

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

*Eureka Chapter*

May 2020



**Let Us See Your Bloomers**

### President's Message

I am hopeful our wonderful members are doing well...and hopefully gardening to your heart's content!

Please be reminded that social distancing and common precautions for COVID-19 has the Chapter 'staying the course' to cancel both the May program and the June garden tour. We are talking about possibly having a small garden tour (maybe one to two homes) in August or September. This will depend on the status of the virus. More news will be forthcoming!

In the meantime, depending on the botanical garden's opening schedule, we encourage you to visit the Humboldt Botanical Garden, especially the Moss Family Temperate Woodland Garden – as it is now in full splendor showing an array of beautiful rhododendrons, azaleas, irises and many other trees and plants along the meandering pathways. The fragrance, colors and variety are simply spectacular!

You have my well wishes and sincere hope that this time teaches us good lessons. We are one of the marquee chapters in the ARS. Let's look forward to getting this 'rhody machine' back in action and better than ever! If there is new or changing news, we will be sure to inform you. Please contact us if you have any questions or suggestions.

My best to everyone!

*Max Abrahamsen, President*

## WORD OF THE MONTH – IMMUNITY, *By Bruce Palmer*

So far we appear to be lucky in our area with relatively few cases of COVID-19 circulating in our community. **Immunity** might be a good topic for this month. **Immunity** comes from the Latin *immunitas*, exemption (originally from public service). We tend to apply the term to animals, including humans, where antibodies at various locations in the body act to neutralize antigens (bacteria, viruses, toxic substances and protein fragments called prions) that cause major problems. Some animals, cockroaches for example, appear to have a natural **immunity** to all antigens. Most do not. Often having a disease confers **immunity** to having it again, but not always. At this point we don't know whether getting COVID-19 makes you immune, although current studies done with small numbers of hamsters and ferrets seems to indicate that **immunity** might result from being sick with the disease. Let's hope so and hope that we can get a viable vaccine in super record time. Let's hope so and hope that it doesn't drag on for two or three years as did the "Spanish Flu" a hundred years ago. Using that term for the Great Influenza is a misnomer – it appears to have originated at the post hospital at Fort Riley, Kansas (where I was stationed in the Army Veterinary Corps in the nineteen fifties) and been spread to Europe by U.S. troops in World War I.

We are a plant organization, so what about **immunity** in plants? Used in a broad sense, **immunity** would include defenses against predators as well as disease. In that sense, plants have an impressive arsenal. Plants do not have kidneys, livers or sweat glands to get rid of toxic byproducts of metabolism, so they often store them in their trunks, as in camphor and sandalwood or in leaves, as in sage and rosemary. Often, plants use these byproducts as defenses against pests, most often against insects, but also against browsing animals. Some plants can use these substances in ways that we usually associate with animal behavior. A well-documented case is giraffes and African acacias. When a leaf of an acacia tree is bitten by a giraffe, the leaf does two things. First, it fills its cells with tannic acid to irritate the giraffe's tongue and stop it from eating more leaves. Then the attacked tree sends out ethylene (the chemical that ripens fruit) into the air to warn neighboring acacias about the giraffe. The neighboring acacias then secrete tannic acid to prevent attack. The giraffes have adapted to this tactic and move either upwind or a hundred yards or more away. There are many other tactics employed by plants, mostly to repel insects. Tan oaks locally use tannic acid to repel insects and we in turn harvested tan oak bark in the early nineteen hundreds to sell to animal hide tanners. Willows store salicylic acid, the precursor of aspirin, to repel insects. In the tropics, the sensitive plant takes a more physical approach to escape being eaten by grazing animals. When one leaf is touched by anything, all leaves on the plant wilt immediately and the plant effectively disappears.

What about rhododendrons? Several members of the Ericaceae family, including *Rhododendron* and *Pieris*, use toxins to fight insect attacks. These toxins are named Grayanotoxins (after the American botanist Asa Gray) and are deadly to many insects and toxic but not usually deadly to humans. They kill honeybees but not bumblebees, which may provide more pollen to rhodies as the big bumblebees rummage around in the flowers. Grayanotoxins don't usually kill people but, as neurotoxins, they can have interesting neurological effects. "Mad Honey", produced from the nectar of *Rhododendron ponticum* is used in Turkey to produce hallucinations. Many of us are aware of the famous incident in 69 B.C., when a Greek king defeated an invading Roman army by tricking the soldiers into eating mad honey or drinking mead made from it. You may have noticed that some of your rhodies are more susceptible to weevil damage than others. That is because some rhodies produce more Grayanotoxin than others. The weevil that attacks our plants came from Central Europe and Asia Minor. So did *R. ponticum*. If you have *R. 'Fastuosum Flore Pleno'* (a very early hybrid, ± 1846), you might have noticed that it seldom gets attacked by weevils. That may be because one its parents is



*R. ponticum*, which has very high levels of Grayanotoxin and **immunity** to weevils.

