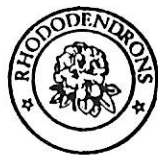


The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group



BULLETIN No. 42 - December 1989

Forthcoming Events 1990

March 13-14	Early Camellia, Rhododendron and Magnolia Competitions	April 27-30	Visits to Gardens in S.W. Wales
April 3-4	Main Camellia Show	April 27-30	International Camellia Society
April 12	Visit to Savill and Valley Gardens, Windsor	May 6-11	Somerset Week-end
April 24-25	Main Rhododendron Show	May 22-25	Spring Tour, Lake District and S.W. Scotland
April 24	Group AGM, 4pm Committee Room, New Hall, Vincent Sq.	June 19-20	Chelsea Show
			Flower Show with classes for Rhododendrons and Magnolias

Chairman's Notes

Members will be aware that the mantle of Bulletin Editor has now settled firmly on the shoulders of Geoff Taylor and may well agree that this issue bodes well for the future.

Following the recent successful launch of the seed exchange it has been decided to establish a seedling exchange and news of this will appear shortly. However the question of venue may render it impossible for some members to attend and it may be appropriate for Branch Organisers to consider holding seedling exchanges locally.

Passing to the question of Branches, negotiations are in hand to establish a new Branch based on Ness Botanic Garden in the Wirral which, hopefully, may be persuaded to take on the old Midlands membership.

The Bulletin Editor has called my attention to the fact that the media, when referring to the, undoubtedly, potential menace of *R. ponticum* are inclined to omit the specific name and so give the impression that the whole genus can, if left to its own devices, become invasive. Indeed a letter was sent to the Times following the printing of an article referring only to "Rhododendrons". If members notice such references they should take the matter up with the source as, remembering the impact this could have on our friends in the nursery trade, it is not merely academic.

Finally to gale damage. In the South and West some gardens have suffered from fallen trees and the normal seems to be that, should you employ contractors to clear them, try yourself to clear debris from around your precious plants since a big, hobnailed boot does as much damage as a falling tree!!

B.A.

1990 Seed Distribution

The first seed distribution of the *Rhododendron*, *Camellia* and *Magnolia* Group last year was a tremendous success and we eventually distributed 1945 packets of seed in 213 varieties to 143 members. This resulted in well over £1100 contribution to the Group's funds.

Lets try to make the distribution this year even more successful! If at all possible could you let me have your contributions (preferably cleaned, but not essential) before the end of December. If seed is not ripe by this date, a note from you of what will be available will enable me to put the expected seed on the list.

Please remember that wild collected seed was extremely popular and sold out very early, in fact we had 44 orders for *R. wightii* more than we could supply! Hand pollinated seed is still very desirable and selfings or siblings of species (*R. campanulatum*, *hemsleyanum*, *longesquamatum*, *pachysanthum*, *thomsonii* and *yunnanense* were all over subscribed by over 20 packets each) or hand pollinated hybrid seed is desirable. Open pollinated rare or especially fine forms of species is acceptable, however, open pollinated hybrid seed is not listed.

Seed should be sent to: The Rhododendron Group, Tilgates, Bletchingley, Surrey, RH1 4QF.

Seedling Exchange

It was decided at the last committee meeting to hold a "Seedling Exchange". This will be held at Tilgates on Saturday, 26th May between 2-5 pm. Members are invited to bring in any excess seedlings they have to exchange with other members. Seedlings, or in fact, any other propagations must be clearly labelled and if open pollinated - this must be stated. Propagations do not need to have been raised from the Seed Distribution. Entrance will be £1 per person (members and guests) which will go towards the Group's funds. This entrance fee will cover entrance to the gardens at Tilgates where there are over 1000 modern Rhododendrons and Azaleas, a national NCCPG Collection of Magnolias (over 400 different clones, but most still very small) and a fairly large greenhouse with tender Rhododendrons, Magnolias and Camellias. Tea will be available. The labelling at Tilgates is fully computerised and very detailed and virtually every tree and shrub is clearly labelled (over 3,500 in only 7 and a half acres!).

Tilgates is 20 miles south of London, just off the A23 and only 2 miles off the Godstone turnoff of the M25. Head towards Godstone, and take the A25 towards Redhill. Through the village of Bletchingley and at the Red Lion Pub turn Right into Little Common Lane. Tilgates is about two hundred yards down on the Right. This could be quite a fun afternoon for members and their guests.

