



RHODODENDRON

SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN



SPRING NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 48, NUMBER 1

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Meliiodendron xylocarpum

Executive Director's Report by Steve Hootman

The unusual, even crazy weather we experienced the past few years continued into 2022. After a relatively normal and beautifully wet spring, that lasted well into June (great for the new growth), things dried out pretty quickly once we hit summer in early July. Although the Pacific Northwest is normally pretty dry and sunny from June into October, 2022 was exceptionally so and we suffered the driest summer on record as well as suffering through the most days over 90°F ever recorded in a single year. So much fun. That being said, the garden, with its valuable collection of *Rhododendron* species and associated companion plants, looks great and we are making tremendous progress with the various ongoing renovation projects. These include a large new area of paths and new plantings in the southwestern corner of the garden between the nursery and the Alpine Garden, just uphill from the Magnolia Grove and Stumpery. This new section of the garden will feature *Rhododendron* species such as *cerasinum*, *pachysanthum*, *pseudochysanthum*, *sikangense*, *lacteum*, *souliei*, and several newly introduced species of Section Tsutsusi (evergreen azaleas) recently collected in China.

In addition, the large colony of black bamboo on the border of the blue poppy meadow flowered and promptly died which opened up a large area right on the main road. This has just been planted with a wide array of species including *polytrichum*, *faithiae*, *valentiniodes*, etc. which will be quite spectacular in a few years.

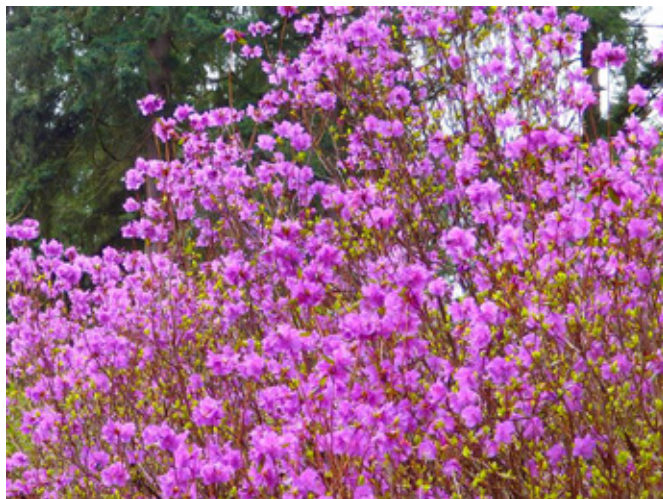
Today, we started excavating for the new hoop project in the nursery, with stump removal first in line before the grading begins. This project was entirely funded by your generous donations to our Capital Campaign fund drive in the autumn of 2022 – a tremendous thanks to all who contributed.

Spring Catalog - shop from your couch.

The Spring Catalog closes on April 26! While we sell a diverse selection of plants in our onsite nursery, our biannual catalogs provide an opportunity to purchase some of our rarest species rhododendrons and companion plants. All plant purchases directly support our mission. See below for some of our favorite offerings.



Rhododendron williamsianum



Rhododendron sichotense 'Midwinter'

Spring Catalog Highlights by Atsuko Gibson

***Camellia* 'Scented Sun'**

You guessed it; this camellia is fragrant! Its four-inch-wide, semi-double flowers are white changing to pale pink as they age, with bright golden stamens. This vigorous upright grower can work well as screening or as a specimen plant in your garden. Rarely offered, this is one of only a few fragrant camellias in the trade.



Camellia 'Scented Sun'

Petrocosmea cryptica

We noticed the increasing demand for houseplants over the last few years. This one is a staff favorite! Its dense thick foliage forms a perfectly flat and tight rosette. It has similar cultivation requirements as African Violets so avoid full sun, but it is best in a bright location while in your house.

***R. augustinii* 'Barto Blue'**

This is one of the most asked for rhododendrons in the garden when in bloom. There is a fantastic blue-lavender hue on this selected cultivar. I highly recommend replacing all your boring hedges and screens with this. A vigorous grower, it will reach 6-7 feet tall in 10 years. They flower at the end of April to early May in the PNW.



Petrocosmea cryptica

***R. stenopetalum* 'Kochozoro'**

This evergreen azalea from Japan has very unusual flowers (creamy green flowers with light pink stamens). "Kochozoro" means "butterflies all together" in Japanese. When in bloom, the entire plant will be covered in flowers. A fairly compact grower, it will be only 4 feet tall in 10 years. This plant pairs well with any flower color palette.

R. 'Carmen'

One of the best dwarf hybrids, this compact specimen features waxy deep red flowers. It blooms as a young plant, and its slow growing habit makes it suitable for a rock garden or in a container. *R. forrestii* is one of the parents so provide excellent drainage. You will cherish having this plant in your garden. It reaches only 1 foot tall in 10 years.



