

The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group



BULLETIN No. 58 - April 1995

Forthcoming Events

April 11-12	Main Camellia Competition.	May 3	ditto	10am-5pm
April 20-23	Harrogate Spring Show - Valley Gardens, Harrogate.	May 5-7	Malvern Spring Gardening Show (in conjunction with Three Counties Agricultural Society)	
April 26	Rosemoor Lecture by Tony Schilling (See Text below)		TCAS Showground, Malvern.	
April 26-30	Cincinnati Flower & Garden Show, USA (in conjunction with the RHS)		Group Spring Tour. (Fully booked)	
May 2	Group Annual General Meeting - RHS Vincent Square. 4.30pm.	May 9-14	BBC Gardeners' World Live, NEC, Birmingham.	
May 2	Main Rhododendron Competition; Late Daffodil Competition; Tulip Competition; Ornamental Plant Competition. 11am-7pm	May 23-26	Chelsea Flower Show.	
		June 14-18	BBC Gardeners' World Live, NEC, Birmingham.	
		June 20-21	Ornamental Plant Competition.	

Chairman's Notes.

Later in this Bulletin you will find that your co-operation is requested for two important matters. The first is the completion of a form of questionnaire concerning the future of the Group and the second is a suggestion regarding the seed exchange scheme. Both these matters have been raised in the past without much feedback. As I have stressed before, it is YOUR Group and we must know whether we are doing the things that you, the members would like. Again, the Bulletin exists in part in order that you may express your views and experiences, so I urge you to use it! Other members must be interested in your successes (and failures) with any of the three genera we represent, since they have seen fit to join a specialist body. Finally the Tours Organiser asks me to say that the Spring Tour (mainly Derbyshire this year) is fully booked but names can be accepted for a waiting list in case of cancellations.

Editor's Notes

To our shame, neither I nor my proof reader (who shall be nameless!) spotted the error in the article on the New Zealand Rhododendron Association Bulletin in which Hastings, Hawkes Bay was stated to be in South Island. If the Deliberate Mistake had not been identified by anyone I would have awarded the prize for that but in fact three readers told me that *R.zaleucum* was thus spelt, so the winner received his prize of a 1-year old plant of *R.delavayi*.

Membership Secretary's Notes.

An ex-member from France whom I was trying to re-enrol writes: "I did not renew my subscription for several reasons: To summarise I would say that there is a tremendous reserve of knowledge concerning rhododendrons in your country but the resulting potential is badly exploited. France is a desert for lovers of rhododendrons as there are no large gardens full of 100-year old plants as in England and we thirst in vain for information such as can be learned from a specialized Society". If his views are shared by other members then clearly we are not fulfilling our "raison d'être". Although we may strive for perfection, it is seldom achieved but we must try not to be complacent and if there is anything we can do to give better value for membership we should be more than pleased if members would let us know and any suggestions would be given the most thorough consideration.

In order to facilitate, and indeed provoke, criticism a brief questionnaire is enclosed with this issue of the Bulletin and it is hoped that you will find time to complete it and return it to me, Tony Weston, Whitehills, Newton Stewart, Scotland, DG8 6SL.

Also enclosed with this Bulletin will be found a request for your co-operation in supplying up-to-date information in order to ensure that the revised Membership List to be distributed later in the year is as accurate as possible.

Later in this Bulletin you will find an article on hybridising and hand-pollinating. Growing rhododendrons from seed can be a very interesting and rewarding pastime and more amateur enthusiasts should try their hand, both at raising plants from seed and producing the seed itself. Remember that one of the objects of the Group is to bring together, whether from the UK or from any other part of the world, regardless of expertise or knowledge, all who share a common interest in the three genera and/or associated plants and to encourage the appreciation and cultivation thereof. One rhododendron capsule will contain more seed and produce more seedlings than one can possibly use oneself so this provides an opportunity for exchange between members through the medium of the bulletin. As a help to beginners I put together a few thoughts on pollination of rhododendrons by hand in the hope that in the forthcoming flowering season some members might care to experiment.

The Executive Committee is giving active consideration to the possibility of reviving the seed distribution scheme which was so successful some years ago when organised by David Clulow. The primary need is for a volunteer to act as Organiser. No botanical knowledge is required for this task but as it is essential that wild collected seed should be reliable the Organiser should keep tabs on the few expert collectors who make frequent visits to the Far East in search of seed in order that he or she may be aware, in advance, of any forthcoming expedition and try to arrange, for a consideration, to take a proportion of the seed on behalf of the Group. The Organiser would then be responsible for arranging for the seed to be cleaned and put into small packets and offered for sale to members, again through the medium of the bulletin.

