

# NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY



January 2007  
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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

It was unfortunate that we had to cancel the December meeting due to the stormy weather. However, the auction will be rescheduled, probably in February.

The onslaught of snow, wind & rain over the past few weeks has taken its toll on our garden trees and shrubs. This afternoon, I removed a broken trellis in our garden that was knocked down by the high winds. I am sorry when a favourite plant is damaged or destroyed. However, it helps to remember that it can provide an opportunity for renewal of the garden.

I look forward to seeing you at our meeting on January 11.

Happy New Year!

Craig



## EXECUTIVE

President	Craig Clarke	390-4090
Vice President	Paul Lawry	390-2370
Secretary	Kathryn Grant	245-7879
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	Debbie Gaboury	758-1204
	Glenda Barr	390-2822
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	Mike Miller	758-2879
	Chris Southwick	758-0993
	John Deniseger	390-3605

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Advertising	Mike Miller	758-2879
Library	Ann Beamish	758-2574
	Helene Sullivan	758-7023
Newsletter	Kathryn Grant	245-7879
Program	Chris Southwick	758-0993
Raffle	Ann Davey & Val Harvey	
Social	Pat Schulson	245-3369
Dollar Table	Reinhold Gorgosilich	758-6533

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## NEXT MEETING

**JANUARY 11, 2007**

**BEBAN PARK**

**7:30 PM**

**INGEBORG WOODSWORTH**

**“THE HACHMANN NURSERY”**

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## **TWIGS AND STEMS**



### **Goodies for January meeting:**

Norma Ginther  
Helene Sullivan  
Brenda Lewis

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The capability to register on-line a rhododendron name has been set up at the ARS public website. You can access the internet registration form at [www.rhododendron.org/name\\_registration.htm](http://www.rhododendron.org/name_registration.htm)

If you still need to register a name you can do so now via the website. The new on-line application has been tested and approved by Jay Murray, who hopes it will encourage more growers to register their plants.

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### **2007 ARS Annual Convention**

The Northern California Chapters invite you to attend the 2007 annual convention, "Rhododendrons at the Golden Gate," April 12 - 15, 2007, with an optional post-conference tour April 16 through 18. The convention features outstanding tours of private and public gardens, featured speakers, and workshops for both beginner and experienced rhododendron enthusiasts.

The convention website is now open for business at [www.ars2007conf.org](http://www.ars2007conf.org).

Interested registrants will find the convention program, tour, speaker, hotel accommodations, plant sale and photo sale information, as well as on-line registration with payment by credit or debit cards (they would MUCH prefer cheques) and a print and mail form for cheque payment.

## **Plant Protection**

Select varieties adapted to climatic conditions in your area. ARS hardiness ratings give an indication of minimum temperatures that a well established plant can be expected to survive without damage. There is presently no rating for maximum high temperature adaptation. Hardiness ratings for selected species and hybrids can be found in the ARS website plant [database](#). The local chapter of the American Rhododendron Society is an excellent source of information on rhododendrons that grow best in your local area. (See [chapter locations](#) to get in touch with your closest chapter.)

Even with recommended varieties, plant performance will be improved with reasonable protection from drying winds. In some northern areas gardeners protect rhododendron plants by building a windbreak around them or covering them with burlap or other protective material during the worst part of the winter.

In the so-called ideal rhododendron areas there may occasionally be damage by early fall or late spring frosts. In the Pacific Northwest, for instance, there are rhododendrons which will start blooming in February and others which follow along all spring. These early bloomers may be quite hardy in bud, but the open flowers will be damaged if there is frost. These plants are usually planted in a protected place and may be covered during a frosty night.

Partial shade is desirable in most cases; in hot dry areas it is essential. There are a few varieties which simply will not tolerate full sun, developing quite yellowish leaves under such conditions. There are many others which, in a reasonably favorable climate, make a better shaped plant, and set many more flower buds if grown in full sun. The beginner, without definite knowledge as to the requirements of a variety, will do well to plant rhododendrons in locations where the plants will receive shade in the afternoon.

