

RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP.  
BULLETIN NO. 15. JANUARY 1981.

CALENDAR FOR NEXT FEW MONTHS.

FEB 17 RHS Show. N.B. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2.30 p.m. TUESDAY.  
18 do -  
MAR 1 Savill Garden, Plant Centre and Restaurant re-open.  
17 RHS Show. RHODODENDRON COMPETITION. CAMELLIA COMPETITION  
18 do - for plants grown in the open or under glass.  
20 South East Branch Meeting. Talk by Roy Lancaster; see later.  
21 International Camellia Society - European Tour begins.  
31 do - do - Congress begins.  
31 RHS Show. Flower and Garden Equipment Show. MAGNOLIA  
APR 1 do - COMPETITION.  
14 RHS Show. Spring Flower Show. CAMELLIA SHOW.  
15 do - do -  
28 RHS Show. RHODODENDRON SHOW.  
29 do - do -  
MAY 1 NESS (University of Liverpool)' RHODODENDRON MONTH' begins.  
12 GROUP TOUR BEGINS. N.B. Amended date - see later pages.  
16 NESS. Meeting day for two lectures.  
17 GROUP TOUR ENDS.  
19 RHS CHELSEA SHOW BEGINS - (19th is Fellows' Day).  
24 The High Beeches - See 'Gardens Open' section on later  
and 31 pages for invitation to Group members.

IMPORTANT NOTICE FROM HON. SEC. ELECTIONS TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

In terms of the Constitution and Rules of the Rhododendron and Camellia Group, the affairs of The Group are in the hands of the Officers and eight elected members. These are at present: -

Chairman: Mr G.A. Hardy. Vice-Chairman: Hon. H.E. Boscowen.  
Hon. Secretary: Mr J. Waugh Owens. Hon. Treasurer: Mr D.N. Farnes.

Executive Committee:

Mr J.D. Bond. Mr A.D. Schilling. Mr J. Sanders.  
Mr A.F. George. Mr J.T. Gallagher. The Lady Anne Palmer.  
Sir Giles Loder. Miss C.E. Perring.

Mr K.J.W. Lowes, Editor of the Bulletin, was co-opted as a member of the Executive Committee at their meeting on 11 July 1978. Major E.W.M. Magor was co-opted as a member of the Executive Committee at their meeting on 28 October 1980. In addition the Regional Branch Organisers are ex-officio members of the Executive Committee.

In accordance with Rule 4 Sir Giles Loder and Mr A.D. Schilling retire but are eligible for re-election.

In accordance with Rule 10, candidates for election to the Executive Committee shall be proposed and seconded by members of The Group and must sign their nomination papers which must reach the Hon. Secretary not later than 30 April 1981.

THE RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP. NOMINATION PAPER for two candidates for election to the Executive Committee on 16 June 1981.

NAME SECONDED BY CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE

MEMBER'S SIGNATURE.....DATE.....

MEMBER'S NAME (IN BLOCK LETTERS).....

TO: J. Waugh Owens, Hon. Secretary, The Rhododendron and Camellia Group, Jubilee Lodge, Yarpole, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 0BA.

TREASURER'S NOTICE - SUBSCRIPTIONS.

THE 1980-81 YEAR BOOK has been sent to all members whose subscriptions are paid up for the current year. There are about 100 members who have not yet paid, although subscriptions were due last November 1st and Bulletin No. 14 carried a reminder, together with a tear-off payment slip at the foot of page 1.

Members who have not yet received their Year Book should please attend to Bulletin No. 14, and if they have any query about the state of their subscription should not hesitate to take up the invitation in paragraph 6 and telephone the Treasurer.

Many more members have requested Bankers Order forms for their subscriptions commencing November 1981 and these will be sent out later this year, once the new rates (if any change is needed) have been determined by Committee. The Treasurer is very grateful for these requests and especially so to those members who have sent S.A.E. for return of the forms.

D.N.F.

MATTERS OF IMMEDIATE OR CURRENT INTEREST.

1. INTERNATIONAL RHODODENDRON CONFERENCE, EDINBURGH, 1982. Most members will have noticed the announcement on page 468, ("The Secretary's notice board") of the December 1980 copy of "The Garden". In case of oversight and as an aide-mémoire I repeat some of the bare facts here. The conference is to be held at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, from May 11 to May 13, 1982, and will have an international programme of speakers; topics covered will include the taxonomy, distribution and cultivation (N.B. cultivation) of rhododendrons with some emphasis on subgenus Vireya. Details of the provisional programme and the application form for Conference reservations will be sent to any interested persons who write to the Rhododendron Conference Organiser, Royal Botanic Garden, Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5LR, Scotland, by July 1, 1981.

The topics mentioned will clearly be of considerable interest and importance to various Group members.

2. GROUP TOUR, MAY 1981. The tour is now arranged and a good deal of information from the Tour Secretary, along with form of application, is provided at the end of this bulletin. Applicants will be given all necessary details once they are registered. Please note the change in precise dates of beginning and ending from those originally envisaged and given in Bulletin No. 14. Please also note that although three of the gardens mentioned there are not in the new list, there are three others in their stead.

In Bulletin No. 14 I mentioned the extent of the area containing these gardens, and said the Tour "might be thought worth it for the scenery alone". Mr Glass has suggested that as there may well be more interest in this matter than I realised when I made the brief reference, some slight amplification would be in order. As a Northumbrian I have to admit that I have a built-in weakness for

"the fells"; as I am not the only Briton to have this bias I will assure potential tour participants that hills, moors, clear streams and distant views will be plentiful, and even commonplace. Coaches use good roads, of course, but even so the countryside alone ought to give pleasure. In Argyll or the Lake District, hills and extensive views are to be taken for granted; but if you have not been on the Yorkshire moors, or explored the Border country, you may not be sure what is in store. I think the prospect of seeing several unfamiliar gardens, with the added interest of passing through much unfamiliar scenery, makes the 1981 Tour more than averagely attractive.

3. RHODODENDRON PROTISTUM, var. PROTISTUM. The name of this species is more familiar to most rhododendron growers than the plant itself. There are not many recognized specimens in gardens, and at present it seems possible that no authentic plant has yet flowered in Britain. However, that situation may have changed this year, for at Arduaine in Argyll a plant which has always been thought of as the genuine species has just come into flower. A more detailed note on the history of the species, and the possibility of this flowering being another distinguished "first" for Arduaine (where the first flowering of "giganteum" took place, so far as Britain is concerned), appears on a later page.

