



The Rootball e-News

Newsletter of the Midwest Chapter ARS—VOL 9, NO. 1, July 7, 2019

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**Midwest Chapter to hold its
"Summer meeting" at the
Home & Garden of Tom Horner
On July 13th.**

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK:

After one of the coldest winters, followed by one of the wettest springs, we are now set to hold our first meeting of the year. (Our last one was literally washed up by flood waters and had to be cancelled). If you can come to only one meeting this year, this is the one.

First, you will get to see a mature Rhododendron Garden in Wisconsin. Back in the 1960s when we first started the Midwest chapter, we were greeted by a degree of skepticism that rhododendrons would grow this far north, this far inland, from both the east and west coasts. Come see how the Skeptics were wrong!

Next, you will have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to acquire some incredible plants. After donating many of Bill Dietrich's plants to the Klehm Arboretum in Rockford, we have a few 4 to 5 foot bushes left over. These will be available for a donation (please be generous - we went all out in our preservation efforts and hired a professional landscaper to remove the plants from Bill's garden).

We also have a small number of littler plants. But in order to get any of these plants, you must show up for the meeting (as if you needed more incentive than the prospect of renewing old acquaintances).

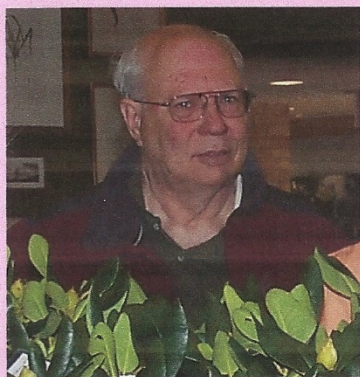
Finally, please bring a headcount of your Rhododendron Garden after last year's tough winter. This should include a list of survivors divided into two subcategories, survivors with no damage and survivors with noticeable damage, and a list of those that didn't make it. This goes back to the old adage that life experience is more useful than statistics and theoretical hardiness ratings.

So, once again, I invite you to come to Wisconsin this Saturday, July 13th. Don't be a Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda. Come early and bring your checkbook to get a plant because once they're gone, they're gone.

Until later - your President,

Richard J. Bara

"In Memoriam" Bill Dietrich



Bill Dietrich
 Midwest Chapter – ARS Truss Show
 Chicago Botanic Garden
 May 7, 2011

The death of Bill Dietrich last December was sad enough but it also deprived the Midwest chapter of a knowledgeable, reliable volunteer who will be long remembered by those who shared their time with him. Whether it was setting up for a plant sale or some other Chapter event, Bill could always be counted upon.

Bill joined the Midwest chapter in 1986 bringing to bear his diverse interests combined with a developing interest in rhododendrons. Bill focused on collecting large leafed rhododendrons (elepidotes) as evidenced by his home Garden. Often in life, we think we know a person only to learn later that we really didn't know that person all that well. Eventually however, we come to know of their diverse interests. Bill's life was such a case in point. Recently I had a fascinating discussion with Bill's nephew, Ken Stull and learned much about Bill's underlying interests.

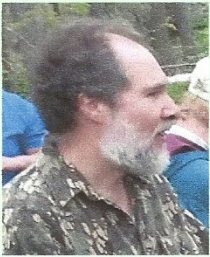
Bill earned his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and devoted his career to the study of cosmic rays. He was part of a Team which analyzed data collected by the satellites (Stereo A & B) in conjunction with the U.S. Naval Observatory. It was his job to analyze raw data and produce "clean data sets" (discerning patterns) which could be used to issue "solar wind warnings. It's generally known that episodes of intense solar radiation (cosmic rays) emanating from the Sun can adversely impair telecommunications or lead to power "blackouts" on earth. It turns out that Bill was "mixing it up" with "a formidable adversary" while "dabbling" in rhododendrons at the same time! - "WHO KNEW"!? :)

With so much riding on such "cerebral" effort, it's no wonder that Bill eventually found an relaxing escape: "mountaineering". He joined the Chicago Mountaineering Club in 1969. Perhaps without realizing it, he applied the same disciplined approach to collecting and analyzing the rhododendrons as he did to his "Day Job". It wasn't long until he was spending his weekends "free climbing" the 500 foot, quartzite bluffs surrounding Devil's Lake, Wisconsin. These "bluffs" served as training grounds for later more challenging ascents of the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains. His passion was driven by the desire to "solve a puzzle" (charting a climbing route), the camaraderie of his climbing "buddies" and his love of the outdoors. Later, as Bill reached his "sunset years", he would limit himself to directing his "climbing companions" from a stable boulder with a bag of "Chips Ahoy" cookies in one hand and a can of COKE in the other! According to Ken, "Uncle Bill" had few "vices" other than being an unabashed COKE "junkie"! :) :)