[Http://www.rhododendron.org/protection.htm](http://www.rhododendron.org/protection.htm)



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## Description of Rhododendron 'Hachmann's Charmant'



Photo by: Lonnie Player

<b>Seed Parent x Pollen Parent:</b>	Hachmann's Diadem x Holger
<b>Predominate Flower Color:</b>	Pink
<b>Flower / Truss Description:</b>	Flower saucer-shaped, wavy-edges, 3" to 3 3/4" across, white, edged purplish-red to deep purplish-pink inside, outside with a marginal band of up to 10mm wide, conspicuous blood red blotch on dorsal lobes. Conical-shaped truss holds 17-19 flowers.
<b>Bloom Time:</b>	Late Midseason
<b>Height (ft.) in 10 Yrs:</b>	4
<b>Cold Hardiness Temperature:</b>	-15°F (-26°C)
<b>Foliage Description / Plant Habit:</b>	Leaves elliptic, mucronate apex, rounded base, 3 1/2" to 4 3/4" long, slightly convex, glossy, mid to dark green, with fawn-colored indumentum.
<b>Elepidote (E) or Lepidote (L):</b>	E
<b>Hybridizer:</b>	Hachmann
<b><a href="#">Registration Reference:</a></b>	RHS 92

Note: Bloom time and 10 year height information are approximate and can vary dependent on local climate and soil conditions. Hardiness temperature is also an approximate guideline.

## Glossary of Terms

### **mucronate**

Having a leaf tip terminating in a hard point that is a continuation of the midvein

### **indumentum**

A wooly or hairy covering of leaves or young shoots. Can be on both top and bottom surfaces of new or young leaves, but is usually confined to the underside of mature leaves.

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Source: JARS V53:No1:p8:y1999

## Hunting the Plant Hunter: The Search for George Forrest's Grave

Peter Hutchison  
Kippen, Stirlingshire, Scotland

*The author's search for George Forrest's grave took place during a plant hunting trip to China in 1997.*

It was raining when we came to Tengchong, as it had rained much of the time while we explored up and down the Salween. It had rained for George Forrest too as he wrote from Tali-Fu (Dali):

I had the usual downpour in the Salween valley. What a place that is, with heat and moisture just like a Turkish bath...though I have travelled the road many times now, some eight or nine, never yet have I escaped rain in the Salween valley.

But the rain had brought the extraordinary diversity of plants and the plants had brought George Forrest, perhaps the greatest of all the collectors, on his first trip to the southwest of China in 1904. It is a moist and crumpled corner of the world with river gorges running north and south and the monsoon spilling over the Burma border, now Myanmar, to fill the rivers of western Yunnan. Tengchong was then Tengyueh where there was a British Consulate and the Burma border, and therefore safety was not far away.

We had come to look for Forrest's grave.

It was unfinished business in a way. Peter Cox and I had walked many of the muddy hill trails that Forrest had walked in western China and the Salween had been one of his most productive areas. The extent of his collections in China is hard to understand. Some 31,000 plants were collected and in the genus *Rhododendron* alone Cowan (1952) credits him with 309 new species in 27 different series and 5,375 numbered gatherings. The numbers have since been reduced by taxonomic attrition but still represent a remarkable contribution which cannot now be equaled.

He died of a heart attack when out shooting near Tengyueh in 1932 and he was buried near the grave of his friend, the Consul Litton, in the hillside cemetery that looked north towards the Salween-Irrawaddy divide. In those hills were innumerable plants that had been discovered and introduced by Forrest, among them *Rhododendron griersonianum*, the parent of many hybrids, and one of the grandest of all, *R. giganteum* (now *R. protistum* var. *giganteum*) which we had found a week earlier in the woods below the pass to the Dulong river.

After enquiring at a monastery where some of the inhabitants seemed of the right vintage to know about such things, we found the Laifengshan cemetery. It had been planted up with oil-bearing camellia (*Camellia oleifera*) during the Cultural Revolution and had become densely overgrown. It sits on an elliptic hill about two kilometers north of the town and has been for long a traditional Chinese burial ground. We wandered rather disconsolately among the dripping thickets where some of the Chinese graves were still tended, but many were in disrepair and some were now only discernible as a shallow mound. Recycling stones was clearly a local habit.