There are still 3 so-called Branches without Organisers, namely, Midlands (which could well be divided into East & West Midlands), the North East and Scotland (possibly divided into two). We owe it to members in these areas to provide the kind of facility which members in the South and West enjoy. Would any member who feels able to offer his or her services as a Branch Organiser, or who can think of someone - not necessarily a member at present, but who could be persuaded to join - whom I might approach with a view to appointing them as Organisers, please contact me. If we could do something along these lines I am sure we could increase our membership in these areas and in so doing enhance the pleasure enjoyed by the present membership by making the Branches more vibrant, both in summer and winter.

Officers - Change of telephone numbers

Hon. Treasurer: Alastair Stevenson, 24 Bolton Rd., Grove Park, London W4 3TB. Home: 0181 742 7571. Office: 0181 994 0584. Fax: 0181 995 0717

Hon. Membership Secretary and Bulletin Editor: Tony Weston, Whitehills, Newton Stewart, DG8 6SL. Home and Office: 01671 402049. Fax: 01671 403106.

Annual Awards made by The Council of The Royal Horticultural Society.

Our congratulations are offered to the following members of the Group who have been honoured by the following Awards:-

The Victoria Medal of Honour, to British horticulturists resident in the United Kingdom whom the Council consider as deserving of special honour. As this honour marks the number of years of the reign of Queen Victoria, it may only be held by 63 British horticulturists at any one time: Dr J A Smart, Marwood Hill, Barnstaple, Devon.

The Loder Rhododendron Cup, for work in connection with Rhododendrons: Mr Bruce Archibald, Starveacre, Dalwood, Axminster, Devon.

The Rothschild Challenge Cup, for the best exhibit in which rhododendrons predominate, shown to the Society during the year: G Reuthe Ltd, Starborough Nursery, Marsh Green, Edenbridge, Kent, For their exhibit of rhododendrons and azaleas at the Chelsea Show.

The A J Waley Medal, awarded to a working gardener who has helped the cultivation of rhododendrons: Mr Ivor Stokes, Pant Coch Cottage, Carmel, Llanelli, Dyfed.

RHS Spring Regional Lecture.

Tony Schilling will give the spring regional lecture on Wednesday 26th April at 2.30pm at RHS Garden, Rosemoor, Great Torrington, Devon. His talk is entitled '*Lichiang: the Jade Dragon Snow Mountains of Yunnan (SW China)*' which he visited in 1987. During his 92 years with Kew he took part in numerous plant-hunting expeditions, including trips to Nepal, Bhutan and China.

Tickets for this lecture, which are free to members of the RHS, are limited to two per member. If you would like to attend, please write to the Administrator at Rosemoor, stating your requirements, enclosing an sae and quoting your RHS membership number.

Membership - Additions and Deletions. (Branch Organisers/Secretaries please note)

The following new members have joined since the last Bulletin (Branches in brackets)

Dr James Porterfield, Green Valleys, Goodleigh, BARNSTAPLE, N.Devon EX32 7NH. (SW)

Miss A O'Connor, 16 Wilderness Rd., PLYMOUTH, Devon, PL3 4RR (SW)

Mr J F Wilson, PO Box 59, FOREST HILL, Victoria, 3131 Australia (OS)

Miss Margaret S Findlay, Tarbreoch Farm, Kirkpatrick Durham, CASTLE DOUGLAS, Kirkcudbright, DG7 3HA. (SC)

Frau Inge Boesch, Leopold Steinergasse 23, A-1190 WIEN (Vienna), Austria. (OS)

Mr C J Callard, 26 Colwood Gardens, Colliers Wood, LONDON, SW19 2DT, (SE + WX)

Sir Colin Campbell, Bart., Kilbride Castle, DUNBLANE, Perthshire, FK15 9NF. (SC)

Ms. Heather Robinson, Alouette Nursery, 22673-132 Ave, MAPLE RIDGE, British Columbia, V2X 7E7 Canada. (OS)

Mr N McEvoy, 48 Reva Rd., Swanside, LIVERPOOL, L14 6UB. (NW)

Mr P D Evans, Painswold, Broad Street, CUCKFIELD, W.Sussex, RH17 5LL. (WX)

Mrs Alison Foster, Killern, GATEHOUSE OF FLEET, Kirkcudbright, DG7 2BS. (SC)

Dr J R Shelley, Showbrooke Park, CREDITON, Devon, EX17 1DG. (SW)

Mrs Janice A Stewart, Stonefield, Lechmelm, Lochbroom, GARVE, Ross-shire, IV23 2RH. (SC)

Mrs A S Haszard, Barwhinnock, Twynholm, KIRKCUDBRIGHT, DG6 4PH. (SC)

Mr J Mark Lane, Head Gardener, Buckingham Palace, LONDON, SW1A 1AA. (SE + WX)

Mrs J Goddard, 95 Birchanger Lane, Birchanger, BISHOP'S STORTFORD, Herts, CM23 5QF. (SE)

Ms. Caroline Tisdall, Conholt Park, Chute, ANDOVER, Hants, SP11 9HA. (WX)

Miss Peta Burton Smith, 3 Carson Rd., West Dulwich, LONDON, SE21 8HT. (SE)

Mr Vinh Burton Smith, 3 Carson Rd., West Dulwich, LONDON, SE21 8HT. (SE)

Mr John Beresford, Aubawn, Lamorna, PENZANCE, Cornwall, TR19 6XW. (SW).

