

December 17, 2012

Dear Fellow Gardeners,

We have some exciting news for you! As of January 1, 2013 the State of Washington will issue a license plate with a large, pink Rhododendron flower on it: the Rhododendron Macrophyllum, our State flower.

We at Meerkerk Gardens have worked toward this goal for almost three years, a long, tough task to accomplish. After collecting over 3,500 signatures, we worked with representative and government agencies to get the bill passed by the State Legislature. Once issued, over \$30,000 from initial proceeds will be paid to the State to cover start up and production costs.

Nevertheless, the result is a win-win situation for us as well as other nonprofit organizations such as chapters of the ARS, garden clubs, native plant associations and other ecology oriented groups.

As a sponsor of the plate, Meerkerk Gardens will receive funds from each plate issued. Eighty percent of the funds will be used to support the Gardens. Twenty percent will be made available to nonprofits in Washington State as grants in support of Rhododendron Macrophyllum and other native plants; projects such as plantings along highways or in parks, increased propagation of plants, literature on the value of native plants in landscapes, etc. A Grant Board will be established, grant instructions issued and grants from \$500 and up awarded. We anticipate that significant awards will be available in 2014 or 2015 after start-up expenses have been recovered.

We invite your organization to take part in this endeavor. First, by encouraging people to buy a state flower license plate and second by applying for a grant to further the interest in the Macrophyllum and our other native plants.

Thank you. For additional information, please feel free to contact me at 360-678-1912, or email Meerkerk @ whidbey.net

Sincerely,

Donald H Lee, President