Subscriptions

Would members who have not renewed their subscriptions for the year to 31st October 1990 kindly note that these became due on 1st November and that the Treasurer would be pleased to receive remittances as soon as possible.

Details:

U.K.

£7.00 per annum

Overseas

£7.00 per annum

Overseas (airmail)

£10.00 per annum

It would be appreciated if members with UK bank accounts would subscribe using a banker's order.

Treasurer: Peter Reynolds, 3 Moorland View, Old Newton Road, Heathfield, Newton Abbot, Devon. Tel: 0626 834524.

International Camellia Society

An International Camellia Society Congress will be held in Maizuri, JAPAN from 3rd to 7th April 1990. With pre and post congress tours, each of five days and with the benefit of eight congress speakers from around the world, this should be quite an outing.

Philip Urlwin-Smith - An Appreciation

Philip Urlwin-Smith, who gardened in a delightfully crammed acre-and-a-bit at Magnolia Cottage near Ascot, sadly died in February this year.

Philip, who was 81, not only loved Magnolias, Rhodo-

dendrons and Camellias, but also the company of people. As an active member of the Wessex Branch of the Rhododendron Group, he made friends from Glenarn to Glendurgan and brought a grand sense of fun and camaraderie to gardening. Philip, a graduate of Worcester College, Oxford, had a rare zest for life. His early years were as full as his garden.

He raced cars at the famous Brooklands circuit, was an early aviator and plane owner. Later, he captained Dorset at golf and owned a racehorse. During World War II he distinguished himself by winning a DFC as a member of 502 Squadron Coastal Command.

Whatever Philip did, and this of course included gardening, he displayed characteristic energy and enthusiasm.

Once, when British Rail were offering Senior Citizens their 'Go anywhere' day trips for a pound, Philip took himself off on an impromptu jaunt to the Scottish Highlands. Shortly after this prodigious excursion, British Rail cancelled the offer, but there is no truth in the rumour (as far as we know!) that this was due to Philip's opportunism.

Although Philip was a knowledgeable gardener and a keen and successful exhibitor at the London shows, one always detected that he was immensely privileged to be involved in gardening. This, perhaps, was never more endearingly displayed than at the honour he felt when a tour party would want to put his garden on their itinerary, or when asked to contribute a piece for the Rhododendron Year Book.

Philip was the founder-member of a small, eclectic band of Southern rhodophiles who would make an annual Spring pilgrimage to Scotland. Along with his wife Leslie and son Philip, these friends will no doubt miss his keenness and infectious gregariousness the most.

BRIAN WRIGHT

It has been suggested that a list of recommended books on our three genera might be useful, particularly for newcomers to any of them. (Reference numbers are to the RHS September 1989 list of 'Books for Gardeners').

For Newcomers The Wisley Handbooks

154 'Camellias' by David Trehane, 64 pp. Revised Edition - £2.95

189 'Rhododendrons' by Peter A Cox, 64 pp. Revised Edition - £2.95

098 'Magnolias: Their care and cultivation' by Jim Gardiner (Curator at Wisley) 144 pp. - £14.95

Note: This is a recent publication and not in the Wisley Handbook series.

General

336 Hillier's Manual of Trees and Shrubs Hard cover £12.95; Soft cover £6.95.

'Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles' by W. J. Bean 8th Edition

354 vol. II, 1975, includes Magnolias

355 vol. III, 1976, includes Rhododendrons

Camellias

265 'Camellias' by Chang Hung Ta and Bruce Bartholomew, Batsford 1984, 211 pp. - £40

'The Colour Dictionary of Camellias' by Stirling Macoboy, Lansdowne Press 1981

Magnolias

'Magnolias' by Neil G. Treseder, Faber and Faber 1978

Out of print, but a revised 2nd. Edition is in preparation.

Rhododendrons

'Rhododendrons of the World and how to grow them' by David G. Leach, George Allen and Unwin 1962. I believe a more recent edition exists also.

'Rhododendrons and Azaleas' by I. F. la Croix, David and Charles 1973.

'Rhododendrons and Azaleas' by Mervyn S. Kessell, Blandford Press 1981.

