

# Finnerty Gardens Friends

JUNE 2016

Welcome back friends of Finnerty Gardens! It has been a while since we last had a newsletter, and I am pleased to report that the University Finnerty Gardens are alive and well, and even more vibrant than ever, if that is possible.

I'm sure most of you receiving this newsletter have been wondering how Finnerty Gardens is doing.

Well, the good news, is that it is thriving under the passionate dedication of Rhonda, Jeremy and the garden staff.

Recently we, the Advisory Group, have been placing some donated plants from the nursery of Gerhard Schacht who was a prominent landscaper in Victoria for many years. His widow has kindly donated many umbrella pines, and maples, to mention just a few. They have found good homes in the garden and we are always grateful for the generosity of such people.

This year, we are taking a big step financially in using most of our accumulated funds raised over the years to erect a higher quality, more permanent deer fence. For some time now it has been an issue with the deer getting into the gardens and we have lost a lot of plants to their bottomless appetites. Unfortunately, we do not have the annual plant sale to continue to help with such costs and we are looking at other ways to help offset the cost of such projects.

I would like to thank Denis Tower and recognize Tower Fence Products for their generous corporate sponsorship contribution to the project.



Looking to the future, we are considering other projects and enhancements to the gardens, including a kiosk to house a map and self-guided brochures at the main entrance to the gardens, and a self-circulating water feature for one of the ponds.

You will notice with this issue, we have inserted a clip and send membership renewal and update form. We hope you will consider the annual membership contribution as another way you can support us financially by joining the Friends of Finnerty Gardens.

We are also looking toward having volunteers in the garden to help with the many tasks that take extra time from the already overburdened gardeners.

So please consider helping out in any way you can so that Finnerty Gardens continues to thrive and be a wonderful place to walk in any season.

When you take your next walk through the gardens, you may notice that we now have a clear plastic box just attached to the entrance pergola at the chapel. This will usually be filled with self-guided brochures of the gardens and can be used throughout the year. These self-guided walking tour brochures have recently been upgraded and will be stocked as soon as they come back from the printer. Stop by and pick up a few to keep handy for your visiting out of town guests.

Carmen Varcoe — *Advisory Committee*

## Some Choice Dwarf Rhododendrons

The species described here are from high elevation. They are found in alpine areas in the Himalayas and Japan, where they can be locally very abundant. Following are some of my favorite selections.



**Rhododendron impeditum (litangense)** is a popular dwarf evergreen lepidote shrub to 60cm tall, with small, aromatic leaves and widely funnel-shaped bluish-purple flowers in spring. It is a native of northern Yunnan and southwestern Sichuan from 2700 to 4900 m in open slopes and alpine meadows.



**Rhododendron fastigiatum** is also a hardy dwarf lepidote rhododendron species. Flowers are usually purplish blue but can be lavender-rose, deep purple-blue, deep lavender, deep blue or even rarely pinkish. Plants sold as *R. impeditum* may actually be *R. fastigiatum*; the two are easily confused. However, the leaves of *R. impeditum* are dark green and not glaucous whereas those of *R. fastigiatum* are glaucous and bluish. Both are well worth growing.

Like *R. impeditum* this hardy lepidote species is also in Subsection Lapponica. Its Chinese name translates to "densely branched rhododendron", an apt description. Introduced to the west by Forrest in 1906 from western Yunnan and reintroduced several times since, it can be found growing in its native habitat of thickets on rocky hills in west and northwest Yunnan and southwest Sichuan at 3200 to 4900 m. Greer rates it among the finest of all the scaly leafed rhododendrons for its hardiness and usefulness, especially in the small alpine forms.



**Rhododendron calostrotum**, also a lepidote species, is a member of Subsection Saluenensia.

The species is native to the mountainous areas of northeast India (Arunachal Pradesh), northern Myanmar, Burma, southern Tibet, and northwest Yunnan province in China. It occurs on rocky slopes, alpine meadows and cliffs, at elevations of 3000 to 4500 m. Its discovery is credited to Frank Kingdon-Ward in 1914. The specific epithet 'calostrotum' translates as "with a beautiful covering", but it is not clear whether the description refers to the typically very free-flowering plant covered with flowers, or to some finer botanical characteristic such as the dense covering of scales on the undersurface of the leaf.



