

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Eureka Chapter

The next meeting, IN-PERSON!

Thursday January 26, 7:00 p.m.

Woman's Club, 1531 J Street, Eureka CA



Eureka Chapter
American Rhododendron Society

Rhododendrons
in the Redwoods

January 2023

Tropical Rhodos—Vireyas

*Eureka Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society will meet on Thursday, **January 26, 2023**. The meeting and program will be held at the Eureka Woman's Club 1531 J Street in Eureka beginning at 7:00 P.M.*

Christy Hartsell will give a program about growing tropical rhododendrons. Christy lives in Palo Alto, CA and is a 30-year member of the De Anza Chapter. He is currently Treasurer having served as President and Vice President.

This will be a great opportunity to learn about Vireyas. Christy will show how he propagates and grows his Vireyas and how the flowers are different depending on the Season.

At one time he had over 500 different Vireyas, but he has since scaled back to a little under 250 plants. Christy has been collecting and growing Rhododendrons and Vireyas for over 30 years, in his tiny yard.

Christy has given talks to interested groups on Vireyas including the Hawaii Chapter, the California Chapter, and the Eureka Chapter. It will be interesting to get Christy's perspective on our recent drought-breaking rain followed by cold. Both of which seem to have stimulated your editor's and President Tim's Vireyas to bloom!



Inferno

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Zircon



Highland Arabesque



Brewster



Palmer Garden Vireya



Walsh Rhody Hostel Vireya



Walsh Rhody Hostel Vireya

*Photos provided by Christy Hartsell
and Tim Walsh*

Word of the Month - Bract

By Bruce Palmer



R. liliiflorum

FLOWERS EMERGING FROM BRACTS

The holidays are gone so our poinsettias are wilted and about to give up, but it was during the time they were on our porches that I thought BRACT might be a good word to revisit. Bract (Latin: *Bractae*, a thin iron sheet) seemed like a good word to explore again.

This time of year, it is the bracts that surround the future trusses that tell us how well our rhodies are going to perform in the Spring. The loose pieces we remove to display our rhodies at the annual flower show are BRACTS. They are not trash but were there to protect the leaves or inflorescence from the time they first developed shortly after the last bloom through the winter until it came time to flower or put on new growth. Bracts are modified leaves, though they often do not appear to be. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (author of the famous epic poem *Faust*) was among the first to understand this when he wrote in 1790: “Everything is leaf, and through this simplicity the greatest diversity becomes possible.” Bracts serve as protective structures in flowering plants. Typically, they drop off as the leaves or flowers develop, but not always. In grasses they persist and are the obvious features around nearly invisible flowering parts and around the seeds of grains before they are winnowed. The persistent papery structures around tomatillos and ground cherries are **BRACTS**.

A number of flowering plants use brightly colored **BRACTS** as attractants for pollinators and landing platforms for pollinating birds. The Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) left from Christmas is a good example. The striking red structures are modified leaves, bracts, that serve to attract humming birds and furnish them a landing spot. The flowers are tiny yellow and red separate female and male structures at the center. The poinsettia was introduced from its native Mexico to the Southeastern United States by Joel Poinsett, a little known but historically important figure sent by President James Madison to Latin America to monitor the revolutions there in the early 1800s. The bracts we are most familiar with are found around dogwood inflorescences. They range in color from white through green, yellow and pink.

Rhododendron inflorescences (trusses) have their protective bracts arranged in a whorl-like spiral around the base and interspersed among the individual flowers. This configuration is called an involucre (Latin, *involucrum*, a wrapper). As the flowers emerge, the bracts drop off. With the bracts gone two tiny thread-like structures on the stalk of each flower are visible. These are called bracteoles or bractlets and distinguish Rhododendrons from other members of the family Ericaceae.



DOGWOOD AND YOSEMITE FALLS

So, the stuff we remove from our trusses for the show was useful to the plant before the flowers emerged. We won't be having a competitive show this year, but you still might want to “clean” your displays before you bring them to the non-competitive show April 29th.



