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The Vancouver Rhododendron Society is a Chapter of The American Rhododendron Society.

Meetings are held at VanDusen Botanical Gardens, 5251 Oak Street, Vancouver on the 3rd Thursday of each month except July, August and December. Guests are most welcome to attend and participate.

VRS EXECUTIVE

President – Don Haslam
Vice-president – Sean Rafferty
Past President – Joanne Ronsley
Treasure – Dana Cromie
Secretary – Jasbir Gill
Membership – Philip McDougal
Programs – Joe Ronsley
Members-at-large – Tony Clayton
- Nora Hall
- Alan Cheung



UPCOMING EVENTS

Fearings Farm – Harold is opening his garden on April 18, between 12 and 5pm. The location is 5376 Ross Road, Abbotsford. For directions call 604-857-4136

Bradner Daffodil Festival – April 18 weekend. About a mile from Fearings Farm.

Annual VRS Potluck - will be held at Nora Hall's home at 6559 Balsam St. Vancouver on June 14 (Sunday) 604-266-8132. A sign-up sheet will be circulated at the April and May meeting.

VanDusen Botanical Garden Walk – On May 21 members and guests will meet at the entrance at 6:30 pm for a guided walk of VanDusen Garden. Your guide will be Egan Davis. Entrance to the garden will be free.



APRIL SPEAKER

CHARLES LYTE

OUR SPEAKER THE EVENING OF APRIL 16TH WILL BE CHARLES LYTE, FROM DEVON, ENGLAND.

CHARLES STARTED LIFE WORKING FOR A GREAT OLD NURSERY, WALLACES OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS, WHICH SPECIALISED IN RHODODENDRONS, AS WELL AS LILIES AND IRISES. HE WENT ON TO BECOME A JOURNALIST, TRAINING ON A PROVINCIAL PAPER; WORKED IN ZIMBABWE (THEN SOUTHERN RHODESIA), BUT THE MAJORITY OF HIS CAREER WAS IN FLEET STREET. THE LATTER PART WAS DEVOTED TO GARDEN WRITING, AND FOR EIGHT YEARS HE ORGANISED A SHOW GARDEN AT THE CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW FOR HIS DAILY NEWSPAPER.

CHARLES HAS WRITTEN A NUMBER OF BOOKS, INCLUDING BIOGRAPHIES OF SIR JOSEPH BANKS (WHO INTRODUCED /RHODODENDRON CNADENSE/ TO ENGLAND IN 1767); FRANK KINGDON-WARD, AND A BOOK CALLED THE PLANT HUNTERS. HE IS RETIRED NOW, BUT A GREAT DEAL OF HIS TIME IS SPENT RECOVERING AND PLANTING A GARDEN, PART OF WHICH IS A DISUSED STONE QUARRY. HIS LECTURE TITLE IS 'RHODODENDRON ADVENTURERS': KINGDON-WARD AND THE OTHER



PRIMULA SECUNDIFLORA

GREAT RHODODENDRON COLLECTORS—A SUBJECT THAT IS ALWAYS FASCINATING, IN THIS CASE CLEARLY PRESENTED WITH AUTHORITY.

SIKKIM PART 2

GEOLOGY

THE HILLS OF SIKKIM MAINLY CONSIST OF GNEISS-OSSE AND HALF-SCHISTOSE ROCKS, MAKING THEIR SOIL BROWN CLAY, AND GENERALLY POOR AND SHALLOW. THE SOIL IS COARSE, WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF IRON OXIDE CONCENTRATIONS, RANGING FROM NEUTRAL TO ACIDIC AND HAS POOR ORGANIC AND MINERAL NUTRIENTS. THIS TYPE OF SOIL TENDS TO SUPPORT EVERGREEN AND DECIDUOUS FORESTS.

A LARGE PORTION OF THE SIKKIM TERRITORY IS COVERED BY THE PRECAMBRIAN ROCK AND IS MUCH YOUNGER IN AGE THAN THE HILLS. THE ROCK CONSISTS OF PHYLLITES AND SCHISTS AND THEREFORE THE SLOPES ARE HIGHLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO WEATHERING AND PRONE TO EROSION. THIS, COMBINED WITH THE INTENSE RAIN, CAUSES EXTENSIVE SOIL EROSION AND HEAVY LOSS OF SOIL NUTRIENTS THROUGH LEACHING. AS A RESULT, LANDSLIDES ARE FREQUENT, ISOLATING THE NUMEROUS SMALL TOWNS AND VILLAGES FROM THE MAJOR URBAN CENTRES.