Maj Acton Gibbon, Errington, Trillick, OMAGH, co.Tyrone, N.Ireland. BT78 3RG. (IR)

Mrs W A Marnell, 84 Coltsfoot Lane, Hurst Green, OXTED, Surrey, RH8 9DD. (SE)

Mr & Mrs K E Piper, The Observatory, Old Bury Hill, Westcott, DORKING, Surrey RH4 3JU. (SE)

Mr R Bischoff, Splatts House, Heddington, CALNE, Wilts. SN11 0PG. (SE)

Mr Keith Knight, Flinton, Rucklers Lane, KINGS LANGLEY, Herts. WD4 9WF (SE)

Mr Christopher Loder, Leonardslee Plants, Lower Beeding, HORSHAM, RH12 6PP (SE)

Mr & Mrs Nigel Green, Leonardslee Plants, Lower Beeding, HORSHAM, RH12 6PP (SE)

Mrs Jane Hare, Bradiford Cottage, BARNSTAPLE, EX31 4DP (SW)

Mr James McKenzie, 19 Grace Avenue, BARLEYHEATH, Kent, DA7 4NN (SE)

The under-mentioned ceased to be members as from 1st November 1994 for the reasons stated:-

Mr R G Beard (WX) Resigned

Mr M J Evans (MID) "

Mrs A Holland (SE) "

Dr H K N Lister (SW) "

Capt S J Loder (SW) "

Mr E N Skrender (WX) "

Mr Tomasz Anisko (OS) "

Mr L M Mason V M H (EA) Deceased

Mr N Marsh (NW) "

Mr P R Page (EA) "

Mrs J N Kleinwort (SE) "

Lt Col David Price (IR) "

Mr R F G Lea (CI) "

Mr H Hollinrake (SW) "

Société Nationale d'Horticulture de France.

The Rhododendron and Companion Plants Group of the above Society recently made an approach to the Hon.Secretary to enquire as to whether they could become members of this Group, to which we replied that we were in the process of arranging Reciprocal Corporate Membership with other Rhododendron Societies/Groups throughout the world and we would gladly offer them free membership of our Group so that they would receive one copy of our Year Book and Bulletins. At the same time we expressed the hope that they would respond by giving us free Corporate membership of their Group. If, as we hope, any of their members wished to share in any of our activities, we asked that they join The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group as individuals. Likewise, should any of our members be desirous of joining their Group the President is M. Philippe Demonsablon, 66, rue Denfert Rochereau, 92100 Boulogne, France, to whom application should be made for membership.

Main Rhododendron Competition - RHS New Hall - 2nd & 3rd May 1995.

The Group is planning to stage a display featuring *Rhododendron* Subsect. Triflora. Help is needed with manning the display and if you are willing to spare an hour or two, particularly on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday, will you please notify the Hon.Secretary, Mrs J Warren, Netherton, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon, PL20 7NL. Tel: 01822 854022.

New Publications - The Book of Rhododendrons.

The leaflet enclosed with this Bulletin describes a new work illustrated by Marianna Kneller, award-winning botanical artist-in-residence at Exbury Gardens with accompanying texts by leading authorities on rhododendrons. The book is being "launched" at an Open Day at Exbury Gardens on Tuesday 16th May starting at 2pm. Guided tours around the 200-acre garden, which will be at the peak of the flowering season, will be accompanied by members of the

Rothschild family. Edmund de Rothschild and the publishers, David and Charles, will host a reception with tea and cakes in the large marquee. Ticket holders will be invited to meet Mr Eddy, as he likes to be known, who will then introduce some of the contributors to the book including, of course, Marianna Kneller herself and Roy Lancaster, broadcaster and regular contributor to *BBC Gardeners' World Magazine*, and Chris Fairweather, the Big Breakfast's "Plant Doctor" on Channel 4 Television, who will entertain you with plant hunting stories, hints on rhododendron cultivation and other topics. The day ends with a glass of wine with some of the 50 or so of the book's contributors from all over the world.

Tickets, price £16.50 each, for this special day will be limited and are available from Sheila Wise, Public Relations Officer, The Estate Office, Exbury, Southampton SO45 1AZ, Telephone 01703 891203.

This book is to be published at £30 but is being offered to members at a pre-publication price of £27 with a personally signed bookplate. Postage and packing is free to addresses in UK only. (Orders from overseas will be subject to a surcharge the amount of which will be advised on receipt of the order form). It will be on sale on the day but for those members unable to be present it can be ordered by post on the official order form from David & Charles, Brunel House, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 4PU, Tel. No. 01626 61121, Fax. 01626 64463. (Note: The order form is a little misleading in that it appears that payment by VISA is limited to UK only. This is not the case.)