4. POLLEN REQUIRED. Also on a later page there is a note about a member's request for pollen of seven species of Rhododendron. None of these species is very common, hence the difficulty. Replies should be sent direct to the enquirer - the address is given.

5. GIBBERELLIC ACID. Another enquiry on a later page concerns the use of "GA" for hastening the flowering of seedlings of rhododendrons. This is a matter of considerable importance to many, whether scientists, professional horticulturists or amateurs, so apart from satisfying the curiosity or need of the member enquiring, I hope that anyone able to offer help or information will let the Bulletin Editor know too.

6. NEWS FROM A DEVON GARDEN - MR. GEOFFREY JUDSON. This note in Bulletin No. 13 referred to Mr Judson's imminent move of house and garden, and contained an invitation to call which was, I know, accepted by a number of members. I have now heard from Mr Judson that after the end of January he expected to have moved to the new address, which I give here. He adds that he has a small garden plot at this address and looks forward to growing at least a few rhododendrons. He also looks forward to continuing his interest in Group affairs, which goes back quite a long way.

New address:- Flat 2, Warberry Lodge,  
11, Cyprus Road,  
Exmouth, Devon EX8 2DZ.

7. RHODODENDRON HANDBOOK 1980 - "The Species Handbook". The review mentioned in Bulletin No. 14 will be found on a later page. It includes some notes which may be useful to those who expect to make regular use of the Handbook.

8. TOUR IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA, 1981. The Secretary has received news of this tour from Mr J. Clyde Smith, who is Honorary Secretary of the Australian Rhododendron Society. Assuming the tour takes place it will be the first of its kind. As it appears to be both ambitious and interesting I reproduce the notice in full.

"If sufficient people are interested, a tour of Papua New Guinea will be available from Sydney for twelve days' duration from August 31, 1981. The purpose of the tour will be to see Vireya rhododendrons in their native habitat. Identifying and naming these will be one of the cares of Mr. John Womersley, who has agreed to lead and direct the tour. Mr. Womersley recently retired from the position of Asst. Director of Botany in the Department of Forestry, after some thirty years in New Guinea, and is uniquely qualified to do this. In addition he has a personal interest in the Society, and has had experience with previous horticultural tours.

The areas to be visited will run from Port Moresby through Wau, Bulolo, Edie Creek, and Lae to Goroka, Kundiawa, Mt. Hagen, Wabang and the neighbouring highlands. There will be visits to the usual tourist attractions, but these will be secondary to roadside visits to see rhododendrons. However this is not a tough "Safari" type of

tour; there are no strenuous walks to undertake, nor is it a plant hunting expedition.

The tour will leave Sydney on Monday Aug 31 and will return there on Friday Sept 11. As an option a further four days may be spent at Mt. Hagen to see the spectacular Eastern Highlands annual Show, returning to Port Moresby on Monday Sept 14 and Sydney on Sept 15.

The cost of the tour will be \$1410 ex Sydney and this will cover all meals, travel and accommodation. The tour may be joined from other centres, and single accommodation is available for five of the eleven nights. These extra costs are, from Adelaide \$160, from Melbourne \$110, single supplement \$65. The additional four days to see the Mt. Hagen Show will cost approx. \$220. Most of the accommodation will be at Lodges in the main centres.

Tentative bookings have been made for the tour and this will be finalised as soon as sufficient members and their friends indicate their interest, however the party can not exceed twenty people. Please advise me as soon as possible if you wish to join the tour.

J.Clyde Smith, Hon. Sec.,  
15 Cassian Street,  
Keiraville, N.S.W. 2500.

9. TASMANIA - 'MINI-CONVENTION', GARDEN TOUR AND RHODODENDRON SHOW.  
This is another event to turn thoughts to Australia. The venue is Burnie, Tasmania, and the dates November 6, 7 and 8, 1981. The programme of events, including speakers and their topics associated with the genus Rhododendron, will be announced in later issues of 'The Rhododendron'. Apply NOW for details of cost, accommodation, etc., by sending a stamped self-addressed envelope to the Convenor:

Dr N. Sullivan,  
Box 606, BURNIE, Tasmania 7320.

Mr Clyde Smith points out that the Burnie event follows the main rhododendron show at Olinda on Nov 1, 2 and 3, and that the two shows would make a very interesting week for anyone visiting Australia.

10. AUSTRALIAN VISIT TO EDINBURGH CONFERENCE, 1982. A third activity proposed by the Australian Rhododendron Society is a Group visit to this conference, to include an American Garden Tour. For further information about this, contact in the first instance:-

Mr R.C.Sangster,  
67, Strabane Avenue,  
BOX HILL NORTH, Vic.3129, Australia.

The inclusion of a stamped self-addressed envelope is required.

BRANCH ACTIVITIES.

SOUTH EAST BRANCH MEETING, FRIDAY 20 MAR.

As noted in the Calendar on page 1, this meeting is arranged for a talk by Roy Lancaster. The time is 7 p.m. and the place is the Village Hall, Chelwood Gate, West Sussex. Chelwood Gate is about 6 miles south of East Grinstead, on the A. 275 road (Forest Row to Lewes). It may help some people to consider the approach from Wych Cross on the A.22, to head southwards by turning into the A.275 at the Roebuck, where there is a big road-sign indicating Lewes A.275, Chelwood Gate and Sheffield Park. Chelwood Gate is just over a mile from this sign. At the Red Lion public house turn east into Beaconsfield Road, towards Nutley, and the Village Hall is about half a mile down the road, on the left hand side, next to Chelwood Gate Church. If approaching from the south, or A.272, take the A.275 northwards, past Sheffield Park, and Chelwood Gate is about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles north of Danehill. Look out for the village name-sign on the grass verge, and immediately take the small road towards Nutley, on the right; at this point a BP petrol station can be seen, ahead on the right, as well as the Red Lion, mentioned.

