

Eugene Chapter

A m e r i c a n R h o d o d e n d r o n S o c i e t y

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Vice-President	Jack Olson
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Membership	Nancy Burns

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Helen Baxter	2012-2015
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Committees

- **Show:** Ali Sarlak, Helen Baxter, Sherlyn Hilton, Nancy Burns
- **Nominating:** Terry Henderson, Helen, Baxter, Sherlyn Hilton
- **Welfare:** Nancy & Harold Greer
- **Hospitality:** We need a volunteer.
- **Programs:** Board of Directors

Newsletter

In memory of Editor
Barbara Novak

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TIME TO PICNIC, TIME TO PARTY

SUNDAY, JUNE 29

AT THE HOME OF ALI & GLORIA SARLAK

All ARS members in District 4 are invited to join us for our annual June picnic at the home of **Ali & Gloria Sarlak** in Corvallis. Come about noon for a walk around the lovely garden, filled with roses, perennials, sculptures, shady nooks, a rock garden - vignettes that show Ali's artistry in gardening.

The **potluck picnic** will begin at 1:00. Please bring a dish to share - **side dish, salad, or dessert** - to serve 10-12 people. Don't forget a serving utensil. Also, please bring your own dishes, silverware, napkins and your beverage of choice. For the main dish, Ali will be grilling **salmon supplied by the chapter**, but feel free to bring an alternate main dish, if you like. Ali has a number of chairs and tables but you might bring a favorite lawn chair.

As we have traditionally done at the June picnic, there will be a plant exchange (entirely optional) so feel free to bring a nicely potted plant to exchange for a different one. Please choose a rhododendron, azalea or companion plant that would make a nice addition to a garden – it's a nice way to add a new plant to your garden.

The Sarlaks live at **4150 NE Fair Acres St** which is on the northeast side of Corvallis and is easy to find. From Eugene, you can drive to Corvallis on Hwy 99 and 99W, or on I-5, or on beautiful Peoria Road, which goes from Hwy 99E on the north side of Harrisburg to Hwy 34 just east of Corvallis. No matter which way you get to Corvallis, you will want to look for signs for Hwy 20 toward Albany. This will be 2nd Street in Corvallis. If you are coming into Corvallis on Hwy. 34, cross the Willamette River and turn right onto Hwy. 20. From the bridge drive 3.2 miles north to Asbahr Ave. Turn right on NE Asbahr for 495 feet to Fair Acres Street. Turn right and the Sarlak house is the first house on the right. If you get lost, their phone number is 541-758-9190. There is room for 4 cars in the driveway for our members who need to park the closest. There is room for 7 or 8 cars along Fair Acres off of Asbahr Ave.



From the President

Growing Rhododendrons on My Door Step

Actually, what I mean is that there is a rhododendron nursery that is not very far from where I live in Corvallis, called Oregon Rhododendrons, and the owner is Floyd Hutchins and his wife Anita Hutchins. Mainly, Floyd runs the business but his wife has done some tissue culture and has hybridized some Rhododendrons. Floyd started the nursery in 1980, so it has been there for quite sometime. When I asked Floyd how he got into growing Rhododendrons, he said that he and his wife like owning land and that during the Vietnam war, getting jobs was not easy. He has a BS degree in Water Pollution Biology and worked in the fishery industry but that he became unemployed and decided to go into the nursery business. He started growing plants and since then has never been sorry. In his wholesale business, he not only grows rhododendrons, but also heathers, heaths and a few other specialty plants.

The area of his land is about 33 acres and it



Oregon Rhododendrons photo by Ali Sarlak

really amusing to see all the colors in springtime in the open fields growing without any shade and there are all sorts of rhododendrons! He told me that at one time he was growing about 50,000 of them. When he called them H1 and H2, I asked him what he meant and he said that H1 plants are hardy to -22° F and H2 plants are hardy to -15° F

so therefore, his plants can tolerate very harsh climates. I asked what kind of soil he uses to raise his plants and he responded "Willamette Valley Silt

Loam and saw-dust". For their pots, he uses 5% special grade sand and 95%



Oregon Rhododendrons photo by Ali Sarlak

cedar bark dust since cedar lasts much longer.

