

Eugene Chapter

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2009

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

FEBRUARY 12 PROGRAM

February! Already! Early rhodies blooming, primroses in the stores! Show time in a couple of months! Two thousand nine is getting off to a fast start!

Galen checked for bud damage from the December cold snap. He found some damage on some varieties, especially the early ones. We don't have a lot of protection from trees so you might have less damage. Some areas probably have more.

All members and guests are invited to the pre-meeting dinner with the speaker. We don't always know the out of town speakers well, so it gives us a chance to get better acquainted. It's also a good way to get to know our own members better. We give the speaker the option of choosing the restaurant so we don't always eat at the same place. My phone number is in the newsletter (541-461-6082). So call and let me know if you'll be joining us. We like to warn the restaurant that the Rhododendron Society is invading.

JoAnn Napier has volunteered to be Hospitality Chair. Many thanks, JoAnn.

Ye Prez Helen

The Eugene Chapter will host a panel discussion presented by chapter members on topics dear to the hearts of rhododendron fanciers:

GROWING RHODIES IN POTS Terry Henderson.

MAKING CUTTING BOXES Ted Hewitt

GRAFTING RHODODENDRONS Galen Baxter

So bring your questions February 12 to Campbell Center, 115 High Street, Eugene,

Refreshments and socializing 7: pm

Leonard Frojen and John Fry will provide goodies.

Program 7:30 p.m.

A no host Chinese Buffet to honor the panel speakers will be served at 5:15 pm at **Buffet City (sign says Chinese Buffet)**, 3260 Gateway Ave., Springfield. **All invited.** Please come if you would like to 1. Get better acquainted with chapter members, 2. Celebrate Abe Lincoln's Birthday, or 3. Partake of Chinese food a cut above the usual.

Never tell me again anything about "green grass." Tell me how the lawn was flecked with shadows. I know perfectly well that grass is green. So does everybody else in England. . . Make me see what it was that made your garden distinct from a thousand others.

~ Robert Louis Stevenson

President	Helen Baxter	461-6082
Vice President	Ted Hewitt	687-8119
Past President	Jack Olson	988-9133
Secretary	Paula Hewitt	687-8119
Treasurer	Richard Reed	747-6221

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Terry Henderson	2007-2010
Nolan Blansit	2007-2010
Frances Burns	2008-2011

District 4 Director	Bob McIntyre	541-347 7269
Alternate Director	Dave Collier	501-663-7917

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Honors	Gordon Wylie	895-2864
Auction/Door Prizes	Rich Aaring	485-6013
Historian	Michael Robert	344-4391
Show Chairman	Leonard Frojen	485-0560

Chapter Media

Newsletter Editor	Frances Burns	896-3216
	rebfeb@hughes.net	
NL Circulation	JoAnn Napier	746-0828
Webmaster	Rudy Fecteau	344-6852
Web site	http://www.eugene-chapter-ars.org	
ARS NL	http://www.rhododendron.org	
ARS web site	http://ars.office.org	

A Valentine!

*Hamamelis x intermedia 'Diane'*

A glimmer of beauty in the winter garden, 'Diane' cheerfully reminds us that Spring will triumph, despite unfriendly weather on its way.

One of the witch hazels, this variety is particularly choice, with fragrant strap-like, long-lasting reddish blooms on bare stems in January and February. Upright and spreading to eight feet, this *hamamelis* requires good drainage and moist soil and is hardy to -10 degrees. It can be forced for cheerful indoor bloom and its lovely fall foliage will light up the garden again!

ARS CONVENTION, EVERETT, WASHINGTON APRIL 30 - MAY 3, 2009

This morning, with a jaded eye on the implacably frosty garden, I plopped into an easy chair with the ARS Winter Journal in hand. WOW! So many good articles and pictures, but tweaking me most was the ARS Convention Program -- talks by experts and tours to gardens large and small. On Thursday evening Steve Hootman will highlight transformation of the old/new Species Foundation into a "blossoming organization"; Friday night's buffet features Jens Birck of Denmark with exciting *Rhododendrons for Smaller Gardens*; and Saturday night's banquet speaker, Dan Hinckley, will take us *Plant Exploring in Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan*. Members, check out the program in the new Journal; join in the excitement of a National Convention in the PNW! Register now and save yourself \$20 (twenty bucks).