CLIMATE

THE CLIMATE RANGES FROM SUB-TROPICAL IN THE SOUTH TO TUNDRA IN THE NORTHERN PARTS. MOST OF THE INHABITED REGIONS OF SIKKIM, HOWEVER, ENJOY A TEMPERATE CLIMATE, WITH THE TEMPERATURES SELDOM EXCEEDING 28 C IN SUMMER OR DROPPING BELOW 0 C IN WINTER. THE STATE ENJOYS FIVE SEASONS: WINTER, SUMMER, SPRING, AND AUTUMN, AND A MONSOON SEASON BETWEEN JUNE AND SEPTEMBER. THE AVERAGE ANNUAL TEMPERATURE FOR MOST OF SIKKIM IS AROUND . SIKKIM IS ONE OF THE FEW STATES IN INDIA TO RECEIVE REGULAR SNOW FALL. THE SNOW LINE IS AROUND 6,000 METRES

DURING THE MONSOON MONTHS, THE STATE IS LASHED BY HEAVY RAINS THAT INCREASE THE NUMBER OF LANDSLIDES. THE STATE RECORD FOR THE LONGEST PERIOD OF NON-STOP RAIN IS ELEVEN DAYS. IN THE NORTHERN REGION, BECAUSE OF HIGH ALTITUDE, TEMPERATURES DROP BELOW &MINUS;40 C IN WINTER. FOG ALSO AFFECTS MANY PARTS OF THE STATE DURING WINTER AND THE MONSOONS, MAKING TRANSPORTATION EXTREMELY PERILOUS.

FLORA AND FAUNA

THE RHODODENDRON IS THE STATE TREE.

SIKKIM IS SITUATED IN AN ECOLOGICAL HOTSPOT OF THE LOWER HIMALAYAS, ONE OF ONLY THREE AMONG THE ECO-REGIONS OF INDIA THE FORESTED REGIONS OF THE STATE EXHIBIT A DIVERSE RANGE OF FAUNA AND FLORA. OWING TO ITS ALTITUDINAL GRADIATION THE STATE HAS A WIDE VARIETY OF PLANTS, FROM TROPICAL TO TEMPERATE TO ALPINE AND TUNDRA, AND IS PERHAPS ONE OF THE FEW REGIONS TO EXHIBIT SUCH A DIVERSITY WITHIN SUCH A SMALL AREA.

THE FLORA OF SIKKIM INCLUDES THE RHODODENDRON, THE STATE TREE, WITH A HUGE RANGE OF SPECIES OCCURRING FROM SUBTROPICAL TO ALPINE REGIONS. ORCHIDS, FIG, LAURE, BANANA TREES AND BAMBOO IN THE LOWER ALTITUDES OF SIKKIM, WHICH ENJOY A SUB-TROPICAL TYPE CLIMATE. IN THE TEMPERATE ELEVATIONS ABOVE 1,500 METRES, OAKS, CHESTNUTS, MAPLES, BIRCHS, ALDERS, AND MAGNOLIAS GROW IN LARGE NUMBERS. THE ALPINE TYPE VEGETATION INCLUDES JUNIPER, PINE, FIRS, CYPRESSES AND RHODODENDRONS, AND IS TYPICALLY FOUND BETWEEN AN ALTITUDE OF 3,500 METRES TO 5,000 M. SIKKIM BOASTS AROUND 5,000 FLOWERING PLANTS, 515 RARE ORCHIDS, 60 PRIMULA SPECIES, 36 RHODODENDRONS SPECIES, 11 OAKS VARIETIES, 23 BAMBOOS VARIETIES, 16 CONIFER SPECIES, 362 TYPES OF FERNS AND FERNS ALLIES, 8 TREE FERNS, AND OVER 424 MEDICINAL PLANTS IN THE STATE.



