



WHIDBEY ISLAND CHAPTER  
The Meerbrook  
Rhododendron  
Gardens  
A R S C O N F E D

# ARS Whidbey Island Chapter

# NEWSLETTER

Website: [www2.whidbey.net/dapont/ARS](http://www2.whidbey.net/dapont/ARS)

Meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each Month  
 Fire District 5 Headquarters Station  
 215 East Race Road, Coupeville, WA  
**Refreshments:** 7:00    **Meeting:** 7:20

January 2005

**Next Meeting: Wed, January 26**

**Program:**

Ilus, ilus maa." Beautiful, beautiful land.  
 (From an Estonian song about the homeland)

Kristi O'Donnell invites us to join her on her 2004 summer trip to Estonia, her Mother's birthplace. We will visit botanical gardens, Medieval architecture, the music and the scenic countryside, sharing historic tales of floral and folk lore. Even a rhododendron was on the postcard of the Tallinn Botanical Gardens! A hardy one at that, *R. brachycarpum*.

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**Calendar of Upcoming Events**

Feb 2	.....	Board Meeting	@ Marshall's 6:30
Feb 9-13	..	Seattle Flower and Garden Show	
Feb 23	.....	Chapter Meeting	Don Kohlenberger - Grafting
Feb 26-27	.....	Mt Baker Orchid Show/Sale	Mt Vernon, WA
March 12	.....	Annual Chapter Plant Sale	
March 23	.....	Chapter Meeting	Rhodie Care
April 6	.....	Board Meeting	@ Marshall's 6:30
April 27	.....	Meeting/Potluck/Show/Auction	
April 27- May 1	.....	ARS National Convention	Victoria, BC
May 25	.....	Annual Meeting	Election of Officers/Short Program
Sept 9-11	.....	ARS Regional Conference	Newport, OR

## 2005 ARS Annual Conference



Take a mini vacation and attend the ARS Conference April 27-May 1 hosted in Victoria, BC, by the Victoria Rhododendron Society. It's a great way to celebrate spring - floods of rhododendrons and spring flowers all over town, visits to public and private gardens, interesting lectures by speakers from Australia, New Zealand, Sikkim, Scotland, the U.S. and Canada, reception in the Royal B.C. Museum, sea-side walks, accessibility to all of beautiful Vancouver Island, on and on. See conference details in your January Journal or online at: <http://victoria.tc.ca/Recreation/Ars2005/>

## Christmas Party Recap

Let's give **Pat Sasson** a 'Party Well Done' award! If you missed the Christmas Party held at Christopher's in Coupeville in December, you missed the best party in town! The food was outstanding and everyone had an obviously good time. We missed **Bill Stipe** and his dancing hat, but **John Marshall** and **Mel Wright** did an admirable job of keeping the gift exchange going and the rioting down. Members were surprised with gifts for the garden, edibles, wine, Christmas decorations and, of course, a few 'flamingo' things. The party favors were origami pyramids that could be used as an ornament or to conceal a gift. And, there was a diary floating around of the flamingo flock's adventures with photos of them at most of their stops. Best of all however, was the fellowship shared with all the other rhodoholics. *Thank you, Pat.*



## 🌿 On The Web

Take a look at the picture of *R. cerasinum* var. *cherry brandy* that **Frank Fujioka** sent to me. Bell shaped flowers of creamy white with a cherry red band at the tip of each lobe. I'm going to have to add this one to my wish list!

[www2.whidbey.net/dapont/ARS](http://www2.whidbey.net/dapont/ARS)

Do you have rhododendron photo that could be used on our website? Send me your photo, slide or digital image (in .jpg format) and the name of the rhodie as well. Sorry, no 'unknowns' please. All photos will be scanned and returned to you. Contact me: [gail@whidbey.com](mailto:gail@whidbey.com) or 331-4746 for more details.

## From The Prez

John Marshall



We had a wonderful Holiday dinner at Christopher's in Coupeville this year. A great big hand to **Pat Sasson** for making all the arrangements and **Gail DaPont** for the party favors. Everyone enjoyed the evening, especially the Chinese Auction gift exchange under the guidance of **Jim Marshall** and helper **Mel Wright**. What a great time, excellent food, fellowship and fun.