The subject of Mr Lancaster's talk is his recent visit to the Mount Omei area of Szechwan, China, well known in Rhododendron and Camellia literature for the explorations of E.H.Wilson in the first decade of this century, and of other explorers. We understand that the talk will be accompanied by lots of slides. A dozen of the rhododendrons already found in the area are:- R.calophyllum, discolor, oreodoxa, argyrophyllum, ririei, orbiculare, williamsianum, simsii, concinnum, lutescens, strigillosum and hemsleyanum. That selection is given merely to whet the appetite, but there are many others.

I feel sure, knowing Mr Lancaster's wide interests in other families, that there is going to be far more to it than that handful of names, and that a talk of outstanding interest and content is in store for his audience.

Although this is a South East Branch function, it is not desired to restrict attendance exclusively to the local membership. It will be necessary to charge the sum of £2.50 per head, which includes a buffet, wine and coffee. Further particulars, with a slip to notify intention to attend, numbers, and to accompany the appropriate remittance, can be obtained from:-

Logan Edgar, Esq., Telephone:- (0424) 425371.  
Wedderlie House,  
St. Helen's Avenue,  
Hastings, East Sussex TN 34 1JT.

GARDENS OPEN.

1. THE HIGH BEECHES, HANDCROSS, SUSSEX. (The Hon.H.E. and Mrs Boscawen). There will be two private view days, on Sundays May 24th and May 31st, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on both days. All members of the Group, as well as interested friends, will be welcome. There is no charge for admission, but there will be a collecting box to help the West Sussex Association for the Disabled. Mrs Boscawen tells me that there is a very promising bud-set, which augurs well for the display providing the weather is not unreasonable. May I remind members that this is the Vice-Chairman's garden.

2. LINGHOLM, KESWICK, ENGLISH LAKES. (The Viscount Rochdale). Although this garden has opened to the public for some years now, it has not been given a "notice" in the bulletin before. I have been provided with a small, neat, but quite informative folder intended for the visitor and guiding him round the arranged route. It makes very interesting reading, and concludes with a list of some of the larger specimens of Rhododendron species to be seen, nearly fifty; and it also makes passing mention of some of the outstanding hybrids grown, as well as some of the more notable trees.

The house and garden are on the shore of Lake Derwentwater, and there are associations with Beatrix Potter; it was here that she wrote "Squirrel Nutkin". Opening times and relevant details are given annually in the 'National Gardens Scheme' Yellow Book.

3. PENN, ALDERLEY EDGE, CHESHIRE. (Mr and Mrs Raymond Baldwin). This is another garden owned by Group members which is going to be open to the public in 1981, not previously noted in the bulletin. The garden is "open" on Sundays 17th and 24th May, but in a letter enclosing his "Camellia Choice", (given further on), Mr Baldwin states that he would also be delighted to welcome any Group members on the 16th May, should they be calling at Ness on that day. He hopes to be at Ness himself on that day and as he and Mrs Baldwin are known to the Director of Ness, Mr J.K.Hulme, it should be possible to make contact in one way or other by enquiry.

Penn is about two and a half acres in extent and, as I have learned from photographs sent by the owners, it is a most attractive garden with impressive views from favourable vantage-points. A plant-list also sent shows that about 400 rhododendrons, including about 150 different species, are fully supported by azaleas, camellias, magnolias and many shrubs and trees of which keen "association-planters" talk, write and approve. There can be very little question of wasted space in this garden.

RHODODENDRONS ON LIMESTONE. by Major E.W.M.Magor.

Visiting a very fine garden in the Cotswolds recently, where conifers are a particular feature, my opinion was invited on the chances of rhododendrons succeeding there on a limestone soil; those few that I saw there, mostly of the Triflorum series, seemed to be thriving.

Though R.hirsutum, one of the first rhododendrons ever introduced into Britain, grows on a limestone formation in the wild, and R.occidentale has been found growing in a soil of pH 7.6 to 8.6 on serpentine in California, it is almost an article of faith among us

that rhododendrons will not grow on chalk.

Lecturing to the Rhododendron Society sixty years ago however, George Forrest said that the highly specialised and exuberant flora seen on the Chino-Tibetan alps, in which Rhododendron is such a prominent feature, is due in great measure to the geological formation. Practically the whole of the area from 7000 feet to the altitude of the highest known peaks, which run up to about 23,000 feet, is capped with limestone. This limestone has nothing chalky about it, but is apparently a strong magnesium limestone, greyish white in colour, very hard and durable, such as is seen in the Dolomites. On the Mekong Salwin divide, where he had found a greater number of new Rhododendrons than in any other area explored, the strata, though still limestone, are much freer in composition, more readily disintegrated and deeply stained ruddy brown by the presence of minerals. The less tall species such as racemosum, rigidum and trichocladum are found flourishing in soils heavily charged with limestone rubble, while species such as crassum, neriiflorum, sanguineum, yunnanense, haematodes, saluenense, dichroanthum and their allies have their roots fixed in crevices of limestone cliffs and boulders or in the limy rubble at their bases. The taller tree species, though having a bed of humus for support, have their rootlets similarly placed, or at least overlying or in contact with the limestone.

Commenting on this, Professor Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour expressed the opinion that it was the mycorrhizal fungus rather than the rhododendron that was intolerant of lime, and in support of this view mentioned that Forrest had brought back specimens of rhododendrons growing on limestone where the indumentum on the under-surface of the leaf was infiltrated by fungus mycelium, and suggested that the fungus, finding the root tissues unwelcoming, was carrying out its nitrogen-fixing functions through the leaves.

Colonel Sir Frederick Stern found means of growing rhododendrons on pure chalk in his garden at Highdown, and Mr A. Grove carried out a series of experiments in his garden in Berkshire, using many different species which he eventually graded according to their degree of lime-tolerance. A full account of these experiments was published in the 'Gardeners' Chronicle' in 1927 (pp. 426-8).

In more recent years, 1956-9, Dr Henry Tod carried out experiments in Scotland, and has shown that rhododendrons can be grown in quite strongly alkaline soils, provided the base is magnesium and not calcium. All plants need a certain quantity of calcium in their tissues, and rhododendrons have the ability to extract it even from soils where it is present in very small quantities; but they lack the ability to control the amount absorbed by their roots, and so on calcareous soils take up excessive calcium at the expense of the other nutrients such as iron and magnesium. It is known that calcium and magnesium are in many ways antagonistic to one another, and in the presence of a large excess of magnesium, little calcium is taken up by the plant, and the converse is also true. When dolomite weathers, the calcium fraction is leached away first, so that the proportion of magnesium in the soil formed from the rock tends to rise, and this will tend to depress the uptake of the remaining calcium by the plant growing in such soil.