When I asked if he is growing native *R. Macrophyllum*, he said it is not easy because of the summer heat. However, he said it is easier to grow the native rhododendrons from the East Coast here. I also asked him if he has favorites and he said "*occidentale* hybrids".

Floyd Hutchins has been growing some of his own seedlings and he said he likes the ones that are pollinated by nature. He tries growing many seeds and then keeps the ones he likes. He has also done some hybridizing, but has never registered the names though he named one for his wife and called it 'Anita's Angel'.

I cannot end my note without expressing my liking for him as he is a very nice, kind, and intelligent plants person. I have known him for a long time and he is a friend of mine .

Ali Sarlak

Ted' s Notes

In 2012 the Friends of Hendricks Park organization hired professional horticulturist Michael Kennedy to do an analysis and assessment of the Rhododendron Garden in Hendricks Park with the intention of being able to better integrate the volunteer program with the needs of the garden and the goals of the park staff. The 99-page document begins with a short history of the park and its succession of head gardeners, then proceeds to outline several possible major projects for improving the park. A large section of the report assesses the garden bed by bed listing what is good, what is in need of improvement, and many of the plants. At the end are a number of appendices of forms and assessments that have been used in the past, for example to inventory the plants.

Earlier this spring the Board of Directors of Friends of Hendricks Park invited Paula and me to be on a Rhododendron Garden Committee whose function will be to use the Garden Needs Assessment to help facilitate the goals of the

garden staff with the Tuesday morning volunteer work group and to prioritize the use of funds that FoHP has for use in the Rhododendron Garden which is separate from the Hendricks Park Forest and Native Plant Garden. The committee will meet with gardener Emily Aune and volunteer coordinator Mieko Aoki and will use advisors Roger Gossler and Michael Robert as needed.

Paula and I are interested in being more involved with this long-established Eugene Park and see this as a way to improve the communications between the ARS Eugene Chapter, the Hendricks Park staff, and the Friends of Hendricks Park organization. With the budgetary constraints and the city park staff reorganization over the past years, Hendricks Park has developed many needs and this is an attempt to help the FoHP, the park staff, and the community work with the funds and time available to improve this well-known and special garden.

The Eugene Chapter provided a number of judges for the Siuslaw Chapter Flower Show on May 17 when Frances Burns, Mary & Doug Furr, Gordon & Linda Wylie, Helen Baxter, Terry Henderson, and Ted Hewitt helped with this well planned and executed show. The entries were well displayed and organized as usual and the community event brought many viewers.

In Memoriam

The chapter lost a member and a friend when Barbara Novak passed away on May 21 after a struggle with cancer. We were fortunate to have her as a member and to enjoy her sense of humor and wit for a few years and appreciate her leadership as a Board member and newsletter editor for the past year. She was enjoying developing a lovely garden with many kinds of interesting plants including rhododendrons in an esthetically pleasing way. Memorial service plans have not been announced.

Member Profile: Frances Burns written by Mary Furr with additions by Ted Hewitt

To paraphrase Rodgers and Hammerstein, How do you solve a problem like Frances? When you're with her you're confused, out of focus and bemused. She's unpredictable as weather, flighty as a feather. She's a darling! She's a demon! She's a lamb!

As her daughter, I know how you feel and sympathize with your trepidation to get to know her better. She's extremely shy, insecure, witty to the point of being caustic when sensing a perceived, but nonexistent, slight, brilliant without recognizing her gifts, and not at all inclined to accept the advances of age gracefully.

But most members of the Oregon chapters of the ARS trend toward a tail of a bell curve in one way or other and, because of this, accept our differences and cherish the friends we make as we sojourn together in discovery of the genus *Rhododendron*. In this spirit, let me tell you a bit more about Frances and how her love of rhododendrons has helped her grow as a person and given her a bevy of friends who accept her foibles and provide the hugs she so needs after the loss of her husband Ralph in 2006.

