

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Eureka Chapter

The next meeting

*Thursday February 23, 7:00 p.m.
Woman's Club
1531 J Street
Eureka, California*

Pre-Meeting No Host Dinner 5:15

***Marcelli's, 1323 5th Street, Eureka
Eureka, Call Nelda, 707-443-8049
For a reservation so there will be enough
seating, Family style, Fixed Price \$20***



*Eureka Chapter
American Rhododendron Society*

*Rhododendrons
in the Redwoods*

February 2017

Jack Olson

Hybridizing and Raising Rhodos From Seed

***The Eureka Chapter of
the American Rhodo-***

***dendron Society will meet on Thursday, February 23, 2017. The meeting
and program will be held at the Eureka Woman's Club 1531 J Street in
Eureka beginning at 7:00 P.M.***

***The pre-meeting no host dinner will be at Marcelli's at 1323 5th street in
Eureka. Roberta will serve us family style from her array of Italian special-
ties for a fixed price of \$20 per person.***

Jack Olson will be our guest speaker. Jack is from Fall Creek, Oregon where he has a 3 acre, mostly rhododendron garden. Jack is a Life member of the Eugene Chapter. He will tell us about his hybridizing efforts and successes, plus raising rhodos from seed.

Jack started his love affair with rhododendrons in 1963, and in 1970 made his first 100-plant rhododendron garden. By the 1990s he was hybridizing and growing on thousands of seedlings. Jack will share his hybridizing goals, why he chooses the seed parent and pollen parent and what characteristics he looks for in a plant that might be worthy of growing on and naming. Before he names and registers a new hybrid it needs to win a ribbon at a Rhody show. Some of his hybrids are R. 'Gladdy', R. 'Prism', R. 'Kalhua' and R. 'Mead'.

He will also tell us how to grow rhododendrons from seed.

Photos are those of the Newsletter editor, June Walsh, unless otherwise noted. Permission is granted to reprint any portion of this publication provided credit to the author and Chapter is given.

Plant of the Month: *R. burmanicum* x *R. 'Mi Amor'*

By Don Wallace

Here is another of the late Jim Gerdemann's fabulous hybrids that we received several years ago. The plant is, as yet, an unregistered hybrid between the yellow fragrant maddenii *R. burmanicum* and the *R. maddenii* hybrid *R. 'Mi Amor'*. The result is a smaller, more compact plant with smaller flowers than 'Mi Amor', but more colorful. There is some fragrance on a warm day. This plant will be 4 feet tall and wide in 10 years, much smaller than 'Mi Amor', so will be a better choice for smaller gardens. Jim Gerdemann lived in Yachats, Oregon on a 3.5 acre parcel that he planted with hundreds of rhododendron and other companion plants and trees over the years. The new owner, Andreea Ghetie, a landscape designer, has been renovating the garden and has open days in the spring and summer for tours. There are many big leaf rhododendrons that are over 15 feet tall. Very impressive! I was lucky to be able to tour the garden with Andreea Ghetie in January on a rainy, windy day, and was able to see many of Jim's hybrids among other species rhododendrons in the woodland garden. Jim also experimented in growing some of the *Vireya* group of rhododendrons outside in his garden with some success.

Here is an article on Jim and Janice's garden;

In 1981, Jim and Janice Gerdemann purchased an acre of property on the edge of the Siuslaw National Forest in Yachats. Thickly forested with spruce and hemlock, but on a sloped site adjacent to the ocean, it was the perfect place to test the hardiness of rare and unusual plants from all over the world. For almost thirty years, Jim (a retired University of Illinois plant pathology professor) and Janice (a retired teacher) collected and planted unusual specimens — most of which they grew from seed -- on the wooded hillside with its myriad microclimates. Over the years, the site grew into a unique, 3.5-acre, richly-planted botanical preserve.



The Gerdemann's world travels, as well as Jim's research into mycorrhizal fungi, informed their intense interest in growing seemingly challenging plants and helped them succeed with plants often deemed tender. Today, the Preserve contains many unusual plants, from southern hemisphere shrubs and trees to significant collections of magnolia, camellia, and rhododendron species and hybrids -- including Jim's hand-crossed tropical vireya rhododendrons, in a glasshouse -- all nestled amid a vibrant native coastal habitat. In 2008, the property was purchased by Jerry and Kathleen Sand, who shepherded the garden with care for nearly eight years. As of the summer of 2015, the property is under the care of Andreea Ghetie. Plans are being developed to increase the garden accessibility to visitors; meantime, many beautiful plants can be enjoyed while wandering the public footpath leading from the road to the entrance to the Siuslaw National Forest. The Gerdemann public trail passes through a wooded hillside facing the Pacific Ocean, bordered by the Siuslaw National Forest in Yachats, Oregon.