The position is well summarised in the Eighth Edition of Bean's 'Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles', Volume III N-Rh, p. 546. A few years ago, an advertisement in 'The Garden' for Rhododendrons that would grow on alkaline soils caused some adverse comment, and the advertiser was asked to contribute an explanatory note for the Year Book, but no more was heard on the subject.

If however any member of the Group, or other reader of this Bulletin, has experience of growing rhododendrons on limestone, and can suggest species (and/or hybrids) that seem to thrive there, it would be appreciated if he would contribute a note on the subject.

E.W.M.M.

(Editor's note). Shortly after despatching the contribution to the Bulletin Editor, Major Magor received a piece of supplementary information from the owner of the Cotswold garden mentioned, as follows: - "Our limestone here is Inferior Oolite - a rather degrading name, but anyway not chalk." !

CAMELLIA CHOICE. From Mr Raymond Baldwin, of Penn, Cheshire ( see "Gardens Open" section earlier. )

Not for us here the refinement of Captain Rawes, recommended from Cornwall by Mr. Nigel Holman. We are 500 feet up on a hill (Alderley Edge) overlooking the Cheshire plain from the east, an outcrop of the Pennines. We must rely mainly on the williamsii hybrids, but of these St. Ewe is a delight each year. The bush is now a spreading pyramid 9' high, growing in the open with slight overhead protection from a large cedar. Each spring from late March to the end of May it covers itself with a succession of deep rose-red cup-shape flowers, and like the rest of the family sheds old blooms before they become unsightly.

R.W.B.

(Editor's note to members). I have caught up with contributors to "Camellia Choice" and hope to receive quite a few more notes. Are there any supporters for the famous old japonicas ?

HONEY FUNGUS ADDENDUM. Following on his note on this subject in Bulletin No. 14, Mr Dan E. Mayers has asked me to add the following correction:-

"Dr. Aloysisus M'bongo has called my attention to the fact that Mrs. Victoria Bray's invaluable preparation for the treatment of Honey Fungus is now sold under the name of BRAY'S EMULSION. I should like, for the sake of good order, to make this correction to my previous note on the subject. "

POLLEN REQUIRED. I quote from Mr Norman's letter of enquiry. "A few stamens taken from a flower just about to open, and placed in a glass drying tube (which I would supply, of course), would be all that would be necessary.

The pollen needed is that from good forms of the following species - Award forms if possible:-

arboreum ssp. cinnamomeum

clementinæ

sherriffii

smithii

traillianum

tsariense "Yun-yun"

wiltonii

All I can offer in exchange is seed of the resulting crosses, if successful."

Fraser S. Norman,

20, Coniston Close, Erith, Kent DA8 3BD.

(Editor's note to members). Please reply direct to Mr Norman.

GIBBERELLIC ACID. Mr Philip R. Page of 60, Branksome, Barmouth, Gwynedd LL42 1HH asks: "Can anyone please tell me of anyone who has used gibberellic acid for hastening the flowering of seedlings of rhododendron species ? In the 1950s it was used in the USA for increasing flower size in camellias for exhibition purposes. My interest has been aroused by an article in the 3 Oct 80 'Gardeners' Chronicle' entitled "For Shy Seeders", reporting that the Forestry Commission at Pitlochry, Perthshire has successfully induced flowering of Leyland Cypress and Western Red Cedar with GA3 Gibberellic Acid for three successive years. The method does not however seem to work well with every species."

(Editor's note). I know of two mentions which have some relevance. The first, which concerns rhododendrons, is by the late E.H.M.Cox of Glendoick, and is on p.93 of the 1959 Year Book, with photographs Fig. 47. The other, which concerns camellias, is on pp.53-4 of the 1966 Year Book, and is by Joseph H. Pyron. The first concerns hastening plant growth, which could well cause plants to flower younger; the second concerns accelerating the flowering of camellias where buds already formed are treated in order to secure earlier opening in a particular season.

(The Bulletin will be very interested).

THE RHODODENDRON SHOW - a note from Arduaine, by Edmund Wright.

Considering the distance we have to travel, Scottish gardens are well represented at Vincent Square in the Rhododendron Show, principally in the classes for species - although hybrids are shown by some of our competitors. The number of awards collected by the five or so present exhibitors is a good indication of the quality of rhododendron gardens north of the border. We could I am sure do equally well at the earlier Rhododendron Competition, but the round trip of over a thousand miles that most of us have to make is, I think, quite sufficient once in the season. Our southern competitors are fairly safe on that occasion, although an earlier sortie should not be ruled out entirely. The Competition could certainly do with some of that, if past reports are anything to go by!

E.A.T.W.

JAM MAKING - unexpectedly, another contribution from Arduaine !

Hardly a subject for the Bulletin, you may think; and so I would have thought, until recently. In the course of a discussion with two Rumanian visitors, we were surprised to hear the lady refer to rhododendron jam, and our surprise must have shown, since she elaborated by saying "like you spread on bread and butter". It seems that this jam is made from the petals of a dwarf rhod. that grows at about 2,000 metres. They were unable to name the species used, but have promised to find out and let me know. Not that we intend setting up a jam factory, because in our opinion making jam from flowers is about as potty as making wine from leaves when there is plenty of fruit available. However if this useless information comes to hand I will pass it on, as I am sure some lady readers will already be reaching for their preserving pans. Mind you, it seems that only small amounts are made and it is considered a great delicacy.

Edmund Wright, Arduaine.

RHODODENDRON 'SUMMER FLAME'.

by Dan E. Mayers.

The response to my article on Summer Flame in the 1979/80 Year Book has been most gratifying. It is, accordingly with great pleasure that I can advise members desirous of obtaining a plant that Mr. John Slocock has kindly undertaken its propagation, and plants will be available through the specialist nurserymen Hydon, Millais and Reuthe in 1982.

I hope that other worthwhile plants in private gardens - plants not presently in commerce - may likewise be publicized and be placed upon the market for the benefit of members.