The alternating snow, wind, and rain left the orchard a shambles of cracked and broken limbs, but only one hazelnut tree tipped over. The income producing orchard must be cleared first so that fertilizer can be applied to the trees, for they have already pollinated next fall's crop. The garden, damaged to a lesser extent, provides daily more unfortunate surprises. A large oakleaf hydrangea, the more than half-century-old deep purple lilac and *Rosa glauca* (syn. *Rosa rubrifolia*) lie shattered under the heavy boughs of the ill-fated English walnut tree. A large limb of the *parrotia persica* tree, another relative of the witch hazels, was twisted off by the heavy snow, despoiling its elegant structure. Meant to branch magnificently afar, it resembles a one-armed goddess, prepared for a dip in the Mediterranean.

While leafing through *Trees of North America* by Roger Phillips two items caught my eye: the Toothache Tree and the Headache Tree. The former is a deciduous native of eastern North America and is found in some European gardens. It is the common Prickly Ash *Zanthoxylum americanum* Mill. Indians once chewed the twigs and fruit to alleviate toothaches. It flowers in May or June, the leaves have teeth and the branches have "sharp prickles". The Headache Tree is an evergreen native to the coast of California and Oregon, *Umbellularia californica*, popularly known as California Laurel, or California Bay. Valued for its timber, and also found in some European gardens, the tree's foliage is strongly aromatic. When leaves are crushed and fumes inhaled they can induce a headache. Perhaps there is a Bunion Tree waiting for thee and me -- and some European gardens, of course!

It is not one's partner's idleness or unfair apportionment of labour that may cut a marriage asunder, but it is wheelbarrows. Those lovely little three-legged objects which are the backbone of garden transport. No matter how many we have, and by now we have acquired four, they will be full, in the wrong place or mysteriously mislaid. They are the thin skin of garden compatibility, the Achilles' heel. Abuse, accusation and devious manipulation hang around wheelbarrows like bad vibes round the Moonies. Has any gardening couple ever owned enough wheelbarrows? I'd love to know. And if they have, what is the number?



Mirabel Osler

YAKKIN' AT THE OLD TOOL SHED

“THE FENCE THAT MAKES GOOD NEIGHBORS NEEDS A GATE TO MAKE GOOD FRIENDS.”

Unknown

This winter has been a scramble. The first snow is gone, and the weather is blissful. I've cut up so many large branches from snow-damaged hazelwood trees, however, that I've mulled about using hazelwood to build a fence. Hazelwood is easy to split, but it rots quickly--not like the locust tree wood that Abe Lincoln split to enclose his father's farm back in 1830s. The fences built by the Lincolns didn't rot away--most were burned for firewood during the American civil war. Split rail fences are beautiful and practical, too. No nails are necessary: Cut the rails ten foot long and stack them at forty-five degree zig-zags, each zigzag equaling a rod. If your fence is 10 rods by 16 rods, you have enclosed an acre.

When in town the other day we noticed a sign marking the Applegate Trail, which was the southern wagon train route to the Oregon Territory. Some settlers decided that the Oregon Trail was too treacherous after having trekked it themselves, so they scouted out a new route for future settlers. The new route took the emigrants past a crude log cabin in a settlement known as Skinner's. In that cabin, the first white child in Lane County was born.

I looked for the cabin site in the now mixed residential-commercial area west of Skinner's Butte and found a five-sided rock covered with lichen and discolored by age. The rock marker is shaded by invasive locust trees and shares a four-by-four foot space with a fire hydrant. This infrequently observed small rock marks where Eugene's first cabin was built and little Lenora Skinner was born. Skinner's cabin was also a trading post and the first post office in the area. Although a replica of the cabin and a nice monument do exist, they are misplaced. The real spot is neglected and largely overlooked. Just waiting for a rediscovery..

Questions? Comments? E-mail me at garden.projects@hotmail.com

Tips from the old tool shed: If you are planning on building a fence or some other garden structure, look for hardy wood such as locust, redwood, cedar, or treated wood. If the structure is going to touch the ground, protect it from water and insect damage, which is a small price to pay for a longer lasting lattice or fence.

