



RHODODENDRON SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN

FALL 2008 NEWSLETTER

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SPECIES PROFILE

Rhododendron ciliatum Hook.f. 1849

Steve Hootman

Of the many outstanding introductions of *Rhododendron* species made by Joseph Dalton Hooker during his famous expedition to Sikkim and surrounding regions in 1848-1949, *Rhododendron ciliatum* is perhaps one of the least widely grown "hardy" species in the modern garden. This is unfortunate given that the semi-dwarf habit, attractive foliage and large funnel-shaped flowers provide more than enough reason to cultivate this early spring bloomer in the modern, often smaller garden.

As previously mentioned, *Rhododendron ciliatum* was first introduced into western cultivation and science from the Sikkim Himalaya. It was subsequently collected from the mountains of adjacent eastern Nepal, Bhutan and southern Tibet. It is found from 8,000 to 13,000 feet in elevation growing in various habitats including coniferous forests, rhododendron thickets and on open rocky slopes. One interesting habitat for this species that I was able to observe first hand during a 1997 expedition to Sikkim, was the occurrence of large colonies on open slopes in what amounted to running water. The plants were generally "perched" upon low hummocks of turf in the wet seeping meadows, but were nonetheless growing in seemingly saturated soil conditions. I must say that if I were to try such a thing in the garden, it would undoubtedly result in a complete failure - these wild rhododendrons were quite happy in their soggy situation however. In stark contrast, I observed this species in another region

growing on dry exposed grassy slopes under conditions quite at odds with what one would consider to be good *Rhododendron* habitat, yet these plants also appeared to be quite healthy.

Rhododendron ciliatum is one of the few hardy (relatively

speaking, of course) members of Subsection *Maddenia*, a large group that is considered to be quite tender in most rhododendron growing regions. In fact, this species and the yellow-flowered *R. fletcherianum* are the only species within the subsection that can be considered reliably hardy in most of the Pacific Northwest. Fairly isolated from related species throughout most of its range, *Rhododendron ciliatum* is one of the few taxonomically "solid" members of the Cilicalyx/Johnstoneanum Alliance. Under the former Balfourian system of taxonomy, H.H. Davidian included this and several closely related species in the "Ciliatum Series," distinct from, but with ties to the "Maddenii Series."

This species forms a neat, mounding and compact shrub, slowly reaching around three or four feet in height and as wide in cultivation. Like many members of Subsection *Maddenia*, it is blessed with the bonus ornamentation of attractive peeling, smooth and reddish-brown bark. The deep green evergreen foliage is elliptic in shape and generally around two or three inches in length. The leaves are bordered with a conspicuous fringe of hairs (they are "ciliate"). The flowers (early to mid-spring) appear as bell-shaped funnels in clusters of two to five. They are white to white flushed pink or pink and up to two inches in length. Unfortunately, the flowers are not fragrant but their size and color in comparison with the plant habit and foliage makes for an outstanding display. This species underplanted beneath and around the taller, yellow-flowered *R. lutescens* provides a fine display in the early part of the flowering season.

In cultivation, *Rhododendron ciliatum* is relatively trouble-free if provided with good drainage and supplemental irrigation during long dry periods (as with all rhododendrons). It performs best in a bright, fairly sunny position where it will form a dense, compact mound but is tolerant of shade where it will become a bit leggy and open. Of course, you then have the advantage of enjoying the attractive bark. It is hardy to around +5 degrees F. but you may want to position the plant where it will have some protection from late spring

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frosts if you garden in an area prone to such events. A location such as a within a light woodland or under high conifers will provide some protection for the relatively early flowers.

This species has been used quite often in hybridizing and is the parent of many widely grown and well known hybrids. A short list of these would include 'Countess of Haddington,' 'Praecox' and 'Cilpinense' a cross with *R. moupinense* which is often mislabeled and sold as *R. moupinense* in the trade.

A form of this species with white tinged pink flowers won an Award of Merit when exhibited by Lord Digby of Minterne in 1953.

ACCESSIONS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE RSF:

1965/352 Brodick. White flowers.

1966/665 Wood. White flushed pink flowers.

1980/077 LS&H#16019:Castle Howard. White flushed pink flowers. Collected wild in Bhutan.

1982/172 Hed#378:Hedegaard. White slightly flushed rose flowers. Collected wild at 11,500 feet in Nepal.