'The Larger Species of Rhododendron' by P. A. Cox, Batsford 1979

'The Smaller Rhododendrons' by P. A. Cox, Batsford 1985.

New Books

'Rhododendron Species: Vol II (of 3) - Elepidote Species. Series Arboretum - Lactum' by H. H. Davidian. 436 pp. 182 illus. incl. 159 colour photographs. Batsford - £50.

'Azaleas' by Fred C. Galle. Descriptions of all Rhododendron species called azaleas and over 6,000 cultivars derived from them. 600 pp. 366 colour photographs. Batsford - £45.

These are two important new books recently published.

W.M.

'Roy Lancaster's Travels in China - A Plantsman's Paradise' 500 pp. illus. incl. 450 colour photographs. Antique Collectors Club - £29.50.

'Frank Kingdon Ward - The Last of the Great Plant Hunters' by Charles Lyte, John Murray - £16.95.

'The Camellia Story' by Tom Durrant (Founder of the New Zealand Camellia Society). Heinemann (1982).

'Camellia Nomenclature' (An official publication of the American Camellia Society). Southern California Camellia Society Inc. - £10.95.

'Rhododendron and Azaleenzucht in Deutschland' Vol. II by Walter Schmalscheidt. Schmalscheidt, Oldenburg, West Germany.

C.P.

Branch News - Forthcoming Events

Sat. 7th April '90. S.W. Branch garden visits to Trewidden and Trengwainton, Cornwall.

Sat. 28th April '90. S.W. Wales Branch garden visits to The Hall, Angle and Four Ashes, Cosheston, Dyfed.

Sat. 5th May '90. S.W. Branch garden visits to Abbotsbury and Minterne, Dorset.

Sat. 20th May '90. S.W. Wales Branch garden visit and members' meeting, Post House Gardens, Dyfed.

Report on the Autumn Week-end

After a beautiful drive through Autumn sunshine for most of us, about twenty or so of our members met over dinner at the Manor House, a 16th century hotel at Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire on Friday 13th October. In spite of the starting date, luck was on our side as we had a week-end of almost unbroken sunshine.

On the Saturday morning, after a leisurely breakfast, we set off for a visit to Hidcote Manor Garden, owned by the National Trust. This is composed of a series of formal gardens, many enclosed within superb hedges, including hornbeam on stems and high clipped yew. In spite of the lateness of the year there was plenty of colour, including a mass of brightly coloured dahlias and other herbaceous plants. We thought this garden delightful and spent several hours there, having a snack lunch at the restaurant. Unfortunately Kiftgate Court nearby was closed, but some of the party visited Snowhill Manor near Broadway, the main interest there being the house which contains a fine collection of craftsmanship including clocks and musical instruments.

Back at the hotel and after tea we all gathered in a small conference room for a plant quiz, expertly set up by our member John Bodenham and his wife Margaret. Some thirty cuttings of rhododendrons with appropriate photographs of the flowers and a description of the whole plant were arranged over a long table for our inspection, and identifying these gave us all a most interesting and enjoyable hour. After a plant sale and dinner we filed back into the conference room for a very interesting talk with slides by David Farnes, who had been on a trek to India earlier this year. His trip was unusual in that he was the only botanical member of his party, and the onerous task of identifying rhododendrons and other plants fell on him alone. We enjoyed following him through his various adventures, and admired his very professional photography.

On Sunday morning we set off for Sudeley Castle, owned by Lord and Lady Ashcombe at Winchcombe. The history of Sudeley goes back to 1066 and makes fascinating reading in the booklet one can buy there. The centrepiece is the formal Queen's Garden flanked by its famous yew hedges. There are large mixed borders, and formal pools all set in extensive lawns with many fine trees. One pool we saw contained some unusual species of duck and two fine black swans.

Once again we enjoyed brilliant sunshine which enhanced the beauty of the surrounding countryside, and it was with some regret that we said our 'good-byes' and left for home, after yet another very happy 'get-together'.

V.A.

Editorial Note

Contributions of a non-topical nature have now been grouped under the heading 'Open Forum' and it is hoped that members will be encouraged to join in discussing any topic in which they have an interest. A few words may be sufficient to illustrate a point of view which can then be included in an edited discussion. Members may of course choose to be identified or remain anonymous.