Branch News.

South West Branch. (SW)

On Friday, 25th November our Autumn Meeting, held at The Gipsy Hill Hotel, near Exeter was well attended. Many interesting plants were on offer, thanks to the generosity of the donors. John Bodenham's Rhododendron Quiz, in which an assortment of leaves had to be identified, attracted the usual interest; could it be that some members are beginning to know what John has in his garden? The quiz was won by Peter Reynolds, with Richard Fulcher and Barry Starling as runners-up. Nigel Wright produced another Gardeners' Quiz which was won by Lynne Tullett with Pat Pennington and Ray Steete as runners-up. After dinner Phil Knox gave a comprehensive and erudite talk on "Plants to Grow in Association with Rhododendrons", accompanied by some excellent slides taken in his garden. (*The main points in his talk are summarised later in this bulletin. Ed.*)

Bruce Archibald then introduced Dr Alun Edwards as the new Branch Organiser and thanked Nigel Wright, who is retiring as Organiser, for his good work during his term of office.

Diary dates for garden visits.

Sat 8th April - Tregrehan, Par and Chyverton, Zelah, Near Truro.
Sat 20th May - Marwood Hill, Barnstaple; New Mill, Alswear, South Molton; and The Old Glebe, Eggesford, Chulmleigh.

South East Branch. (SE)

The Branch has a new Branch Organiser, John Hilliard, 99 Gales Drive, Crawley, Sussex RH10 1QD, who is taking over from John Fox to whom the Branch and, indeed, the Group is greatly indebted for many years of outstanding work. It is on people like him that organisations such as ours rely for their very existence and the membership in general assuredly owes a great debt of gratitude to them for many hours of work, both in the field and in the office, in arranging outings, lectures etc. for the benefit of other members.

John Hilliard has already arranged with John McQuire for two parties to visit his garden at Deer Dell, Botany Hill, The Sands, Near Farnham on 15th and 22nd April. In the interests of better communication each party will be restricted to a maximum of 10 people who will be allocated places on a 'first come' basis.

Wessex Branch (WX)

On 25th November Keith Rushforth gave us a talk in the Lecture Room at the RHS Wisley Garden on *The Rhododendrons of Viet Nam* illustrated by most interesting slides showing the near vertical hillsides where these rhododendrons are found. He also brought some of the plants grown from the seed which he had collected.

On 24th February at Churt Village Hall, another new venue, Jennifer Trehane talked about her visit to China which she has described in her article which appears later in this bulletin.

Our spring programme includes:

Sunday 2nd April, *Members' Afternoon* at Rivendell House, Monks' Well, Moor Park, Farnham by kind invitation of Mr & Mrs James Hall.

Sunday 7th May, *Annual Competition, Plant Sale and Exhibition* at Ramster, Chiddingfold by kind invitation of Mr & Mrs Paul Gunn.

Sunday 14th May, *Visit to Little Coopers*, Coopers Hill, Eversley, Hants. by kind invitation of Mr & Mrs J K Oldale.

Wessex Branch welcomes members from other branches to any of its meetings. Enquiries to the Branch Hon.Sec., Mrs Margaret Hall (Phone & Fax: 01252 783222).

Overseas Branch.

It is hoped that with the appointment of a Convenor for the Overseas, or International Branch, as it is to be called in future, our members outside the UK will feel that they have someone to whom they can relate and who is solely concerned with the interests of members of this Branch. Michael Jurgens, who has been a member of the RHS for 30 years, has a Dutch background and is a good linguist, has volunteered to take on the job. His wife, Jorie, is American. Both are keen amateur gardeners with a large garden, Michael having a special interest in rhododendrons, of which he has built up a large collection of species and hybrids, and Jorie being a rosarian. Their address is: The Old House, Silchester, Reading, Berkshire RG7 2LU. Tel.No. +44 1734 700240.

It is hoped to issue, with each bulletin, a supplement containing items of news and other information of particular interest to members living abroad for whom, perhaps, some of the reports contained in the bulletin itself are of limited interest.

New Forest Branch (NF)

This branch came into existence at a meeting of some 23 members of Wessex and South West Branches, held at Jermyns House, Hillier Arboretum, on 25th February 1995 at the instigation of Tom Spring-Smyth and prompted by the need for a venue for meetings nearer to home for the members concerned than was previously the case when they were expected to travel to meetings of their own branches. The Arboretum was specially opened for the meeting by the kindness of the Director, Bernard Payne who addressed the meeting with a few words about the 50-year Development Plan for the Arboretum. Jennifer Trehane also said a few words. The Branch Organiser of the new branch is Christopher Fairweather, The Garden Centre, High Street, Beaulieu, Hants. SO42 7YR. The Hon. Branch Secretary is to be David Benton, 50 Duke's Wood Drive, Dibden Purlieu, Southampton. SO45 4NJ. Tel.No. 01703 848246. The Hon. Branch Treasurer is to be Martin Gates, 12 Marlborough Rd., Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, SO5 1DH.