1995/072 BLM#324:Glendoick. Collected wild in eastern Nepal.

1999/102 Gerdemann. Jim's "best pink" which I have not seen in flower yet.

2000 #s /064/069/082/094/111 SEH#545 From my collection of seed in the eastern Himalaya.

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

Cox, Peter A. & Kenneth N.E. 1997. *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species*. Glendoick Publishing, Perth, Scotland. pgs. 296-297.

Davidian, H.H. 1982. *The Rhododendron Species*. Vol. I. Timber Press, Portland, OR. pgs. 100-102.

Hootman, S.E. 1997. Unpublished field notes.

Rhododendron Species Foundation: Records – 1964 to present.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The images on the cover are *Rhododendron ciliatum*. The one on the left was taken by Steve Hootman in Sikkim and the one on the right is from the RSF image collection. On this page are also images of *R. ciliatum* with the top one by Steve Hootman, again taken in Sikkim, and the lower one from the RSF image collection of accession number 1966/665 taken in the Garden.



RSBG NEWS & NOTES

Rick Peterson

Peter Schick

Another great friend, avid plant collector, and enthusiast for species rhododendrons has passed away from our lives. Peter Schick, of Fort Bragg, California died on August 5th, 2008 just before his 93rd birthday. Peter was most involved with the Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden in nearby Mendocino, California. He served on the Garden's board of directors, helped develop the plant collections, built a number of the Garden's structures, and donated hundreds of plants as well as many volunteer hours. The MCBG recognized Peter's efforts by dedicating the Tender Rhododendron Species Garden to him last year. He was instrumental in bringing nearly one hundred species of Rhododendron into the collection, mostly from subsections Falconera, Grandia, and Maddenia.

Peter also had an intense interest in Vireyas, those rhododendrons that are native to southeast Asia. Along with a few others, this group of plants is more well-known today due to Peter's sharing of his knowledge, seeds, and plant material around the world. In fact, he earned the designation "the Johnny Appleseed of Vireyas" by the American Rhododendron Society when he was awarded the Gold Medal, the ultimate tribute by the Society, in 2007 for his noteworthy impact in disseminating information about rhododendrons.

There was a long-time association between Peter and the Rhododendron Species Foundation. He joined as a member in 1978 and would often visit the Garden annually. Forty rhododendron accessions in the RSF collection are attributed to him, almost all Vireyas and many being from wild collected sources. He was a dedicated supporter of the RSF and he will be missed for his enthusiasm, friendship, and wisdom. Sincere condolences go out to Peter's family and his many friends.

Garden Campaign

The board and staff are very grateful to the following members for their generous contributions to the fall garden campaign (through 10/31/2008). Thank you so much!

Margaret Adams, Rollo & Winnie Adams, ARS Eureka Chapter, Jason Ashford, Russell Barber, Rodney Barker, Werner & Patricia Brack, Dan Brady, Joan Buhler, Barbara Carman, Richard & Karen Cavender, Neil Christianson, John & Margaret Cunningham, Robert & Barbara Dunning, Edward Egan, B. J. & Natalie Falanga, Robert Franz, William & Lillian Greer, Stephen Hall & Caroline Enns, Sandra & James Harris, Hans Hasche-Kluender, Clem Hertz, Valerie Hilt, Carl & Betty Hogan, Mark Holeman, Siggie Kemmler, Ken King, Kathy & Roger Lintault, Alma Manenica, Judy & Bob Mathey, Gwen Mayne, Julie McQuary, Chip Muller, Nickolas Nickou, Mark & Patricia Nixon, Sue Olsen, Richard Organ, Donald & Roberta Powell, Nayadean Pundsack, Elaine Sedlack, Don Selcer, Roberts & Adela Smith, E. White Smith, Jr. & Lucie Sorenson-Smith, Ramona Soule, Barbara Sullivan, Karen



Peter Schick

Swenson, Paul & Diane Thompson, George & Wendy Weyerhaeuser, Jonathan Wright, and Glen Youell.