ARISAEMA RINGENS

RHODODENDRON SPECIES NATIVE TO SIKKIM

- R. AERUGINOSUM
- R. GRIFFITHIANUM
- R. ANTHOPOGON
- R. HODGSONII
- R. ARBOREUM
- R. LANATUM
- R. AUKLANDII
- R. LEPIDOTUM
- R. BARBATUM
- R. LINDLEYI
- R. CAMELLIAFLORUM
- R. MADDENII
- R. CAMPANULATUM
- R. NIVALE
- R. CAMPYLOCARPUM
- R. NIVEUM
- R. CILIATUM
- R. OBOVATUM
- R. CINNIBARINUM
- R. PENDULUM
- R. DALHOUSIAE
- R. PUMILUM
- R. PECIPIENS
- R. SETOSUM
- R. EDGEWORTHII
- R. SMITHII
- R. ELEAGNOIDES
- R. THOMPSONII

R. FALCONERI
R. TRIFLORUM
R. FULGENS
R. VIRGATUM
R. GLAUCUM
R. WALLICHII
R. GRANDE
R. WIGHTII

WWW.EXPLORESIKKIM.CO

HOOKER'S TRAIL & SIKKIMESE FLORA

JOSEPH DALTON HOOKER WAS A NATURALIST WHO HAD VISITED EASTERN HIMALAYAS IN AND AROUND 1849. DURING THAT TIME HE HAD VISITED NORTH SIKKIM. IN HIS BOOK 'HIMALAYAN JOURNALS' HE HAS ELABORATELY DESCRIBED THE NATURE AND CULTURE OF SIKKIM. WE HAVE FORMULATED A SHORT ITINERARY, WHICH WILL TAKE YOU TO SOME OF THE PLACES HE'S DESCRIBED IN HIS BOOK. RELIVE AND TAKE THE HOOKER'S TRAIL AND DISCOVER THE SIKKIMESE FLORA WITH US.

ABOUT JOSEPH DALTON HOOKER

JOSEPH DALTON HOOKER WAS ARGUABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT BRITISH BOTANIST OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. A TRAVELLER AND PLANT-COLLECTOR, THE IMPORTANCE OF HOOKER'S WORK IS ALSO EVIDENT IN HIS TRIP TO THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN HIMALAYA (1847-49). HOOKER OBTAINED A GOVERNMENT GRANT FOR THE TRIP AND THE ADMIRAL GAVE HIM FREE PASSAGE ON THE SHIPS TAKING LORD DALHOUSIE, THE NEWLY-APPOINTED GOVERNOR GENERAL, TO INDIA. AFTER VISITING CALCUTTA, HOOKER WENT TO DARJEELING WHERE HE MET BRIAN HOUGHTON HODGSON, AN EXPERT ON NEPALESE CULTURE,

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BUDDHISM AND COLLECTOR OF SANSKRIT MANUSCRIPTS WHO WAS ALSO A PASSIONATE NATURALIST. THE TWO BECAME CLOSE FRIENDS AND HODGSON HELPED HOOKER PREPARE FOR HIS TRIP INTO THE HIMALAYA. HOWEVER, BY THE TIME HOOKER WAS READY TO SET OFF FOR SIKKIM IN 1848, HODGSON WAS TOO ILL TO ACCOMPANY HIM AND DR. ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AGENT, WENT INSTEAD.

SIKKIM THEN WAS NOT A PART OF INDIA AND WAS A SMALL HIMALAYAN KINGDOM. THE CHOYALS (KING) WAS UNDERSTANDABLY ANXIOUS NOT TO ANNOY ANY OF HIS POWERFUL NEIGHBOURS SO HE AND HIS CHIEF MINISTER, THE DEWAN, WERE PARTICULARLY SUSPICIOUS OF TRAVELERS LIKE HOOKER WHO SURVEYED AND MADE MAPS DURING THEIR TRAVELS. (THEIR SUSPICIONS PROVED WELL-FOUNDED, AS HOOKER'S MAPS LATER PROVED TO HAVE BOTH ECONOMIC AND MILITARY IMPORTANCE TO THE BRITISH.) WHEN HOOKER FIRST SOUGHT PERMISSION TO ENTER SIKKIM, THE DEWAN MADE CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS TO PREVENT HIM, AND EVEN AFTER PRESSURE FROM THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION FORCED THE DEWAN

