

Eureka Chapter

Next Meeting: Special Date
Thursday, **February 21st** @ 7:30
Christ Episcopal Church
15th and H Streets
Eureka, California

Pre-Meeting No Host Dinner
Gonsea Restaurant 5:15 p.m.
2335 4th St. Eureka, near Target
Call Nelda, **443-8049**, for your reservation, so you will have a seat!



Pomegranate Splash, photo and hybrid by Frank Fujioka

February 2008

Special Program February 21st



Frank Fujioka, Photo by Marc Colombel

The Eureka Chapter will hold its monthly meeting a week early so that we can bring a very special program; February 21st at 7:30 p.m. at Christ Episcopal Church, 15th and H Streets in Eureka. Frank Fujioka will be our featured speaker. Many know Frank from his wonderful rhododendron hybrids “Starbright Champagne”, “Midnight Mystic” and “Pomegranate Splash” just to name 3 of the 18 he has registered. His program will feature his beautiful photography and the hybridizing work he is

doing. Currently he is concentrating on foliage for “all year interest”.

Prior to retirement Frank was a teacher and counselor in the High Schools near Seattle. After spending all day with people he wanted to spend quiet hours at home. Gardening was the answer. Gradually he focused on rhododendrons because of the magical flowers that bloom in the spring; he began hybridizing around 1965 because he enjoyed the science and genetics.

At first hybridizing was just for experimenting but eventually Frank set goals and became very serious about it. Some years he would make as many as 250 crosses but fortunately not all produced seeds and not all germinated.

Don Wallace, who has visited Frank’s garden many times says, “Frank’s wonderful garden is located, wouldn’t you know, on Rhody Lane. The house, garden, and small nursery are on a bluff overlooking Puget Sound and the Olympic Range of mountains. It is a breathtaking spot. His garden is full of rhododendrons, Japanese maples, dwarf conifers, and many other interesting plants. Most of the rhododendrons are Frank’s hybrids that he felt had merit and deserved a permanent spot to grow on. Across the road from the house is the nursery and the testing grounds for his new hybrids. Here the fun really started for me. He has planted his favorite new hybrids in beds that curve around, making a nice garden in itself. But these plants may not stay long as Frank is ruthless in weeding out the inferior plants. Only the best get to stay”.

WORD OF THE MONTH: DECIDUOUS

By: Bruce Palmer

The winter season is here. We even had a rare snowfall near sea level in some of our yards a couple weeks ago. Our Rhododendrons still hold their leaves but many of the other trees and shrubs, including our deciduous azaleas, are bare. So, why not use "**deciduous**" for our word of the month? The word derives from the Latin "decidere", to fall off. What's more interesting about the word than its origin is how and why it happens. Deciduous has been defined as "shedding leaves at a certain season". Typically that happens in the fall as the days get shorter, but not always. Wiliwili, *Erythrina sandwichensis*, the endemic coral tree of Hawaii's dry forests and a number of other plants in arid climates lose their leaves in the early summer as the dry season approaches, so it doesn't happen uniformly in the autumn.

Most commonly, though, that is when it happens. Why do so many plants drop their leaves at that season? In the mountains around us, where the winters are seriously cold, the needle-shapes and small cross-sections of conifer leaves can survive nicely, though the same leaves are not highly efficient at photosynthesis. Broad-leaved deciduous plants with their wide, thin leaves do much better at photosynthesis when the days are warm and long but expose all their surface area to freezing when the days get short and frigid. What to do? One solution for broad-leaved plants is to make as much food as possible while it's the efficient thing to do, store a lot of it, then drop the leaves when they become more of a liability than an asset. It takes less energy to grow new leaves in spring than to use damaged, inefficient ones to start the next warm, sunny season.

What's happening in this process? Chlorophyll is broken down constantly and reconstructed. When the days get shorter, the cells slow down and eventually stop manufacturing chlorophyll. Photosynthesis grinds to a halt and once it is no longer taking place there's no reason for the plant to continue allowing the free passage of materials to and from the leaves. The plant forms an abscission (Latin: abscissus, to cut off) layer between the stem and the leaf. It is a corky layer that forms a scar which cuts off the transporting vessels and protects the live cells in the stem. The leaf cells die and the leaf drops off. The dead leaves on the ground form good mulch for protection from cold and the materials that didn't get back into the plant before the abscission layer was formed can be recycled through the roots the next spring. The cells in the leafless plant subsist on the large stored excess of food that was made by photosynthesis while the leaves were functioning. As the days get longer the plant starts over, using the stored nutrients from the previous warm season to grow new leaves, typically right above the scars where the old ones fell off. It sounds like a lot of extra work, but it must be worth it; the deciduous habit has allowed broad-leaved trees to flourish and become the dominant plants in most of the modern world.



