

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

## Eureka Chapter

### *The next meeting*

Thursday February 27, 7:00 p.m.  
Woman's Club  
1531 J Street  
Eureka, California

Pre-Meeting No Host Dinner 5:00

**Bayfront Restaurant,**  
1 F Street, Eureka, Call Nelda,  
707-443-8049 For a reservation  
so there will be enough seating



RSBG Big Leaf Rhododendron protistum  
at Humboldt Botanical Garden

2014

### "Healthy Soil: An Ecosystem"



Submitted photo

On **Thursday February 27th** the Eureka Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society will welcome **Gisele "G" Schoniger** as our guest speaker. The meeting will be held at the **Woman's Club 1531 J Street, Eureka beginning at 7:00p.m.**

**Gisele "G" Schoniger** is Manager and Organic Gardening Educator at Kellogg Garden Products. In her 33 years in the Garden Industry, Gisele has accumulated a wide range of experience and knowledge. She earned her degree in Ornamental Horticulture from Cali-

fornia Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo. She has owned an Interiorscape company, worked for the State Department of Agriculture, practiced as a horticultural therapist with senior citizens and launched an outstanding sales career by helping establish top-selling organic gardening products. Gisele will share her wealth of gardening wisdom as an educator to the industry and consumers all across the West. Her workshops are ***upbeat, educational and entertaining.***

Ms. Schoniger's program will be: **"Healthy Soil: An Ecosystem"**. If you've heard that a successful garden starts with good soil, you've been given good advice! Soil is a complex ecosystem, which supports all life on earth. But what is "good" soil and how do you know if you have it? Learn the basics of how to build and care for healthy soil in your landscape using natural and organic materials. Not only will you be rewarded with abundance of crops and beautiful landscapes, but also the feeling of making a difference in the garden-at-large, on this beautiful earth we all share.

She promises that you will be thrilled to have come to hear her program and to take away new knowledge.

*Photos are those of the Newsletter editor, June Walsh, Ellen Gill, Bruce Palmer and Tim Walsh. Permission is granted to reprint any portion of this publication provided credit to the author and Chapter is given.*



Top left: Camellias, rhododendrons and magnolia at Humboldt Botanical Garden, Top right; June and Tim Walsh with HBG president Evelyn Giddings receiving David Douglas award.



Second Row Left; Eureka Chapter Member Diane Larkin receiving the Humboldt Botanical Garden Larry Moss award from Evelyn Giddings.

Second Row right; June Walsh with one HBG's baby Big Leaf rhododendrons in the Moss Family Temperate Woodland Garden.



Finally the rain has come and is flowing. Lettuces loving the rain.



Second and third in the front row Eureka Chapter members, Norma Goerlitz and Ellen Gill, receive HGB Award for their participation on the Green Team which mostly propagates plants for the May plant sale.



Eureka Chapter members Nelda Palmer, in blue, Bruce Palmer and Tim Walsh, hiding in the trees, plant perennials in the Moss Family Temperate Woodland Garden at Humboldt Botanical Garden.

## Rh. 'Cloudburst'



### Plant of the Month

*Rhododendron* 'Cloudburst'

By *Don Wallace*

I have waited for some time to make this new hybrid of mine the Plant of the Month, as until now, I haven't had any plants available. This was one of my very first hybrids. I really liked the species *Rhododendron irroratum*, and especially the clone called 'Polka Dot'. The flowers displayed were full and interesting with all those "speckles". I also like the hybrid R. 'Wizard' by the Seattle hybridizer Halfdan Lem. Here was a rhododendron that

seemed to have a glow within the peachy flowers, so I made the cross. I used R. 'Wizard' because it had no pollen to use and the *R. irroratum* did. In those days the protocol was "find a rhody with some pollen and dab it onto as many others as I could and see what happened". Four years or so later I had about 5 seedlings that I liked. Some resembled R. 'Wizard' more, and others resembled the *R. irroratum* 'Polka Dot'. I named the best of the group R. 'Cloudburst' as all the dots reminded me of a heavy rainstorm.