PRUNING HEATHS AND HEATHERS

Pruning Callunas and Ericas seems daunting, and I usually move on to victimize something from another genera, so mine tend to look neglected; waves of pity and guilt then prevent me from wielding the secateurs. Should I render a “butch haircut” to the Callunas? Is there any other coiffure for a *Calluna vulgaris*?

As in rhododendrons, there are scads of species and hybrids, and not all relish pruning at the same time. For the gardener with more than a casual interest in these ubiquitous plants, *Heaths and Heather* by Terry L. Underhill is highly recommended. Their history goes back to the Greek and Roman civilizations. People who lived on the fabled moors long before before Sherlock Holmes used heather for building material, brooms, beds, and once upon a time for heather ale. The book is fascinating reading. Though no longer in print one might find it on Alibris.com or Amazon.com. After scanning the chapter on pruning, I have developed a comfort zone for dealing with the specimens scattered among the rhodies, and know where to look for other concerns should they arise.

In general, to produce strong, well formed plants, one can remove from a third to half of the growth for the first three or four years. Then let them develop into their preferred habits of large blooms or sprays and trim them every year or two to maintain strong young shoots. Shearing them evenly gives them a mown appearance, nothing like their wild shapes on the moors. (Forgive us, for we have sinned and used a chain saw!) Trimmed to varying heights of 1 to 3 inches, *Calluna* heathers look best with an uneven look. Use shears turned upside down, and clip into the bush, rather than across. New growth is not produced from really old wood. Some *Ericas* may be cut back to hard wood and will sprout again. FB

JANUARY 14 PROGRAM

The beautiful selection of slides on Gardens of Britain presented by Gordon Wylie drew a large audience. Members H. Deans Stout and his wife from Medford and Merle Sanders from Roseburg drove up despite the fog. Shirley Hall attended for the first time in ages and there were several guests from the community attending for the first time.

During the 2008 International Rhododendron Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland last May, Gordon and Linda viewed the Royal Botanical Garden and its three satellite gardens. Later, with traveling companions John and Margaret Hammond of Starling, England, they spent a week visiting gardens in Argyll: Arduaine, Crarae, Stonefield and the Isle of Colonsay where blooming sinograndes put on a show. The couples visited Muncaster Garden in northwest England and made a two-day trip to Wales to visit gardens there, one of which was the famous Bodnant Garden. A slide showing the Britannia Inn (established in 1462) was an indicator of the sense of history that surrounds the many sites visited on their trip. The discovery of America was 30 years in the future when the Inn opened! Thank you Gordon for glimpse into history and a lot of beautiful gardens.

MAY SHOW MOVING TO VALLEY RIVER CTR

When the Oakway Mall notified us that the mall would not be able to accommodate our May Show this year due to construction, Leonard Frojen and his committee explored a number of different venues and the chapter board of directors chose the Valley River Center as the site of the May Show. We will have the Center Court available to us with room nearby for commercial vendor exhibits. Set-up and take-down will be easier as VRC will supply the tables, table covers and skirts, but please mark your calendars for helping with set-up on Friday, May 8, helping with the show on Saturday and Sunday, May 9 and 10, and take-down on Sunday, May 10.

Details of times will be forthcoming but we will need help with setting up the display racks, placing flower trusses, clerking for the judges, acting as knowledgeable hosts for interested visitors, keeping the trusses watered, distributing information about our chapter activities, and taking down the racks. Leonard and his committee are continuing to work out the details with VRC and to make plans for a successful show. In the mean time, please be out talking to your rhododendrons and getting them to put forth many fine trusses so the Center Court will be filled with color for this Mother's Day Weekend.

Because of contractual agreements with the merchants at VRC, we will not be able to have our plant sale in the mall. However, the Willamette Valley Hardy Plant Group has offered us space at their annual plant sale at the Lane County Fairgrounds on Saturday, May 9, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Paula and Ted Hewitt will coordinate the set-up on Friday, May 8, and the sale on Saturday with the help of Terry Henderson. If you have not been to this sale, it is an impressive gathering of plant buyers.