**R. calostrotum** has variable in habit, ranging in height from a few inches up to 4 feet. The most dwarf forms, with a prostrate habit, are found in ssp. keleticum. The branchlets are smooth and the undersides of the rounded leaves have dense overlapping scales. The flowers are borne in clusters of one to three, on pedicels that hold them up above the foliage. They are large in relative to the other plant parts, and saucer-shaped. Their color ranges from light pink to magenta or purple. An especially fine form with rosy-crimson flowers has been named 'Gigha'. Blooming period in our area is usually early May. *Calostrotum Gigha* has beautiful and interesting rose-crimson flat saucer shaped flowers which stand above the wonderful silver-grey foliage in April-May. A lovely free flowering and neat plant. Height 30-40cm in 10 years.



Although the species **rhododendron keiskei** usually do not like temperatures below minus ten degrees C, the prostrate form, keiskei 'Yaku Fairy', is hardy to minus 15. In the wild it grows in rocky areas of central and southern Japan and it is occasionally encountered growing in trees as if it were an epiphyte. 'Yaku Fairy' is a cultivar of variety ozawae and is barely 6 inches tall after 10 years. This lepidote or scaly rhododendron can, over a great length of time, spread to two feet, even while remaining under six inches high. The blooms are relatively large and yellow in colour. 'Yaku Fairy' requires a bit of shade.

Myrtilloides Group of **Rhododendron campylogynum** is a dwarf, evergreen shrub that forms a low, spreading mound up to 40cm high. The pinky-purple, thimble-shaped flowers appear on long stems all over the plant in late spring. Myrtilloides is a unique subspecies of a dwarf group of rhododendrons from W China, Burma and Tibet. In late spring it produces rich pink, broadly bell-shaped flowers. It forms a neat and dense cushion that requires no pruning to look good. However, it is often used in Japanese gardens where clipping brings the desired shapes. If you decide to trim it do so immediately after flowering. It grows very slowly.

## Cultivation

Dwarf Rhododendrons don't mind the sun but they hate too much heat, so avoid reflected heat from South facing walls and patios. Grow the plants in full sun or partial shade in moist but well-drained, leafy humus-rich, acidic (pH 4.5-5.5), soil; keep them mulched at all times. The roots are shallow, and spread to the sides in search for nutrients so shallow planting is critical. An ideal soil mixture would be peat with lime-free, light garden soil topped with leaf-mould. Fully hardy to about -27°C (USDA zone 5b). These plants make fine pot plants and some are trained as bonsai. I planted them in sunny to semi-shaded areas in well-drained soil. The pH is about 6, so not ideal, but they are doing well.

## Finnerty Advisory Committee

We have a group of very dedicated talented people who from time to time help out with the selection, placement and general overall stewardship of Finnerty Gardens. This is a group comprised of horticulturalists, garden landscapers, & arborists.

During the growing year, we meet to walk through the gardens to critique and suggest ways in which we can continue to make the gardens the wonderful oasis it is.

The committee liaises closely with the staff that maintain the grounds and with the office of the Vice President in charge of External Relations.

On behalf of the University, thank-you to all those committee members who give so freely of their time and advice.

## The Finnerty Gardens Website: [uvic.ca/finnerty](http://uvic.ca/finnerty)

Another project in the works is a refresh of the Garden's website. We would like to update the photo's section of the website, and would appreciate the Friends of Finnertys' assistance in sending in their favorite photo of the gardens, from all seasons.

The self-guided maps, and membership information will also be updated, and a new feature section will be added, (stay tuned!)

Friends' feedback is always appreciated and comments can be sent to Charles McQuade at [mcquade@uvic.ca](mailto:mcquade@uvic.ca)

## 2016 Membership Drive

Membership in the Friends of Finnerty Gardens is \$20 per year (single or family). Membership includes an informative newsletter published multiple times a year, invitation to a "Members Day", volunteer opportunities, and invitation to workshops and gardening lectures. Funds raised through membership support enhancements within the Gardens which would not be possible otherwise.

This newsletter will also be archived on the Finnerty Garden's website at [uvic.ca/finnerty](http://uvic.ca/finnerty).

Contact: Charles McQuade, UVic Finnerty Garden Friends

250-472-4489 | [mcquade@uvic.ca](mailto:mcquade@uvic.ca)

The information presented and the opinions expressed by the authors in this newsletter are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the University of Victoria or any employee thereof.



## FRIENDS OF FINNERTY GARDENS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL & UPDATE FORM

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign me up for  1 year (\$20)  2 years (\$40)

Please make cheque payable to: **University of Victoria**

If you wish to donate above the membership fee selected, we will send you a tax receipt for the difference.

Please Clip this box and send to:

**Mr. Charles McQuade, Friends of Finnerty Gardens,  
Office of External Relations, Admin Services Building,  
University of Victoria PO Box 1700 STN CSC  
Victoria BC V8W 2Y2**



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