

## AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

### Eureka Chapter

*The next meeting*

**Thursday February 24th, 7:00 p.m.**

**The meeting will begin at 7:00 sharp, so please be sure to join the meeting no later than 6:55 p.m.**

You may also log in at 6:30 to chat and make sure your link works.

To join the Zoom meeting click this link:

<https://zoom.us/j/99120170578>



Eureka Chapter  
American Rhododendron Society

Rhododendrons  
in the Redwoods

## February 2022

## Kristian Theqvist, Gardens of Finland

***The Eureka Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society will meet on Thursday, February 24, 2022. The meeting and program will be held via Zoom, see above for the Zoom link for the program beginning at 7:00 P.M.***

The Eureka Chapter speaker, Kristian Theqvist, gardens in Finland. He will be joining us via Zoom in the wee hours from Finland, for our 7:00 pm program in Humboldt County California. He often attends Eureka Chapter Zoom programs!

He has given talks in USA, Canada, Russia, Iceland, Sweden and Norway and is a very engaging speaker. You can see his programs, many of which are in English at: <https://www.rhodogarden.com/Talks/Talks.html>

Tim and I met Kristian at the 2018 ARS Convention in Bremen Germany. His enthusiasm for Rhodos and Rhodo-philis was uplifting. Later during the Convention, he was awarded the Silver Medal. He is one of the founders of the Finnish Chapter ARS and President for many years.

He has been gardening and hybridizing with rhododendrons for many years. As described in the Spring 2017 ARS *Journal* "Finland is one of the northernmost countries in Europe, situated between latitudes 60° and 70° N, corresponding in latitude in Alaska from Anchorage to Prudhoe Bay. However, the climate in Finland is distinctly warmer and more favorable for the growing rhododendrons than is northern Alaska".

He has been president of the 270+ member Finish Rhododendron Society, many of whose members are also members of the ARS. <https://www.dendrologianseura.fi/rhodokerho/club.html>



Submitted photos of  
Kristian's garden this  
winter and in its Rhodo-  
dendron blooming  
spring



*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.*



## What's a Species?

By Bruce Palmer

*Excerpted from Bruce's President's Message March 2012 Eureka Chapter Newsletter*

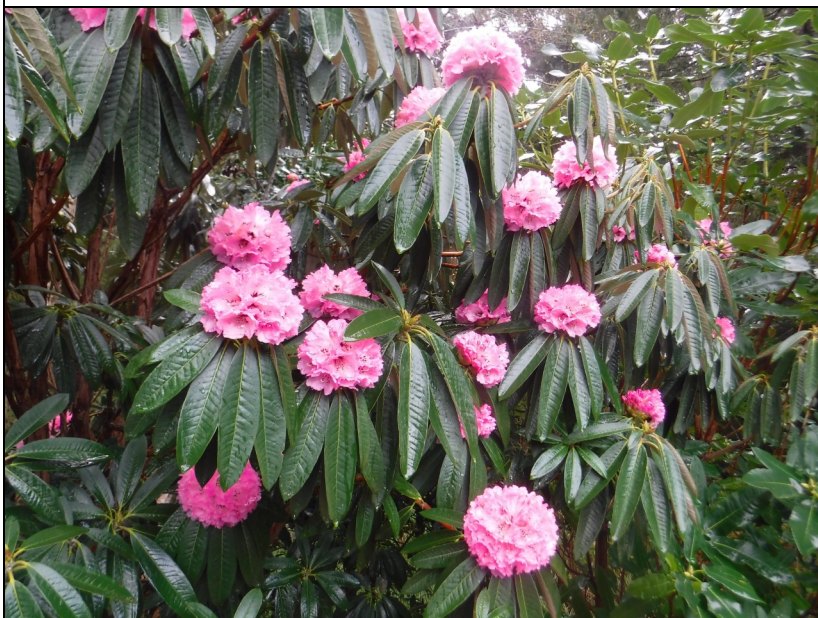
The question for this month, asked several times at meetings, is “what is a species”? Well.....It's not an easy question to address. The term “species” in biology is both singular and plural; specie is money. The definition is a bit fuzzy. Basically, organisms belong to the same species if they interbreed freely and produce fertile offspring in nature. In nature, members of the same species usually don't interbreed with other groups (species) that may be somewhat similar.

