

INTRODUCTION TO THE BRUECKNER HYBRID EVALUATION PROJECT

December 5, 2010

This note introduces the reader to the Niagara Region Chapter's Brueckner Evaluation project. It identifies articles written by Dr. Brueckner, introduces the reader to greater detail, than previously available, about the hybridization program; this provided through a talk given by Christina Woodward using material gleaned from her father's archives. Finally, it briefly describes the principal elements of Niagara Chapter's, member based, Brueckner Hybrid Evaluation Project.

Dr. Brueckner worked for some 20 years studying rhododendrons; hybridizing, testing, evaluating and sharing the products of his endeavours. His work ended with his death in 1994.

In November 2010, Christina Woodward, Dr. Brueckner's daughter was invited to give a talk at a scheduled meeting of members of the Niagara Region Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society (ARS). The purpose of the talk was to present as complete a review of Dr. Brueckner's work as possible within the time constraints of a public talk. Christina used Dr. Brueckner's records to inform members of (a) how he had become interested in developing a hybridization project, (b) significant influences on him, (c) principles he followed in doing his work, (d) rhododendron specie and hybrids he worked with, and (e) significant outcomes from the hybridization project.

At the conclusion of her talk Christina, used these words to discuss the motivation behind her comittment to this hybridization project and concluded by posing the question of what may lie ahead for Dr. Brueckner's work:

"In 2004 Marta Brueckner and I made the decision to rejuvenate and salvage what we could of the program. Neither of us had been involved in the detail or depth of Dr. Brueckner's breeding program and our knowledge of rhododendron culture was fairly basic. Undertaking the management of 800 plus rhododendrons required a significant learning curve, and the product of some of that experience has been displayed in the above slides. This was based among other things on Dr. Brueckner's copious notes and correspondence which has survived, de-coding information which he had not kept records for, and mapping and coding all rhododendrons on the 2 acre family property, not to mention the research and communication with many experts and enthusiasts.

I am no rhododendron expert, and I do not have a science background, but I am passionate about these rhododendrons and the enduring worth of the program. I know a beautiful rhododendron when I see one and I have acquired an appreciation for the unusual. In working through my father's notes I found comments in his stud book next to a plant's record such as, "Excellent," "Worth naming," "Remarkable," "Should be registered," enough to tip me off that his program was still very much in progress when he died and there was much unfinished business. It would be a great shame to not share some of our recent findings and the opportunity for others of involvement and discovery."

An [outline](#) of this talk is available on the Niagara Chapter's web site. Readers, who wish to view the complete set of images included in the talk, may follow links provided on the Outline.

The [meeting](#) at which Christina made these comments was the culmination of 2 years of work and discussion with the Board of the Niagara Region Chapter of the ARS. During this time, the Board of Directors and Christina

Woodward developed an understanding that a Brueckner Hybrid Test project would be developed as part of the Chapter's Plants for Members (P4M) program.

Following Christina's talk at the November general meeting, Nick Yarmoshuk, as Secretary of the Niagara Chapter, Board of Directors, briefly described the [agreement](#) and asked for member support for and participation in the proposed project.

He stated that the goals of the project would be (a) to preserve the product of Dr. Brueckner's work for future generations; (b) to disseminate information about Brueckner's hybrids as widely as possible; (c) to make as many cultivars as possible available to members and rhododendron enthusiasts; (d) to test Brueckner hybrids for their viability and use in the climate of southern Ontario; (e) to involve Chapter members in a valuable testing project.

Elements of the understanding include the striking of a Steering Committee, which will report to the Niagara Region Chapter Board of Directors. The Committee's role would be to formulate principles to be followed in (a) selecting plants to be propagated; in (b) distributing the plants; in (c) evaluating the plants, i.e. to develop a set of criteria for observation of the plants. Ultimately, systematically collected evaluation data would be used to publish the results of the test program.

Also, the meeting was informed that [two sets of cuttings](#), totaling some 200 rooted cuttings, would be available for distribution to the testing program in Spring 2011. A further 150 cuttings were to be delivered to a propagator in mid November, 2010.

Members at the meeting were invited (a) to comment on the information presented, (b) to ask clarifying questions, (c) to express their potential interest in participating in the test project and (d) to volunteer to work on the Steering Committee.

The response of those present was supportive and volunteers to serve on the Steering Committee came forward. The Brueckner Test Program Steering Committee is composed of the following volunteers:

Paul Chafe	Kingston	Botanist, hybridizer
Peter Hannam	Guelph	President Woodrill Farms, Grower
Marie Johns	Jordan	Master Gardener
Kevin Kavanagh	Norfolk County	Landscape, South Coast Gardens Native & Subtropical Nursery
Brian Schram	Fort Erie	ex-Rhodoholic, Knowledgeable
Ron Sutton	Burlington	Plant Collector, Grower, Chemist
Christina Woodward	Mississauga	Committee Secretary. Knows the Brueckner Hybrids, Program & Content, Maintains Brueckner Archives
Nick Yarmoshuk	St.Catharines	Committee Chair; Grower, Secretary, NiagaraRegion Chapter, RSC; Chair, ARS Test & Demonstration Garden Committee

Linking the Brueckner Articles to Christina's Slide Show

Dr. Brueckner reported on his work and described results in two articles published 4 years apart in the Bulletin of the Rhododendron Society of Canada. The first description, [HYBRIDS OF *R. dauricum sempervirens*](#), appeared in the Bulletin of the Rhododendron Society of Canada. 1981. Volume 10, pp. 7 to 9. A second account of the project, [RHODODENDRONS: A SEARCH FOR STRENGTH WITH BEAUTY](#) appeared in the Bulletin of the Rhododendron Society of Canada. 1985, Volume 14 No.2, pp. 18 to 22. They are available on Niagara Chapter's www site.

A third article dealing with the Brueckner Hybrids, by Barrie Porteous, [RHODODENDRONS IN A COLD CLIMATE](#), was published in the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society. Volume 44, Number 2, Spring, 1990, pp. 78- 83. This item is also available on the Niagara Chapter's www site. (Porteous article).

Dr. Brueckner's articles are linked to significant slides presented during Christina Woodward's talk. These slides serve to amplify content presented in the original article.

Christina Woodward wishes to emphasize that every effort has been made to provide as full and accurate information from the archives as possible. While every effort has been made to fully and accurately include all important information in the content of the various slides, she recognizes that some details may have been inadvertently excluded. This information will continue to be updated as new information comes to light.

The authors may be contacted as follows:

Christina Woodward canadacaw@yahoo.ca
Nicholas Yarmoshuk rhodosrus@gmail.com

