



Prunus serrula (tibetan cherry)

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

EUGENE CHAPTER

FEBRUARY 2014 NEWSLETTER

February Chapter Meeting

THE SHADY ROCK GARDEN

Truls Jensen of Wild Ginger Farm Nursery, Beaver Creek, OR

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NEWSLETTER

Editor Barbara Novak
541-465-2155
email: kbhome@epud.net

Printing & Mailing

Harold Greer
541-686-1540

hgreer@greergardens.com

Webmaster Ted Hewitt
547-687-8119

Truls Jensen owns and operates Wild Ginger Farm nursery with his wife, Emma Elliot. They specialize in alpine, rock garden, Western native and woodland plants and, as Truls has indicated, have developed a number of successful shady rock garden beds as the trees have grown.

Truls was born in Norway and has a PhD in Entomology. As a scientist, he conducted ecological field research for the University of California, the USDA and the Illinois Natural History Survey. He brings his observational skills to his role as primary propagator at Wild Ginger Farm. His ability to think outside the box has led to innovative propagation and cultivation approaches.

Rock gardens are a perfect place to grow many of the smaller rhododendrons from rocky areas of the high Himalayas. Truls will show us how to create beds, the planting mix that he uses, and gardening methods for successful rock gardens. Wild Ginger Farm website www.wildgingerfarm.com includes many "how-to" illustrated articles and videos dealing with rock gardens as well as their extensive catalog.

The meeting will start at 6:30 p.m. at the Campbell Community Center, 155 High Street in Eugene with a social time with cookies and coffee followed by the program at 7:00. The public is invited at no charge.

Join us for a pre-meeting no-host dinner at 5:00 at Oregon Electric Station on 5th Ave. at Willamette Street. This is a pleasant time to meet the speaker and visit with friends. Please RSVP to Ted Hewitt at

ted.hewitt@comcast.net or by phone at 541-687-8119 by Tuesday, February 11, so that we may notify the restaurant how many to set the table for.



Hendricks Park January 11, photo by Ali Sarlak

Editor's Note

January is the month when I decide that I have too many fruiting vines and trees. In late February I will prune, er, hack at my roses and find out that I have way too many roses. I will try to not bore you by going on and on about the beauty and apparent cold hardness of the witch hazels (though I could, I could...).

Many of my large leaved rhododendrons have severely brown leaves, including magnificum, macabeum, and arizelum, but sinogrande is still mostly green. Like many of us, I am waiting to see if any of these will pull through - but one of my big leaved rhododendrons looks GREAT! *Rhododendron rex ssp rex*.

Rex is reported to be hardy to 0 °F. Its classification is subgenus Hymananthes, section Ponticum, subsection **FALCONERA**; and its origin in China (where else) is within S. Sichuan province and NE Yunnan province. You may be thinking, where the heck is this Sichuan province that so many rhododendrons come from, so the next column has a map of China, showing the two provinces.



My REX, on January 25 2014

The lowlands of these provinces have tropical climates but Western Sichuan and NE Yunnan provinces are mountainous, with some elevations exceeding 16,000 feet, so the climate is quite mild in most of these areas. These mountains are the eastern beginnings of the Himalayan range and comprise an uplifted seafloor. Therefore the soils are basaltic, not granitic, with areas of mudstone, sandstone and limestone. The area has dry winters but an abundance of rain, mostly falling in June through August. *Rhododendron rex* should do well in our basaltic soils here in Eugene, and in the coast range, but will probably be most happy if



http://www.peachfoundationusa.org/images/China_map.jp

watered well in the summer. Since it is used to very dry winters, it would probably be happy planted near or under roof eaves in dry winter soils.

Rex's leaves are deep green and glossy and may be obovate (egg-shaped with the wide end at the apex, or tip, of the leaf) to oblanceolate (take the obovate leaf and pull it so it is much longer than wide), and over 14 inches in length. The indumentum is fawn-colored and the new leaves are pale and fuzzy. Oh, and it flowers too! The flowers are held in ball shaped trusses, campanulate (bell-shaped), white with a modest pink tinge and charming crimson spotting on the inside of each flower. The Royal Horticultural Society has given Rex an Award of Merit. Like all **FALCONERA**, Rex makes a large shrub that can eventually become a small tree (25-30 feet).