I am sure that I speak for all members of the Group in wishing the New Forest Branch every success in the future (Ed.)

RHS Rhododendron Year Books.

Anyone having spare copies of the Group's Year Books for 1946, 1974, 1975, or 1976 is requested to contact Nigel Wright who will be happy to pay the going rate or exchange for spare copies which he has of 1949 and 1956. His address is: The Old Glebe, Eggesford, Chulmleigh, Devon, EX18 7QU. Tel: 01769 580632.

Letters.

From Charles Quest-Ritson, Editor, The Gardener's Yearbook.

Reference your announcement regarding the Group Spring Tour in Bulletin No.57 (December 1994), although it is true to say that **Wentworth Castle** is not yet open to the public, members may be interested to know that when we requested details for our 1995 edition of The Gardener's Yearbook, we were informed that it will be open from 10am to 5pm on Sunday 28 and Monday 29 May; They also offer guided tours during the whole of May and June at 2pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. You may like to mention these dates in your next Bulletin; it is an excellent collection.

Group Annual General Meeting - Tuesday 2nd May 1995.

The Group AGM will be held in the Rhododendron Room, Vincent Square at 4.30pm on Tuesday 2nd May 1995. A Nomination Form for Candidates for election will be found at the foot of page 5 of this Bulletin. Attention is drawn to the time table which must be strictly adhered to.

The International Rhododendron Register (1958).

Several UK members have enquired as to why the usual Supplement to the Register was not sent out with the Year Book this year. The answer is that only a small proportion of members make use of it and as The Royal Horticultural Society charge the Group £2.50 per copy the Committee decided that it was a waste of money to send it to all members irrespective of whether or not it was required. Members who wish may purchase it direct from: RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. (NB. This does not apply to members of the International Branch, who will continue to receive a free copy).

Rhododendron Powdery Mildew

Dr. David M Kenyon, Department of Horticulture, SAC, Auchencruive, Ayr, KA6 5HW.

It is now two years since I last corresponded in this bulletin on our favourite Rhododendron disease. In this time the first three year project which studied several aspects of the pathogens biology has been successfully concluded. In its place is another three year study funded by the Scottish Office, which is once again in collaboration with the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. During this project particular attention will be paid to the extent to which the disease has spread throughout Great Britain and Northern Europe. Genetic fingerprinting techniques will be used in the identification of different isolates of the disease and how widely these occur. To this end we have started to collect samples from throughout the country. Many more samples are, however, required if an accurate picture is to be built up. Group members can assist this work by sending samples to the above address, preferably wrapped in moist kitchen paper to prevent the leaves drying out in the post. We will also be examining the effect of environmental factors on disease development. Our previous work showed that at higher temperatures (20 degrees C.) disease development was restricted by an enhancement of the host plants resistant reaction. Unfortunately, in Great Britain, prolonged periods at such temperatures do not occur, resulting in lower levels of response by the host Rhododendron. Such work is valuable as it is only through such studies that we can predict the activity of the disease at various stages of the year. We shall therefore be very grateful for samples from members of the International Branch. However, in order to avoid infringeing our import regulations, before sending your samples will you please first write to Dr. Kenyon, who will send you a special bag with instructions on how to despatch your leaves. Originally, it was suggested that the disease epidemics developed during the summer, but we now know that there is extensive spread of the disease earlier in the growing season.

Control of the disease is, as always, a high priority with most nurseries and large gardens where a variety of chemical sprays need to be applied each year. During our first project we found that the chemicals currently being recommended for the control of Rhododendron Powdery Mildew performed poorly in trials. This summer we will conduct both glasshouse and field trials on behalf of the Horticultural Development Council (HDC). These trials will hopefully provide a number of new and improved chemicals which can be used to combat the disease. We shall also be looking to reduce the number of sprays required in a growing season by timing applications to coincide with periods of pathogen activity early in the growing season.

There are obviously many questions that still need to be answered about this disease. During the next three years we shall try to address a number of these problems, allowing Rhododendron enthusiasts throughout the world the continued enjoyment of the increasing number of susceptible species and hybrids in the absence of disfiguring infection.

Companion Plants for Planting in association with Rhododendrons.

First claim must go to other members of the Ericaceae family. *Enkianthus campanulatus* with its large urceolate (urn-shaped) flowers will eventually achieve a stature which enables it to be appreciated from below. Striking autumn colour at the end of the season comes as a bonus, even in shady situations. *E.c. var. palibinii* and *E.perulatus* are smaller shrubs, both of which turn red in the autumn. With *Gentiana sino-ornata* planted in front the feast of colour is superb. *Pieris* species and cultivars with their white flowers

shine out well among rhododendrons and can be had in all sizes from the miniature 'Little Heath Green' to the large *forrestii* cultivars such as 'Wakehurst' and 'Jermyns'. The young leaves on these come a brilliant red, while those of *P.floribunda* var. 'Forest Flame' are a good pink. *P.japonica* has two extra qualities, a sweet scent plus cultivars such as 'Blush' with red buds and pink flowers.