Under cultivation, two similar species can often be crossed artificially. The result is called a hybrid. Hybridizing is relatively easy in our favorite genus *Rhododendron*, a rather promiscuous bunch of plants compared to some others. That ease of human-assisted cross-breeding is what has produced the multitude of beautiful hybrids we enjoy so much.

The problem of defining a species has produced some heated discussions among biologists. They are divided into two camps, dubbed “lumpers” and “splitters”. Splitters believe that small differences between groups should define a species. Lumpers think that small differences are not definitive and that similar species should be lumped together.

There is a tendency in recent years to combine plants that used to be in separate

species into one and designate subspecies and varieties. The fragrant species *Rhododendron maddenii* is a good current illustration. Most of us have a specimen or two in our gardens with labels that predate the decision to lump species and call the various forms subspecies of *R. maddenii*. All of this goes to show that our attempts to make sense of nature don't always reflect what's going on in the real world; the plants didn't ask us for our opinions!



*Rhododendron arboreum* 'Leonardslee', grow-

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY



ARS2022

RETURN TO THE NORTHWEST

SPRING INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

PORTLAND-VANCOUVER | MAY 4 – 8, 2022

**ARS 2022 Spring Convention**

**May 4 to 8, 2022**

<https://ars2022.org>

There is still time to plan to attend the American Rhododendron Society 2022 Convention in Vancouver/Portland. The gardens around Portland are fabulous. The speakers will be world class. The plant sale will be sure to entice.

## Rh. pachysanthum



### Plant of the Month

*Rhododendron pachysanthum*,

This is a connoisseur species. It is one of the finest foliage plants in the genus. This species is native to Taiwan and is found growing above 10,000 ft. of elevation, in full exposure above tree line. This may account for its thick leathery leaves and resistance to sunburn. The most notable characteristic is the conspicuous silvery or brown indumentum on the upper surfaces of the leaves as well as on the stems. Also, a thick, dense, wooly indumentum covers the undersides of the leaves, which at maturity turns a rich orange color.

This indumentum is a prized

attribute, not a problem that needs to be sprayed with fungicide. It has been noted by some rhododendron experts that the indumentum may be a “natural insect proofing” by the plant, although this doesn’t make the plant immune to insect damage. The flowers are pure white to pale rose-pink and can be in trusses of 10 to 20 florets. The lovely flowers can be seen early in the spring, March, but often in early winter as well. This species will form a dense, compact shrub that holds its leaves for at least 3 years, and will perform best when given at least ½ day of full sun. *By Don Wallace*

### New Arrivals Early Plant Sale

**This is the best time to plant Rhododendrons and Azaleas!  
The days and nights are cool. We sincerely hope the rain  
comes to give the soil a good soaking. It is not too hot to dig  
holes!**

**Members Only Pricing and Very Reasonable Nonmember Pricing**

**By Appointment,  
Call Tim and June**

**707-498-2337**

**2027 Irving Drive, Eureka CA (Humboldt Hill)**

To see a complete list of the plants available and pictures with descriptions  
click here <https://eurekarhody.org/plantsale/>



## Please, please – Don't eat the daisies Rhododendrons

By, Margot Moser, Member of the Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society, BC Canada

Reprinted with permission From The *Rhodovine*



Two interesting articles have come my way lately: the first warning about the dangers of eating rhododendron leaves or flowers and the second, extolling the merits of a particular rhododendron extract. Poisonous or beneficial – which is it?

The first article focusses on the fact that many rhododendron species contain a toxic chemical called “grayanotoxin” in their leaves and flowers which is transmitted to the honey of bees that collect the nectar. If bees collect exclusively from rhododendron blossoms, the resulting honey will cause poisoning. This has come to be known as

‘mad honey disease’. Whether ingested via honey, flowers or leaves, grayanotoxin intoxication is very rare and rarely fatal to humans or other creatures who make this poor nutritional choice. Interestingly, bees themselves are neither hurt nor helped in the process of making mad honey.

Symptoms, which generally subside in 24 hours, include dizziness, weakness, excessive perspiration, nausea and vomiting shortly after the toxin is ingested. Unpleasant as those may be, there are apparently some who enjoy feelings of euphoria and even hallucinations. As is often the case, it is the dose that makes the poison. Accounts of grayanotoxic poisoning date back as far as 400 BC in Turkey in areas where bees sometimes feasted exclusively on rhododendron nectar. It even played a role in early chemical warfare – once when warriors on their way home to Greece unknowingly stole mad honey from hives and, a few hundred years later, when mad honey was deliberately left for soldiers to discover, devour and thereby be defeated.