TH

NEW DISTRICT DIRECTORS

MEET YOUR DISTRICT DIRECTOR & ALTERNATE

Robert C MacIntyre. District 4 Director ARS

Immediate past President of the Southwestern Oregon Chapter, and currently both Member ship and Program Chair, Bob was awarded the Bronze Medal for 2008. He is 2nd Vice President of the Weedum-Seedum Garden Club of Bandon, and a member of the Oregon Federation Of Garden Clubs. His goal as District 4 Director is to encourage all chapters to develop an active outreach program in general public awareness in the culture and use of the genus Rhododendron, as well as to encourage new memberships in the ARS.

His e-mail address is remacintyre@yahoo.com or he may be reached by phone at 541-347-7269. To contact him by regular mail, he may be reached at either of the following addresses: 55296 Tom Smith Rd, Bandon, OR 97411 or PO Box 85, Bandon, OR 97411-6318.

David C. Collier, Alternate District Director 4 ARS

Dave is a member for the Portland, Chapter, where he has been Past Vice President, President, and Past President. His service includes 16 years as Portland Chapter Board member, and 20 years active member. In addition, he was Finance Committee chair for 6 years, web team committee member, and assisted with the chapter newsletter and marketing group. He has judged at Portland and other District 4 shows over a period of 14 years assisted in all phases of putting on shows. Past owner of Seed 'em Weed 'em' he now owns and manages Collier's Nursery. Besides membership in the Night Crawlers Garden Club and National Garden Club Inc, Dave is also active in the Greater Portland Iris Society, the Oregon Orchid Society, the Hardy Plant Society and other garden groups, Dave has presented talks at Rhodo conventions, other chapters, and other garden clubs. Dave Collier can be reached by phone at 503-663-7917 and by mail at 37325 SE Lusted Road, Boring, Oregon 97009-9768. No e-mail address was provided.

IF THE TRUTH WERE KNOWN

. . . gardeners hate to part with dirt, clay pots, pickle jars, really good labels, stakes, tarred twine, and any kind of wooden box. They do not mind giving a plant that sells for \$40 if they have an extra one, but the other stuff (which may be worth a dime) it tears the heart to part with.

Henry Mitchell

There are those who make hundreds or even thousands of crosses. Many have had great success and enhanced the world with lovely new hybrids.

Satisfied with far less than a hundred crosses, I am always looking for something different -- ringed edges, large blotches, of those that go from light to dark. One that I call "Love's Blush" blooms white then turns to a nice light pink, and then turns back to white. The more sunlight it receives, the darker the pink. Open pollinated, the seed parent was my 'Raspberry and Custard' which darkens rather than lightens in color.

Then there's 'Consolini's Windmill' which comes out a bright magenta and the center turns white. To me it is an unsightly shrub, but I am hoping its bloom will improve the plant I cross with it. Many rhodies on the market today come out with a beautiful white center, then darken, which I believe detracts from the beauty of the flower.

When I first started hybridizing I was in love with large trusses, but have gotten beyond that because they get very tall and wide with trusses so heavy the limbs break in heavy rain or snow. So now I'm now hybridizing for small to medium size -- even they can get larger than today's small yards can handle, especially in width because of the "yaks" in the background.

Really *really* orange is the color I really *really* want, and am determined to get. My wife thinks orange will clash with other colors in the garden, but color coordination is not my No. 1 priority! Some of my latest colors not on the market yet include one I call "Melrose Sunset", a cross of 'Nancy Evans' x 'Ring of Fire'. I crossed that with 'Dad's at a Distance' and came up with a bright mixture of yellow and orange throughout the flower. I have two nice white sister seedlings with lost backgrounds; one has 2/3 of the top half of the flower a very nice red and the other has a large red flare. I plan to name them "Whistle Stop" and "Star Struck". Another of my hybrids is 'Midnight Mystique' x (Senator Jackson' x 'Peggy Roberts'). It has a half-inch edge of reddish purple and a white center, and its name will be "Oh So Beautiful". A sister seedling with a perfect truss of red rose color, will be named "Rambling Rose".

So if you begin hybridizing, use your imagination; think of colors you will enjoy in your rhododendron garden. Go for it! Many disappointments may come along, but you can produce a beautiful rhododendron. Try it -- you will like it!