This plant is an early bloomer, usually opening in late February or early March. It is a heavy bloomer, and perhaps due to the cool moist early spring weather the flowers last and last. I have seen flowers looking good from late February until early April. It is not that each flower lasts that long, but the bloom seems to go and go, thus resulting in color on the plant for this extended period. I have grown this plant in shade and sun and have found that it prefers shade. In shade the foliage is much darker green and it seems to bloom just fine in a shady spot. **I plan on bringing some for this upcoming meeting and will have some in the raffle and some for sale on the back table.**

### IT IS THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN

The rains have finally come, the Rhodys are starting to get ready for the **April Show (25th, 26, and 27th)** and so are we. At February's meeting volunteer coordinator, **Diane Larkin**, will have the volunteer sign-up sheet for the show available. It only takes a couple of hours at the show from everyone so we can have the best flower show on the west coast! Please sign up and help us out. *By Mary Marking*

Why would anyone want to head out to Humboldt Botanical Garden at this time of the year? There are blooms to be seen that will probably surprise you, that's why! Some Magnolias begin their bloom as early as mid-January and they continue right the way through to June in some cases. January through February is when Magnolia 'Caerhay's Belle' struts its stuff. A truly magnificent tree which can grow as much as 4 feet in a year in its early years, literally "explodes" in a tremendous mass of 10 to 12-inch, scented, bright pink flowers without a hint of purple. As we've told visitors before: "The good news is that they bloom very early and the bad news is, they bloom very early"! This beauty can really lift your spirits on a dreary winter day but that is often the problem; winter can be very hard on one-foot-wide pink flowers on our all too often blustery north coast in February. That said, it's worth visiting Humboldt Botanical Garden's "baby" giant pink Magnolia! You WILL be impressed and you will NEED one of your own!

What else might you see very early in the new year at Humboldt Botanical Garden? How about a number of Camellias! While we grow several hybrids and named species, the most impressive show comes from the *Camellia reticulata* hybrids, the "tree Camellias". It is said that the first introduction of *C. reticulata* "Tree" Camellias into Humboldt County were from the old historic Cottage Gardens Nursery in the very early 1900s. While our cool and dampish weather causes problems with many Camellias (especially the Japonicas and williamsii hybrids), the reticulatas, while not immune, are less bothered by petal blight where the flowers open and very quickly turn brown (often within hours) and fall off. The flowers of the reticulatas at HBG start their show as early as January and continue often into March. The flowers are very large, mostly double and very bright, especially on a darkish winter day!

Our collection of *Helleborus* is still quite small but they are adjusting well to their hillside home in the lowest point of the Moss Family Temperate Woodland Garden. In some years they flower starting in December but they usually peak in February and March (common names are 'Christmas Rose' and 'Lenten Rose'). We feature several named hybrids including 'Heronswood Red', a magnificent, true red-flowered clone. There are green-flowered species plants and several multicolored hybrids to cheer up a dark corner! These early bloomers are in the company of our still-growing collection of *Primulas* which often start blooming in December! The colors in the world of *Primulas* are best described as "Jewel-like" and you'll see what I mean when they start to spread with age and self-seeding!

Finally there are the early-blooming Rhododendrons. The Humboldt Bay region is about as close to Rhodie Nirvana as can be found in the United States. The "big-leafed" species (...if you've never seen *Rhododendron sinogrande*, you may not believe your eyes!) tend to be precocious bloomers along with a subsection called "arborea". These dazzlers often start showing off in January. Rhododendron plants have evolved in "torrentially" wet areas of the Himalayas and their flowers stand up quite well to our wet winters. These are just the beginning of a time of mass blooming for the Rhododendrons as a group but they are especially welcome at this time of the year! *Continued next page*

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So, what to do on a boring, grey, damp day around Humboldt Bay? Take a trip to Humboldt Botanical Gardens and find some amazing things that you didn't know about. Trust me, your spirits WILL rise!

Photos and text by Tim Walsh, HBG Volunteer, Eureka Chapter Treasurer, American Rhododendron Society Big-Wig and UC Extension Master Gardener. Humboldt Botanical Garden is at the North Gate at College of the Redwoods, Eureka.



*Helleborus 'Heronswood Red'*



*Rhododendron sinogrande*. This is in RBG Edinburgh...someday the ones at HBG will be this big too.