All contributions are welcome, but currently the following items are of interest to some members.

- i Fast growing trees suitable for shading and sheltering Rhododendrons.
- ii Later flowering Camellias.
- iii The hardiness of *Magnolia grandiflora* and its cultivars.

G.H.T.

Open Forum - Notes from Members on Group Genera

Rhododendrons in a Forest Setting

The profession of forester lends itself in retirement to combining woodland ownership and the cultivation of rhododendrons, especially if the family includes two forester sons and plenty of space.

If the financial risk was reasonable, my wife and I would try to buy parcels of scrub land considered to be unsuitable for commercial use, perhaps for legal reasons. As planting and maintaining a plantation until it is safe from the competition of scrub regrowth is an expensive business, our family were only able to do this sort of thing occasionally as and when savings were available. Even then there was some financial sacrifice as such plantations are not very easy to sell before they are over twenty years old. Now that our children are grown up, finance is less difficult and our pleasure is increased by the decision of our two sons to qualify as commercial foresters too.

We have always been in the habit of purchasing rarities from nurseries, and growing from seed unusual and attractive trees more usually seen in the arboretum of a wealthy landowner. The Forestry Commission also approves of such additions. We are fortunate in having a wood in North Wales in addition to the one in Norfolk where we live and we make a habit of taking rhododendron layers from one to the other well wrapped-up on the roof rack of our car. The soil in our Welsh wood consists of pockets of acid clay between rock boulders and contrasts with the flat heathland soil of East Anglia, but such things merely add to the interest of the exercise. Rhododendrons may take up more space than ornamental tree species, but groups can be fitted in here and there.

The prudent owner of a commercial forestry plantation which includes outstanding rhododendron hybrids and species naturally buries suitable side branches at the time of planting, so he is not surprised when he becomes the proud owner of some well-rooted layers. Such a person could easily start a rhododendron nursery if it suited him, but the writer of this note prefers to increase the variety of his rhododendron stock by exchanging layers or seedlings. If anyone would care to send a list of layers or seedlings which he or she has available for exchange to me, Philip Page, 277 Holt Road, Horsford, Norwich, NR10 3RB, I will gladly send mine in return. This system of mutual exchange seems to be common practice amongst members of the American Rhododendron Society, but the Atlantic Ocean and red tape tends to discourage such friendly exchanges.

PHILIP PAGE

Battling Against Salt-laden Wind

We are fortunate in that although we are only some 600 yards from the sea, we are screened by two thin shelter belts of trees from some impact of the gales. As Criccieth is South-facing on the Southern side of the Llyn Peninsula in North Wales and well to the East of the most exposed headlands, we have a lot to be thankful for.

I have seen far less sheltered gardens than ours on the Eastern approaches to Criccieth and they fall into two camps; those with little or no shelter grow few or no rhododendrons, while those with shelter from *Berberis darwinii*, *Eleagnus x ebbingei*, *Griselinia littoralis*, *Escallonia* or just gorse tend to grow only hardy hybrids.

I have discussed this problem with Philip Brown of Portmeirion Garden and we contrasted my current experience with that in my previous garden on the North side of the Llyn Peninsula, some 450 feet up overlooking the Irish Sea. There I

succeeded with very few rhododendrons and had to burn a number of failures. In thirteen years, Elizabeth, Blue Diamond, Cilpinense and *R. yakushmanum* were the only real successes. Philip pointed out that few coastal gardens on that North-Western flank of the Llyn Peninsula made any attempt to grow rhododendrons.

Where does this lead? I seem to be saying that site is all important and that it is difficult to overcome the worst effects of salt-laden gales in a garden exposed to them. The previous garden I struggled with was only one third of an acre and in that particular site I would have needed to develop the entire area as a shelter belt to have any success.

Here in Criccieth the garden boundary is a typical field hedge and I am thickening it by adding an inner 'domestic' hedge of Berberis, Eleagnus, Privet, Thuja, Birch and Lawson Cypress. Towards the best of our sea views, I am being careful to leave several 'windows' in the screen.

Inside the new hedge I have planted thirty or forty young rhododendrons with some emphasis on the species and crosses of the *Cinnabarinum* and *Triflorum* series. I plan to add to these annually, but it will be some years before they are large enough to be enjoyed by anyone other than myself and only then can I be sure about the shelter and selection of varieties.