In addition to the subspecies *rex*, there is a subspecies *gratum*, which is rarely seen outside China and a subspecies *fictolacteum* which seems more prevalent in commerce, perhaps because it is reported to be slightly smaller at maturity, with a deeper colored indumentum; but probably mostly for darker pink flowers.

Reportedly, *Rhododendron rex* is threatened by habitat loss, so plant one!

From the President

One of the Ericaceae plants that has been always on top of my list of interests is *Kalmia latifolia*, commonly called kalmia, mountain-laurel or spoonwood. It is native to the Eastern United States and horticulturist Alfred Rehder called it “one of the most beautiful native American shrubs.” The variety Pink Charm has won the Royal Horticultural Society’s Award of garden merit.

Kalmia comes in variety of colors: pink-rose, deep rose, white and purple and in a variety of sizes from dwarves to large shrubs. In places in Carolina, mountain-laurels are trees. Mountain-laurel grows in partial shade and also full sun. Don't confuse it with other 'laurels' such as bay laurel, California laurel and English laurel. Like most other members of its family, including blueberries and rhododendrons, *Kalmia latifolia* requires acidic soil with a pH between 5 and 6.

I personally experience some difficulty keeping these plants happy in my yard in Corvallis. For best growth these plants require somewhat moist soil with very good drainage. It is hard to believe but, in our area, the summer gets very dry with barely any rain.

In spite of the difficulties of growing mountain-laurel well, I still try to grow some varieties. I am in the landscape business and for some clients I recommend Rhododendrons as foundation planting

and mountain-laurel as a mass planting for a display of colors, and in some cases, mountain-



www.whatgrowsthere.com

laurel can be used for screening. I tell the clients if they raise rhododendrons only they save money, because the plants do not need trimming very often.

Mountain-laurel was used in the early 1800s for wooden clocks and even today the wood is used for wood railings, wreath making, furniture and bowls.

All parts of *Kalmia latifolia* are poisonous to humans and livestock, and honey from bees who visit kalmia may be poisonous. It is evidently not a problem to birds. The more I learn and read about these unique native plants the more I will use them and try to enjoy their beauty. I hope I started your interest so that you may consider having a few kalmia in your landscape.

I can't close this note without thanking Jack Olson for the wonderful presentation he did for us the last meeting. Thank you Jack and Sandy Olson.



Federal Way, WA

More information:
RhodyGarden.org
253-838-4646 x. 140
Lodging:
Hampton Inn & Suites

RSF 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

April 25 and 26, 2014
Everyone Welcome

Speakers: David Chamberlain, Harold Greer,
Steve Hootman, Douglas Justice

Reception & Banquet

Featuring: Garden & Nursery Tours;
Hilltop Artists Glass Art Exhibit

This will be a wonderful opportunity to visit the R. Species Foundation Botanical Garden at peak Rhododendron bloom time.

The Saturday evening banquet will be held at Weyerhaeuser's corporate headquarters, an architecturally significant structure designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (who also designed Chicago's Sears Tower), to harmonize with its forested surroundings. The architects dubbed their creation a groundscraper because its immensity lies in a horizontal rather than vertical dimension.