Winter is a time of promise because there is so little to do -- or because you can now and then permit yourself the luxury of thinking so.
Stanley Crawford

Ed. Note: I found this information in the Scottish Rhododendron Society's Winter Review #68 2008 of their seasonal publication, The World of the Rhododendron. With their permission, and hopefully Keith White's blessing, here is a brief synopsis:

The Rhododendron Guide, Version 1.1

[Version 1.12 is now available]

By Bruce Duffy

A book on CD

Price \$29.95 Order from rhodyguide@yahoo.com

This is a book you should have because:

First: for the photographs. Dr. Duffy has [many more than the] 4900 in Version 1.1. The author is a good photographer. The size of the photos is limited mainly by the size of your monitor.

Second: for the practical and sound advice . . . The folksy writing style [expresses his opinions honestly and] is easy to digest. There is an illustrated glossary for the technical language. . .

Third: for the practical advice and commentary of the experts. In the "Species" section Dr. Duffy uses orange text to denote the species specific commentary of Steve Hootman, curator and co-director of the Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden. . . Page references in blue refer to Peter and Kenneth Cox's "Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Hybrids". . .

Fourth: for Dr. Duffy's mastery of the digital format. The book is organized such that navigation and cross referencing information is very easy. It automatically opens your internet connection in order to utilize all the links to outside web sites of gardens, books and book-sellers, rhododendron societies all over the world and even biographies of the great plant hunters. In this way the book is a much more extensive reference than what is on the disk.

Fifth: pricing. The US price is \$29.95. Further, Dr. Duffy has pledged a significant portion of the profits to the Rhododendron Species Foundation. . . Every time a new edition comes out you can send him your older edition and he will send you the newer edition for [a reduced] price. . .

Keith A. White, SRS member, RSF Board member and Chairman, Photography Committee.

VOLUNTEERS FOR GOODIES IN FEBRUARY
Leonard Frojen and John Fry
March Volunteers: JoAnn Napier and Ray Klein
Thank you, Helen Baxter for January goodies!

The most serious charge which can be brought against New England is not Puritanism but FEBRUARY.
Joseph Wood Krutch

It is now the end of the first week of January and just a few weeks ago we had snow with 15° temperatures, but now it is near 50°. Having recently read an article in the Fall 1987 ARS Journal on the beauty of rhododendrons in the winter, I took my camera with me on a walk around our garden as I find this to be a good way to observe some of the details of what is looking good. Without the many perennials, there are not the summer groupings of color, texture, and shape so I tended to look at the details of individual plants and was surprised at how much there is to see in the way of color, texture, and shape in a microcosm.

Let's look first at the rhododendrons. In a raised bed by the driveway, where we see it as we come and go, is *Rhododendron* 'Pink Snowflakes' with wonderful red flower buds contrasting against the green leaves. Nearby, beside a garden path, is one of our favorite multi-season plants, *Rhododendron* 'Cilpinense', with its bright green leaves edged with little hairs and sporting clusters of tight flower buds each having bud scales edged in white creating wonderful patterns. We now have several of these around the woodland garden that contribute their nice color and shape throughout the year, but, this year, we have added a few dwarfs that have beautiful maroon winter foliage. In a prime spot on the front rock terrace is *R. campylogynum* var. *myrtilloides* which we selected for its dainty little thimble-shaped flowers in April. However, we are now delighted with the small, shiny, greenish-maroon leaves. Also new this year is *R.* 'Patty Bee' whose maroon foliage is a good foil for the curved, silver-backed green needles of a dwarf balsam fir, *Abies balsamea* 'Nana'. The third new little maroon-foliaged dwarf is a *R. hanceanum* 'Nanum' but it is so small that it continues to live in a pot. However, the winter foliage will someday be a good addition to the garden. Also in a raised bed where it is easier to see, we have *R. pronum* whose sturdy, green leaves have yellow stems and ribs radiating out from a yellow growth bud, forming a spoked wheel pattern. This plant also looks good during the rest of the year and, perhaps, will bloom someday. Often at this time, *R.* 'Christmas Cheer' shows some of its pink color to brighten gray January days but the December cold took care of the early buds that were opening. However, I did find one new bud just starting to open showing the bright pink against the green leaves. By February these plants should be in full bloom placing them among our favorites. Throughout the garden, plants with variegated foliage brighten the winter dullness so *R.* 'President Roosevelt' does its share with swelling flower buds amidst the tri-color, green to cream foliage.



