

GREATER PHILADELPHIA RHODOGRAVURE

Newsletter of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, American Rhododendron Society ::::::::::: Winter 2013

And you thought a scion was a car

January meeting focuses on a special propagation method

Many things can drive a rhododendron fancier nuts. Weevils. Legginess. West Coast stunners that won't grow here.

And then there are the plants that look good and grow well – but are all but unobtainable because, for whatever peculiar reason, they are nigh unto impossible to propagate. Rooting cuttings the tried-and-true way always meets with failure, no matter how you tweak the process. (Tissue culture is a theoretical option – if you have the expensive laboratory setup and the desire for 7,000 ant-size plants that require ridiculous coddling.)

Karel Bernady to the rescue, ladies and gentlemen, as well as to the lectern. At January 13 meeting, Karel will report on the chapter's progress with grafting elepidotes. In his travels to Germany, Karel observed and learned the latest in grafting rhododendrons – the mating of an easy-to-grow rootstock with a cutting of a hard-to-propagate clone – and has introduced it to our Plants for Members program. The upper part of the graft – the plant being propagated – is known as the scion.

Several ARS members have helped Karel make grafts (the first were sold in September). With his fine record keeping, Karel knows which are the best candidates for this ancient horticultural art, so our chapter is in the forefront of mitigating the frustration of Why-can't-I-acquire-that-knockout-purple?

We gather at 1:30 in the Widener building at Morris Arboretum for conversation and bonhomie, with the program at 2:00. In the new snacks rotation, members whose last names



Grafted R. 'Heritage Campfire Peach,' became available via chapter propagation. Another photo: Page 4 Photo: John Delano

begin with P—Z are encouraged to bring cookies and the like.

It being deepest January, if wretched weather makes cancellation prudent, an email will be sent that morning; members without email should call chapter president Maris Ogg at 215-836-0637 to find out the meeting status.

New registrar is a local dude

Do you have a new hybrid that's just the best thing ever, with a fabulous name that everyone tells you should be "out there" for others to grow? Sounds like a matter of registration, and there's a new person in charge of registering American rhododendron names.

This past fall, Jay Murray, the longtime North American Registrar for the Genus Rhododendron, wound up her tenure and was succeeded by Michael Martin Mills of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter. While the position is in the orbit of the national American Rhododendron Society, Michael actually reports to Dr. Alan C. Leslie of the Royal Horticultural Society. He is the top guy in the world for rhododendron registration, with four regional registrars (North America, Australia, Japan, New Zealand) under him. (Dr. Leslie is also the international dianthus registrar.)

At this early stage of his role as registrar, Michael is

learning a lot of acronyms and arcane details about the overall international plant registration setup. Since registering a rhododendron requires precise measurements of actual flowers and matching color to the RHS color charts, there are precious few registrations being submitted at this time of year, but Michael reports feeling daunted by the prospect of opening his inbox in May and June.

After he's gone through a full year in his new role, Michael anticipates knowing enough to actually write something useful about the registration process. His advice for the time being is not to stint on the testing and trialing of a new rhododendron (hot years, wet years, cold years, different zones, ease of propagation) before seeking to register it.

Registration application forms, both downloadable and entirely electronic, are at the main ARS website, www.rhododendron.org/plantregistry.htm, along with instructions.

Greater Philadelphia Chapter
American Rhododendron Society
www.GPChapterARS.org

President: Maris Ogg (2012-14) 215-836-0637;
mogg@towerbridgeadvisors.com
Vice President: Debby Evans (2012-14) 215-836-1590; dfevans@msn.com
Treasurer: Myo Myint (2012-14) 610-525-0599; myintm933@verizon.net
Secretary: Michael Martin Mills (2012-14) 215-844-6253; mmm19119@gmail.com
Past President: Linda Fowler Hartnett 610-940-9478;
lindahartnett@gmail.com
Director: Karel Bernady (2011-13) 610-827-0113; bernack@verizon.net
Director: Robert Harper (2011-13) 610-532-4285; harper210@aol.com
Director: Kim Kopple (2012-14) 215-242-0391; kkopple@vet.upenn.edu
Director: Kate Deregibus (2011-2013) 215-247-5777;
kderegib@exchange.upenn.edu
Director: Bud Gressman (2012-14) 856-692-2341; mgressman@comcast.net

Newsletter: Michael Martin Mills 215-844-6253; mmm19119@gmail.com
Plants and Propagation: Karel Bernady & Linda Hartnett
Truss Show: Michael Martin Mills; Philadelphia. Flower Show: Linda Hartnett

The American Rhododendron Society is a horticultural organization devoted to the genus Rhododendron – which includes azaleas. At the national level, the society holds annual conferences, publishes the excellent, full-color quarterly Journal of the ARS, and fosters plant research and conservation. Its website, www.rhododendron.org, is a trove.

The Greater Philadelphia Chapter gathers eight times a year. Sunday afternoon meetings are held September, October, November and January at Morris Arboretum. February through August we are more mobile, with a banquet, plant sale and picnic at various sites. The latest meeting information may be found at www.GPChapterARS.org.