Fall Plant Sale

Drizzle and rain showers were an unhappy deterrent for customers at our Fall Plant Sale Fundraiser so we did not do quite as well as we had hoped. Nevertheless, I am very grateful to our sponsors: Columbia Bank, including bank employee Mike Harris for helping cashier; Round Table Pizza for providing 8 pizzas to feed our volunteers; Trader Joe's for the use of shopping carts as well as providing samples and treats to sale customers, and the Weyerhaeuser Company for allowing the use of its parking lots – thank you all very much! Many thanks go to our participating vendors: Blue Frog Garden Nursery, Chimacum Woods, deGro Flower & Garden Co., Fairmeadow Nursery, Foliage Gardens, The Greenery, Hardy Fern Foundation, Keeping it Green Nursery, Lee Farm Nursery, Overland Enterprises, Pan's Garden, and Steamboat Island Nursery. Of course, the sale only happens with the help of our dedicated volunteers and I would like to thank each and every one of them: Rollo Adams, Winnie Adams, Bob Dunning, Bill Erhet, John Farbarik, Mike Harris, Bill Heller, Dennis Hendrickson, Deena Henkins, Chuck Larson, Pat McGill, Nancy Meyer, Bill O'Neill, John Parker, Garratt Richardson, Ann Robbins, Martha Robbins, Helen Smelko, Bettie Snoey, Carol Sterley, Diane Thompson, Paul Thompson, Conrad Watne. In addition, I appreciate the generosity of John Farbarik, Robert Mast, and Garratt Richardson for donating plants to sell with all the profits donated to the RSF.

Rutherford Conservatory

I wrote in the last issue that we were waiting on approval of permits from the City of Federal Way and we continue to do so; however, the materials for the conservatory arrived in

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early October. Once the permits are issued groundbreaking will take place. Many thanks go to Paul Thompson for doing much of the footwork during the permitting process.

Evening in the Garden 2008

Diane Thompson

The lawn area in the RSBG was transformed into a Hawaiian Lu'au for the third annual 'Evening in the Garden' event held on July 26th. RSBG guests were greeted at the Gift Shop gate with colorful leis and, as they drew near to the party, Hawaiian music could be heard wafting through the rhododendrons on this warm summer evening. A palm tree, surfboard, beach chair, and towel motif reminded one of those spectacular Hawaiian beaches. Many people enjoyed a tour of the Garden before the festivities and appreciated seeing the growth of the Garden over the last year.

Upon returning from their walk guests enjoyed refreshments served from a grass-skirted tiki bar that was built with bamboo collected from the Garden. The tables were set with pineapples, huge hosta leaves, and sarongs. The whole roasted pig arrived, along with poi and a delectable selection of salads and desserts. A spirited auction of rhododendrons and other cool plants was held after dinner as well as a great variety of items were given away as door prizes to lucky winners.

Much appreciation is extended to the volunteers who helped with set up and take-down, brought food, and contributed funds to the event: Tekla Bottemiller, Joanne & Marian Gerry, Hank Helm, Deena Henkins, Prudence Holliger, Stan Hungerford, Bill O'Neill, Katherine & Long Nguyen, Garratt Richardson, Ramona Soule, and the RSBG staff. Grateful thanks also go to those who donated plants for the auction and door prizes: Bob Zimmermann and Beth Orling of Chimacum Woods nursery, Michelle Bundy of the Hardy Fern Foundation, and Richie Steffen of the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden. Funding was also provided by the Walker Trust. Thank you one and all!

After another fun and enjoyable gathering of nearly 100 rhododendron species enthusiasts and friends, plans are underway to get together again in July 2009! Be on the lookout for more information in the next issue of the RSBG Newsletter.

BOOK REVIEW:

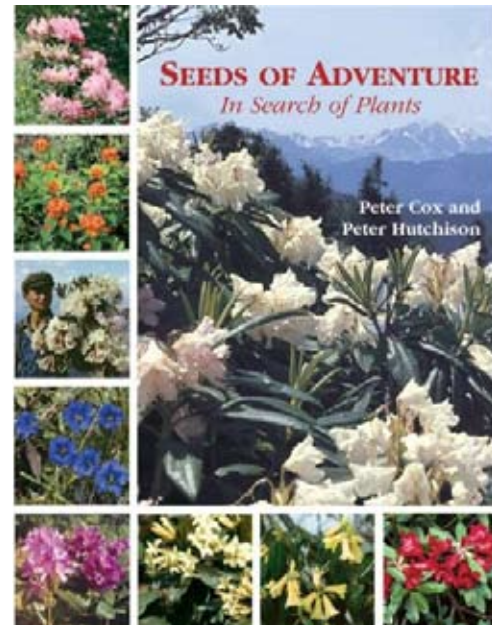
Seeds of Adventure: In Search of Plants

By Peter Cox and Peter Hutchison

Reviewed by Steve Hootman

This is a long awaited book that was well worth the wait. It is an absolutely stunning assemblage of stories, photos and information all packed into one hefty book of well over 400 pages. A notable feature is that virtually every page contains at least one full color photo, usually two or three. This book provides a detailed, highly readable account of every expedition undertaken by the two authors in their long and