For the first time since Felicia and I have been living here in Coupeville, we've had over 21 inches of rain during our rain season. All the moisture sure makes a big improvement in the number and size of rhododendron buds. Hopefully we will have nice big beautiful trusses this spring to share with you at the chapter meeting truss show in April and the truss show at Meerkerk in May.

Some of you may not be aware that **Pat Sasson's** husband, **Ken**, passed away on December 16<sup>th</sup>. We send our deepest sympathy and love to Pat and the Sasson family at this difficult time.

To start out this year our program for January will be our ever enthusiastic and entertaining speaker, **Kristi O'Donnell**. Come for a great presentation, lots of fellowship, cookies, coffee, a raffle and fun.

Don't forget that the ARS District 2 will have a booth at the Flower and Garden Show in Seattle, February 9-13. Help is always needed to setup and teardown the display and people to staff the booth. If you can help, contact Don Smart at 425-333-6178 or email [donolyn@comcast.net](mailto:donolyn@comcast.net).

Our Annual Chapter Rhododendron Plant Sale at Coupeville High School will be March 12, 8am-4pm. We will need people to dig and haul rhodies, sell, cashier and be on hand to answer questions for rhodie buyers. This is the Chapter's main fund raiser for the year. Your help and participation is greatly needed to make it a success. Call me, 678-5448, or **Bill Stipe**, 678-8740 or 222-3096 (email: [wstipe@whidbey.com](mailto:wstipe@whidbey.com)) to let us know how you can help.

Happy New Year! See you at the next meeting.

## Hybridizers Meeting

Don Smart

The NW Hybridizers group will meet at 7 PM at **Elsie Watson's** home on Thursday, February 10. Her address is 11530 Holmes Point Dr NE, Kirkland, WA. For directions call Elsie at 425-823-1755.

At the last meeting **Frank Fujioka** was elected President of the group. February's meeting will include a seed exchange, so if you have some seed to share, bring it along. We will also see a slide show of pictures **Bill Heller** took of the Meerkerk Christmas Open House.

## Whidbey Island Garden Tour

Kristi O'Donnell

This year, the Whidbey Island Garden Tour is in *spring*, April 30th. While Meerkerk Gardens is not one of the selected private gardens for the Tour, we will be on

the map as a featured place to see. We have also been designated this year, as one of the beneficiaries. As you can imagine, we are delighted! We are looking for volunteers to assist at Meerkerk on that day. Docents will be staged throughout the gardens to answer questions, we'll have coffee and tea set up, and of course, it will be peak bloom season and the nursery will be open. Please contact me, [meerkerk@whidbey.net](mailto:meerkerk@whidbey.net) or 360-678-1912 if you'd like to participate.

## Meerkerk Magic

Kristi O'Donnell

### New Year Inspiration 2005

Create.

*Guided orange sun, the new dawn  
Greets moon, Saturn, Venus.*

*Eleven geese sounding  
nor' easter bringing snow.*

*Eagle spirals over sea  
ascending*

*Lift our eyes; our lights.*



Meerkerk Gardens is cared for by a dedicated group of volunteers. Friends from the American Rhododendron Society, local garden clubs, Island County Master Gardeners and our community assist the year 'round. There are many ways you can volunteer to assist at the Gardens:

### 2nd Saturday: Work Party

We share coffee and rolls at 8:45 and embark upon Garden projects at 9:00 am. A potluck lunch is served at noon.

### Thursdays: Hands-on-Horticulture

We welcome you to work with other garden enthusiasts to rake, plant, mulch, tend the burn pile or help with new signage. Park in the volunteer's parking lot and meet in the Volunteer Cottage for hot coffee and tea at 8:45 then into the Gardens to dig up some dirt.

## In Memoriam

On behalf of the Whidbey Island ARS chapter, I want to express our sorrow at the passing of member **Pat Sasson's** husband, **Ken**. We will miss his ready smile and quick sense of humor.

"An avid sailor, he loved being able to see his sailboat from the deck of his house. He built a small Toro for his granddaughter and in 2003 founded the South Whidbey Yacht Club. After serving as Commodore for a year, he turned the tiller over in December and became past commodore. He was also a member of the Raritan, N.J. Yacht Club. As a member of Whidbey Island Center for the Arts where he enjoyed being on the stage crew. He was a Friend of Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens and a member of the Whidbey Rhododendron Society."