D.E.M.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR. (Reply regarding Rhododendron 'Lava Flow').

Dear Mr Lowes,

I read with some interest the letter by Mr. L. Edgar on R. 'Lava Flow'. I have a plant of this Rhododendron in full sun and it has always given a remarkable display. I purchased this plant from the Sunningdale Nurseries about 1963 and it is now 2 ft. high and over 4 ft. across. I have a copy of the old Sunningdale publication "Rhododendrons at Sunningdale" by James Russell. The information given on 'Lava Flow' is "Raised here by crossing K.W.13225 with griersonianum. (The plant is referred to as R. repens in the R.H.S. Handbook, but seems to be nearer to R. didymum, except that it has brilliant scarlet flowers instead of red)." Low and compact in habit, with pointed, dark green leaves, up to ten flowers in a truss, widely opened, vivid scarlet spotted crimson." The Sunningdale propagator was Mr Harry White.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) E. Streater.

RHODODENDRON PROTISTUM, var. PROTISTUM.

by K.J.W.Lowes.

The flowering of Arduaine's R. protistum var. protistum is likely to be of considerable interest to other growers of the plant, as well as to the many admirers of those tender giants the Grandia subsection, with their dominating effect in our gardens and their romantic plant-hunting associations. Before giving some background information on the species in the wild and its several collections by Forrest and Kingdon Ward, I must point out that certain assumptions have had to be made about the plant in question. Until the inflorescence has been adequately examined it can not be taken for granted that what we are talking about really is a genuine and pure R. protistum var. protistum. Such an examination may "prove" that it is, or it may put the appellation in doubt. It is already clear that interspecific hybridisation within the Grandia subsection can take place extremely easily in favourable circumstances. So the name 'protistum' is here to be used for convenience; no particular claim should be read into what is said.

First, as to introduction. From such information as I have to hand I have traced eleven numbers of Forrest's introduction, and one, plus a possible, of Kingdon Ward's. There may have been more, and we must presume the possibility that introductions have been made to other countries. The term 'introduction' is used because it is the term traditionally used in the Species Handbooks; but the difficulty of knowing what survives in cultivation is referred to on page 258 of the 1980 edition. These thirteen numbers were collected between the years 1918 and 1928. The provenance of the Arduaine plant is not at present clear, although it may well have been precisely documented when it was planted out. This seems to have been in 1930 or thereabouts. It is not known to have flowered before this year. In his article "Arduaine Revived" in the 1979-80 Year Book, Mr Edmund Wright wrote as follows:- "Perhaps the most interesting (---) is a plant said to be R. protistum; this has not flowered, due, we think, to the dense canopy above it. Once again the light has been let in, and we hope to see the first buds in the not too distant future." So results have soon followed that perceptive forecast. Two flower buds formed after growth-time last year, and colour began to show as they swelled in early February, the visible pink leading at first to expectations of corollas of creamy-white, flushed rose. This is the description which has been given in reference books since before the second world war. However, it should be borne in mind that although there have apparently been many collections, there may not have been many sightings of flowers in the wild, seed-collecting time being so much later than flowering time; it therefore seems dangerous to assume that only one colour is possible. In Peter Cox's "Larger Species" the range of colours given for "R. protistum (giganteum)", which I take to embrace both, is comprehensive between creamy-white and purple. The reason for this apparent diversion is that after two or three days the flower-colour revealed itself as in the pink range and it seemed most unlikely that it would turn to creamy-white. As this note has to be completed before the trusses reach their peak, the end of the story of the proper colour has to be left for another occasion. What is most unfortunate is that Mr Edmund Wright is at present in the middle of a long period away from Arduaine, so he will not witness this flowering; he will have to content himself with listening to the accounts and descriptions of his brother Harry and others, and to looking at such colour photographs as are taken; if this flowering heralds a continuous sequence - and a fifty-year-old plant may by now feel sufficiently conscious-stricken as to really get on with it - then the future is going to be full of interest for the owners and their visitors. The next few weeks must become quite exciting for Arduaine while authentication is being sought, for there is the tantalising prospect of having another first-flowering, to repeat Arduaine's 1936 success with the "old" R. giganteum, now R. protistum var. giganteum. An intriguing play upon words also arises. The word 'protistum' is a reduplicated superlative meaning 'first among firsts' - that is, virtually, 'firstest'. How apt for Arduaine! (Was it General Patton who liked to "get there firstest with the mostest"?)

What are believed to be protistums in other gardens in Britain are likely to be examined ever more hopefully from now on, at any rate where the plants are mature. Such a garden is Brodick, famous for its "giganteum" and "magnificum" and some possible hybrids. I believe that some years ago specimens of R. protistum planted at Tower Court and Glendoick failed to survive. On the other hand, foliage from Mount Stewart was exhibited by the Dowager Marchioness of Londonderry at the April 1953 Rhododendron Show. There is, or at least there was formerly, a plant in the U.S.A. from Forrest 24775, from which I understand grafted plants reached this country; they or their progeny still exist in at any rate two gardens, but these, I understand, are not of a size to give hopes of flowering for some time. There may well be other protistums in the U.S.A. and other countries, such as the ones mentioned by the late Edgar Stead of New Zealand in his article in the 1947 Year Book (pp.44-5); and the specimen(s) planted some years ago at Pukeiti (Robert Hair, 1970 Year Book, p.53), and Olinda, Australia (A.W.Headlam, 1973 Year Book, p.49).

It is unfortunate that the weather at Arduaine and its effect on flowering times have not synchronized too well with the needs of the Bulletin, for the provision of a complete and detailed description of the two trusses must now await another moment, and possibly another place.

K.J.W.L.

BOOKS.

JOURNAL OF GARDEN HISTORY - AN INTERNATIONAL QUARTERLY.

The first number has now appeared. In Bulletin No. 13 I promised to give further information, but this was eventually deferred when at a late point in preparing the stencils for No.14 a small flurry of more urgent "news" items arrived, and the weight of bulletin and enclosures threatened to require a more expensive stamp. I now quote from a leaflet which states the intention of the publishers and editor.