ANNOUNCEMENT 2014 TOUR OF NORTHERN EUROPE	<u>ITINERARY</u>
<p>A tour of Denmark and Northern Germany will leave just after the ARS Convention in May of 2014. We will meet at an Airline's Hub and fly to Hamburg, Germany. A Coach will take us to all of the Rhododendron Gardens and sites in Northern Germany and then into Denmark. The tour is going for \$3975 with double occupancy rooms. The Tour includes Airfare from the Airline Hub, Coach and Driver, Hotels, all breakfasts and 4 Dinners. The fare is based on present exchange rates and fees and should be accurate within about 10%. We have had enough interest so we may have two Hubs, one on the East Coast and one out of Seattle to get group rates to fly into Hamburg, Germany. We ask that everyone on the Tour meet us at the Airline's Hub and fly as a group to Hamburg, so we know everyone will be there when we arrive in Hamburg. We will let people know where they need to meet once we know who is going.</p> <p>Contact Wm. R. Heller: william.r.heller@boeing.co</p>	<p>May 20 Tuesday Depart States for Hamburg, Germany May 21 Wednesday Arrive Hamburg around Noon, Coach to Oldenburg, Germany for 3 nights. May 22 To Westerstede for the Rhodo 2014 Exhibition May 23 Hobbie Rhododendron Garden & Scholsspark in Lutetsburg May 24 Brun's Nursery, Bad Zwischenahn in Gristede, Bremen Rhodo. Park & Botanic. Travel to Hamburg one night in hotel May 25 Hachmann's Nursery, Pflanzen un Blumen and Hamburg Botanical Gardens. To Sonderborg Denmark one night in hotel. May 26 Inge & Harry Froloch's garden, Haje & Askel Hojgaard's garden in Skarbakp, Ulla and Svend Aage Askjaer's garden in Spottrup. Stay over in Viborg. May 27 Rhododendron Haven by Helle & Claus Erik Jorgensen in Tarring, Halse's garden in Fuhen. To Copenhagen for the remainder of the tour with day trips out to the area's gardens. May 28 Wednesday To Gl. Koegegaard's Manor House in Koege, Danish Display Garden, Peter Hansen's Large Garden just outside Nakskov. May 29 Svend Hansen' Kaernehuset Nursery/Gardens with Svend's & Frederikborg Castle and the baroque garden May 30 Nivaagaard an Art Museum where Svend Hansen has done the bulk of the planting, then to Carl Adam Lehmann's summer garden in Hornbaek. May 31 Rosenborg Castle and Gardens, then back to Carl Adam Lehmann's Garden in Copenhagen and Depart early evening from Copenhagen.</p>

Rhododendron wumingense
by Ted Hewitt

Now you can be the first on your block to grow *Rhododendron wumingense* in your garden. This very dwarf member of Subsection Maddenia is known to occur on only one isolated mountain, Daming Shan, in southern Guangxi Province in China where it was found by Steve Hootman and Peter Cox on a 2010 plant exploration trip, though it had been written about by Chinese botanists prior to that time. This was the expedition that Keith White participated in and spoke to us about a few years ago. (RSBG 2012 yearbook *Rhododendron Species*, p. 22)

It has tiny elliptic leaves, typically an inch or less in length, and, in the wild, forms tight, low mounds on the tops of exposed boulders and on cliffs. Borne in clusters of one, two or three, the pure white flowers appear quite large for this size plant and have interestingly reflexing petals. As with many of the members of this subsection, it is rated as being hardy to only +10° F but Steve Hootman thinks that it might be hardier than this, based on other species that have been found in neighboring northern Vietnam.

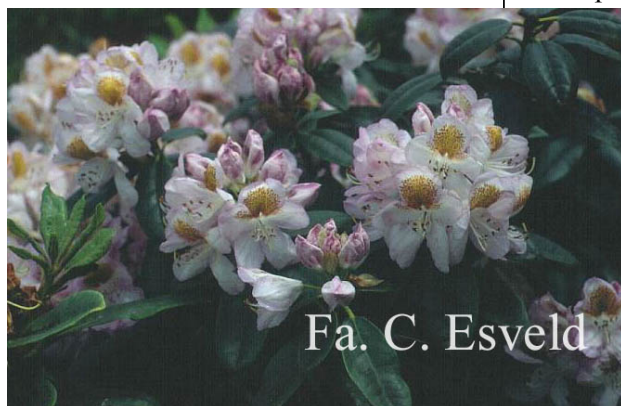
So far, it appears to be very slow growing and requires good drainage, so Steve suggests that it would do well in a container or a hanging basket that could be brought inside during exceptionally cold weather. Currently, *R. wumingense* is being offered for the first time at the RSBG (you might be able to pick one up at the RSF 50th Anniversary Celebration in April or it can be ordered from the RSBG now).