R. 'Cilpinense'



Helleborus argutifolius

Now let's look at some of the other plants that are putting on a winter show. Old fashioned as they are, the female skimmias with clumps of bright red berries nestled in the green foliage are easily seen, even from a distance. On a smaller level, the shiny green, heart-shaped leaves each decorated with a silver, marbled pattern of *Asarum marmoratum* really stand out amongst the brown oak leaves on the ground. Similarly, the irregular, pentagonally-shaped, highly patterned green and silver leaves of large clumps *Cyclamen hederifolia* present a nice vignette. Many digital cameras are capable of taking close-up pictures of these terrific patterns that are very interesting to look at on the computer monitor. Among the few blossoms in the garden at this time is the sweetly scented *Viburnum grandiflorum* with small clusters of dainty pink and white trumpets blooming directly from the bare stems of the leafless shrub. Close-up pictures make it easier to study these little wonders. Among the interesting texture plants are the stemmed hellebores. Though the more common *Helleborus x hybridus* is barely showing the new blossom stalks, the large stalks of evergreen, toothed leaves of the *Helleborus argutifolius* are looking fresh and are putting forth the interestingly shaped new light green flower heads that form a wonderful contrast of texture. Similarly the finely cut, dark green leaves of *Helleborus foetidus* contrast with the light green flower heads. In terms of texture, pattern, and shape, a cousin of our sword fern, *Polystichum neolobatum*, has kept its shiny, dark green fronds looking beautiful through the winter with each part of the frond being incredibly detailed. The effect in a close-up picture is a composition of texture and pattern. The variegated false holly, *Osmanthus heterophyllus* 'Goshiki', has become a favorite of ours with its spiny, holly-like leaves that are a mottled cream and light green and that serve to lighten the solid green of shrubs around them all year long. Interesting color and texture contrasts continue on several of the dwarf conifers, the small *Saxifraga umbrosa* 'London Pride', the large, burgundy-colored leaves of the oakleaf hydrangea, and the peeling bark of the Himalayan white birch.

There are still more plants of interest to be studied and photographed but I will conclude with the statement of how wonderful it is to be enjoying the garden in the first week of the new year and I hope you will take your digital camera out to explore the plants of your own garden.



R. campylogynum var. *Myrtilloides*



Polystichum neolobatum



Asarum marmoratum

EUGENE CHAPTER
AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY
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EUGENE, OR 97401

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2009

CHAPTER CALENDAR

2009

- FEB 12 EUGENE CHAPTER MEETING BACK TO SECOND THURSDAY**
5:15 PM No Host dinner for Speaker (all invited) at Buffet City (sign says Chinese Buffet),
3260 Gateway Ave., Springfield
If possible, let Helen know you are coming so she can reserve a large enough table. 461-6082
7:00 PM Refreshments at regular meeting, Campbell Center, 511 High Street, Eugene
7:30 PM Program -- Panel Discussion:
GROWING RHODIES IN POTS, Terry Henderson
MAKING CUTTING BOXES, Ted Hewitt;
GRAFTING RHODODENDRONS, Galen Baxter
- MAR 12 EUGENE CHAPTER MEETING**
ANNUAL MEETING - NOMINATION & ELECTION OF OFFICERS
Program: GROWING WINNERS & SHOWING RHODODENDRONS, Mike Bones, Siuslaw Chapter
- APR 11 EARLY SHOW & AWARDS BANQUET**
The Electric Station, Fifth and Willamette
Speaker Don Wallace, Singing Tree Nursery Eureka
- APR 30 - MAY 2 ARS CONVENTION, EVERETT, WASHINGTON SEE ARS WINTER JOURNAL**
- MAY 9-10 SPRING RHODODENDRON SHOW -- VALLEY RIVER CENTER**
MAY 9 ONLY 9 AM - 2 PM PLANT SALE - FAIRGROUNDS,