Near the entrance we found a range of agricultural buildings and the manager told us that the Consul's house had previously stood there. Indeed they pointed out where the tennis court had been. Afternoon tea and tennis at the Consul's house while fractious tribes warred and skirmished in the hills beyond-echoes of an Imperial past came down as we stared at the blank concrete.

The cemetery was vast and clearly not much could be done without more time to make local enquiries and mount a more substantial search. So we headed back into town where we were told that the building of the British Consulate still existed. It turned out to be a strange structure with a Chinese roof topping a very classical building of solid masonry that would not have been out of place in Georgian Edinburgh. Windows had been bricked up and shuttered but over one pedimented door we could just discern the words "HM Consulate."

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What was the story? What was the reason for this substantial and very British building, deep in what was then somewhat hostile territory? We wandered, rather puzzled, round the back to find the rear facade pitted with innumerable bullet holes like a pocked complexion. And then it began to dawn. This was a listening post, eyes and ears on the very edge of the British Empire. The French to the south in Vietnam had imperial ambitions and to the north were the turbulent tribes who nearly cost Forrest his life. George Forrest must have passed through the doors of this building many times but what other more furtive visits were made? We climbed on the veranda and peered through the cracks in the shutters. Just sacks and piles of yellowing grain, and perhaps a few ghosts.

When we returned to Kunming the Curator of the Botanic Garden there, Guan Kaiyun, who will be known to many ARS members, suggested that he might be able to help. So it came about that our small group supported by two members of the family, Gillian Cameron and Ian Forrest, arranged for a search to be carried out by a young ethno botanist from the Kunming Institute, Yang Yongping, with another staff member. The report he subsequently wrote makes interesting reading involving searches in the undergrowth and discussions with local people. Sadly he missed meeting 91-year-old Mr. Wang who had worked in the British Consulate as he had gone off to visit his daughter. But with the help of Mr. Wang's relatives and others he managed to locate the area in the cemetery known as "Yang-ren-fen," or Foreigner's Graveyard, and the discovery of an upside-down stone of the missionary Alvar Carlsson confirmed the location. But of Forrest's grave there was no trace. The Japanese had occupied Tengchong in 1942 and had fortified the hill of Laifengshan making free use of gravestones in the process. Then in July 1944 to quote Mr. Yang: "To completely annihilate Japanese enemies in Laifengshan, Chinese army and American air forces had dropped thousands and thousands of bombs in this small mountain." If that was not enough, in the 1950s some local people collected tombstones "for their own construction purposes."

Forrest's memorial does not lie, of course, on a bombed hillside in Yunnan but in the contribution he made to our knowledge of Chinese botany and the plants he introduced to cultivation. Better than any tombstone are the precisely observant field notes written in his neat hand on thousands of specimens in the Herbarium at Edinburgh. But it is good to know what happened, just the same.

*Sir Peter Hutchison, a member of the Scottish Chapter, delivered a memorable talk on George Forrest at the ARS Annual Convention in Oban, Scotland, in 1996. He has visited many of the areas where Forrest did his collecting.*

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## ***Garden Robot***

WELLINGTON (Reuters) - Tired of mowing the lawn? New Zealand researchers say they have a device that could make your neighbours green with envy.

It's a lawnmower operated via the Internet. The robotic grass cutter is controlled through a web page which monitors the mower by a small camera on the side of a house. "What our technology allows us to do is to control lawnmowers and other robotic devices while people are away at work," Massey University's Glen Bright told Reuters.

The electric mower, smaller and more compact than a normal mower, moves in a sequence across the grass, stopping in places that require trimming.

It motors out once during the day and then again at night with the computer directing its every move.

The mower should be up and trimming by the end of the year and commercially available soon after that, Bright said. The device needs physical boundaries to navigate but by the end of the year it will be able to self-navigate and adjust to different grass heights as well as carrying out gardening tasks such as soil testing, he said.

The mower was developed in collaboration with lawnmower and chainsaw company Husqvarna, part of the Sweden-based AB Electrolux home appliance maker.