From <https://goyachats.com/Organizations/Details/138>

WORD OF THE MONTH – GYMNOSPERM

By Bruce Palmer

This month's word has little to do with rhododendrons but is fascinating. Suggested by Steve Cole, the word is **Gymnosperm** (Greek, *gymnos*, naked, and *sperma*, seed). Gymnosperms are relics from before the ascendancy of flowering plants and the group contains many familiar and some of the oddest seed-bearing plants on the planet. The group includes Conifers, Cycads, Ginkgo and a bizarre group lumped together as Gnetophytes.

When most of us were in high school and college, there were two orders of seed plants within the Class Spermatophyta (Greek, *sperma*, seed and *phytos*, plant), the Gymnosperms with seeds borne without a protective structure and Angiosperms (Greek, *angion*, vessel and *sperma*, seed) with seeds borne inside a protective structure called an ovary. Our beloved rhodies are angiosperms. The groupings are still similar but no longer fit the old categories of kingdom, phylum, class, order, etc. DNA analysis, more complete fossil records and other analytic techniques have changed things. Groups such as Gymnosperms are now listed as "unranked" and are sometimes referred to as clades. In any case, the members of the group are still considered to be related.



Cycas revoluta

So what plants fit into the Gymnosperm grouping? By far the largest clade contains the conifers, those majestic trees we see all around us in this area. Conifers dominated the landscape during most of the age of dinosaurs, but as the climate became more varied and generally cooler after the dinosaur extinction 65 million years ago, the flowering plants outcompeted



***Rhododendron macrophyllum* among redwoods**

conifers and relegated them to marginal areas, primarily high altitudes and latitudes, colder climates and areas where it is sufficiently wet that they can compete with flowering plants.

The next largest clade contains the cycads. Cycads are tropical plants resembling palms. The only place they grow naturally in the continental United States is in the subtropical extreme southeast, mainly Florida. A typical cycad has a trunk with a group of fronds at the top. The resemblance ends there, though. The cycad sexual parts are cones similar to conifer cones. The seeds have no covering and are borne on the scales of the female cones. The seeds are edible, but contain a toxin that can affect the nervous system if eaten in high quantities.

The third clade in the Gymnosperms contains only one modern species, the Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*). No known wild populations exist; all specimens in the Western World have come from gardens in China and Japan. The name derives from the Japanese Gin Kyo, meaning silver apricot, after the fruitlike female structure, is probably the origin of the Western and scientific names. Female and male organs are on separate trees. The broad leaves resemble some ferns more than flowering plants and the single trunk is like conifers. The leaves are used as medicine and dietary supplements, said to be useful for memory improvement. The female fruiting body is so foul smelling that nearly all ginkgoes in western gardens are from male cuttings. I still remember distinctly the smell of female ginkgo trees on the UC Berkeley campus when I was a student there in the 1950s.



Ginkgo biloba

The most unusual clade is Gnetophyta (*gneto-* probably means strange or mysterious). These plants are like conifers but have vascular systems like flowering plants. DNA evidence has them more closely related to conifers than flowering plants, so they are placed with the gymnosperms. Two members of this group are the most striking. *Welwitschia mirabilis* is a strange plant living in the coastal deserts of Southwest Africa. (Continued on page 4)

Its leaflike structures can spread over 10 feet (note the six foot fence in the photo), conserving precious water in the underlying sand. The leaves resemble



Welwitschia mirabilis

Called Desert Tea, it was used as a stimulant by local Native Americans and early European settlers.

those of flowering plants but it has cones and “naked seeds”. Mormon Tea is the member of this group most familiar to us. Several species are sources of the performance enhancing drug ephedrine, now banned by the FDA because of its potentially deadly properties. The species we know best is *Ephedra californica* found in the Mojave Desert. It’s a bush resembling Scotch Broom but without leaves.



Ephedra californica

Gymnosperms may have been outcompeted by the flowering plants (Angiosperms) in the modern world, but they certainly have some very unusual species. As we enjoy our rhodies beginning to bloom, and as we prepare to host the ARS National Convention (themed “Rhododendrons in the Redwoods”), let’s not forget that those holdovers from the age of dinosaurs, the Gymnosperms, are very important to us in this southwest corner of the Great Northwest Temperate Rain Forest.

Temperate Zones

22.5 degrees to 66.5 degrees of North or South latitude

Includes 4 distinct zones:

- Humid subtropical climate (think south eastern North America and south eastern China)
- Mediterranean climate (think Southern California and Mediterranean Europe)
- Continental climate (think middle of North America)
- Oceanic climate (think England, Ireland , Scotland , northwestern North America and *Eureka!* ; monthly mean temperature below 72 degrees F in the warmest month and above 32 degrees F in the coldest month, Eureka’s dry summers put us on the edge of the Mediterranean climate zone and the Oceanic climate zone, perfect!)