Frances was born in Eastern Washington to a very Victorian mother of English descent and a hard-working Swiss-American railroader. Although both parents loved her, the marriage was troubled and Frances was raised primarily by her mother, a person that her very bright daughter could and did outwit at every turn. Frances, complete with her wavy red hair, too much



Frances as a judge at the 2014 Siuslaw Show photo by Mary Furr

freedom, and a loyal dog, tended toward escapades of adventure tempered by a strong moral compass. The repercussions of these exploits were frequent school discipline and a lifelong sense that she didn't belong. Bless the teachers who recognized her intellect and energy and channeled it in positive directions! It is of no small import that Frances's childhood hero was no other than the plantsman Luther Burbank.

In 1944 Frances was working at the ticket counter in the Pasco railroad station when a handsome US Army Air Corps sergeant, Ralph Burns, grabbed her hand and said that he wouldn't let go until she promised to write him. Ralph and Frances were married after the war and lived in Kentucky and Ohio before settling in Oregon.

In 1960, Ralph and Frances moved to the farm on the McKenzie River, where unbeknownst to them, serendipity placed them in proximity of neighbors who loved and collected rhododendrons. As typical of families through the 1960s,

Frances took care of the home and flowers and Ralph had a career and took care of the lawn and orchard. During this time, Frances became a Master Gardener. *Sometime in here she raised and bred collies for 25 years with goals of improving temperament, appearance, and an eye problem - sounds rather like hybridizing rhododendrons and the ideas of Luther Burbank.* In 1973 she accepted a job as a computer technician with the U. S. Forest Service. By the time both Ralph and Frances were retired in 1988, they, too, had become ardent rhody lovers through the influence of their now dear friends and neighbors, Art and Maxine Childers and Claire and Daisy Hamlin.

With the mentoring of the Childers, Ralph and Frances began to dabble in hybridizing, each making their own crosses. *One of my favorite hybrids by Ralph is 'Fran's Song' and Frances' hybrids include 'The Birthday Boys', 'Prom Date', and 'Gorgeous Gertrude'.* When both the Childers and the Hamlin homes were sold, they were given many wonderful plants for their rhododendron collection.

Joining the Eugene chapter of the ARS in 1989 was a natural progression in their hobby, and Frances found an outlet in her creative and organizing talents by participating as newsletter editor and helping with the shows. *She has been honored with an ARS Bronze Medal and a Certificate of Appreciation by the Eugene Chapter for the fine newsletters that she produced.* She also served a term as the Secretary of the ARS. Unfortunately, Ralph developed health problems in the late 1990s, at which point Frances focused her time

and energies on taking care of him. When Ralph passed, rejoining the activities of the Eugene chapter was a solace and a source of renewal.

In time for the 2001 ARS Convention hosted by the Eugene Chapter, Frances compiled and published the book To Have a Friend from the letters written from 1945 to 1951 between Del & Ray James of the Eugene Chapter and C.P. Raffill, the assistant curator of Kew Gardens in England which so ably develops the James' knowledge of rhododendrons and hybridizing but also chronicles the marvelous friendship despite the long distance and their different backgrounds. Embedded in the letters is also a discussion of what life was like in England during and following World War II. This book is available at the Eugene Public Library but also several chapter members have copies.

Doug and I moved to the family farm in 2006 and, with Frances' encouragement and mentoring, have also grown to love rhododendrons. The size of the rhododendron collection is intimidating, in terms of maintenance, but we help Frances with the whacking, mowing, and weeding as best we can. In the last eight years, she continues to maintain a database to document her collection, write articles for the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society, and improve her presentation of trusses at rhododendron shows. The result has been much treasured ribbons and trophies that hallmark her efforts over the years to participate in the hobby we all love, growing rhododendrons!

Thank you, Frances, for all that you give to the Eugene Chapter and the ARS.