"Garden history in recent years has begun to assume considerable importance as a discipline in its own right - through the work of various distinguished scholars, the enthusiasm and energies of such research centres as Dumbarton Oaks, the activities of the Garden History Society, and the exhibition in 1979 at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The scope and range of its subject have not, however, fully revealed themselves. A new 'Journal of Garden History' will provide an essential forum for this fast-developing subject to expand and experiment, and for the extent and nature of its contribution to be assessed. It will be the only journal dedicated to the inter-disciplinary and international field of garden history.

Garden history has so far attracted scholars from a variety of disciplines. The 'Journal of Garden History' will maintain and strengthen these approaches. It will certainly emphasize the architectural history of garden design, with an especial place being reserved for the publication of new material on specific gardens anywhere in the world; but it will also want to explore the relevance to garden history of other topics - iconography, aesthetics, botany and horticulture, technology, social and economic history, conservation and restoration of historic gardens, geography, history of ideas, and the relation of gardens to the history of landscape taste. An important need is to see garden history in an international context.

A substantial book review section will also attend to recent publications in all these fields. "

The leaflet in question embodies other information and an order form, and can be obtained from:-

Taylor & Francis Ltd.,

4, John Street, London, WC1N 2ET.

It is clear from an examination of the first issue that the claims to scholarly and international approach are fully justified.

K.J.W.L.

THE 1980 SPECIES HANDBOOK. An appraisal by the Bulletin Editor.

The last edition of the Rhododendron Handbook (Species) is dated 1967, and its predecessors 1947, 1952, 1956 and 1963. In 1967, the stated intention was "to revise and publish this Handbook about every five years". Various factors have combined to foil this plan, most of them too obvious or well-known by now to merit repetition. Many people will have bought this new edition already, and, according to their knowledge, experience and degree of familiarity with the older Handbooks, they will have reacted personally and formed their own opinions. There remain those who have not yet acquired a copy, and the notes and views which follow are of course aimed chiefly at them; however it is hoped that some of those who already have the book will also be helped in some small way.

The appearance of the new book differs from that of its predecessors for two reasons. It is almost twice as thick as the 1967 edition, with 362 pages compared with 278 in 1967 and 187 in 1956; and, as is happening more and more these days, the familiar hard cover has given way to a soft one; it is obvious that this saves the purchaser a matter of pounds rather than pence. For a highly detailed and complex book like this it is very praiseworthy that the post-paid price has been kept below £7.00. The extra bulk is soon explained when the pages are turned; in particular, a comparative table concerned with classification occupies most of the extra pages, and the growing number of Malesian species has swollen the number of entries in the main index and, of course, areas of cross-reference. Furthermore, in some existing series, sections or subsections, new species are included which have been described since 1967. On the other hand much tidying-up work has been done to save some of the space thus required. The new edition has a slightly smaller format than the 1967, so it still goes in my anorak pocket; yet it weighs only five ounces more, so it should accompany the owner in the garden just as the earlier ones did.

The new comparative table mentioned, which is supplied rather for the gardeners than for the botanists, takes up 65 pages. For the present, and pending the universal adoption of the Edinburgh revision, this serves a very useful purpose. In case a user should experience initial difficulty in locating names in this new table, it may be helpful to observe that all the lepidote species are gathered together in subgenus *Rhododendron* (pp.3-28), and that all the elepidote species except the Azaleas (two subgenera) and the *Azaleastrum* subseries are in subgenus *Hymenanthes* (pp.28-65). The subsections in the *Hymenanthes* section are listed in alpha betical order, unlike those in subgenus *Rhododendron*, which are arranged in a botanical sequence. Whether it will again be needed in the next edition remains an open question. A full explanation of the need for such a table is given on pages 1 and 2. Briefly, the Edinburgh revision of Cullen and Chamberlain has sunk into synonymy a considerable number of plant-names important to the gardener, and a new Group Terminology is employed in the R.H.S. Horticultural Revision to facilitate correlation of these and to ensure that they can be traced within the covers of this book. To give an example which might occur in some well-labelled "Open" garden, if you walk up to a familiar old plant which you know as *R.radicans*, and find that it is newly labelled *R.calostrotum* ssp. *keleticum*, reference to page 21 will reassure you that the new label was not put there by some under-informed blackbird; the correlation will be made clear in column three.

The two fundamental reasons for regular re-editing of the Handbook are of course that it should be regularly brought up to date with new information, and that corrections can be made where errors have been found in earlier editions. This has been done, and it may be helpful to draw attention to some examples of both types of revision. Little comment is needed where there are additions such as species newly described since 1967, or new collections. The collectors' numbers section now occupies 105 pages, ranging from Wilson of 1899 to several expeditions in the 1970s, right up to Schilling of 1978. This represents an increase of over twenty pages and some hundreds of new numbers. The Rock numbers beginning on page 328 have now been sorted from the U.S.D.A.P.I. numbers. On page 328 itself there is a note about this, which is important for people

concerned with Rock's collections. There are four separate alphabetical name-lists, and these have all been brought up to date. They are (1) the main list "Descriptions of Species in Cultivation", (2) "Species not in Cultivation", (3) "Synonyms" (now 18 pages and consequently very comprehensive), and (4) "Species of Uncertain Relationship, Omitted from the Cullen and Chamberlain Classification". The gardener's use of the main list will not need to change, but with the widening of our knowledge of the genus over the last hundred years his dependence on the other three lists increases yearly. The Rhododendron Series table remains, but the detailed keys have gone, and are replaced by notes on the main characteristics of the series as a group, with further notes under each subseries.

An important new feature follows the Virgatum Series, No. 43. This is a list of just under three hundred entries under the heading "Section Vireya". These are separated into Subsections and in some cases into Series. Other features of the 1967 edition which have been retained include the flower shapes and leaf shapes; they have, however, been revised. Then the Glossary has been much enlarged, from 23 entries in 1967 to 89 now. I think it is useful to have these explanations within the covers of the book, for when the user is "in the field" his Lucie Smith and his Stearn's "Botanical Latin" will be at home on the bookshelves. The list now includes some less common terms such as 'detersile', 'retorse' and 'scabrid', which are not so universally understood. I would go so far as to recommend consideration of a further modest expansion next time, so as to include those terms which might in practice be encountered in the "Descriptions of Species in Cultivation" main list, or in descriptions of new species (for example in the Year Books). To the obvious objection that a line has to be drawn somewhere, I readily agree. What I have in mind are words which are in fact used in the Descriptions (I noted dimorphic, ericoid, ferruginous, imbricate, rhombic, ovate-rhombic and rhombic-ovate), and some of those which have been in use in botanical descriptions (for example, cuneate, lamina and setose).