Not already a member? Dues are \$40 per year, which includes chapter and national membership and a subscription to the Journal. Contact the president or treasurer (see above) for a member form or go to www.GPChapterARS.org; click on “Join us.”

Location, location, location

Regular chapter meetings at Morris Arboretum now take place in the Widener building, our former home, at the top of the winding drive into the arboretum proper. Just say “rhododendron meeting” at the booth and drive in.

But do note that in February the Greater Philadelphia and Valley Forge Chapters convene jointly. That meeting will be at the historic Uwchlan Friends Meeting House in Lionville, Pa., a short distance from the Downingtown exit of the Pennsylvania Turnpike (Exit 312; after the tollgate, turn right onto Route 100 South. At the second traffic signal, turn right onto Sheree Blvd. Turn left at the next light onto Eagleview Blvd., left again at Dowlin Forge Road. Go to the stop sign, and bear left into the parking area.) Additional driving instructions will accompany the email notification of that meeting.

In memoriam Ruth Robinhold, 1913-2012

There have been six presidents in the 20th and 21st centuries who served two full terms, and Ruth Adams Robinhold Henderson lived through all of them, starting with Woodrow Wilson when she was a babe in arms. Ruth, a special spirit in the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, died on Dec. 13. This coming February 20, she would have turned 100 years old.

We know Ruth as a devotee of rhododendrons – and highly successful truss show competitor as well. But her great claim to fame was as a rower, a founding member of the Philadelphia Girls’ Rowing Club, the oldest continuously active women’s rowing organization in the country. Girls’ Rowing began in 1938, and Ruth was been a part of it to her end – the

club had scheduled a grand centennial celebration for her. When the club celebrated the 150th anniversary of its historic building last summer, Mayor Michael Nutter saluted her multiple times. Over the years, Ruth competed – and often took home the gold – in many venues, starting with the Schuylkill, and including the Hudson River, the Patapsco in Baltimore and even Lake Zurich, Switzerland. (Go to <http://www.philadelphia-girlsrowingclub.com/history.php> to learn more about the club and Ruth, with many photos of her through the decades.)

It was through rowing that Ruth Adams found her first husband, William H. “Robbie” Robinhold. She needed some help with her shell one day, and the dapper fellow in the boater hat

from next-door Undine Barge Club obliged. Not too long afterward, he asked her out, and two years later they married.

Ruth grew up in Germantown. Her father died when she was very young, and the family did not have many resources. Ruth, the oldest of three, went off to work – at the Stetson Hat Co. at the age of 13! Ruth stayed at Stetson for 23 years, working her way into the executive suite. From there she went to the old First Pennsylvania Bank, again advancing to executive level. She retired after 24 years, a mere 43 years ago.

Ruth’s skills at horticulture were honed at the Barnes



Ruth Robinhold

At home in December 2012

Photo: M.M. Mills

It takes at least a subdivision

How does a modest club accomplish such endeavors as an annual exhibit at the Philadelphia International Flower Show, the propagation of thousands of plants, meetings, competitions, displays and more? Lots and lots of volunteers.

With hope that the following compilation is somewhere near completeness, the RhodoGravure (as well as chapter officers) salutes those who volunteered in 2012.

Cut-Flower Competition (“truss show”): Craig Conover, Kim Kopple, Cathy Keim, Sue Thomson, Tom Lloyd, Randy Dalton, Cynthia Rossetti, Joan Roberts, Bud Gressman, Marilyn Gressman, Liz Bal, Norman Beaudry, Jean Beaudry, Wil Smith, Howard Kline, Mich Steele, Karel Bernady, Michael Martin Mills.

Philadelphia International Flower Show exhibit: Debby Evans, Cynthia and Rupert Rossetti, Michael Martin Mills, Randy Dalton, Kim Kopple, Karel Bernady, Linda Hartnett, Ellin Hlebik, Alice Horton, Eva Forchion, Lou Winegrad, Nils and Mary Knutzen, Betsy Urffer, Myo and Thein Myint, Herb and Jan Thomas, Bud and Marilyn Gressman, Bruce Keyser, Eva Jackson, Win and Ann Howe, Bob Harper, Fred Kaufman, Jon Villaume, Tom and Fran Schuetz, Frank Brouse, Cathy Keim, Chuck Reardon, Andy Earle, Sue Camp, Glenn Fredrick, Pat Kelleher, Joan Deen, Ted Stecki, Tom Lloyd, Joan Roberts, and Tom Conover.

Plant Sale: Tom Lloyd, Jon Villaume, Maris Ogg, Bud Gressman, Betts Layman, Linda Hartnett, Craig Conover, Randy Dalton, Michael Martin Mills, Karel Bernady, Myo Myint, Tom Conover.

Propagation: Frank Furman, Steve Torongo, Linda Hartnett, Michael Martin Mills, Myo Myint, Bud Gressman, Tom Lloyd, Michael O’Hara, Nils Knutzen, Karel Bernady.

Meetings, picnic, PHS Fall Garden Festival: Sue Camp, Maris Ogg, Robert Smith, Kate Deregibus

Betts Layman’s Lace Cookies

From her handwritten recipe card, via Kate Deregibus

½ cup butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup rolled oats
2 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon flour
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon baking powder

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Cream butter. Add sugar, egg and vanilla extract. Mix oats, flour, salt and baking powder, then add to butter-sugar mix and blend well.