*Magnolia 'Caerhay's Belle'*



*Camellia reticulata*



*Camellia reticulata, Magnolia 'Caerhay's Belle', and Rhododendron 'Noyo Dream'*



*Magnolia 'Caerhay's Belle'*

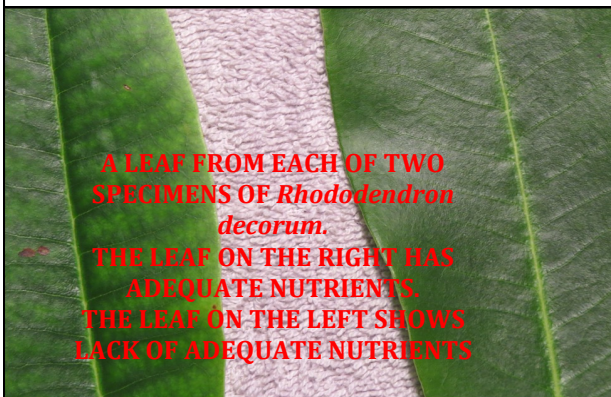
## WORD OF THE MONTH

*By Bruce Palmer*

This month's word is **NUTRIENT**. It's appropriate to update one of the first words that appeared in the newsletter, given that our speaker this month will be discussing fertilizers and amendments. The word is from the Latin *nutrire*, to feed. Nutrients in plants are the atoms and molecules plants use to construct cell parts, grow and flower. February is one of the recommended times to fertilize your rhodies (we say valentine's day, mother's day and labor day). By this time in a normal year the rains have leached a lot of the nutrients out of the soil. When you apply fertilizer, there are three symbols with numbers on the bag. What do those symbols on the bag (N,P,K) mean? Why are they so important? N stands for nitrogen. All three of the major molecules in cells (carbohydrates, fats and proteins) contain carbon, hydrogen and oxygen. All proteins contain nitrogen in addition to C, H and O. That's important because every part of a cell is a protein or is constructed by enzymes which are proteins. Plants can get all the C, H and O they need from the air, water and soil. The air is 80% nitrogen but plants can't use N from the air as it is; it must be attached (fixed) to an oxygen or sometimes a hydrogen atom. Certain kinds of bacteria do most of the fixing in the soil and higher plants take it up from there. Plants need so much of it, though, that if you want good looking garden plants you need to give them extra usable nitrogen. P stands for phosphorus. Phosphorus is used by cells to store the energy produced in photosynthesis and respiration. It takes extra energy to make flowers, fruits and seeds, so if you want good flowers in your garden, you need to give your plants extra phosphorus. With our Rhododendron blooming time, now is a good time to give them some phosphorus. Plants can get enough phosphorus from the soil if it is loose and well-drained, but clay particles trap it and don't let it move or get taken up by plants. Thus we tend to add planting mix in our sticky soils when we put in our rhodies. K stands for potassium. Potassium is one of those elements that acts to help enzymes do their work. It is used in large quantities by plants but often is not present in the soil in sufficient amounts for healthy looking garden plants.

Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium are the primary nutrients in commercial fertilizers, but there's an extensive list of other nutrients a plant requires, often in very small amounts. The other nutrients, often called micronutrients, are not usually in short supply in the soil so most of the time you won't have to worry about them. If you fertilize regularly and your plants still don't look good, you might consider adding micronutrients. Magnesium, the element essential to chlorophyll's action, can be added using Epsom Salts. Iron, used in some of the energy-producing enzyme systems, can be added as chelated iron. A lack of either of these elements will make your rhodie leaves look sick. The leaf photo shows two leaves, one with adequate nutrition and the other lacking nutrients.

Don't over fertilize, though. All members of the family to which Rhododendrons belong, the Ericaceae, appear to be totally dependent for their nutrients on fungi that invade their roots called mycorrhizal fungi, as we saw in the word of the month at this time last year. The root photo shows fungi associated with the roots of *Rhododendron siderophyllum*. Too great a concentration of nutrients can harm this vital relationship between fungi and plants. The best fertilizers are usually those with lower NPK numbers on the bag. Come to the meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup> and enjoy the talk on soil amendments and fertilizers.



**A LEAF FROM EACH OF TWO SPECIMENS OF *Rhododendron decorum*. THE LEAF ON THE RIGHT HAS ADEQUATE NUTRIENTS. THE LEAF ON THE LEFT SHOWS LACK OF ADEQUATE NUTRIENTS**



**PHOTOMICROGRAPH OF FUNGI ASSOCIATED WITH ROOTS OF *Rhododendron siderophyllum*. THE LARGE ROOT IS SLIGHTLY LARGER THAN A HUMAN HAIR. ALL OF THE RHODIES IN OUR YARD HAVE THE SAME FUNGUS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ROOTS.**