Here in British Columbia too, several of our native rhododendron species are known to be toxic – *Rhododendron occidentale*, *Rhododendron macrophyllum* and *Rhododendron albiflorum* but, luckily, they don't grow in such profusion as to create health problems.

Another article on rhododendrons promotes the benefits of a food supplement derived from *Rhododendron caucasicum*\* which is native to the Caucasus. (It is a parent of R. ‘Christmas Cheer’.) The claim is that a person living in that area is 36 times more likely to live to be 100 years old. “Researchers” attribute this to their environment and a unique source of nutrients in their daily regime – a powerful super-antioxidant extracted from *R. caucasicum* which is said to be the only species not toxic to humans. If you're interested, capsules containing *R. caucasicum* extract are available at many health food stores across Canada.

So, there you go – a bit of fascinating, albeit useless, rhododendron trivia.

See: <http://www.rhodyman.net/rhodytox.html> Copy the address into the search bar and then type ‘grayanotoxin’.

### Photographs:

Deer and rhododendrons <http://shadetreesnursery.com/>

Rhododendron Flower By SKas - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50236171>



## **Eureka Chapter American Rhododendron Society**

### **Member Profile**

It has been more than 2 years since we met in person. It is time for the Eureka Chapter members to get reacquainted. Please help your newsletter editor by telling us about yourself. Member profiles will be featured in future newsletters. Please fill out the form below and return it to June Walsh by snail or Email to: [RhodyHostel@suddenlink.net](mailto:RhodyHostel@suddenlink.net)

Or : June Walsh  
2050 Irving Drive,  
Eureka, CA 95503-7022

Name(s)\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address/s\_\_\_\_\_

Career? Former career?\_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many years have you been a member?\_\_\_\_\_

What sparked your interest in Rhododendrons?\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Where do you garden?\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have some special challenges in your garden?\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a favorite Rhododendron?\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there some companion plants that you find particularly appealing?\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you do any hybridizing? If so what are your goals?\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is/are the Best Garden/s you have ever visited ?\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Eureka Chapter/American Rhododendron Society  
2050 Irving Drive  
Eureka, CA 95503-7022

Eureka Chapter Newsletter is published monthly except during July, August and November.

Submissions from members are encouraged and should be sent to June Walsh, Newsletter Editor, by email [RhodyHostel@suddenlink.net](mailto:RhodyHostel@suddenlink.net)  
Membership information and applications are available from Ellen Gill. [Htg1anderg@suddenlink.net](mailto:Htg1anderg@suddenlink.net)

Eureka Chapter is a member of the **Humboldt Botanical Gardens**, Eureka, CA and **The Rhododendron Species Botanical**, Federal Way, WA.

Eureka Chapter is a chapter of the American Rhododendron Society a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization.

[www.EurekaRhody.org](http://www.EurekaRhody.org)



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### Future Programs

*The Eureka Chapter will be ready to welcome its members and guests back to the Eureka Woman's Club for in-person meetings, until then we will continue to Zoom meetings and post the programs on the web at [www.EurekaRhody.org](http://www.EurekaRhody.org).*

*The Eureka Chapter Telephone-tree callers will be on the phone to keep you up-to-date with anything new. Tell them thank you for their calls!*

### **Zoom Programs, 7:00 p.m.**

<https://zoom.us/j/99120170578>

February 24, 2022 Kristian Theqvist, Gardens of Finland

**Plant Sale, call for appointment 707-498-2337**

March 24, 2022 Kathy Lintault, Growing Camellias

**Plant Sale, call for appointment 707-498-2337**

April 28, 2022 Don Wallace, Rhododendrons Fragrant and Fancy

**Plant Sale, call for appointment 707-498-2337**

April 29 to May 1, 2022 Rhododendron Show, Canceled

**Plant Sale, call for appointment 707-498-2337**

May 26, 2022 Mini Show, Pending

June 5, 2022 Members' Gardens Tour and Bring-your-own-Picnic

*All programs subject to change*



What is laid down, ordered, factual is never enough to embrace the whole truth: life always spills over the rim of every cup. -Boris Pasternak, poet, novelist, Nobel laureate (10 Feb 1890-1960)

*Rhododendron kiusianum 'Komo Kulshan' at Humboldt Botanical Garden, blooming now!*

### **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 all members are welcome, call or email June Walsh 707-443-0604