*Editor's note; The Eureka Chapter newsletter and the ARS Journal have published many of Bruce's articles about the WORDS we use to understand the natural world. Bruce taught biology at Maui Community College for 25 years and is the recipient of the 2015 American Rhododendron Society Gold Medal.*

**R. 'FASTUOSUM FLORE PLENO'  
NOT ATTACKED BY WEEVILS BECAUSE OF  
R. ponticum PARENTAGE ?**



**Plant of the Month**  
***Rhododendron 'May Day'***  
**By Don Wallace**

What better choice for May's Plant of the Month than 'May Day' with its rich red-orange bells that cover the plant in May, making a festive look in the garden. The plant grows wider than tall and will be 5 ft tall and 8 ft wide in 10 years. The foliage is a very nice dark green with a dusting of indumentum on the undersides. The leaves hold for 2-3 years making it a full and lush plant. The bloom is quite long, 3-4 weeks, and is always noticed by our customers. Plant with 'Blue Lagoon' or 'Royal Purple' for a show you won't forget.

*Editor's note; Don Wallace is owner of Singing Tree Gardens Nursery, he has written the Plant of the Month for many years and seldom does the same plant twice. He was honored by the American Rhododendron Society with the Silver Medal in 2007*



'Starbright Champagne' Richard Grabowski



Richard Grabowski



Richard Grabowski



Laurie Ervin



Iris in Bloom, Richard Grabowski



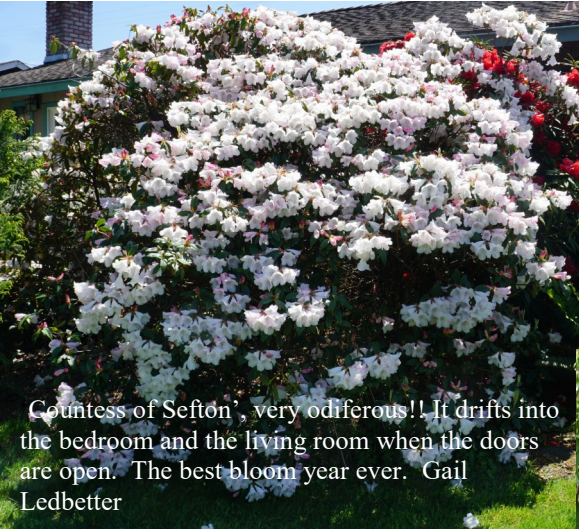
Laurie Ervin



Laurie Ervin



'Dee's Pantaloons', a one-of-a-kind hybrid by Don Wallace. I named it after Dolores's fancy ruffles. Paul



'Countess of Sefton', very odiferous!! It drifts into the bedroom and the living room when the doors are open. The best bloom year ever. Gail Ledbetter



'Northern Lights'  
Trish & Joe Ortiz



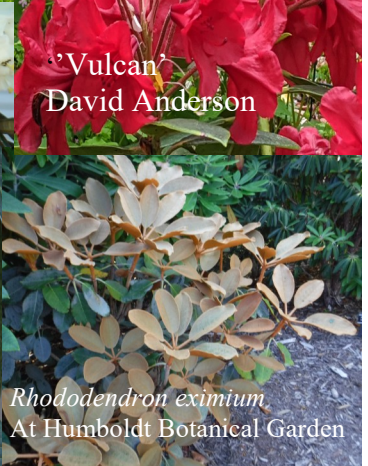
'Vulcan'  
David Anderson



'Rubicon' Gail Ledbetter



'Yaku Angel' David Anderson



*Rhododendron eximium*  
At Humboldt Botanical Garden



*Rhododendron sinogrande*,  
This is the first time it has bloomed. Gail Ledbetter



*Rhododendron mechukae*  
At Humboldt Botanical Garden



'Coral Mist'  
David Anderson



'Starbright Champagne' David Anderson



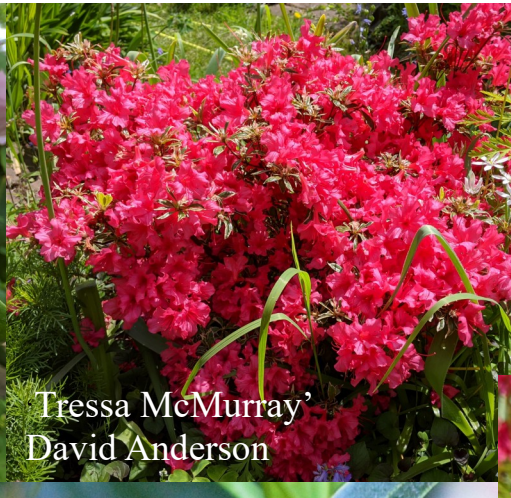
*Rhododendron arboretum*  
'Leonardslee'  
Humboldt Botanical Garden