One could go on to Vaccinium, particularly *V.arctostaphylos* (with its splendid autumn colour and purple fruits) or *V.glaucum* (with its handsome green foliage, white-glaucous beneath, and black fruits) to Gaultherias with their striking fruits, Cassiopes, Phyllodoce, *Leiophyllum* - the choice is endless. These all go well with the dwarf alpine species of rhododendron such as *R.campylogynum* 'Myrtilloides', *R.sargentianum* and *R.keleeticum* on the peat garden.

The many monocarpic Meconopsis, such as *MM.napaulensis* and *regia* come in many colours, whilst *MM.dhwojii* and *paniculata* make drifts of colour among sheltering rhododendrons. Equally, the longer lasting perennial species, e.g. *MM.betonicifolia* and *grandis* plus the hybrid 'Sheldonii' grex giving 'Branklyn' and 'Slieve Donard' etc., can make pools of colour in the glades.

Many Lily species and hybrids enjoy growing among rhododendrons - the acid and moisture lovers, of course. Particularly at home is the stoloniferous *Lilium duchartrei*, the so-called 'Marbled Martagon'. The strange, yet beautiful, *L.mackliniae* (Manipur Lily) is also at home here. The shelter and boscage of rhododendrons can be home to many strange and curious plants, such as *Arisaema* spp. and *Tricyrtis* spp. (The Toad Lilies), most of which are late-blooming, after the rhododendrons have finished flowering.

In the spring the colour forms of our native Wood Anemone (*A.nemorosa*) can carpet the bare spaces. Trilliums stand splendid in the humus rich soil, whilst a wealth of rhododendrons can shelter many a cache of hidden treasures.

Phil Knox

Camellias in China.

China can safely lay claim to be the country to visit to see Camellias growing in the wild. She can also be proud of the fact that more research is carried out on the genus Camellia in China than anywhere else - but what about ordinary camellia cultivation? Those of us who attended the symposium on *Camellia nitidissima* in Nanking last year were astonished at the breadth and depth of work being done with such enthusiasm and energy, and that was just on one species! Nine papers on ecology, seven on breeding and cultivation and ten on other aspects which ranged from tissue culture and D.N.A. work to the possible use of *C.chrysanthia* tea as an anti-carcinogenic.

Our visit to the gene bank, which many of us thought would be a laboratory filled with petri dishes, further opened our eyes. A well laid out nursery containing most of the 21 species of yellow camellias so far discovered, from the tiny sulphurous yellow flowers of *C.limonia* to the larger (5cm) *C.euphlebia*.

None of these has any practical interest as far as our own garden cultivation is concerned as they are all sub-tropical in their requirements but they were interesting from an academic viewpoint. The practical lessons were learned during our 15-day trip into Yunnan and Sichuan (already very well described by Maurice Foster in the 1994 Year Book). We have known for years that camellias are extraordinarily drought tolerant and this was borne out by the way many of the wild camellias were thriving in almost desert-like conditions. Some *C.pitardii* were growing, albeit with difficulty, on almost vertical slopes where nothing else survived, and I could find no moisture in the soil when I dug down to a depth of at least 30cm which was as deep as I could get with bare hands and a piece of wood. We have been preaching about the need for mulching and the use of organic matter in the soil for camellias, yet many we saw had not a whisker of organic matter within 100 meters and yet were growing well with good green leaves and plenty of flowers. Shade is another classic camellia cultivation recommendation; it is true that bushes were better under shade, larger and with bigger flowers, but for *C.pitardii* var. *pitardii* and for *C.oleifera* in particular, and in most cases *C.reticulata* it did not seem to be a pre-requisite. The few plants we saw of *C.saluenensis* were on lower, more sheltered, heavily shaded slopes which confirmed that it is this ability to flower in low light intensities which has been conveyed to the *x williamsii* hybrids.

to our great benefit.

Travelling through the Yunnan and Sichuan countryside we often saw village tile works and sometimes buffalo plodding steadily round in a circular pit filled with clay soil being prepared for tile making. The soil, which had come from the surrounding fields, was obviously heavy with a high percentage of clay and silt-sized particles, hard to cultivate, but this was the norm throughout the areas we visited - a dense, apparently airless soil, in theory totally unsuited to growing camellias. Yet, planted round the edge of the farmyard, would be a group of magnificent camellias, mostly varieties of *C. reticulata* or *C. japonica*, towering over the buildings less than 200 meters from the village tileworks.