MICHAEL COOPER

'Tanlon', Criccieth, Gwynedd, LL52 0SA

The Taliense Series in Norway

Writing from Trondheim in Norway, on a similar latitude to Southern Iceland, a member if seeking contact with anyone growing the *Taliense* Rhododendrons, a series which apparently will grow and thrive in those Northern climes. Please write to:

Mr. F. Larsen, O. Magnussons Veg 1, 7046 Trondheim, NORWAY.

Crossing Azaleas for Fun

Starting with plants of Exbury strains, Fred Minch has hybridised azaleas on the West coast of America for close on thirty years, producing plants with up to 80 flowers per truss, although 50 is more usual. Without much attention to scientific theory, Fred has walked among his flowering azaleas, tweezers and camel hair brush in hand, selecting a bit of this to go with a bit of that, with quite startling results and many show successes.

When Fred first started working with azaleas, people were not interested locally and many plants were given away to customers calling at the nursery to buy rhododendrons. Things are different today and although Fred maintains that the azaleas are his hobby, a new double-flowered cross named 'Puyallup Centennial' (from crossing a large yellow and orange) honours his city's centenary and at least 1,000 have been ordered for 1990, proceeds going towards the centenary fund. Being fully double, the plant is sterile and a large commercial nursery has undertaken the propagation.

Using his own crosses and without introduction of fresh blood from other species, Fred has been attracted by double blooms and vivid colours, striving to increase flower size with more and more florets per truss.

An interesting thing has recently occurred in some of his plants where some of the seedlings had a dark, rich green foliage and the texture was quite coarse. They were moved from the greenhouse to the lath house as is usual when they reach a certain age and through this past winter, which was one of the most disastrous ever, they did not lose their leaves. There was no sign of mildew (which is getting to be a problem) and Fred is keeping a close watch on them to see what happens in the future. These plants have yet to bloom, so we wait in expectation.

We have also had extremely hot summers the past few years when he was pollinating and both Fred and Brett Smith (another azalea hybridiser) have found that the stigmas will not accept the pollen in the heat.

JEAN MINCH

4329 Chrisella Road East
PUYALLUP, Wa 98372, USA

Jean has kindly sent a few photographs of Fred's azaleas and the trusses are certainly large with some unusual colours and the doubles are obviously sterile with an absence of stamens. Some crosses have now been registered and first generation seed is usually available from Fred Minch. - Ed.

Acers to Magnolias - A Professional View

In 1962 the intention was to plant an Acer Glade at Arley as part of the renovation and replanting programme that the owner, Mr Turner, had planned for the arboretum. Unfortunately, it had been neglected for about thirty years before he acquired it and consequently, it was totally overgrown, including the site for the acers. Being on the North wall that once housed the boiler house for the heated walls of the walled garden and the remains of the old fruit orchard, the site was obviously not to the liking of acers. In the beginning, the site was totally cleared and the large overgrown yew hedge of about twenty feet tall (and about as wide) that surrounded it was cut back rather brutally with a chain saw and eventually after three or four years, started to make a good hedge. Today, it is about eight feet tall, three to four feet wide, neatly clipped and encloses the area known as 'The Magnolia Glade'. Originally, a good selection of acers was acquired, but after three to four years it was obvious that the planting was not going to be a success and although given another two years, they were suffering excessive dieback. It was decided to abandon the idea of an Acer Glade in favour of magnolias and so the Magnolia Glade came to reality, with a very good selection from the genus.

All the magnolias have grown exceptionally well, apart from *M. macrophylla* which, although not killed during the winter, was always cut back to about two feet from the ground every year. However, in the old catalogue, 'Trees and Shrubs growing in the grounds of Arley Castle - 1907', there is a reference to *M. macrophylla* being mentioned in 'Loudon's Arboretum et Fruticetum Britannicum'. This fine tree at Arley was a standard, over twenty-eight feet high with a trunk of six inches diameter at a foot from the ground and a head of some seventeen feet across. At that time this was the largest *M. macrophylla* recorded in England, but a more recent catalogue stated that this tree could no longer be traced.