Rhododendron Species Symposium at The RSBG

The **second annual Rhododendron Species Symposium** will be held on April 7th and 8th at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington. We’d love to have you join us!

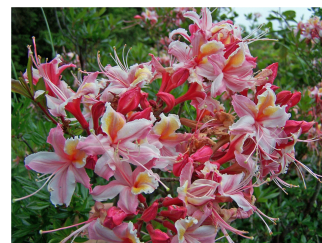
This year’s featured speaker is Dr. Hartwig Schepker, Scientific Director of the Botanic Garden and Rhododendron Park in Bremen, home of one of the largest Rhododendron collections in the world. He is also the Secretary of the German Rhododendron Society. Hartwig has been on several rhododendron trips in South East Asia and North America, including four journeys to Arunachal Pradesh.

Symposium registration is now open. Cost to attend the entire Symposium weekend, including all sessions, speakers, classes plus Saturday lunch and Saturday evening banquet will be Only \$125 if registered before February 10th. Late registration of \$145 begins February 11th. All events take place at the Evergreen Inn & Suites Best Western Plus or at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden.

Register online at <https://rhodygarden.org/cms/events/9540/rhododendron-species-symposium-2017/>



Shed no tear—O, shed no tear!
The flowers will bloom another year.
Weep no more—O, weep no more!
Young buds sleep in the root’s white core.
John Keats





Rhododendron occidentale at Stagecoach Hill



Maria Krenak



Mary Lou Goodwin, team leader



Brush recently cleared from azaleas



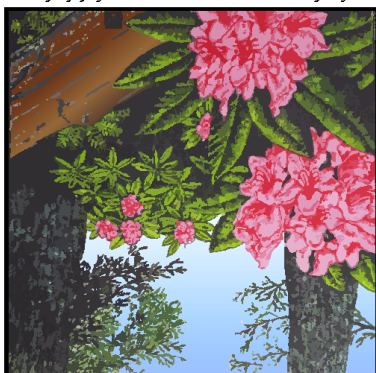
Mark Freitas

Over winter, the State of California Parks supervisor Michelle Forsys led a group of workers from the Conservation Corps for many days work of brush clearing at World Famous Stagecoach Hill Azalea Reserve.

On January 28th a small group gathered to clear the grass, ferns, berry vines, and other invasive plants from the Azaleas. Chuck and Mary Lou Goodwin from the Eureka Sequoia Garden Club and Maria Krenak, June Walsh & Mark Freitas from the Eureka Chapter ARS worked for 3 hours to clean up 50 plants along the main loop trail. We only have 350 more to do in the 40 acre parcel!

The next dates are **February 18 and February 25. 12:00-4:00** at Stagecoach Hill, off Highway 101 on Kane Road, just 8 miles north of Trinidad. Each person needs to sign a liability waiver from the California State Parks(Mary Lou will have these forms).

Let June know if you will be joining us. Wear a long sleeve jacket, heavy work gloves and sturdy boots. **HAND PRUNERS ARE ESSENTIAL.** Water and rest rooms are **NOT** available, so plan accordingly. **Call June with Questions 707-443-0604**



Eureka Chapter/American Rhododendron Society
2050 Irving Drive
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Eureka Chapter Newsletter is published monthly except during July, August and November.
Submissions from members are encouraged and should be mailed to June Walsh, Newsletter Editor, 2050 Irving Drive, Eureka, CA 95503-7022.
Or by email RhodyHosiel@suddenlink.net
Membership information and applications available from Ellen Gyll. Higlander@suddenlink.net
Humboldt Botanical Gardens Foundation, Eureka, CA and The Rhododendron Societies Botanical, Federal Way, WA.
Eureka Chapter is a chapter of the American Rhododendron Society a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization.

www.EurekaRhody.org

Future Programs

February 23, 2017	Jack Olsen	Growing from Seed
March 23, 2017	Elaine Sedlack	Westonbirt Arboretum, England's National Arboretum
April 27 to April 30, 2017	Eureka Chapter Hosts the Annual American Rhododendron Society Convention	
May 25, 2017	Member Only Mini- Show	
June 4, 2017	Members' Garden Tour and Picnic	

All those tasty treats
are brought to you by
these sweet-treat
members :-)

February:	Randy Eaton and Bill Troiano Harry and Ursula Lowther Charles Cunningham
March:	Charles Cunningham Joe Bonino Jacquie McShane Sue Silva



Imagine the Possibilities.

Mollie Smith

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Thank you Mollie
Smith and Coastal Business Systems
for doing our Newsletter printing for
our non-computer users. Mollie has
also printed our Convention 2017
color brochures.

Eureka Chapter Officers and Board Members

For board member contact information or if you are interested in attending a board meeting which are held the first Wednesday of the month at 7PM, call or email June Walsh 707-443-0604