Back to "civilisation" and the growing tourist industry based around the Buddhist temples we saw collections of ancient tree peonies and camellias, virtually all of which are grown in clay pots, and which are much prized. What about the compost? Peat, bark, grit and slow release fertilizer? Not a bit of it! It appeared to be the same stuff that they used for making pots and tiles. The plants, being mostly Yunnan 'reticulatas' such as 'Lion Head' and 'Chrysanthemum Petal' were a bit leggy for some tastes but they were healthy and flowering freely. Nobody could, or would, tell us what they used for fertilizer. The prized collection of yellow species camellias are grown in Kunming under glass in similar soil with clay pot crocks on the surface to reduce splashing during watering. We visited the collection fairly early in the morning when the glasshouse had just been opened up for the day. The riddle of "What do you use for fertilizer?" was solved along with the reason for crocks on the tops of the pots, and some of the more squeamish beat a hasty retreat as the odour hit them!

Back home and one realises that we have come a long way, not only in distance but in "technical achievement". Are we mollycoddling our plants too much and gradually destroying some of the resilience and toughness which is their forte? Maybe we can learn a thing or two from a look at how they grow in their home country.

Jennifer Trehane

Notes on Hybridising.

The object, of course, is to combine the desired qualities of two rhododendrons in a single specimen. Hybrids are produced by crossing

- 1) two species
- 2) a species and a hybrid, or
- 3) two hybrids.

Two species.

The product of a cross between two species is called a primary or F1 hybrid. Any given species may be pollinated by a different clone of the same species in an endeavour to improve quality. If you collect seed from a garden grown species without hand pollination you cannot be sure that the seedlings will come true to the original plant as cross-pollination may have taken place with other plants.

A species with a hybrid.

The hybridiser can recover a characteristic which may have disappeared in the first cross in the following manner. Let us assume that a rhododendron with very beautiful red flowers was crossed with *R. bureavii*, whose indumentum you desire. This cross may well produce a hybrid with lovely red flowers but with mere traces of indumentum or none at all. Indumentum may be said to be recessive, and in order to rediscover the indumentum you must make another cross with a species having indumentum such as *R. yakushimanum* or *R. bureavii* again. 50% of the seedlings resulting from this crossing will have indumentum and it is partly for this reason that F1 hybrids are invaluable as parents.

Two hybrids together.

The number of crossings has exploded in recent years, especially in America, many of which unfortunately are of little or no interest, as the hybridiser must always bear in mind that the main object of hybridising is to produce a plant which is better than either of its parents.

First steps in hybridising.

Before commencing, one must think about the goal one wishes to achieve and stick to it, since it takes a number of years from fertilisation to flowering and deviation can result in a waste of valuable time.

Remember that rhododendrons are divided into two main groups, those with scales (lepidote) and those without (elepidote). Scales are usually to be seen on the underside of the leaves and it may be necessary to use some form of magnification for them to be visible. (See Bulletins 51 & 52 - December 1992 & April 1993 re pocket microscopes). The lepidotes as a rule have much smaller leaves; many are dwarf alpines. It is important to remember that it is unlikely that a successful cross will be made between parents in opposite groups so do not attempt to cross a scaly species with a non-sclaly one as the odds are that you will be wasting your time!

Choice of parents.

Do not overlook the desirability of good foliage and dense habit of growth. Rhododendrons, especially some of the red-flowered hybrids, can become straggly and unsightly for more than eleven months in the year, whereas by careful selection of parents it is possible to prolong the beauty of the plant throughout the year on account of the deep colour and texture of its foliage and its compact habit. Whether one is breeding for colour, precocious blooming, fragrance, hardiness or flowering period, it is strongly recommended that the hybridiser research previous crosses which have been made by other breeders. In this connection reference should be made to Part II of The Rhododendron Handbook. If the cross you were intending to make has been attempted by another breeder with little or no success, it is as well to find this out before spending time on it. Likewise, you would be ill-advised to propagate for eventual introduction a new hybrid if a similar but superior form is already in existence.



THE R.H.S. RHODODENDRON, CAMELLIA & MAGNOLIA GROUP

Election of Officers to the Executive Committee

In accordance with Rule 4 of the Constitution the under-mentioned members of the Executive Committee, having served for three years, are due to retire but are willing to stand for re-election. However, if any member wishes to make an alternative nomination, they may do so provided that they first obtain the candidate's agreement to stand for election. Proposers should make use of the Nomination Form below, which must be returned to the Hon. Group Secretary, Mrs. J. Warren by 18th April 1995.

Mr D N Farnes,

Mr G A Hardy,

Mr I Stokes

Nomination Paper for Candidates for election to the Executive Committee on 2nd May 1995

Name of Candidate

Signature.

Proposed by

Signature

Seconded by

Signature

To: Mrs J Warren, Netherton, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon, PL20 7NL.

Pollination by hand.

Owing to the size and accessibility of the flower parts of rhododendrons, pollination by hand is comparatively easy. All that is required by way of tools is a small pair of scissors and a pair of tweezers.