M. grandiflora was another magnolia that apparently never really appreciated the location and was later moved to the South wall of the house, which suited it very well and where it still grows profusely, producing large creamy white flowers throughout the summer and into early autumn. In the twenty-one years that the new magnolias have been planted, most have attained a height of about seventeen to twenty feet, but I think the most magnificent one growing at Arley is *M. tripetala* (sometimes called "The Umbrella Tree", which is now over twenty-five feet tall, with a girth of thirty-two inches. Its creamy flowers, with a not very agreeable scent, appear in May and June followed by deep orange cone-shaped fruits which contain scarlet seeds, beloved by birds, so one must be quick to collect them as soon as ripe, if any are required for propagation. Going from the largest of the magnolias to the smaller compact bushes of *M. stellata* and *M. stellata* Rosea that always flower abundantly in March and April, these often get frosted, but more buds open and in another few days there is another flush of flowers.

The *M. stellata* we have are about eight feet tall and a little more across, with the Rosea variety being perhaps the more robust, but both appear to be very healthy. I often get enquiries about planting a magnolia in a relatively small garden and perhaps *M. stellata* or *M. sieboldii* (which is about the same sized bush as the former) are the most suitable. Another magnolia similar in flower and leaf to *M. stellata* is the cultivar Leonard Messel, but as this is a hybrid from *M. stellata* you would expect some similarities, but the growth is much more robust and bushes

planted at the same time as the parent are eighteen to twenty feet tall, producing pale lilac coloured flowers in profusion in April. Returning briefly to *M. sieboldii*, which has grown very well up to this year, this one shows some dieback on one or two of the lower branches after this spring, but hopefully this will not continue. It has flowered as usual this year, but perhaps not so abundantly. With cup-shaped white flowers and deep red stamens, this is an attractive summer flowering shrub and a magnolia that I consider well worth growing.

M. watsonii also flowers in June and July and has a rather overpowering fragrance from its five to six inch wide creamy white flowers. This magnolia has made a rather large shrub of about twenty feet in height, of very strong rigid growth and has quite large leaves, unlike *M. salicifolia* with its slender branches and narrow leaves. *M. salicifolia* has grown to about the size of *M. watsonii* (x *wieseneri*) but flowers in April, before the leaves appear and is a nice compact shrub of rather pendulous nature.

Also flowering from March to about May, *M. denudata* (*conspicua*) is often victim of the spring frosts and sometimes the flower buds are ruined. However, it has made a nice compact shrub of about twenty feet in height and still making a lot of growth, but *M. soulangiana* is hard to beat for growing and flowering; the specimens at Arley are about seventeen feet tall, but twice as wide and have been pruned back several times to control the width of the bushes. *M. liliiflora* Nigra on the other hand never seems quite so prolific, being a much tighter bush with deep shiny leaves. The deep purple-maroon flowers always appear a little gaudy to me, but they are a very striking colour and continue to appear from spring into summer. We have one that is wall-trained and flowering well on one side of a gateway that leads into the walled garden, with *Ribes speciosum* on the other side. There is always a great deal of interest in these shrubs on our open days.

More recently planted, *M. sargentiana* was added to the glade about ten years ago and is now about twelve feet tall and we look forward to seeing the flowers within the next five years or so.

Two other magnolias that do very well at Arley are *M. officinalis* and *M. sinensis*, both of these being about seventeen to twenty feet tall, with a spread of about twelve feet. In the last eight years, *M. Rustica Rubra* (a sport of *M. Lennei*, I believe) has been planted and is now five to six feet tall, while another recent addition is 'Heaven Sent', which I think is a *M. soulangiana* hybrid, now about nine feet in height - hopefully these two specimens will grow as well as the earlier plantings.

Often queried is *M. acuminata* (the 'Cucumber Tree'), which is planted in the arboretum and is now about twenty feet tall. The dull greenish-yellow flowers are inconspicuous, appearing from late May into July, but the name, which fascinates many people, refers to the shape and colour of the young fruits, which resemble small cucumbers. Not a magnolia for a small garden, this one will make a large tree. The original *M. acuminata* (about sixty feet tall and possibly planted about 1820) that was in the arboretum died about twenty-four years ago, and while I do not think I shall see the replacement reach that size, it is pleasant to think that in the years to come, perhaps our younger generations will appreciate the splendours of these very large magnolias and will look after them for their future generations to do the same.

DAVID LEE
Head Gardener to Arley House, Worcestershire