R. augustinii 'Barto Blue'



R. stenopetalum 'Kochozoro'



Georgia with Azaleas On My Mind

ASA/ARS 2023 Convention

Georgia with Azaleas On My Mind

Dunwoody, GA

April 19-23, 2023

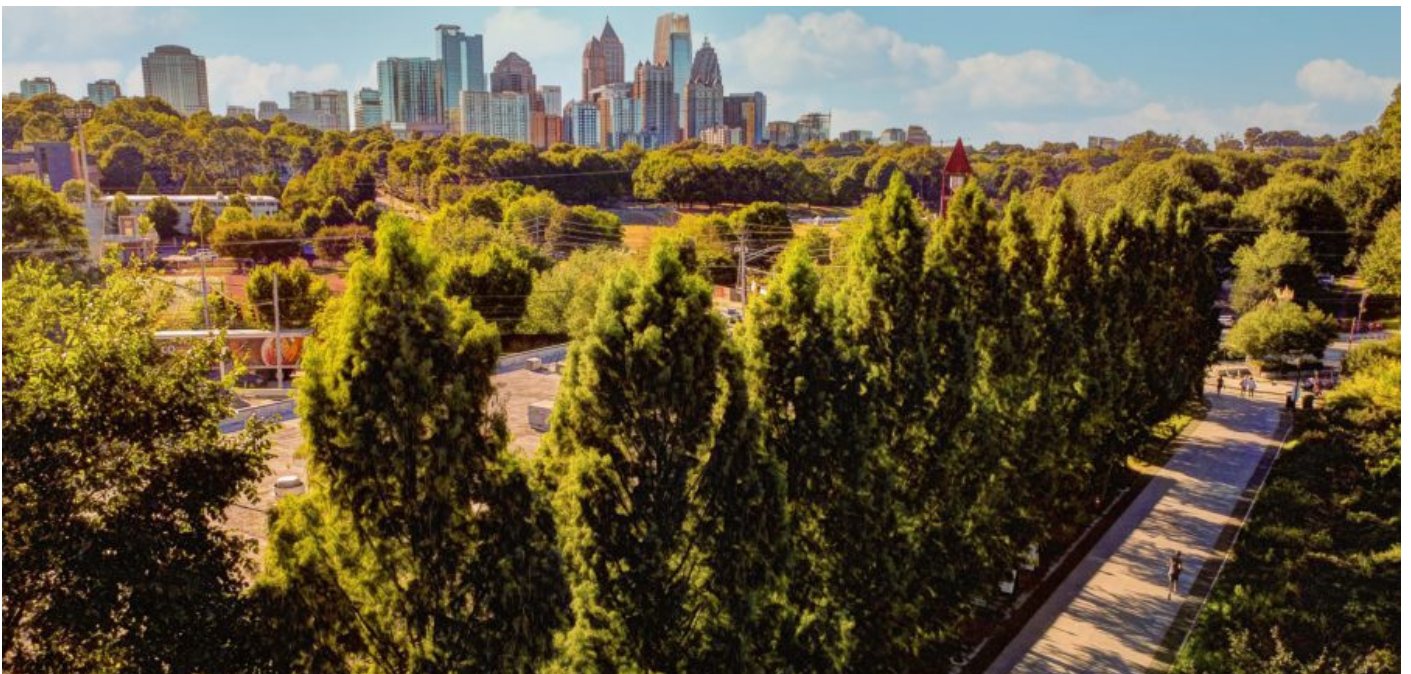
The Azalea Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society and the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Azalea Society of America kindly invite you to attend the 2023 Annual Joint Convention to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, April 19 to 23, 2023.

Leave the snow behind. Spring will be in the air. Your friends will be there. You will have much to see. Interesting presentations are planned. A plant sale full of hard-to-obtain azaleas and rhododendrons awaits. Beyond the convention, Atlanta and Georgia have much to see and do. Come join us.

For membership information, please click here.

REGISTER

Watch a comprehensive video highlighting the convention presenters, the city of Atlanta, and the history of the ARS.



Daytime shot of the Atlanta Beltline and the Midtown Atlanta Skyline. Taken near Piedmont Park.
Photo credit: Gene Phillips

Curator's Notes by Steve Hootman

As we prepare this latest edition of our newsletter, I am in the process of pulling selected plants for distribution to another public botanical collection – Milner Gardens and Woodland near Qualicum Beach on Vancouver Island, Canada. Milner is updating and developing a new *Rhododendron* species collection and we are providing many of the rarest and newest species for cultivation, display and preservation in that very suitable and beautiful location.