'Schneekrone' Trish & Joe Ortiz



Unknown , David Anderson



Tressa McMurray'  
David Anderson



*Lilium mackliniae*  
Tim Walsh



'Alice Eastwood''  
Nelda Palmer



*Rhododendron 'genestieranum'*  
Nelda Palmer



Mt. St. Helen's'  
David Anderson



'Nasselle' Humboldt Botanical Garden



Garden lovlies,  
Nelda Palmer



Jim's garden, 'Markeeta's Prize'  
Ellie Gayner



*Tulipa Gregii*  
'Red Riding Hood' Karen Angel



*Aquilegia caerulea*  
Rocky Mt, Columbine  
Karen Angel



*Aesculus carnea*,  
Sue Hemmann



'Nasselle' Humboldt Botanical Garden



Jingle Bells' Ellen Gill



'Fire Rim' Lynne Sarty



'Kiwi Magic'  
Trish & Joe Ortiz



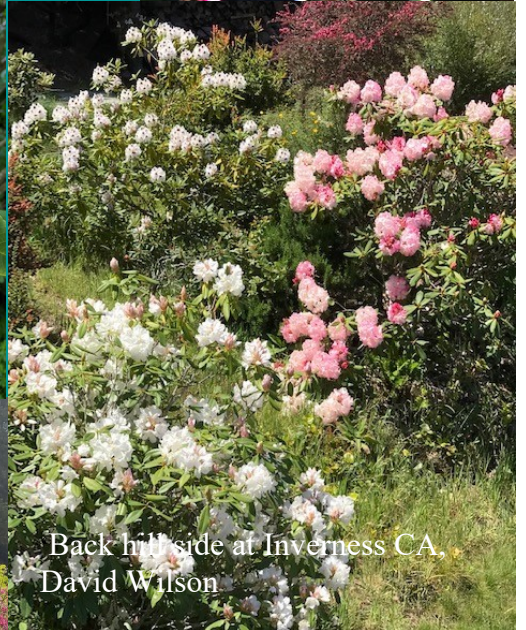
'Arneson's Gem'  
Karen Angel



'Mi Amor' calyxes, Lynne Sarty



*R. serotinum*, D. Anderson



Back hillside at Inverness CA,  
David Wilson



Front yard, Lynne Sarty



Jim's Garden, Elsie Gayner



'Rubicon' June Walsh

'Mi Amor' Lynne Sarty



'Spring Field' June Walsh



Ellie Gayner



'Purple Passion' Trish & Joe Ortiz



*Davidia involucreta*, First flower, 15 yrs, Tim Walsh



'Horizon Monarch' Trish & Joe Ortiz



Laurie Ervin



Laurie Ervin



'Seaview Sunset' Trish & Joe Ortiz



'Calsap' Trish & Joe Ortiz



*Rhododendron grande*  
Humboldt Botanical Garden



*Trillium ovatum*  
Humboldt Botanical Garden

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Eureka Chapter Newsletter is published monthly except during July, August and November.

Submissions from members are encouraged and should be sent to June Walsh, Newsletter Editor, by email [RhodyHostel@suddenlink.net](mailto:RhodyHostel@suddenlink.net)  
Membership information and applications are available from Ellen Gill. [HtgIanderg@suddenlink.net](mailto:HtgIanderg@suddenlink.net)

Eureka Chapter is a member of the **Humboldt Botanical Gardens**, Eureka, CA and **The Rhododendron Species Botanical**, Federal Way, WA.

Eureka Chapter is a chapter of the American Rhododendron Society a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization.

[www.EurekaRhody.org](http://www.EurekaRhody.org)



*Eureka Chapter  
American Rhododendron Society*

*Rhododendrons  
in the Redwoods*

## Future Programs (WE HOPE!)

May 28, 2020

June 7, 2020

*July and August*

*September, 24, 2020*

*October 22, 2020*

*November 2020*

*December 3, 2020*

*January 28, 2021*

*February 25, 2021*

*March 25, 2021*

*April, 22, 2021*

*April 23-25 2021*

*May 27, 2021*

*June 6, 2021*

**Member Mini Show, Canceled**

**Member Garden Tour , Canceled**

*Weed, Deadhead, Wear Your Mask and enjoy your garden*

*Dennis Bottemiller, the Rutherford Conservatory*

*Steve McCormick and John Stevens, Rhodos in Finland*

*Enjoy Family and Friends, Give Thanks*

*Holiday Member Meeting*

*Bruce Palmer, Plant Hunting with Joseph Rock*

*Mike Stewart, David Douglas Plant Explorer*

*Marc Colombel...From France!*

*Atsuko Gibson, Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden,  
Propagation*

*Rhododendron Show and Sale*

*Let us See Your Bloomers, Mini Show*

*Member Garden Tour and picnic*

***All programs subject to Change and Cancelation, NO kidding!***

While you are in quarantine shop online at the ARS Store. You can benefit the ARS by using Amazon Smile. Whenever you shop at **Target, Walmart, or Amazon**, and Amazon Prime please start here: [www.ARSStore.org](http://www.ARSStore.org)

These vendors send the ARS a small commission based on your purchase which benefits the ARS and does not cost you anything.

## Eureka Chapter Officers and Board Members

For board member contact information or if you are interested in attending a board meeting which are held the first Wednesday of the month at 7PM, call or email June Walsh 707-443-0604