Bill was an avid downhill skier, an accomplished woodworker and an avid "consumer" of SCI-FI novels. Ken and his family discovered nearly a thousand such paperbacks in his home office, some of them "classics". It's not hard to imagine Bill having been the technical advisor for the movie, BACK TO THE FUTURE! His interests far exceeded the space I have here. Suffice it to say, his love for rhododendrons was obvious to those touring his garden. To those special few, possessing Bill's intellect and imagination, you may have witnessed "cosmic dust" irradiating from his rhododendrons. Could it be that Bill had discovered ANOTHER solar wind "collector"? Whatever you're willing to believe, Bill would have delighted in sharing his "secret" with us or at the very least—getting in "the "last laugh"! I can see him chuckling now! :) :)

Roger Dunlap

Growing Rhododendron Species Seed from Russia



Chapter member, **Mike Heim** – Botany Professor at LCO (Lac Courte Oreilles) Ojibwa Community College in Hayward, Wisconsin advised us in a March memorandum his intent to germinate rhododendron species seed from Russia. His objective is to evaluate native Russian species comparable in hardiness to the climate conditions of northwestern Wisconsin. (Zone 3a – minus 35 to 40° F).

In Mike's own words:

It was with a bit of trepidation that I ordered rhododendron seed online from Russia. The allure of super cold hardy rhodies, especially with unusual horticultural merit, was irresistible. One (*R. fragrans*) from eastern Siberia has, as the name suggests, fragrant flowers. Another, (*R. hypopitys*) from Lake Baikal, is yellow-flowered, and the third (*R. redowskianum*) is a spectacular-blooming mat-former for my alpine bed. Well, I need not have worried. The online seed company, **Prof-Seeds** out of Perm, Russia (by the Ural Mountains) turned out to be very efficient and knowledgeable, with excellent customer service. I'm excited for spring to arrive so I can sow the seeds. The packets even have germination instructions for each of the species and give the location where they were collected in the wild. What more could a rhodie-holic ask for?

The challenge is to uncover rhododendron species which are capable of better withstanding the brutal wind and cold of northwestern Wisconsin. As of June 13th, all of the rhododendron seed had germinated nicely. Obviously Mike's research is in its early stage but we will follow Mike as "Co-Monitors" in this interesting project.

Shown below are photos of the three rhododendron species which are the object of Mike's research. Please note that the height and hardiness are approximate. The results of Mike's evaluation may differ from the approximations indicated below.



R. fragrans
(Azaleodendron)
Height: 3-4'
Hardiness: —0° F?



R. aureum
var. *hypopitys*
Height: 2'
Hardiness: —10° F?



R. redowskianum
Height: less than 1'
Hardiness: - 10° F?

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Summer Meeting

DATE: July 13, 2019
 PLACE: Tom Horner's Garden
 25706 Malchine Road
 Waterford, WI 53185
 TIME: Noon to 4:00 PM
 CONTACT: Tom Horner
 Text 414 550-5935
 Email: psalmxl@aol.com

Fall Meeting

Date: September 14, 2019
 Place: John Migas's Garden
 6541 Bradley Road
 Saugatuck, MI 49453
 Time: 10 AM to 1 PM
 Contact: Roger Dunlap
 Phone: 231 409-3160
 Email:
 koukla18833@yahoo.com

The Midwest Chapter—ARS

Website: www.midwestars.org

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Midwest Chapter Officers (CURRENT)

Richard Bara—President
[<rjbara72@gmail.com>](mailto:rjbara72@gmail.com)

Tom Horner, Treasurer
[<psalmxl@aol.com>](mailto:psalmxl@aol.com)

Susan Garland, Membership
[<s-boatman@sbcglobal.net>](mailto:s-boatman@sbcglobal.net)

Roger Dunlap, Secretary
[<koukla18833@yahoo.com>](mailto:koukla18833@yahoo.com)

Roger Dunlap, Newsletter Editor
[<koukla18833@yahoo.com>](mailto:koukla18833@yahoo.com)



R. 'Yellowstone'
 Mature Height: 4-5'
 Bud Hardiness: -15° F



R. 'Pioneer Silvery Pink'
 Mature Height: 5'
 Bud Hardiness: -20° F



R. 'Virginia Delp'
 Mature Height: 3'
 Bud Hardiness: -15° F