Rhododendron ‘Mrs. T.H. Lowinsky’ and the Hybrids of Tom H. Lowinsky

by John M. Hammond

Tom H. Lowinsky is a name that is rarely mentioned in rhododendron publications and, when it does come to the fore, as was the case in a short article by Jack Olson in the January, 2014 issue of the Eugene Chapter *Newsletter*, it is usually in connection with the rhododendron named after his wife. The correct name for this hybrid is R. ‘Mrs. T.H. Lowinsky’, of which Frederick Street, the well known nurserymen said:

‘There are a number of outstanding blotched hybrids and probably the most famous and popular of all is Rhododendron ‘Sappho’ ‘Viscount Powerscourt’ is equally outstanding. But the plant I would choose is a white Rhododendron ‘Mrs. T.H. Lowinsky’. There is more to



this flower than a prominent orange blotch. It is almost a flare because it fades out, although somewhat abruptly, into the ivory white of the petals. It is the shape of these that makes the plant as attractive as it is. They curve backwards at the top and forwards at the base to give each individual flower an orchid-like effect. In addition to this, the habit of the plant is so good and the foliage is so dark a green that it always looks well even under the worst condition’.

R. ‘Mrs. T.H. Lowinsky’ was introduced and named around 1917 by Waterer’s of Knap Hill Nursery and is said to be of complex parentage involving *R.ponticum*, *R.maximum* and *R.catawbiense*. Its hardiness, to which Jack Olson refers, likely comes from *R.catawbiense* and its heat tolerance from *R.maximum*; it received an AM from the R.H.S. in 1919, and it is still widely available on both sides of the Atlantic. It grows well in a container. Around the turn of the Century, if you provided Waterers with a sufficiently large order for plants, were able to demonstrate a knowledge of plants and trees and could chat with the somewhat shy and blunt Anthony Waterer II, and he just happened to like you, then it was possible to have a seedling from a mature cross named after a member of the family. There are no records to substantiate this was the case with R. ‘Mrs. T.H. Lowinsky’, nevertheless, it is par for the course for this to be the origin of the name.

This hybrid is often marketed in North America as R. ‘Mrs.

Tom H. Lowinsky’. Beware, this is the name of an entirely different cross, which some reports indicate was raised and named by Tom H. Lowinsky, a *R.griffithianum* x R. ‘Halopeanum’ (aka ‘White Pearl’) cross which is thought to have been made prior to 1918. R. ‘Mrs. Tom H. Lowinsky’ has a relatively tender white flower with dark spots and has not been in commerce for at least 50 years. Some observers have suggested it may no longer be in cultivation, however, it would not be surprising if there were plants still extant in temperate old gardens in Southwest England, Northern California and Southern Oregon, as the Cottage Gardens Nursery of Eureka imported tens of thousands of hybrids directly from nurseries in England.

Thomas Hermann Lowinsky was born in 1857 into a family of merchants and was formerly General Manager of Hyderabad (Deccan) Co., coal mines in India. Latterly he was a stockbroker at the firm of L. Hirsch and Co., at Warnford Court, Throgmorton Street in the City of London. About 1898 he purchased Tittenhurst Park, a 72-acre estate in Sunninghill, an exclusive residential district of Berkshire on the

fringe of Windsor Great Park. Tittenhurst Park was previously the home of Professor Thomas Holloway who is remembered as the founder of the famous Holloway College, and by the early-1900’s Tom H. Lowinsky had enhanced the earlier rhododendron plantings of Prof. Holloway, who from around 1850 had originally placed them in formal parterres. Prior to The Great War, Lowinsky establish a famous collection of rhododendrons, trees and shrubs that was particularly highly regarded by his compatriots in the rhododendron world. Somehow he had the ability to grow specimen plants and his seedlings at his cold ‘inland’ garden better than many of his peers, and he managed to keep them healthy and in good condition.

This somewhat un-remarked gentleman not only owned a major collection of species, he was also a prolific hybridiser, particularly with *R.griffithianum* that, in the early-1900’s, he crossed with just about everything that would take it in his garden. Lowinsky had obtained his rose-pink form of *R.aucklandii* ‘Roseum Superbum’ from Richard Gill who had been head gardener for many years to Mrs. Shilson at Tremough in Cornwall, prior to setting up his own nursery in the old walled garden on the estate. A friend of Mrs. Shilson, who had noted the nurseryman’s interest in rhododendrons, had sent this form of *R.aucklandii* to Gill and he believed it to have been a graft or layer from a large plant in the Italian Lakes. Lowinsky

Rhododendrons of Tom H. Lewinsky

by John Hammond, continued from page 4.

protected this plant in winter with a canvas tent and used the plant extensively in his hybridisation programme from which R. 'Dorothea', R. 'The Don', R. 'Snow White' and R. 'Xenia' were named. He made thousands of crosses using newly available species, and jointly with Lord Aberconway was the first to flower and show *R. griersonianum*.