POINSETTIA INFLORESCENCES

THE GOLDEN GATE, AND REDWOOD EVERGREENS



© National Geographic Society

Dufaycolor Photograph by B. Anthony Stewart

EUREKA'S COURTHOUSE IS FRAMED BY PALMS AND RHODODENDRONS

The date palm was imported, as were panels of a Chinese temple for a lumber baron's mansion. A famous "prefabricated" store, brought in pieces from China, was set up again in the business center. The red ball on top of the Courthouse, lighted by night, is visible across Humboldt Bay and far out at sea.

IX

Our friend Marc Colombel from Brittany France found this vintage picture of Eureka. Tim Walsh remembers the mansion. The courthouse in the background was damaged and demolished by the December 21, 1954 6.4 earthquake. Tim's brother Clancy was born DURING the shaking! The courthouse was replaced in 1956 by the winners of the Ugliest Architecture contest.



Rhododendron protistum at Humboldt Botanical Garden, This BIG leaf Rhodo currently has 13 HUGE pink flower trusses . Must see to believe!

Happy New Year!

By Eureka Chapter President Tim Walsh

Maybe a bit late but I thought that I'd share a few words about a most-interesting year just past.

Maybe it was just me, but I don't recall a better bloom overall. I suspect that it was because of a change in the weather or, maybe just the way that "the weather" treated our plants.

The "Humboldt Bay region" had an unusual winter (quite dry as I recall), an early "wet" spring and a "back-to-normal" dry summer. By that I recall that growing up in Eureka we had very few "sunny" summer days with lots of overcast which led to our relatively normal dry fall.

Locally we have access to "lots" of water because of the water systems built years back to supply two pulp mills, both of which have long been shut down, and that sends a large amount of water to where it came from...the ocean. That said, I don't have any guilt for using some of our local "excess water" to comfort a few of our newer plants for the first couple of years!

Keep in mind that our favorite plant, the Rhododendron, typically needs very little water locally once established, even though we're officially located in a Mediterranean climate with long hot/dry summers (USDA 9B). We've all seen huge Rhodies around the Humboldt Bay area towns surrounding Victorian homes that haven't been watered

for decades, literally...right? What makes the Humboldt Bay Region unusual is that we have "cool summers" and most of our rhodies come from the Himalayas which, in most cases, delivers torrents of water which moistens and enriches the soils during April, May and into June, it's called "the monsoon".

Because of our "cool" summers we can specialize in several types of Rhododendrons and other "Alpines". At Humboldt Botanical Garden our chapter grows several Rhododendrons and other "companions" like nowhere else! Don't expect to see lots of Basil or Tomatoes but, you can see temperate region and even sub-tropical plants that will make YOUR GARDEN a destination!

This upcoming chapter meeting will be about a tropical / sub-tropical series of Rhododendrons that will make you drool! Vireyas are tropical Rhodies that will do well on your back porch...or greenhouse. June and I have grown them for years on our back porch and have lost only a few...because of "over-protection"! They will amaze you for both their flowers and forms. Christy Hartsell is both a "great guy" and a great plantsman. He grows a huge number of Vireyas in his small backyard in the San Francisco Bay Area and will show us all how we can make an amazing display of plants that we can do well here and that many of you have never even seen!

All that said, let's see what makes other Rhododendron fanciers "jealous" at this time of year...



Moss Family Temperate Woodland Garden 2023

Companion Profile

In February 2013 Eureka Chapter member Denise Braafladt invited members of the Eureka Chapter, American Rhododendron Society to come to her garden to collect tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) for Humboldt Botanical Garden's Moss Family Tem-

perate Woodland Garden. Denise's husband Dr. Hal Braafladt (1926 to 2014) planted young *Dicksonia antarctica* ferns in the early 1960s in the Redwood forested canyon behind his house. The ferns had grown large and lush and were so happy that there were many baby ferns in the canyon. It usually takes 20 years for a tree fern to produce spores.

These ferns grow from an erect rhizome, like a bearded iris, forming a trunk. They are very hairy at the base of the stipe, adjoining the trunk, and on the crown. The rough textured fronds (leaves) can grow to more than 6 feet long and are considered some of the largest leaf structure in the plant kingdom. At maturity fronds are borne in flushes, with fertile and sterile fronds often in alternating layers.