This distribution of *Rhododendron* species and their associated companion plants is at the core of our mission to collect, cultivate and distribute for preservation and conservation purposes members of the genus *Rhododendron*. Our focus with the majority of these distributions is to send taxa that are particularly rare or endangered in the wild in order to spread as much of the genetic material available to as many appropriate locations as a means of ensuring that these plants remain safe from extinction, at least to some degree. Thus we distribute taxa native to climates even milder than here in the Pacific Northwest to regions like coastal northern California where they should have a better chance of long term survival as that climate more closely matches that of their native habitats. In addition to distributing plant material to the most appropriate climactic regions, we are also focusing on those species that we deem to be most at risk in their native environments. Thus, some of the newer introductions from southern China for example, species such as *R. guihainianum* and *R. wumingense*, which are known from only a single, isolated location, are prioritized over species such as *R. aganniphum* which covers whole mountainsides in the eastern Himalaya and so is in no real danger of extinction.

Your support of the RSBG and its mission is what makes all of this possible, and for that we are very grateful.

In addition, just in the past year, we have made substantial donations of *Rhododendron* species and their wild origin companion plants, many of them quite rare or even new to cultivation, to several important repositories and stewards of rare plants including San Francisco Botanical Garden, Sonoma Botanical Garden (formerly Quarryhill BG), UC Berkeley Botanical Garden, University of Washington Botanic Garden, and several other smaller, but no less important, institutions.



R. guihainianum (in: *Rhododendron Species*, 2016: RSF vol. 11, p1-40).
Photo: Steve Hootman



R. wumingense (*Rhododendron Species* 2016).
Photo: Steve Hootman

Species profile: *R. nakaharae* by Adam Duell

Rhododendron nakaharae is a very compact creeping evergreen azalea. With a typical maximum height of around 1 foot it is most suitable as a ground cover, rock garden, or container plant. Its small size also means even well-established gardens can easily accommodate the introduction of these plants. The branchlets are densely covered in dark green glossy leaves. In turn, shiny brown/red hairs cover the branchlets as well as the upper and lower surfaces of the leaves. It flowers later than most evergreen azaleas with blooms opening from June through August. The flowers are brick red to rose red, 1.5 inches across, and quite large compared to the leaves which are 1/2" long. Flowers are borne in clusters of 2-3 and somewhat uniformly cover the plant.

Rhododendron nakaharae is endemic to northern Taiwan where it grows at elevations of 1000-3300 feet in grasslands. Despite its relatively low elevation, *Rhododendron nakaharae* is quite hardy and can tolerate summer heat and cold temperatures down to -5°F. It is an easy to grow species that prefers full sun or light shade. The compact creeping growth habit and late flower time make this a distinct evergreen azalea.

Rhododendron nakaharae was introduced to the United Kingdom in 1957 and the USA in 1960. Since then, it has often been used as a parent in hybridizing programs and it gives rise to low-growing, late-flowering cultivars. We grow two named selections here at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden: 'Mt. Seven Star' and 'Mariko'. 'Mariko' comes from Yushan (Mt. Seven Star) where the species was first collected. Originally grown by Dr. Rokujo of Japan, this form was the first *Rhododendron nakaharae* grown in England and was given The Royal Horticultural Society Award of Merit in 1970. It grows tightly with rose-red flowers. 'Mt. Seven Star' is the English name for Mt. Chising in Northern Taiwan where the seed was collected by C.S. Kuo of Tai Da University in Taiwan in 1969. This form was grown and named by Polly Hill in Martha's Vineyard, MA. The leaves are a deeper green and hairier than 'Mariko' while the flowers are larger and a pure cadmium red. The flowers of 'Mt Seven Star' also tend to open a week later than 'Mariko'. Both forms are equally slow growing and will maintain a short compact form but 'Mt. Seven Star' will grow somewhat broader. In 1991 Polly Hill wrote "In the 18 years since I nurtured this tiny 'Mariko' it has grown to ten inches high by 26 inches wide." It is doubtful that *Rhododendron nakaharae* will ever outgrow its placement or need to be trimmed.



R. nakaharae 'Mt. Seven Star'
Photo: Will Clausen

According to Mr. Barry Yinger, a former Curator of Asian Plants at the US National Arboretum, *Rhododendron nakaharae* has a number of different forms scattered throughout the mountains of Taiwan. The origins of the 'Mt. Seven Star' and 'Mariko' forms are only 80 miles apart so it is expected that there are a number of intermediate forms between the two. Interestingly, 'Mt. Seven Star' and 'Mariko' do not readily cross. Hand pollinated plants can produce seed but it has not yet been viable. This could suggest that they are actually distinct species but there is not enough information to say for sure.