Let us move on now to the Descriptions of Species themselves, which for many users is perhaps the section of the book referred to most often. These are similar to those used in previous editions, but there are many "up-datings", often using more recent experience. Examples are gymnocarpum, inberbe, neddianum 'Machrie' and nakotiltun; but there are many more. There is a change of criterion in the mentioning of R.H.S. awards, which are now given only for forms of a species and not, as formerly, for hybrids where the species is a parent. This is a point mentioned, along with others, in the "Introduction to the Species Descriptions" on pp. 106-7, and it is advisable to read this carefully along with all other explanatory matter before bringing the Handbook into everyday use.

There are many thousands of entries in this book, and many thousands of words in botanical Latin are consequently used. It follows that a few problems arise, as in any book of this kind. Some are concerned with changes in what is held to be correct; some with improvements in uniformity where there have been inconsistencies; some are simply corrections of former errors; and there remain a few errors, chiefly of a typographical nature; (there are even, the Editor tells me, such things as errors which crop up after the proof-reading). It is with a view to helping those who will use the Handbook for checking names and spellings, as in writing articles or reports, or making up labels and records, that such changes and errors as have come to my notice are given below.

First there are deliberate alterations. These are chiefly changes in accepted opinion, removal of inconsistency, or correction of errors observed since the 1967 Handbook came into use. Some of these can be formed into groups, as for example specific names terminating in -anum; where the stem to which -anum is added ends in -er (which is nearly always with proper nouns like Fletcher or Genestier) there should be no 'i' as there is with davidsonianum or williamsianum. So we now have consistency and correctness with fletcherianum, genestieranum, thayerianum, websterianum, then detznerianum and englerianum (p.233 not in cultivation); add to these aurigeranum, which is not from a proper noun.

The next group embraces situations where an 'ae' spelling is not now acceptable in the spelling of botanical names, and is usually replaced by an 'i'. Cases I have noticed are (in the new spelling) chamaeunum (an 'e' this time, not an 'i'), blandfordiiflorum, camelliiflorum, prinuliflorum. Two different kinds of change are in nakaharae (now 'ad') and uvariifolium (two 'i's); note also that half of uvariifolium has been accidentally omitted from beneath the oblanceolate leaf on page 104. Names like annae, clementinae, anesiae, searsiae and wilsoniae however, are correct because they are feminine agreements. Note also that in brookeanum, cogkeanum, cuffeanum and several others, the 'e' is correct because it is part of the stem, which is a name and proper noun; the 'e' should not therefore be pronounced.

We now have not so much a group as a miscellany, chiefly of single instances of correcting old errors, some of them going back many years. The hyphen formerly used in chamaethonsonii was not necessary (cf. chamaecistus, chamaecyparis, chamaedaphne); on page 254 we have, correctly, rubriflorum, rubroluteum, rubropunctatum; but they are unfortunately followed by an obtrusive rubro hyphen punctatum, where I should have liked the inconsistency to have been removed. Next, albertsenianum is named after M.O. Albertsen, not -son (p.110); anhweiense is now correct (not 'wh' - place-name Anhwei); circinatum should only have one 'n' although two 'n's have been incorrectly used for so long (Latin verb circinare, and the 'a' is both long and stressed)

It remains to note what is really a relatively small number of errors observed in working through the volume (a "consumer" copy as it will be purchased by members of the public). I must stress that in my view and after half a lifetime devoted to work on language and accuracy, to have kept the scale of error down to this low level is a very substantial achievement. If you think the list which follows is not "relatively small", this view should be borne in mind; to put it another way, how many "botanical words" are printed in the entire book? The answer has already been mentioned - many, many thousands. They are given at random as there are scarcely any links of relevance.

Contents page; delete one of the words 'and'. P.79; cerochitum is shown as not in cultivation, but has for many years been offered in the R.H.S. Wisley Seed Lists - surely there is a plant producing seed, or even the resulting seedlings exist somewhere? P.13; for nahogoni spell nahogani. P.67; wongii is marginally out of alphabetical order. P.73; second-bottom line, 'lepidote' should read 'elepidote'. P.77; after nicromeres insert a 'Q'. P.85; chrysanthum is mis-spelled chrysanthemum (as it is, very widely, in various earlier publications). P.115; note that arizelum var. rubicosum is correct, whereas rubricosum with an intrusive 'r' is often found, incorrectly. P.173, under magnificum; for Corsewell, spell Corsewall. P.181, under nitidulum; a 'p' is inadvertently omitted from s. Lapponicum. P.216 (two entries) - chrysanthum as above. P.232; cerochitum as above. P.235; add an entry for nicromeres - s. Glaucocephalum and s.s. Genestierianum ( ). P.235; add an entry for openshawianum - s. Fortunei and s.s. Calophytum ( ); it is given on p.76. P.237; sanguineum ssp. atrorubens should be atrorubum. P.250; for narsheadianum spell norsheadianum. P.254; sennii is marginally out of alphabetical order. P.256, under tanakae; note correct spelling of the Genus Tsusiophyllum. P.294; under numbers 26450 and 26460, correct spelling of Azalea. P.310; number 7612 should spell martinianum. P.315; number 14314 should spell campanulatum. On P.9, columns 2 and 3 only, the line under R.lyi should be dotted, not broken line, because the Ciliocalyx Aggregate ends there in C. and C. Similarly on P.11, columns 2 and 3, the line under R.rigidum should be dotted as the Yunnanense Aggregate ends there.

Now, on the matter of the use of the book, a note chiefly intended for those not yet familiar with the previous editions of the Species Handbook. Using a highly detailed reference book, such as this one, becomes more rewarding when a few routines and devices have been learned, and the following observations may help a few members.