A Visit to *R. occidentale* Country

by Ted Hewitt

On May 15, Eugene Chapter member Bob Whitman phoned me to ask how to find Stagecoach Hill in northern California as he was on his way to visit a friend in Eureka and remembered me talking about the outstanding display of *R. occidentale*, the native Western Azalea, growing on Stagecoach Hill. Later in the afternoon, I received an e-mail from him with wonderful photos of the *occidentale* in bloom. First, I must commend Bob for being a good enough techie to use his smart phone to call me, to photograph the blooms, and to e-mail them to me. Second, it made me think back to the time last June when Paula and I visited the area with a group from the ARS Eureka Chapter. At that time on June 8, 2013, Tim Walsh, ARS District 4 Director, almost apologized that the flowers were about a week past the peak bloom but that he usually estimates peak bloom time to be the second weekend in June. This year Bob found that even 3 weeks earlier the flowers were “still mighty cool, if not peak”.

Stagecoach Hill is located on the east side of Hwy 101 within sight of the Pacific Ocean near the fresh water lagoons north of Eureka and is a

large area that was logged and now has been kept fairly clear of new growth so the *occidentale* have been able to grow in prime habitat. In looking back through a number of older ARS Quarterly Bulletins and Journals, I found a number of articles that discuss the efforts of Frank Mossman and Britt Smith to study this area. The range of *occidentale* is primarily along a coastal strip from Bandon, Oregon, to Santa Cruz California, and then in the Sierra Nevada foothills south to San Diego, but Stagecoach Hill offers a terrific glimpse of the wide variation there is in flower color and shape as well as in plant size so makes a great plant hunting trip. The bloom season is generally from May through July but there are sporadic blooms from January through September. Look carefully and you will notice flowers with brighter colors, or frilly edges, or picotee-edged petals, or double flowers, or dwarf plants, or wonderful wine-red foliage in the fall. A number of these varied clones have been collected and propagated and are in the trade or can be found in private gardens. The chapter library contains many of the old Quarterly Bulletins and you can find good articles in the October 1972 and April 1974 issues or more recently in the Winter 2007 Journal.



A “selfie” taken at Stagecoach Hill by Bob Whitman



R. occidentale

photo by Bob Whitman



R. occidentale (note the frilly edges on the petals)

photo by Bob Whitman

Plant Sale

The results of our plant sale this year were the best we have had in 3 years as we sold 167 plants with a gross sales of \$1,614 and a net profit of \$712. Thank you to Nancy, Leonard, Helen, Ali, Sherlyn, Tom, Terry, and Ted for their time and effort in making this a successful fund raiser for the chapter.



R. 'Fran's Song' hybrid by Ralph Burns

photo by Ted Hewitt

Lace Bug Check Time

Emily Aune has begun to notice the hatching of a new crop of Azalea Lace Bugs at Hendricks Park, so, as the weather warms, the eggs that have over-wintered on the protected undersides of the leaves of our rhododendrons are beginning to hatch and this is the best time to deal with the problem before the bugs spread and multiply. See the website www.oregonstate.edu/dept/nurspest/azalea_lace_bug.htm for information.

Congratulations to **Rick Reed** who retired on May 15 after many years in the banking industry though he will not be sitting idly at home in the near future as he and Joyce have a long list of places to go and things to do. We again thank Rick for his years as chapter Treasurer and also co-chairing a number of flower shows.