Tittenhurst Park suffered due to the loss of garden staff in The Great War, although Lowinsky did make inroads in regard to restoring the gardens following the cessation of hostilities in 1918. Nevertheless, problems caused by overcrowding remained. In the early-1920's, just when his many years of hybridisation work were beginning to come to fruition, he suddenly lost interest in rhododendrons and decided to concentrate on another hobby in the world of art. He vacated Tittenhurst Park and in 1926 the property passed to an owner who was not particularly interested in rhododendrons; but in the same year, Lowinsky's famous collection of species and his own hybridisation work were offered to Lionel de Rothschild of Exbury, who purchased the entire collection in collaboration with another highly regarded rhododendron personality, Mr. J.J. Crosfield of Embley Park, Romsey. Lionel de Rothschild, who retained Lowinsky's record books, noted :

'. . . . I spent three whole days at Tittenhurst arranging for its dispersal A very large specimen of Aucklandii Roseum Superbum [*R. griffithianum*] was also in the border, and it is pleasing to think that this plant will find vigour and a fresh lease of life in the more congenial climate of Muncaster It was Mr. Lowinsky's procedure, immediately any seedling showed signs of flowering, to lift it from the nurseries and pot it up; those worth keeping were either grown on in pots or eventually planted out. In addition there were in pots a certain number of species, including the newer Chinese ones, which enabled him to flower these at the earliest possible moment with the certainty that the weather would not spoil them It is certainly to be regretted that this collection has been broken up, and it is still more to be regretted that it should be in the lifetime of one who has spent so many hours of his life in growing and improving the Rhododendrons of this country so far his [Lowinsky's] Aucklandii crosses have been supreme My one aim in arranging for the distribution of these plants has been to allow some of the best of all his hybrids to be obtained by any one who was ready to seize the opportunity'.

It seems inexplicable that having spent 25 years establishing a major plant collection, which extended over most of the 25-acre estate, Lowinsky could just walk out the front gates and leave thousands of his plants and seedlings, a large quantity of fertilised flowerst and his records behind. Lowinsky's plant collection was broken-up and distributed mainly to Exbury and Embley Park. A batch, including some large specimens, found a new home at Muncaster, and

it is likely that Sir John Ramsden intended to use the *R. griffithianum* in his own crosses, as some made in the early-1930's had this species in their parentage. Sir James Horlicks and Sunningdale Nurseries were also recipients of a batch of Lowinsky's plants and over the years a total of around 22 of the latter's hybrids were named. Lionel de Rothschild's second Head Gardener at Exbury was Arthur Bedford, a very capable gardener in the old tradition, and on returning to Exbury from the 1934 Chelsea Flower Show, where a large exhibit had been staged by Lionel, the Head Gardener sat down on a bench and commented, 'Ah, well, another Chelsea over', then suddenly collapsed and died from thrombosis. Lionel named one of Lowinsky's best lavender hardy hybrids R. 'Arthur Bedford' (syn. 'A. Bedford') in his memory. This is a cross of an unnamed mauve seedling and *R. ponticum*; it is fragrant with an almost black flare in the throat, is lighter in the throat and shades to darker around the petal edges, and is still available in the U.K.

Some of Lowinsky's plants remained at Tittenhurst Park; indeed, there were a large number of seedlings in the garden when the estate was sold. In the early-1900's, in parallel with five other gentleman gardeners, Lowinsky repeated the R. 'Penjerrick' cross made famous by Barclay Fox and Samuel Smith. It is not known who acquired the clones from his cross of the pink form of *R. griffithianum* x *R. campylocarpum*, but you may come across these seedlings in a well-known garden one day. Thomas Hermann Lowinsky passed away in 1931.