A day or two before the buds open, and when they have begun to show colour, the corolla of a flower should be removed by cutting through its base, just above the ovary. Next, detach the tube forming the bottom of the flower and cut away the pollen-bearing stamens at the base. All that will then remain are the female parts of the flower, i.e. the style with the stigma at the top and the ovary at the bottom, in which the seeds will form. Be very careful, during this operation, to see that no pollen is allowed to fall accidentally on to the stigma thus causing an unwanted pollination. To be on the safe side, it is advisable to prepare at least eight flowers for each cross as various factors may hamper your efforts, not least a period of prolonged wet weather. Unwanted flowers in the same truss should be removed at the same time. If the stigma at the top of the style is seen to be exuding a sticky secretion designed to catch and hold the pollen, the next part of the operation can follow immediately; otherwise it may be necessary to wait a day or two for the stigma to become viscid. It is not necessary to provide any covering in the meantime because, with the floral parts removed, there is nothing to attract insects, neither is it advisable in case overheating or excessive moisture through condensation develops under the covering.

The pollen is contained in the anthers, the little sacs on the ends of the filaments or stems of the stamens. The stamens from the pollen-bearing plant are removed and, holding them with the tweezers, the anthers are brushed lightly over the sticky surface of the stigma of the seed-bearing plant. The soft stringy pollen which protrudes from two tiny holes in the anthers adheres to the stigma and forms a uniform coating thereon. In a short while, possibly as little as 2 hours, the pollen germinates and tubes penetrate down the style, thus causing fertilisation to take place in the ovary approximately 24 hours later, after which there is no need to worry about rainfall.

Labelling.

Attach your label (preferably of plastic or zinc) securely to the stem of the truss without delay. Ensure that the label shows full details of the parentage (female or seed-bearing parent followed by the male or pollinator). Use acid to write on a zinc label or a waterproof marker such as Artline 444XF Paint Marker on plastic, and ensure that when the seeds are sown the tray or ground beds are labelled in the same way.

Harvesting.

There is no need to wait until the seed capsules turn brown - in fact, by so doing, you may risk loss of seed if the capsules should split before you can extract it. Normally the seeds of the dwarf alpine species ripen more quickly than those of the larger species due to the conditions they experience at high altitudes in the wild, but most seed should be ripe by the end of August and certainly no later than mid-October. Harvested in August, dried in the oven at 100 degrees F. for three days then sown immediately will give them a good start

and the seedlings, if kept in a cool greenhouse, should make excellent growth by the end of the first year. If you prefer to store the capsules at room temperature for a few weeks until they are dry and brittle they can then be crushed and riddled and the seed returned to their packets with their labels until the time comes to sow them, ideally in January. The earlier they can be sown the sooner the seedlings will be ready for transplanting and moving to a cold frame when risk of frost has receded. There they will make continuous progress up to mid-July but very little thereafter in the first year.

Sowing.

Unless you require large numbers of seedlings a 9cm pot or 17x10 cm tray should be sufficient. This should be *lightly* filled with a mixture of peat and chopped fresh sphagnum moss - the latter may be omitted if not available - the surface *gently* levelled and the seed sprinkled on top. DO NOT sow too thickly and DO NOT cover the seed. Spray with a good fungicide, cover with glass and put in a shaded place away from direct sunlight. January is the best time to sow and, with few exceptions, germination should occur within 6/8 weeks - sooner if given a small amount of heat. The compost should be kept moist but certainly not wet and should never be allowed to dry out. As soon as germination takes place remove glass and place in a cold frame or cool greenhouse. Watch carefully for any signs of fungal infection and spray again if necessary. Irrigate as necessary by capillary action rather than from overhead as the latter tends to encourage *botritis*.

Younger Botanic Garden - Retiral of Arthur Hall.

(Re-printed by courtesy of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh News Letter)

Arthur Hall retired on 23 December 1994 after 30 years dedicated service at the Younger Botanic Garden, Benmore. He became a student gardener at RBGE in the early fifties and on graduation went to Kieramah, Uganda as group manager for a firm of tea producers. During his time in Africa he was responsible for road building, which no doubt provided some of the know-how and determination which has influenced many difficult path building projects at Benmore! He returned to Britain in 1961 and in August 1964 rejoined the RBGE as Botanical Foreman at Younger Botanical Garden, Benmore. Within a year Arthur succeeded to the Curatorship, and over the next 29 years became responsible for making Benmore one of the most exciting woodland gardens in Britain. During his time at Benmore, the garden has doubled in acreage, coped with extensive hurricane damage in 1968, undergone award-winning building restoration work and in recent years has assumed a major role for the *ex-situ* conservation of conifers. Arthur has also played a key role in Benmore's development as a major visitor attraction and is Director of Bute and Cowal Tourist Board.

But above all it is as a horticulturist that Arthur has made his mark, being awarded in 1988 the Loder Rhododendron Cup by the Royal Horticultural Society and in 1990 receiving the Scottish Horticulturist Medal from the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society.