Here at the RSBG we grow *Rhododendron nakaharae* under the light shade of a huge maple tree. Multiple plants grow close together to create a continuous mat of rolling mounds. At the edges of the mat the creeping habit is evident as the branches stretch outward pressed firmly against the ground. Moss has been growing quite successfully under the *Rhododendron nakaharae* using the small branches as support. The moss comes through the crowns at random creating high contrast light and dark green patches across the entire mat. When in flower, the mat is densely covered in blooms while the dark leaves and light green moss peek through providing additional visual interest.

This plant is available for purchase in the Spring 2023 Catalog.



R. nakaharae 'Mariko'
Photo: Will Clausen

ACCESSIONS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE RSF:

- 1973/195** Isle of Gigha
1974/085 'Mariko' — Hydon Nurseries, Ltd.
1975/267 'Mt Seven Star' — Polly Hill

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

Cox, Peter A. & Cox, Kenneth N.E. 1997. *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species*. Glendoick Publishing, Perth, Scotland. pg. 378.

Hill, Polly. "North Tisbury Nakaharae Azaleas," *The Azalean*, Dec 1991, pp. 71-73.

Hill, Polly. "Rhododendron Nakaharai, a Taiwan Endemic", *JARS*, Fall 1985.

Upcoming Events

2023 Events

Pop-up Plant Vendor Weekends!

Saturday-Sunday; April 1-2, 15-16, 22-23
May 6-7, 27-28

10 am – 4 pm

Throughout April & May, the garden will host featured vendor weekends in partnership with local nurseries. You'll have an opportunity to buy from boutique and wholesale vendors, providing a unique selection that you won't find anywhere else.

[READ MORE](#)

Mother's Day Weekend

Saturday-Sunday; May 13-14

10 am – 4 pm

Celebrate mom with a beautiful outing to the Rhody Garden! Explore 13 garden features, experience the garden at peak bloom, and picnic on our patio with delicious eats from a local food truck.

[READ MORE](#)

Blue Poppy Day

Saturday, May 20

10 am – 4 pm

The mystical Himalayan blue poppy, *Meconopsis*, will grace us with its ethereal beauty once again. Celebrate these fabulous flowers and enjoy a feast for your eyes. Walk through a meadow glowing with blooming blue poppies or stroll along the ADA accessible path through the blue poppy glade. There are two fields of poppies to enjoy and explore!

[READ MORE](#)

Rhododendron Species Symposium

Friday-Saturday; June 9-10

12 am – 12 pm

RSBG is reimagining the Symposium for 2023. Stay tuned for details on the new and improved version.

[READ MORE](#)

Evening in the Garden

Saturday, July 29, 2023

5 – 8:30 pm

RSBG is reimagining Evening in the Garden for 2023. Stay tuned for details on the new and improved version.

[READ MORE](#)

Fall Foliage Festival

Saturday-Sunday; October 21-22

10 am – 4 pm

Celebrate autumn at our Fall Foliage Festival that features tours, plant talks, and plant sales.

[READ MORE](#)

Member Appreciation Day

Sunday; September 17

10 am – 4 pm

Membership makes us grow and thrive! As a way of thanking our loyal Members for their continued support, we invite you to join us for our Member Appreciation Day, featuring discounts on plants, delicious food, garden tours, activities for kids, and silent auction.

[READ MORE](#)



Endowment Support

Fairfield, Richard Hall Trust

Restricted Contributions 7/26/2022 - 12/31/2022

Alpine Garden: Anonymous

Education Fund: Anonymous

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Hasche-Kluender, Hans	Russell, Millie	

Intern Program: Walker Foundation

Mast Property: Anonymous

Undesignated Gift: Fleischmann, Lucille
 Anonymous

Engraving Program

6/01/2022 - 12/31/2022

Edge, Jana
Graham, Patrick

Rash, Maria
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General Operations

6/01/2022 - 12/31/2022

Cash Contributions:

AmazonSmile Foundation
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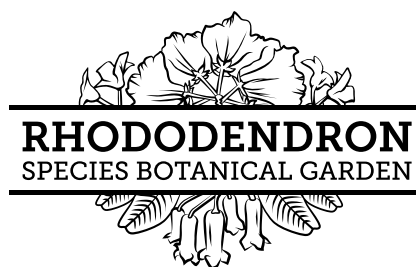
Peter Norris
Keith White

A planned gift is a way to extend your support of the RSF beyond your lifetime. This kind of long-term provision ensures that the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden will be here to share the inspiring stories of the natural world with generations to come. Visit [our website](#) to learn more and enroll.

RSF Foundation & RSBG Staff

Staff

Executive Director and Curator	Steve Hootman
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Nursery Manager & Assistant Curator	Atsuko Gibson
Marketing and Outreach Manager	Natalie Ries
Horticulturist & Assistant Curator	Will Clausen
Assistant Nursery Manager	Emily Joseph
Assistant Horticulturist	Adam Duell
Administrative Assistant	Janey O'Neil
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