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TO SUBMIT, HE OBSTRUCTED THEIR PROGRESS IN VARIOUS WAYS. HE PARTICULARLY URGED THEM NOT TO CROSS THE NORTHERN BORDER WITH TIBET DURING THEIR EXPLORATIONS, BUT HOOKER AND CAMPBELL KNOWINGLY IGNORED HIS ORDER AND THE BORDER VIOLATION WAS USED BY THE DEWAN AS A PRETEXT TO ARREST AND IMPRISON THEM IN NOVEMBER 1849. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT SECURED THEIR RELEASE WITHIN WEEKS BY THREATENING TO INVADE SIKKIM. THE ELDERLY RAJAH WAS PUNISHED WITH THE ANNEXATION OF SOME OF HIS LAND AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF HIS BRITISH PENSION; A RESPONSE THAT EVEN SOME OF THE BRITISH THOUGHT EXCESSIVE. FOLLOWING HIS RELEASE, HOOKER SPENT 1850 TRAVELING WITH THOMAS THOMSON IN EASTERN BENGAL AND THE TWO RETURNED TO ENGLAND IN 1851. TOGETHER THEY WROTE THE FIRST VOLUME OF A PROJECTED FLORA INDICA (1855), WHICH WAS NEVER COMPLETED BECAUSE OF A LACK OF SUPPORT FROM THE EAST INDIA COMPANY (ALTHOUGH HOOKER EVENTUALLY PRODUCED

THE FLORA OF BRITISH INDIA, 1872-1897). HOWEVER, THE INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON THE GEOGRAPHICAL RELATIONS OF INDIA'S FLORA WAS TO BE ONE OF HOOKER'S MOST IMPORTANT STATEMENTS ON BIOGEOGRAPHICAL ISSUES. ALTOGETHER HOOKER COLLECTED ABOUT 7,000 SPECIES IN INDIA AND NEPAL AND ON HIS RETURN TO ENGLAND, MANAGED TO SECURE ANOTHER GOVERNMENT GRANT WHILE HE CLASSIFIED AND NAMED THEM. THE FIRST PUBLICATION WAS THE RHODODENDRONS OF THE SIKKIM-HIMALAYA (1849-51), EDITED BY HIS FATHER AND ILLUSTRATED BY WALTER HOOD FITCH, WHOSE FINE DRAWINGS ENRICHED MANY OF BOTH HOOKER'S PUBLICATIONS. HOOKER AND CAMPBELL'S TRAVELS ADDED 25 NEW RHODODENDRON SPECIES TO THE 50 ALREADY KNOWN AND THE SPECTACULAR NEW SPECIES THEY INTRODUCED INTO BRITAIN HELPED CREATE A RHODODENDRON CRAZE AMONG BRITISH GARDENERS. HOOKER'S JOURNEY ALSO PRODUCED HIS HIMALAYAN JOURNALS (1854), WHICH WERE DEDICATED TO DARWIN.

Cy Irwin, 1928 – 2009

It is with deep regret that I write of the death of longtime member Cy Irwin at the age of 80 on Sunday, March 22. Cy and his wife Martie with their garden of fine rhododendrons were my next door neighbors for 26 years until 2004 when they moved to a nearby condominium complex because stairs and garden were becoming a lot to manage. Cy and Martie were hardworking contributors to the VRS, and for this they were both honored with the Bronze medal in 2000 for their long service and dedication. Over the years Cy sold the monthly raffle tickets until 1986 when he became the VRS Treasurer. After his Treasurer term Cy often audited the annual books of the society, again sold raffle tickets, attended nearly every VRS show and sale to help with the money side of sales, set up tables, and did whatever work was needed.



CYPRIPEDIUM FORMOSANUM

RHODODENDRONS ARISE FROM THE DEAD

CLIVE L. JUSTICE, VANCOUVER, B.C.

Martie, the rhodo plants person of the family, always said their rhodos were on wheels, but it was Cy the gardener who rolled rhodos from place to place as they grew and needed relocation. I remember fondly Martie offering, over the fence, rhodo 'cuttings' for my husband Tom to root, cuttings made 'available' when Cy misstepped during his gardening.

Cy was born in Vancouver and, with the exception of a short sojourn in Premier, BC, spent his formative years in Vancouver. He grew up with his two older sisters, Constance and Helen. His family were pioneers in the greater Vancouver area; his great-grandfather, William Holmes, was the first European settler in Burnaby. Cy married Martie in 1963 and they had two children, Mark and Ann.