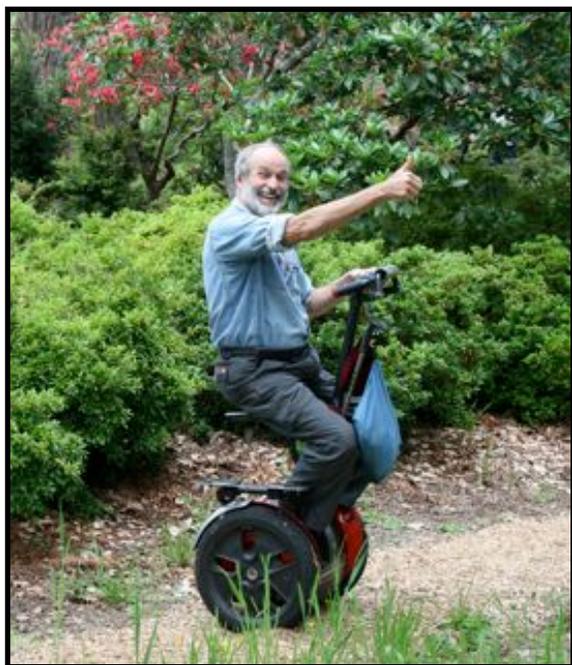


Spring Despite All

by Gordon Wylie

A thunderous crash signaled the fall of a second hefty limb from one of the large native oaks (*Q. garryana*) in the backyard as February's freezing rain descended on our garden in an effort to finish off any plants surviving the bitter cold only two months earlier. Four weeks on, as if further evidence of damage was needed, *R. ririei* completely defoliated. A year before it had been in glorious full bloom playing its usual role as harbinger of all that was to follow in our typically long season of rhododendrons in flower. Discouraging moments for any gardener. Would disappointment continue as the blooming season unfolded?

Certainly it didn't for around 500 visitors during April and May public open days at the O. Howard Hinsdale Garden. Though surely experiencing a more severe than usual winter, this large collection of magnolias, camellias and rhododendrons again demonstrated why they are such popular garden ornamentals in the Pacific Northwest that do especially well in coastal areas.



Visiting Hinsdale Garden on a Segway photo by Gordon

Another bonus this year was 54 Canadians arriving at Hinsdale on Mother's Day in an exuberantly painted tour bus. The Cowichan Valley Chapter ARS, CVRS in their common terminology, was founded twenty-five years ago by Victoria Chapter members in the Duncan area wishing to avoid driving some thirty miles in dark and stormy weather. Duncan has a population of about 5000, but Cowichan Valley totals around 80,000 residents. Their truss show and plant sale a week before this tour began saw 1200 plants sold, so the area must be home to many ardent gardeners. Bus tours sponsored by the Chapter have proved so popular as to also be fund raising events.

This tour started in the Bay Area of northern California, with most participants flying to San Francisco to participate, though a few had ridden the bus down from Vancouver Island. They visited the Mendocino Botanical Garden in Fort Bragg, and then journeyed north. Their first stop on Sunday before Hinsdale was at Shore Acres State Park, and arrival during the noon hour made it perfect as the lunch break. The local Friends of Hinsdale Garden group managed truly excellent box lunches prepared by Harbor Light restaurant in Reedsport. A perfect sunny day allowed our visitors to enjoy their meal at picnic tables and benches while looking out over a serene Umpqua River.

It was indeed a fun group and we all enjoyed the visiting. The guests were also free in purchasing raffle tickets and other offerings from the Friends, plus leaving a truly generous group donation to help assure the garden's future.

And, oh yes, what about our garden? I'm pleased to report the deciduous azaleas have really been quite nice this year!



R. 'Betty Arrington' in the Sarlak Garden

photo by Ali Sarlak

Walks in Hendricks Park:

- June 1 at 7:00 a.m.
Birding with Tom Mickel
- July 6 at 7:00 a.m.
Birding and Bird Biology
with Dan Gleason



R. 'Betty Arrington' in the Berkeley Garden (the way she used to be)
photo by Ted Hewitt (in 2009)



R. 'Betty Arrington' in the Sarlak Garden photo by Ali Sarlak

This will be the last Newsletter for the 2013-2014 Program Year so the next issue will be the August/September Newsletter in late August. Have a nice summer.

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EVENT CALENDAR

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CHAPTER EVENTS:

- June 29 Potluck Picnic at home of Ali & Gloria Sarlak, Noon to 3:00 p.m.
(Details on p. 1 of this Newsletter)
- Sept 13 Potluck Picnic at home of Sherlyn & Cameron Hilton
Noon to 3:00 p.m. Details will be in the Aug/Sept Newsletter

CONFERENCES 2014:

- September 26-28 ARS Western Regional Conference, Everett, WA
- October 20-24 70th Jubilee International Rhododendron Conference
Dunedin, New Zealand *'First for Rhododendrons'*

CONFERENCES 2015:

- May 6-10 ARS Annual Convention, Sydney B.C.

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