** – Bus pre-tour of Victoria gardens, both days organized by the *Victoria Rhododendron Society*
- **Thursday** – Car-pooling tour of country gardens in the Cowichan Valley put on by the *Cowichan Valley RS*; early arrivals in Qualicum Beach on Thursday evening can meet at the Shady Rest Waterfront Pub
- **Friday** – Welcome to all at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre – Speakers, plant sale, prizes, tour of Milner Gardens, plus the AGM of the Rhododendron Species Foundation, social time with friends, ARS Awards, Buffet Dinner at QBCC – all organized by *MARS* and the *Nanaimo Rhododendron Society*; Plant sale managed by *North Island RS*.
- **Saturday** – Bus post-tour of gardens from Qualicum to Nanaimo return organized by the *Nanaimo RS*, dinner together in the evening at a local restaurant.

Each day of the convention is individually priced so you can do one or two or all of the days of the convention. Dinners are optional but will be very reasonable so please plan to join us!

Every day will offer spectacular gardens and fun activities for participants.

We are working hard to keep the cost of this convention affordable for everyone, so.....

PLEASE SAVE THESE DATES

and join us for this fabulous 5-day event right here on Vancouver Island!!

Registration Opens in January 2026. Check at marsrhodos.ca

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

Gone but Not Forgotten



Wilbur Leroy Bluhm **January 29, 1927 - October 25, 2025**

Wilbur was a great asset to our chapter. He gave us several programs on the native flora of Oregon and twice, great programs on trees. Wilbur was a great photographer; thus his programs were very well illustrated. Wilbur hiked the remote wilderness areas and the not so remote but uncluttered populated areas to document the notable plants and wildflowers growing there. Wilbur contributed greatly to the Oregon Flora Project, the subject of our last program by Director Linda Hardison.

Every Memorial Day weekend, for several years, Wilbur lead our chapter, with the Hardy Plant Society, through the Siskiyou Mountains, Kalmiopsis Wilderness, and beaches in SW Oregon and N California in search of remarkable native plants.

My first exposure to Wilbur was as a back to back property owner with my grandparents. Wilbur was then the Marion County Agricultural Agent. My grandparents grew a big garden. They raved about the great advice Wilbur gave them. At the time, I was six years old.

I would love to have access to the many programs Wilbur did for us. If only.....

Keith White

A memorial service and celebration of life is planned for December 13 at 1:00 p.m. at First United Methodist Church in Salem, Oregon.

Click [here](#) for Wilbur's Obituary from the Statesman Journal.



Gordon K. Wylie **February 10, 1932 - October 29, 2025**

Re Gordon Wylie: A remembrance

Gordon Passed away last week at the grand old age of 93.

Gordon and wife Linda have been associate members of WCARS for many years. I first met Gordon during the 1985 ARS annual meeting in Eugene. Gordon was chairman of that conference and a more jolly, articulate and Humorous director could not be imagined. I was impressed by Gordon then and impressed by their beautiful garden. Later, when giving a program to our chapter about their garden, Gordon stated that when they bought the property in Eugene there was nothing on the lot except solid blackberry vines and some large pieces of junk that needed to be hauled away. Gordon and I spoke and joked at every meeting we were at together. Despite his good humor, Gordon was a very serious player in the management of the ARS, being in many committees and involved in the seed exchange. He was president of the ARS and awarded a Gold Medal in 2004 for all his contributions.

Gordon and Linda and I went with the Scottish Rhododendron Society to Belgium in 2010. We visited several arboretums with almost 200-year-old trees. For these arboreta, the “companion plants” were often rhododendrons. In one place the restrooms were half a mile away. Too far. Gordon and I found each other improvising “the facilities” behind a particular tree. That was a good laugh.

Several years ago, I and Bob Grasing were visited by Keith Rushforth, famous English plant explorer and tree expert. Keith was here to explore the Kalmiopsis and Siskiyou Mts. While I was in the operating room a few days earlier, the anesthesiologist, who had grown up in Reedsport, mentioned a hidden old garden across from the Elk Reserve, along the Umpqua River. On our way to the SW OR coast we stopped by the spot. It was clear to Keith that this was an overgrown, but special garden with exotic trees and many early rhododendron hybrids. Later I mentioned this to Gordon. Soon after that he and John Hammond from England explored the garden, and found that it had been created by timber tycoon Howard Hinsdale. The two of them made a deal with the BLM to rehabilitate and publicize the Hinsdale Garden, now open to the public on several special days of the year. John Hammond did extensive research and published a few articles on the garden history in the Journal ARS. **This garden is Gordon’s gift to the people of Oregon.**

Keith White

No further details are known at this time. If you would like to send a card to Gordon’s wife Linda, her address is: 307 Ironwood Loop, Creswell, OR 97426

The Beauties of Fall



R. Horizon Monarch
Photo by Thuy Chrestenson



Stewartia pseudocamellia
All other photos by Keith White



Left: R. May Day bud
Right: R. May Day flower





R. oldhamii



R quinquefolium



Thanksgiving

The year has turned its circle,
The seasons come and go.
The harvest all is gathered in
And chilly north winds blow.

Orchards have shared their treasures,
The fields, their yellow grain,
So open wide the doorway —
Thanksgiving comes again!

Old Rhyme.



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 2024

GOLD ---

Herb Spady	1991
Betty Spady	2001

SILVER ---

Richard "Dick" Cavendar	2003
-------------------------	------

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
Secretary: Nancy Burr
Treasurer: Adele O'Neal.....971-570-0237
Librarian: Keith White503-559-5796
Newsletter Editor:
Print & Mail: Mary Ellen Ramseyer -503-689-3733
Board Members:
Thuy Chrestenson: 503-689-3110
Anne Gross: 503-581-1909
Keith White....503-559-5796

Greeter: Susan Doellinger.....503-838-4884W
Web Site: Kathy Lintault.....503-434-5472