## To-Do Projects for a Whole Year for the Rhodo-Geek

Month	Project
January	Good time to dig and move rhododendrons
February	Valentine's Day early spring feeding time, use 6-7-5 fertilizer
March	Enjoy your flowers
April	Enjoy your flowers, Enter your flowers in the Eureka Chapter Show
May	Enjoy your flowers, Enter your flowers in the Eureka Chapter Mini-Show, start deadheading and pinching to promote branching and fullness
June	Enjoy your flowers, Keep deadheading and pinching. Father's Day feeding, use 6-7-5 fertilizer
July	Enjoy your late flowers, Keep deadheading and pinching. Replenish mulch.
August	If you have weevils, treat with Bayer Tree and Shrub Insect Control
<p>Important Note from Don Wallace: As it turns out, <i>Bayer, Ortho</i> and <i>Hi-Yield</i> weevil and thrip killer all contain <b>Imiducloprid</b> as the active ingredient. Unfortunately, this chemical is suspected of contributing to honey bee die off. I am usually not too concerned by using any chemical that works, but if we kill all of our pollinators, we will be in deep doo doo. <b>Imiducloprid research is ongoing.</b> I don't really know of a safer alternative other than the nematodes.</p>	
September	If you have weevils, While soil temperature is above 50F degrees and damp, put out nematodes. Temperature and moisture are critical to success.
October	Fall planting time; round up all those potted plants you purchased at the show and conference and garden sales and plant them. Fertilize the rest of your Rhodos with a low nitrogen fertilizer like 2-10-10
November	Relax and eat Thanksgiving dinner with family and friends, Start watching for <i>R. 'Cornubia'</i> and <i>R. 'Christmas Cheer'</i> to bloom
December	Sprinkle some dolomitic lime around your rhodos, Decorate your Rhodos!



The *Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden* in Federal Way, Washington, is preparing a special event to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Garden! This event is being held April 24-26, 2014 and we would like to invite all members of the American Rhododendron Society to attend. Speakers include David Chamberlain, Harold Greer, Douglas Justice and Steve Hootman. The full schedule of events as well as registration information and a link to the hotel is available on the RSF website, [RhodyGarden.org](http://RhodyGarden.org).



Eureka Chapter/American Rhododendron Society  
 2050 Irving Drive  
 Eureka, CA 95503-7022

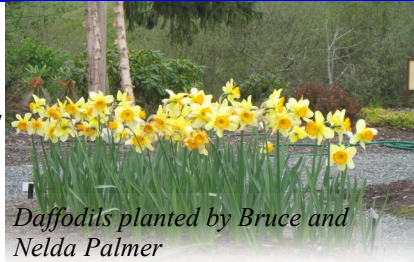
**Eureka Chapter**

Eureka Chapter is published monthly except during July and August. Submissions from members are encouraged and should be mailed to June Walsh, Bulletin Editor, 2050 Irving Drive, Eureka, CA 95503-7022. Rhodyhos-tel@suddenlink.net Membership information and applications are also available from Trish Ortiz. Ars.trish.ortiz@gmail.com Eureka Chapter is a member of the Humboldt Botanical Gardens Foundation, Eureka, Calif., and The Rhododendron Species Foundation, Federal Way, Wash. Eureka Chapter is a chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.

### Future Programs

<b>February 27, 2014</b>	<b>Gisele Schoniger, Healthy Soil: An Ecosystem</b>
March 27, 2014	Dennis McKiver, Mendo Coast BG Rhodos
April 24, 2014	Jack Olsen, Companion Plants for Rhodos
April 25 to 27, 2014	Rhodo Show and Sale
May 16 to 18, 2014	ARS Spring Convention, Cleveland, Ohio
May 22, 2014	Mini Show and Potluck
June 8, 2014	Member Garden Tour and Potluck Picnic
July and August	Weed and Water!
<b>September 18, 2014</b>	<b><i>This is a date Change! Bruce Palmer, native plants of Hawaii, Potluck Luau, Hawaiian shirt contest</i></b>
<b>Sept. 26-28, 2014</b>	<b>Western Regional Conference, Everett, WA</b>
October 23, 2014	TBD

*If spring came but once a century instead of once a year, or burst forth with the sound of an earthquake and not in silence, what wonder and expectation there would be in all the hearts to behold the miraculous change.* Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



*Daffodils planted by Bruce and Nelda Palmer*

### Eureka Chapter Officers and Board Members September 2013 to June 2014

<b>President, Bruce Palmer</b>	<b>Publicity, Ellie Gayner</b>
<b>Vice President, Jerry Reynolds</b>	<b>Past President, Betty Bottemiller</b>
<b>Secretary, Gail Ledbetter</b>	<b>Programs, Don Wallace</b>
<b>Treasurer, Tim Walsh</b>	<b>Membership, Ellen Gill (Max is on leave)</b>
<b>Director at Large, Nelda Palmer</b>	<b>Show Committee, Tom and Mary Marking</b>
<b>Newsletter Editor, June Walsh</b>	

For board member contact information or if you are interested in attending a board meeting, call or email June Walsh 707-443-0604