For many years now it has been Ann Irwin's calligraphy that has complimented the floral artistry for the Bronze Medal awards given by the VRS. After school, Cy worked in the finance industry for over 30 years before finishing his career at Woodward's. During the early part of his working life, he traveled frequently and relocated first to Nelson, BC, where he was also a volunteer fireman, and later to Santa Clara, California, where Mark was born. Cy was also very active at St. James Church where he was on the Board of Directors for the St. James Community Service Society.

When not in the garden, Cy enjoyed going to symphony concerts, dining out, and was also an avid puzzle solver.

Meg Brown



**NEW GROWTH SPROUTING FROM THE
ROOTS OF PLANTS KILLED IN THE FREEZE.
JUSTICE PHOTO**

MOST OF US HERE ON THE PACIFIC COAST ARE BY NOW ALL TOO FAMILIAR WITH THE 1955 FREEZE AND THE RESULTING HAVOC IT WROUGHT TO OUR RHODODENDRONS. WHILE MANY WERE CUT BACK SEVERELY, OTHERS NEVER RECOVERED, AND EVENTUALLY DIED, TO BE DUG UP WITH REGRET AND CONSIGNED TO THE INCINERATOR.

DURING A VISIT TO DR. MCKEE'S HOME IN ABBOTSFORD, 40 MILES EAST OF VANCOUVER, B.C., LAST SPRING (1960), ALLYNE COOKE AND I DISCOVERED SEVERAL DEAD STICKS IN AMONGST A PLANTING OF SOME 400 RHODODENDRONS SET OUT IN ROWS THAT HAD BEEN 3-4 FEET HIGH PRIOR TO THE 1955 FREEZE. TO OUR AMAZEMENT STRONG NEW GROWTH WAS COMING FROM THE BASE OF THE OLD STUMPS AND THE DEAD BRANCHES. AFTER MUCH CRAWLING ON HANDS AND KNEES WE DISCOVERED 8 IN ALL. THESE FIRST CROSS SEEDLINGS OF THE R. FORTUNEI AND TRIFLORUM SERIES WERE PLANTED BY DR. MCKEE SOME 12 YEARS AGO AND ARE NOW OVER 20 YEARS OLD. DR. MCKEE HAS PURPOSELY NEGLECTED THEM, AND HAS NEVER WATERED OR MULCHED THEM. ON A SOUTH SANDY LOAM SLOPE, IN FULL SUN, THESE RHODODENDRONS HAVE BEEN LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES. THOSE THAT DIED WERE LEFT COMPLETELY UNDISTURBED IN THEIR PLACE IN THE ROW. WE FOUND THAT ALL THE NEW GROWTH WAS FIRMLY ATTACHED TO THE OLD ROOT, RULING OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN NATURALIZED SEEDLING (FIG. 10). DR. MCKEE CONFIRMED THAT THESE HAD DIED AS A RESULT OF THE '55 FREEZE.

IN ORDER TO CONFIRM OUR DISCOVERY WE RETURNED IN LATE SEPTEMBER TO PHOTOGRAPH THEM. ALTHOUGH IT WAS DIFFICULT TO LOCATE ALL EIGHT AGAIN IN AMONG RHODODENDRONS 6-8 FEET HIGH AND AS BROAD, WE MANAGED TO FIND FOUR, EACH WITH SEVERAL STEMS AND FROM 4-8" OF NEW GROWTH. PHOTOGRAPHING THEM OFFERED SOME DIFFICULTIES BUT WE MANAGED TO GET SOME SHOTS OUT OF THE ROLL.

WHILE IT IS FAIRLY COMMON FOR MANY PLANTS, RHODODENDRONS INCLUDED, TO RENEW THEMSELVES FROM THEIR ROOTS IF CUT OR FROZEN TO THE GROUND DURING THE FOLLOWING SEASON, BUT WE FEEL IT IS QUITE UNUSUAL FOR THIS TO OCCUR AFTER FOUR SEASONS. THIS IS APPARENTLY THE CASE WITH THESE RHODODENDRONS OF DR. MCKEE'S. MAYBE IN THE FUTURE WE SHOULD NOT BE TOO HASTY IN DIGGING UP DEAD (?) PLANTS AND DESTROYING THEM.