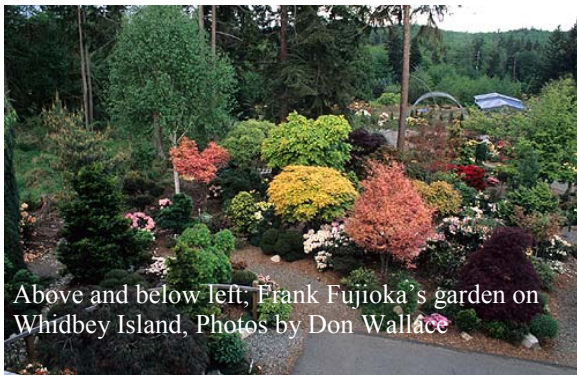
Plant of the Month – 'Starbright Champagne'

By, Don Wallace

The plant of the month for February is Rh. 'Starbright Champagne'. Created by Frank Fujioka in 1983 and registered in 1995, this unusual hybrid has the parentage (Yaku Sunrise x Hansel) x Lem's Cameo. The flower trusses are a light creamy-yellow color with a deep red throat and red spotting. The most notable characteristic is the 'star-shaped' flowers that come from one of its parents, 'Yaku Sunrise'. Frank has used this rhododendron in his breeding program to create other plants with 'star flowers' that will undoubtedly create a stir among enthusiasts who are looking for something different.

'Starbright Champagne' will grow to 5 ft tall and the same wide in 10 years. The elliptical foliage is a nice medium green, adding to its beauty.

Photo of "Starbright Champagne" by Don Wallace



Above and below left: Frank Fujioka's garden on Whidbey Island, Photos by Don Wallace



Above and below right: Lynne Sarty's garden, photos by Lynne's husband Jon Hafstrom.



Member Profile: Lynne Sarty

By, Lynne Sarty

In 1998 my family and I moved into our new/old home on Mitchell Heights Drive in Eureka. The house was built in 1941 and in the early fifties the yard was landscaped with a liberal planting of rhododendrons (30+). It was October when we moved in and only one rhody was in bloom. But come springtime, I was thrilled again and again each time one of those big green bushes burst into blossom.

I made a map of all the rhododendrons in my yard and for each one, I noted the color of its flowers and the date it bloomed, but I still knew nothing about the care and feeding of my newly adopted friends, so I joined the Rhododendron Society. Of course, since joining the society I have acquired even more rhodies and I have also learned how to take good care of them. I fertilize in February and June, keep them well mulched, and deadhead, deadhead, deadhead. I enjoy cutting the blossoms and bringing their color and scent into the house, while my husband prefers photographing them. Our favorites are the scented ones but we love and appreciate them all.

As much as we love those rhododendrons we also love lots of other plants, so the rhodies must share the yard with their companion plants. Various trees, bushes, ferns, flowers, and ground covers mingle with the rhodies and blend into a pleasing landscape. For a balance of form and function, we grow edible plants. We maintain a vegetable garden, berry patches, and fruit trees. Luckily, we like to play in the dirt (my expression for gardening) so our yard is never a burden but a constant source of pleasure.

Above photo of a younger Lynne with a plant, below Lynne making a tufa pot at the June Rhodo Potluck.



Eureka Chapter/American Rhododendron Society
 2050 Irving Drive
 Eureka, CA 95508-7022

Eureka Chapter

Eureka Chapter newsletter is published monthly except during July and August.

Submissions from members are encouraged and should be mailed to June Walsh, Bulletin Editor, 2050 Irving Drive, Eureka, CA 95508-7022.

Membership information and applications are also available from June Walsh.

Eureka Chapter is a member of the Humboldt Botanical Gardens Foundation, Eureka, Calif., and The Rhododendron Species Foundation, Federal Way, Wash.

Eureka Chapter is a chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.

Future Programs		
February 21, 2008	Frank Fujioka "Great Hybrids"	
	Rhodo 101, Feeding and Fertilizers, Don Wallace	
March 27, 2008	Wilbur Bluhm, Siskiyou and Kalmiopsis area of Oregon and California	
	Rhodo 101, Pruning Rhodies, Jill Mefford	
April 24, 2008	Special Guest Invited	Rhodo 101, Show Trusses, Nelda Palmer
		Flower Show Review
May 22, 2008	Mini-Show and Pizza night	Rhodo 101, Deer Abatement, Tim Walsh
June 15, 2008	Annual Summer Potluck	Kane Road Azaleas and tour of Member's Gardens

Find the Eureka Chapter Newsletters and other Humboldt County gardening news at:
www.redwoodmatrix.net/ears/ears.htm (this site is hosted by member, Jim Wasetis)
 And lots of extra Rhodo News at:
www.rhododendron.org/news/newsindex.htm

Eureka Chapter Officers and Board Members		
September 2007 to June 2008		
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