The backbone of the book could be said to be the section "Descriptions of Species in Cultivation", pp.108-230. Since it is a list of the approved names being used in 1980 it follows that older names which have been replaced will not be found there; but the

older names will still be found in gardens, on labels, and in the literature. So for this and other reasons there is another list, of Synonyms, pp.239-257, and this will be referred to frequently by many users. Another list, that of "Species not in Cultivation", may be needed less often (pp.231-238); but the names can crop up in field notes, collectors' reminiscences, old garden records and so on. The new three-column section on pp.3-65, already referred to, is going to be very important now, in various circumstances. Cross-reference between these sections will be constantly required before the next edition appears, so attention is called to some difficulties which can be encountered. Many of them will cause surprise or perplexity, some will cause disappointment, as when old friends appear to have waved a last goodbye (e.g. I find it sad that bullatum is now in Synonyms and not the main list). For occasions when a specific name is not where you expect it to be, my first suggestion is - become very persistent; try everything, look in all these lists, because if you have the name right it is pretty sure to be somewhere in the book. Here are a few cases to use for experiment.

First, try finding bodinieri. It is "not there" now; but it was, in 1967. Glance down the list on pp.66-67 and you find it, along with some other names which may look vaguely familiar - perhaps one of these: - detonsum, fulvastrum, imberbe, magorianum, peregrinum, setosum or spilotum. These two pages, headed "----Omitted from the Cullen and Chamberlain Classification", give the reason, and also solve a few mysteries. Next point, the old Rhododendron Series list found in the previous Handbooks is still with us, pp.68-92, plus Section Vireya pp.92-99. So if you know, or can guess, the Series, you may find your query there; it will probably be in one of the other lists of course.

Some random notes, all bulked together, of the kind of thing which could be difficult or confusing to newcomers to the book, now follow. One category of confusion arises from the all-too-common occurrence of the same name having been given by different botanists to different plants; another arises from very similar names being used, sometimes sounding the same (e.g., when you say mollyanum you are also saying mollianum; so the later mollyanum was changed and is now montroseanum). So caution is needed in using aureum, discolor, edgarianum, japonicum, jasminiflorum (cf. p.161 with p.248), javanicum (p.161 and p.248), nudiflora, punctatum, repens, sinense, tubiflorum and verticillatum, as well as many others less likely to be encountered. Constant reference to the Synonyms list is essential where the user is exploring new ground. Among the 'similar' pairs, where the onus lies heavily on the user to be precise, meticulous in fact, I mention along with mollianum, williamsii and williamsianum, taiense, taliense and tamaense, radians and radicans, calophyllum and calophytum, wasonii and watsonii, spilotum and spilanthum, and others. Of course this situation has nothing to do with the preparation of the present volume; it is a matter of how to use what is there accurately and advantageously.

In his foreword, the Director of the R.H.S. Wisley Garden, Mr. C.D. Brickell, has stated the Society's indebtedness to the various individuals responsible in great or small measure for the new Handbook. Let me quote him in one particular: "The appearance of the new 'Handbook' so rapidly after the publication of the Edinburgh classification is due largely to the meticulous and thorough work of Dr Alan Leslie at Wisley. He deserves the warmest thanks of all rhododendron enthusiasts for the extreme care with which he has edited the original draft text prepared by the sub-committee and he has blended it so admirably with the Edinburgh classification and the proposed R.H.S. Group system". Quite simply, I warmly endorse that view. I have already drawn attention to the relatively low price. Now a word of praise for the printers, Spottiswoode Ballantyne Ltd., who deserve unstinted praise for a good-looking book with a minimum of so-called "printers' errors". We welcome and will make good use of this long-awaited new edition, and must be very grateful that it is so good.

"What is to become of specific Botany I cannot think". (Sir Joseph Hooker, 1817-1911). "----we still have a very long way to go before our knowledge of the genus, one of the largest in the whole plant kingdom, can be regarded as comprehensive or by any means complete". (Dr J. MacQueen Cowan, about 27th April 1949). They would be very interested.

Spring Tour 1981. Tuesday 12 May to Sunday 17 May.  
North East England and South East Scotland.

Below is an outline of the programme for the Rhododendron and Camellia Group Spring Tour 1981, which, like the tours in previous years, has been painstakingly organised by Major Walter Magor. All enquiries should now be sent to Nigel Glass, Tour Secretary, Evensong, 8 Nuns Walk, Virginia Water, Surrey GU25 4RT. (Telephone 099 04 2333).

We assemble at 12.30 p.m. on Tuesday 12 May for lunch at the Harrogate Arms Hotel which adjoins the Northern Horticultural Society's garden at Harlow Carr, Harrogate. Cars may be left for the duration of the tour at the Harlow Carr Gardens coach park. In the afternoon we tour the Harlow Carr Gardens and at 5 p.m. our coach will take us to the Viking Hotel, York. The programme is then -

Wednesday 13 May	am	Castle Howard
	pm	Stonely Woods, Fadmoor
Thursday 14 May	Stay at	the Scotch Corner Hotel
	am	St Nicholas, near Richmond
	pm	Beaufront Castle
Friday 15 May	Stay at	the White Swan Hotel, Alnwick
	am	Howick Hall
	pm	Eglingham Hall
Saturday 16 May	Return	to the White Swan Hotel, Alnwick
	am	Manderston House, Duns
	pm	Whitchester House, Duns
Sunday 17 May	Stay at	the Peebles Hotel Hydro
	am	Dawyck
	pm	Leave by coach for Harlow Carr
		to arrive by 4 p.m. The coach will take members to York
		if required.

P.T.O.

N.B. PLEASE TURN TO OTHER SIDE FOR PARTICULARS OF COSTS.

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IF YOU WISH TO JOIN THE TOUR, PLEASE COMPLETE AND FORWARD THIS SLIP.

COSTS. The cost of the complete tour is £140 single, £255 double. This includes five nights' hotel accommodation, all meals, entrance fees, plants to be presented to garden owners, and travel by coach from and back to our starting point at Harlow Carr. It is hoped that all members who can will use the coach, but those who cannot may deduct £15 a head from the cost.

The party will be limited to 40 and priority will be given to those wanting the complete tour. If you wish to join the party will you please complete the attached form (below, both sides), and send it to Nigel Glass, Tour Secretary, Evensong, 8 Nuns Walk, Virginia Water, Surrey GU25 4RT (Telephone 099 04 2333), with a cheque for £10 a head as a deposit, the balance to be paid without reminder by April 1st. Cheques should be made payable to the Rhododendron and Camellia Group.

A more detailed itinerary will be sent to those joining the tour.