South Whidbey Record

# Are Your Variegated Plants Reverting?

Ron Knight

Editor's note: Ron Knight is the outgoing President of the Vancouver (BC) Rhododendron Society. His article is reprinted from their newsletter, *Indumentum*, with permission. Visit their website:

<http://www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org/vrs/>

I like variegated plants. Their yellow, cream, or white streaks and blotches brighten up shaded areas and provide interesting contrasts in my garden.

However, most of them have a major problem. They occasionally produce a shoot that has lost its variegation and reverted to solid green. I've included photographs of some of the main offenders in my garden:

Rhododendron ponticum 'Variegatum', Hydrangea macrophylla 'Maculata', Euonymus fortunei 'Emerald 'n' Gold', and Elaeagnus pungens 'Maculata'.

What causes variegation? It involves some complex genetics, but generally, a mutation in leaf cells results in the green chlorophyll being masked or absent. Chlorophyll going missing is not a happy event from the plant's point of view since the pigment is needed to trap light energy that is used to manufacture food. That's why variegated plants are often not as vigorous as their solid green progenitors.

Commercial growers produce variegated plants by taking cuttings from shoots where variegation has occurred. The cloned shoot is called a "sport".

Apparently, all variegated plants are field tested before being brought to market in order to select those that are least likely to show reversion. Still, in my garden, almost every variegated shrub has produced a pure green shoot from time to time.

In my rhododendron patch, the variegated inmates are President Roosevelt, R. ponticum 'Variegatum', and Goldflimmer. Of the three, the variegation in Goldflimmer is by far the most stable. The other two, every year or so, produce shoots that have mutated back to a solid green.

The cure for reverted foliage is simple; prune out the entire shoot that holds the solid green leaves. Otherwise, since the reverted foliage is often more vigorous than the variegated foliage, it can eventually grow to dominate the plant and ruin its appearance. The variegated Hydrangea in the attached photograph provides a good example. The pure green leaves are larger than the variegated ones and the reverted shoot grew much taller than two other shoots which originated at the same point on a main branch.

As you do your gardening chores, look closely and you may be surprised, as I was, to see how many of your variegated plants are showing reversion. Then, get out your pruners and perform a bit of corrective surgery.

For more information on rhododendrons or gardening in general, contact Ron Knight through the Caron Gardens' website: [www3.telus.net/rcknight](http://www3.telus.net/rcknight)

# The Job For YOU

**John Marshall** has done an outstanding job as our President for three years (time flies when you're having fun!) and is ready to pass the torch. If you've been looking for the opportunity to support and inspire the Whidbey Island ARS Chapter, now is the time to step forward. You don't need to be a rhododendron expert to be President, just have a willingness to lead us through another year (or two!) of rhododendron adventures. Give John a call, 360-678-5448, if this job is for YOU.

# Boys and Their Toys



Some guys consider getting a new power drill, chainsaw or even a powered wheelbarrow an adequate 'toy'. There are others, though, who covet a truly magnificent piece of machinery before their 'toy' needs are satisfied. **Bill Stipe**, **Jim Ramsey** and **Frank Fujioka** have all gotten bright shiny new Kubota tractors in 'paint it any color as long as it's orange' orange. Now these are serious he-man toys. Wow, with 4 wheel drive, power steering, roll bar, headlights, these guys are probably not going to listen to that call to dinner. In fact they will probably be out 'dragging the main'!

# The 'Other' Flamingo



It isn't bad enough that you should be watching out for the flamingo flock, now you'll have to also keep your eyes peeled for the *lone ranger flamingo*. This mutant with fluttering tale feathers started at **Frank Fujioka's** where I thought he had found a permanent home. Think again, as he is starting to appear in other members' gardens as well. He's been spotted at **Pat Sasson's**, **Dave & Karen Anderson's**, **Mervyn & Kathleen Floyd** and **Russ Ernest**. Is there no end to the flamingo threat!

# Say What?

Cyberspace

- A bicycle can't stand alone because it is too tired.
- A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.
- A boiled egg in the morning is hard to beat.
- Those who get too big for their britches will be exposed in the end.
- Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead to know basis.
- When an actress saw her first strands of gray hair she thought she'd dye

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Please submit articles of interest for Feb Newsletter by **2/11/05**

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