The "trunk" of this fern is merely the decaying remains of earlier rhizomatous growth of the plant and forms a medium through which the roots grow. They can be cut down and, if they are kept moist, the top portions can be replanted and will form new roots. We did this with a plant donated to HBG by Gail and Rod Ledbetter.

The fern grows on damp, sheltered woodland slopes and moist gullies, which we have been able to replicate in the Moss Family Temperate Woodland Garden. *Dicksonia antarctica* is the most abundant tree fern in South-eastern Australia.

Dicksonia is considered very primitive, dating back at least to the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. Humboldt Botanical Garden's *Wollemi nobilis* is from the early Cretaceous period.

There are 25 species of *Dicksonia*, several species are considered rare because of over collection in their wild habitat. They are widely cultivated in North America in USDA zones 9 and 10 as well as in greenhouses and con-



Eureka Chapter member Ellen Gill planting new fern 2013



Many Big Leaf Rhododendrons are growing alongside the tree ferns, *Dicksonia antarctica*, at Humboldt Botanical Garden



Eureka Chapter members Don and April Goess in front of fern 2022

servatories. They can live hundreds of years.



Plant of the Month – *Rhododendron agapeatum*

By Don Wallace

This little known species is so delightful. In fact, that is what its name means. It is a medium sized, mounding grower with handsome dark green leaves. This species opens for us here along the coast in late February or early March. The tubular bell-shaped flowers are a rich crimson red, measuring about 2" in length, in clusters of 10-12. It is a very precocious bloomer and rivals any hybrid blooming at that time. Native to upper Burma, this species is found growing between 6,000 to 7,000 ft. in elevation. *Rhododendron agapeatum* is in the

section Irroratum, sub section Parishii. It has been re-classified as *Rhododendron kyanii*. This plant will grow to 5 ft. x 5 ft. in 10 years and can grow in full sun or partial shade. We have found this species to be a very hardy, tough grower with no disease or insect problems. We obtained it from Peter Schick of Fort Bragg, CA over 20 years ago, and who knows where Peter got it. He had people from all over the world sending him seed of plants they knew he could grow in his arboretum.

At Eureka Chapter Member meeting potlucks and board of directors' meetings we share all kinds of delicious food. Gail Ledbetter has brought this dish to potlucks and people have asked for the recipe. Members ask and we try to supply...all kinds of information! Have fun making and eating.

Calico Beans

1 ½ lb. hamburger
 ½ lb. bacon, cut in small pieces
 1 c chopped onion
 2 (1 lb. 15 oz.) cans of pork & beans
 1 (1 lb.) can kidney beans, drained
 1 (1 lb.) can butter limas, drained
 1 c ketchup
 ¼ c brown sugar
 1 T liquid smoke
 3 T vinegar
 1 t salt
 Pepper



Brown hamburger, bacon, onions. Drain off the fat. Combine all ingredients. Bake in the oven at 350 F for an hour or in crock pot on low for 4-6 hours.

Note: Gail says she ditches the lima beans and has used other combinations of beans.

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

Membership information and applications are available from Ellen Gill. Htg1an-derg@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 organi-



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Future Programs

The Eureka Chapter is ready to welcome its members and guests back to the Eureka Woman's Club for in-person meetings. 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!

January 26, 2023, 7:00 Christy Hartsell, Growing Tropical Rhododendron Vireyas

February 23, 2023 7:00 Tim Walsh, Garden Visits

March 23, 2023 7:00 Glen Jamieson, Road trip around Iceland

April 27, 2023 7:00 Don Wallace, Something Exciting about Rhododendrons

April 28, 2023 Rhododendron Show and Sale, Carson Park

May 25, 2023 6:00 Members' Mini Show and Potluck

June 5, 2023 Garden Tour, Bring-your-own-picnic

All programs subject to change

As garden philosopher Allen Lacy has written, "I suspect that more loving and caring people can be found among gardeners than among any other group united by a common interest."

Rhododendron arboreum 'Leonardslee', January bloom



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, RhodyHostel@suddenlink.net