With a spoon drop onto a foil-covered baking sheet. Bake for 7 to 9 minutes. Cool, then peel off cookies.

Calendar

Important: If you do not receive this newsletter electronically, you will not receive email reminders a week before meetings. Please use this calendar to mark your own.

Jan. 8, 2013, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. Board meeting, home of Maris Ogg.

Jan. 13, 2013, Sunday, 1:30 p.m. Chapter meeting, Morris Arboretum, Widener building. See Page 1.

Jan. 20, Sunday, 2 p.m. Valley Forge Chapter meeting, Jenkins Arboretum. Speaker: Joseph Klimavicz, “Hybridizing Evergreen Azaleas.”

Feb. 17, Sunday; 2:00 p.m. Joint meeting with Valley Forge Chapter. Uwchlan Friends Meeting House, Lionville, Pa. Speaker: Norman Beaudry. See article below.

March 2-10 Philadelphia International Flower Show

March 21, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Valley Forge Chapter meeting, Jenkins Arboretum. Speaker: Karel Bernady, grafting.

April 13, Saturday, 6:00 p.m. Annual banquet, Whitemarsh Valley Country Club

April 18, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Valley Forge Chapter meeting, Jenkins Arboretum

April 18-21 Azalea Society convention, Athens, Ga. For more info: <http://www.azaleas.org/convention13.html>

May 1-5 ARS Annual convention, Seattle area. For more info: <http://www.olympiachapterars.org/2013-ars-international-convention.html>

May 3-5 Valley Forge Chapter plant sale, Jenkins Arboretum

May 9-11 Chapter plant sale, Morris Arboretum.

May 12, Sunday Valley Forge truss show, Jenkins Arboretum

June 19, Sunday Chapter Picnic

June 30, Sunday Valley Forge picnic

Aug. 18, Sunday District 8 Cutting exchange and auction

5/5/5 – it’s not a lottery number

On Feb. 17, when the sister chapters meet in Lionville, Pa., the program will be “Searching for the 5/5/5 Rhododendron,” presented by Norman Beaudry of Bethesda, Md.

Though it’s not as frequently employed as in the past, there is a three-digit rating system for rhododendrons. The first is for flowers, then leaves, then plant habit; 5 is the top rating – meaning that a 5/5/5 rhododendron would be utterly smashing in all regards. Norman, who now serves as chairman of the ARS Seed Exchange, says his presentation will include a look at introductions from such Eastern hybridizers as Bob Furman (Massachusetts), Eveline Pilkington (Massachusetts) and Delbert Brim (North Carolina). Just to make Pennsylvanians squirm, Barlup and Fujioka hybrids from the West Coast will be included, which along those of Jens Birk of Denmark. Norman is using all of these for his own breeding efforts.

The Beaudrys, Norman and Jean, are particularly active in the ARS, and were awarded the Silver Medal in 2009. They have frequently served as judges of our chapter’s cut-flower competition.

The meeting begins at 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 17. A major refreshment hour follows the program. Directions to the Uwchlan venue will be included in the February email reminder.



Propagated R. 'Irresistible' is another cultivar made available via the chapter's grafting project. Photo: Karel Bernady

The Flower Show

The Philadelphia International Flower Show is almost here, and the team that designed and will install the chapter's exhibit could use help, in two forms. There is setup, on Tuesday, Feb. 26, and breakdown on Sunday, March 10. Contact Linda Hartnett at 610-940-9478 or lindahartnett@gmail.com. Those interested in staffing the table at the exhibit and answering visitors' questions should contact Michael Mills at 215-844-6253 or mmm19119@gmail.com.

Ruth Robinhold

Continued from Page 2

Foundation, where she took the three-year program starting in 1970. Many Dexters and Gables graced the Robinhold home in Lafayette Hill. Her success in rhododendron competition started with a bang – the first time she entered, she took home the trophy for Best Species in Show, in 1983. She continued entering for many years, and never failed to take home ribbons. Once her brother gave her a box with 100 fresh rhododendron cuttings. She'd never rooted cuttings before, but learned fast, and had 72 take. Ruth, who spent her last years with her second husband, Richard Henderson, at the Masonic Village just outside Philadelphia, kept her binder with notes and photos of the different rhododendrons and azaleas she grew – along with their ribbons. At the Masonic Village, she and Richard always had a couple of rhododendrons in pots on their patio.

Ruth Robinhold Henderson was probably the youngest almost-centenarian we'll ever meet. As Richard recently pointed out, at 99 she would use a cane to get around, but not a walker, because that would have made her look old.

How does one get to live so long (and so well)? We've all heard the phrase, "It must be something in the water." For decades, that something in the water was Ruth Robinhold in her shell, slipping up and down the Schuylkill.

.....

Editor's note: In early December, the RhodoGravaure dispatched a reporter to interview Ruth Robinhold in anticipation of a 100th-birthday article. The information and stories she shared then are the basis of this obituary.