AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Eureka Chapter

Pre Meeting Dinner
5:15 p.m.
Gallagher's, in the Eagle House
139 2nd Street, Old Town
Reservation is required
call Lynne at (707) 362-1796

The next meeting,
Thursday February 26th, 7:00 pm
Eureka Woman's Club
1531 J Street, Eureka CA

Eureka Chapter American Rhododendron Society — *Rhododendrons in the Redwoods*

February 2026

Getting to the Root of the Problem!

The Eureka Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society will meet on Thursday, February 26, 2026 . The meeting and program will be held at the Eureka Woman's Club 1531 J Street in Eureka beginning at 7:00 P.M.

Kathy Kosta will give us a program called, Getting to the Root of the Problem: Basic Techniques in Plant Disease Diagnosis. She will cover the steps required to diagnose plant problem, from foliar to stems to roots. Symptoms of the different types of plant diseases or disfunction are demonstrated. Fungal, bacterial, and viral problems are highlighted.

Kathy is graduate of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, she has worked as a plant pathologist for 38 years. As a pathologist she has worked with farmers, foresters and other landscape professionals.

In early 2012 she began work on the disease known as Sudden Oak Death, caused by the pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*. She started the statewide Best Management Program for Ornamental and Native Plant Nurseries and also served as the CDFA/USDA liaison to the National Ornamental Research Site at Dominican University of California in San Rafael, CA. Recently retired and a UCCE Master Gardener she plans to continue working with people on plant problems and best management practices. (*Submitted photos*)

Plant of the Month: *Rhododendron* 'Wind River'

By Don Wallace

Rhododendron 'Wind River' was created by Jim Barlup. This plant is one of the best-looking rhododendrons in the nursery. It has roundish leaves which are very dark green are lush and cover the plant amply. The flowers have a mixture of pink and peach, and are held in full, round trusses. This plant grows slowly but is worth the wait. You can expect *Rhododendron* 'Wind River' to be 5 feet tall and 6 feet wide in 10 years from planting. It can take full sun here in Humboldt County. A real winner!

The Dogwoods (*Cornus*) at Humboldt Botanical Garden are fantastic, but only a few *Cornus* do well in coastal Humboldt County.

Cornus kousa

We have grown these trees successfully in the Moss Family Temperate Woodland Garden since planting in 2008/2009. They are native to Asia and can grow to nearly 40 feet though the ones in the Temperate Woodland Garden are closer to 15 feet in 18 years. They have inconspicuous flowers surrounded by large showy bracts; they provide good fall color and set fruit! They need full sun and plenty of drainage. They can get by with little summer water but will do best if given infrequent deep watering. They rarely need to be pruned. There are different named varieties with white, pink or magenta flowers and even one with variegated foliage *C.k.* 'Wolf Eyes'. All do well.

Cornus capitata

This Asian native evergreen species is very well adapted here and may reach 40 feet. It can handle wind without disfigurement! They need no summer water once established. Some people find the fruit annoying when it falls, but the fruit looks great on the tree, and wildlife take advantage. These trees, though evergreen, drop leaves all year. The leaf fall can be raked into the bed the tree is planted in for a natural mulch or picked up in your mower to be added to a compost heap. *Cornus capitata* 'Mountain Moon' is a selection which has larger flowers, leaves and fruit and covers itself in bloom in spring. It is growing along the fence on HBG's western border.

***Cornus kousa* 'Radiant Rose' with 'Blue Star' juniper**

Cornus sericea

We grow *Cornus sericea* 'Kelsy's Dwarf Osier Dogwood ' , a short red-twig dogwood, growing only 2-3 feet tall. It is a deciduous North American native planted in the Lost Coast Brewery Native Plant Garden. It is in two locations as 'mass plantings' of many individuals. In spring it has an umbel of small inconspicuous flowers. In summer it has nice matt- green leaves. But it is winter when it comes into glory with bright red-twiggy branches. If it is coppiced (cut to the ground) every few years the red twigs will be renewed.

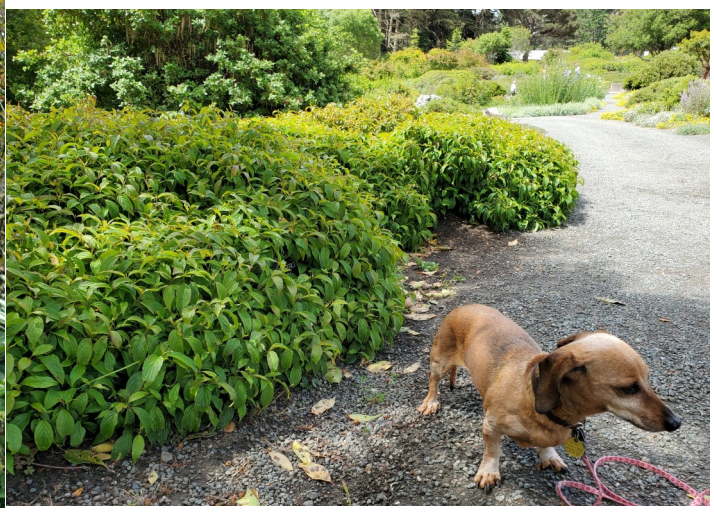
***Cornus* 'Eddie's White Wonder'** is deciduous and can grow to 40 feet. It is a cross of two North American natives, *Cornus florida* from eastern North America and *Cornus nuttallii* from western North America. In summer the leaves tend to look tired. We have several throughout HBG. They bloom well with enough sun, and can be drought tolerant.