Some of you may recall the name Tittenhurst Park as the estate purchased by John Lennon on 4, May, 1969. Group photographs were taken there in August 1969 before the 'Beatles' parted company. The video of John Lennon's 'Imagine' was recorded there with Yoko Ono later the same year, and some years later the estate was purchased by Ringo Starr. The final words belong H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, who purchased the estate in around 1989, and who was deeply interested in the cultivation of the rhododendrons in his historic garden - he recalled in 1996:

'I came to Tittenhurst Park, my family home in England, for the first time in 1989. The rhododendron 'Mrs. Tom H. Lowinsky', seen in full glory at that time, stands out very clearly in my mind. At the Chelsea Flower Show in 1995 I was particularly thrilled with the knowledge that on our exhibit we were able to give pride of place to the progeny of perhaps the mother-plant of 'Mrs. Tom H. Lowinsky', still growing strongly at Tittenhurst.'

R S F T u r n s 5 0

by Ted Hewitt

2014 marks the 50th anniversary of the Rhododendron Species Foundation and a gala celebration is planned for April 25-26 with events at the Rhododendron Species Botanic Garden, the Weyerhaeuser Corporate Headquarters, and the Hampton Inn Hotel in Federal Way, Washington.

On Friday, April 25, Harold Greer will start the program with a talk on *The Rhododendron Species Foundation Story* (remember that the RSF began right here in Eugene) followed by a talk by Steve Hootman, the Executive Director of the RSBG, on *The Rhododendron Species Foundation Today*. Later in the afternoon, there will be time to tour the gardens including the propagation area, the nursery, and the Rutherford Conservatory.

On Saturday, Douglas Justice, Associate Director and Curator of the University of British Columbia Botanic Garden in Vancouver, will continue the talks, there will be more time in the gardens for tours and visits with the speakers, and, in the evening, there will be a reception and banquet at the Weyerhaeuser Corporate Headquarters, concluding with a program with David Chamberlain, Research Associate at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh, Scotland, and Harold Greer.

During the celebration, there will be an emphasis on informal time and tours in the RSBG and its facilities at the height of the rhododendron species flowering season, meeting casually with staff and other delegates in what has become over the last several years an internationally renowned botanical garden, arguably containing the most comprehensive collection of natural rhododendron species in the world. What an opportunity to visit this fine garden and facility.

The Siuslaw Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

Chapter Meeting

Tuesday February 18 at 6:30 pm for refreshments.

At 7 pm an expert panel of Chapter rhododendron growers will present ‘‘*SPRINGTIME CARE FOR OUR GARDENS*’’ to prepare your garden for bloom.

The public is invited to the Presbyterian Church of the Siuslaw at 3996 Highway 101 in Florence. Call 541-997-7573 or go to siuslawars.org.

The Portland Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

Chapter Meeting

Thursday, February 20, 2014 7:00PM - 9:00 PM

All Saints Episcopal Church, 4033 S. E. Woodstock Blvd. Portland, OR

"ALL THAT GLITTERS - LEVERAGING LIGHT AND COLOR IN YOUR GARDEN"

A multimedia presentation by Kathy AND Dave Collier of Collier's Nursery on the use of light and color to create interest in your garden, feathering slides of several tour gardens and followed by a COMPANION PLANT AUCTION

American Rhododendron Society

Eugene Chapter

PO Box 7704

Springfield, OR 97475



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American Rhododendron Society*

February 2014
Newsletter

2014

EVENT CALENDAR

2014

CHAPTER EVENTS

- February 13 The Shady Rock Garden, with Truls Jensen & Emma Elliot of Wild Ginger Farm Nursery, Beaver creek, OR
- March 13 The Humboldt Botanic Garden, with Tim Walsh
Officer and Board Member Elections
- April 19 2013 Spring Rhododendron Show & Awards Banquet at Hilton Garden Inn
- May 10 Plant Sale at Lane County Fairgrounds

CONFERENCES 2014

- April 25-26 RSF 50th Anniversary Celebration, Federal Way, WA
- May 16-18 ARS Annual Convention, Cleveland, OH
- September 26-28 ARS Western Regional Conference, Everett, WA

CONFERENCES 2015

- Spring Annual Converntion Victoria B.C.