rather amazing careers as plant explorers. Both authors are excellent writers, sharing their humor, knowledge, and an obvious love for their shared endeavor. Peter Cox is one of the world's foremost authorities on rhododendrons and a long-time nurseryman, collector, hybridizer, author, and plant hunter. Peter Hutchison, his long-time friend and collaborator, is an accomplished plantsman and a keen gardener with a strong interest in rare trees and primulas.



This book represents their amazingly long collaborative effort as plant hunting companions, from their first collecting trip in 1962, to the mountains of Turkey, through a wide swath of the Sino-Himalaya, to their last expedition together in 2002 when they returned triumphantly to the Subansiri River of Arunachal Pradesh, India. In between are chapters and wonderful photos of the people, landscapes and amazing plants of Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, and, of course, China. Many of the plants illustrated in this book are relatively new to cultivation or even science, and many, many of them now grace our gardens thanks to the efforts of these two plant collectors.

The book also contains extensive maps of each of the regions described, as well as an index to place names, in a commendable and much needed effort at sorting out the confusing names that are encountered whenever one reads of an expedition to this relatively unknown part of the world.

If you have any interest whatsoever in the plants, people, natural history or landscapes of China and the Eastern Himalaya, you will treasure this beautifully presented and vastly informative book.

This book is available at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden Gift Shop for \$75US (sorry, no member's discount on this book) plus shipping and handling. Please call 253-661-9377 or email: giftshop@rhodygarden.org.

Richard Baines
 Patricia Bell
 Susan Cross - Planscapes NW
 Derek Fowler
 Robert Frew
 Keith Kalkanoff
 Shawn Macleod
 Peter Maurer

Martin Muller
 Walter Ostrom
 Richard Robillard
 Dora Schranz & Stan Morkowski
 Shirir Yarkony

**Rhododendron Species
 Botanical Garden**

The RSBG Newsletter is published quarterly in winter, spring, summer, and fall by the Rhododendron Species Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Submissions are due by the first of the month, 8 weeks before publication. Email rick@rhodygarden.org

Contributions (8/1/2008 - 10/31/2008) THANK YOU SO MUCH!

Life Member Gifts

Jay & Pamela Green
 Honoré Hacanson
 Keith & Wendy White

Hazel Tarpley
 Katherine Thompson

Endowment Gifts

Margaret Huie
 A. J. Giustina
 Kenneth Graham
 Donald & Roberta Powell
 Charles Sale & Margaret Charleton

Member Gifts

Anonymous - Australia
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 ARS Greater Philadelphia Chapter
 ARS Massachusetts Chapter
 ARS Olympic Peninsula Chapter
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Rutherford Conservatory

Fran Rutherford

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In Memory (8/1/2008 - 10/31/2008)

In Memory of Fred Cummings

Don Selcer

In Memory of Ken Lauhon

Karen Swenson

In Memory of Charles Larus

June Sinclair

We are very grateful to the above contributors for their thoughtfulness in choosing the RSBG for their gifts.



Disanthus cercidifolius

Dennis Bottemiller

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www.rhodygarden.org

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2008 Calendar

December

12 – Volunteer Christmas Party

2009 Calendar

March

14 – Spring Work Party & Potluck

April

4/5 – **Spring Plant Sale**

TBA – Annual General Meeting

May

30 – Volunteer Picnic & Work Party

July

TBA – Evening in the Garden

September

TBA – Fall Plant Sale

December

11 – Volunteer Christmas Party

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

WISH LIST

Tractor (\$20,000)

Chainsaw (\$500)

Wheelbarrows (\$50 each)

2 x 6 foot plastic top tables (\$50 each)

(we need the tables for our plant sale fundraisers)

If you would like to donate any of these items (new or gently used) or the money towards the purchase of one or more for the RSBG, please contact the office at 253-838-4646 or rick@rhodygarden.org.

You will be provided with a letter that serves as a tax deductible receipt for all donations of funds or in-kind gifts.

THANK YOU!