The two *Cornus* that are not so great for coastal gardens are *Cornus nuttallii* (native to the west, needs heat and cold to look its best), *Cornus florida* (native to North Eastern and South Eastern USA…these mostly survive to die)!

Cornus canadensis

This low-growing dogwood is native to Eastern Asia, Greenland and northern North America. It is very cold hardy thriving in USDA zones 2-6, so it is not suited to coastal Humboldt. It may do well if given enough shade and irrigation in colder areas of Humboldt County. If you can make it happy it is a completely charming groundcover.

June and Tim Walsh are the curators of the Moss Family Temperate Woodland Garden in Humboldt Botanical Garden, they are both UCCE Master Gardeners and ARS Gold Medal recipients.



Right, top, *C. c.* 'Mountain Moon'

Center, *C.k.* 'Wolf Eyes'

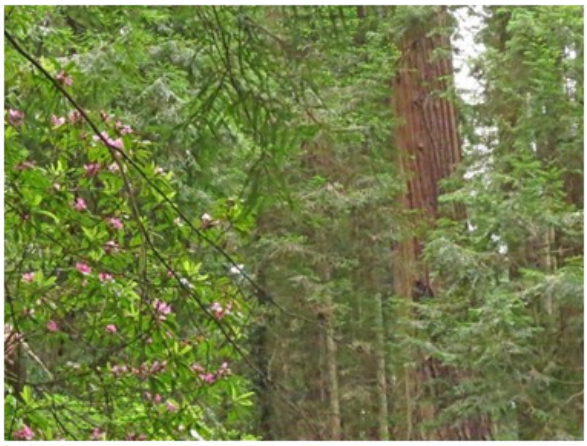
Bottom Left, *C.c.* 'Mountain Moon' fruit

Bottom Right, *Cornus sericea* and Rhodie-dog

WORD OF THE MONTH – GYMNOSPERM

By Bruce Palmer (reprinted from February 2017)

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 bizzare group lumped together as Gnetophytes.



***Rhododendron macrophyllum* among redwoods**

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 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.

Ginko biloba

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 fruit-like 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.

Welwitschia mirabilis

Ephedra californica

The most unusual clade is Gnetophyta (*gneto-* probably means strange or mystcrious). 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. 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 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. Called Desert Tea, it was used as a stimulant by local Native Americans and early European settlers.

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, Chile, South Africa, southern/ southwestern Australia and Mediterranean Europe)
- Continental climate (think middle of North America, Europe, and Asia)
- Oceanic climate (think England, Ireland , Scotland , northwestern North America and *Eureka at 40 degrees north!*; 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!)

Eureka Chapter/American Rhododendron Society

2050 Irving Drive, Eureka CA 95503-7022

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

Submissions from members are encouraged and should be sent to June Walsh, Newsletter Editor, by email at RhodyHostel@gmail.com

Membership information and applications are available from Ellen Gill at rhody4erg@gmail.com

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

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

www.EurekaRhody.org

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Future Programs

***The Eureka Chapter meets at the Eureka Woman's Club,* 1531 J Street, Eureka CA.**

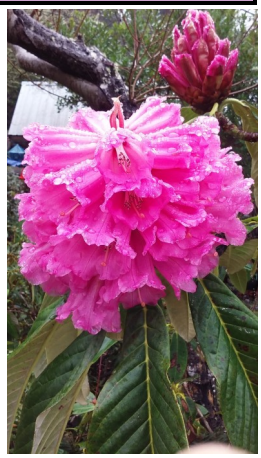
The Eureka Chapter Telephone-tree callers will be on the phone to keep you up-to-date with anything new. Tell them thank you for their calls!

February 26, 2026	***Kathy Kosta***	***Getting to the Root of the Problem!***
March 26, 2026	***Don Wallace***	***6 steps to Success with Rhododendrons***
April 23, 2026	***Joe Bonino***	***A visit to Descanso Gardens***
May 28, 2026	***Member Mini-Show and Potluck***	***Let us see your Bloomers!***
June 7, 2026	***Member Garden Tour and Potluck Picnic***	

All programs subject to change...what in life isn't?

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

Darci Short and Frank Bickner enjoying the February bloom of Big Leaf *Rhododendron protistum* at Humboldt Botanical Garden.



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 7 p.m. all members are welcome, call or email June Walsh 707-498-2337 RhodyHostel@gmail.com