



The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN – 81

MARCH 2003

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Maurice Foster

Membership

Our membership drive last year aimed at taking the enjoyment of our three genera to a wider audience. Progress in recruiting new members has been slow, but I understand that at 783 we now have the biggest membership ever, allowing for the usual number of late renewals. This came encouragingly close to the 800 we might reasonably have expected to achieve at this early stage and the figure is sufficient for us to renew our efforts this year. We will further invest in improving what we have to offer and in getting our message across to potential members. Here are some of our plans:

The Bulletin

We are now able to restore the frequency of the Bulletin to three issues a year.

You may remember that in order to update the design and increase size to 12 pages an issue, we needed to balance the increased cost by reducing frequency to twice a year. We then decided that the improved product would allow us to accept advertising to provide additional revenue. Advertisers have indeed found it an attractive environment in which to promote their products and services and it is their support that has enabled us to restore the extra issue.

This increase in frequency is a significant advantage as, although we have added colour and plant information, the essential role of the Bulletin remains as a noticeboard for members, signalling news of events and developments, some of which, notably tours, the seed exchange and various meetings, are time sensitive and will thus benefit from the change. We are fully confident of maintaining standards and John Rawling, our Editor, who saw the opportunity, has willingly embraced his increased workload. I should like to pay tribute to the valuable contribution he is making to the Group. The advertising portfolio is managed by Brian Wright and our thanks are also due to him for securing and maintaining the support of our advertisers.

The Bulletin is also a good forum for members, so **let me urge you once again to share your views and knowledge with the rest of us by sending contributions to the editor.** You will now have less time to wait to see them in print.

Shows display

Your committee unanimously approved the purchase of an exhibition display to promote the Group, particularly at the

continued on page 2



Rhododendron 'Crosswater Belle'

David Millais

See article 'What's New in Hardy Hybrids' on pages 5 and 6.

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spring shows which attract plant enthusiasts, many of whom will not know of our activities. It is of light, modern construction and fits nicely into the boot of an average car and will thus be flexible enough for us to use at relevant Branch events, wherever they may be. Mike Robinson arranged a demonstration and is now organising design and graphics. At the time of writing it is on schedule for use at the early show at Vincent Square on March 4th, which means that by the time this is in print, many of you may have had the opportunity of seeing it. We think it will help to give publicity to our three genera and reinforce our message about what we have to offer potential members.

Membership leaflets

Last year we printed some 30,000 leaflets for distribution through gardens open to the public, nurseries and at RHS centres like Wisley and Rosemoor. We are following this through this year with a further 10,000. If any members with gardens open to the public or nurserymen willing to put them on display and distribute them with catalogues and orders who did not participate last year and would like to do so this year, please get in touch with our Secretary, Joey Warren. Our target is RHS members, so in addition if you have friends who are members but not in the Group, tell them of the excellent value they get for a mere £15 a year. Joey can supply leaflets.

George Forrest centenary celebration

The Group is initiating a programme of linked events in 2004 to celebrate George Forrest's first journey to Yunnan in 1904. We will hold a seminar at the early April 2004 meeting at Vincent Square on Forrest's plant collections and their impact on the contemporary garden, covering not only rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias, but also his other important

collections of herbaceous, bulbous and alpine plants. This will be supported by a display stand in the hall organised by Ted Brabin, our NW Branch Chairman and drawing on the celebrated Forrest plant collections at Ness. There will also be a series of 'Forrest Trails' in gardens where there are significant numbers of Forrest plants. In addition to the great public gardens, if any member opens his garden to the public, has Forrest plants, and is willing to participate, please let Mike Robinson know as he will be pleased to discuss details. We are also hoping for articles in *The Garden* and *The Plantsman* as well as of course in our own Yearbook and Bulletin; and a display of archive material in the Lindley Library.

More details of all this in future Bulletins. It will be an exciting programme, so in the meantime just make a note to remind yourself to register for the seminar and see the show.

Website – www.rhodogroup-rhs.org

The Group website continues to develop and is now an integral part of our programme to expand interest in our plants and activities. It achieved around 7000 'hits' last year, its first full year of development. The site is constantly being updated and already contains an impressive amount of detailed information, supported by many colour illustrations. Regular visits are advised as our hotline news sections are kept updated on new collections and award winning plants; a current project is to list progressively all AGM plants, both species and hybrids in all three genera and a start has been made. Our conservation collections are already listed and by the time you read this the exclusive 2003 seed list will be available on screen. Our thanks are due to Mike Robinson and Chris Callard for creating and expanding the site to constantly add value and they would welcome feedback from members, so please let them have your comments.

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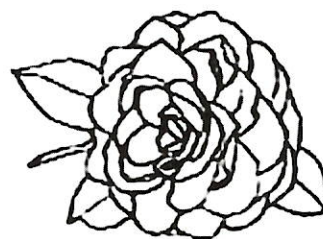
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Three issues for 2003 – As you might deduce from this issue's date, we plan to revert to three issues this coming year – March, July and October. I shall need plenty of response from you, our members: your Letters, your Notes and your Articles.

Please send me your copy by 14th June for the next issue.

Send to:

John Rawling, Hon Bulletin Editor,

The Spinney, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.

Tel. & Fax: 01883 653341 or E-mail: jr.eyre@virgin.net.

Erratum – I have received a correction to the article by Mike Robinson on Yellow Magnolias in Bulletin 80. Phillipe de Spoelberch writes "...I am not responsible for (*Magnolia*) 'Limelight' as stated in page 8 towards the end of the article. I think that this is a creation of Phil Savage."

Jim Fuller

"Members of the Group who knew him will be sorry to hear that Jim Fuller died last week, after an illness of a few weeks. A connoisseur particularly of the species, Jim lived in the Lake District, where he grew a selection of his favourites, first at Rydal Mount and later at Ambleside. He was a friend of the collector Michael Black and a lover of the mountains, so inevitably he was drawn to the Himalayas. Jim and I trekked together in Bhutan and Tibet – a situation which sometimes places a strain on relationships – and I found him to be the easiest of companions and kindest and most generous of men. I know that my great sense of loss will be shared by his many other friends."

Stephen Fox (14.02.03)

The 2003 seed list includes wild collected seed from Yunnan, Sichuan, Hubei, Hunan, Jianxi and Guangxi provinces of China as well as Arunachal Pradesh in India.

In particular *camellia xylocarpa* is an entirely new introduction (see this item under **More on seeds, P9**). Please send your bid to Tony Weston by 31st March. Winners will be announced in the July Bulletin.

The charge for seeds collected by Alan Clark in the Lu Shan and Wuhan Botanic Gardens is the same as for wild collected seed. These 'gardens' are areas of the mountainside set aside for the cultivation of rare species. It is considered that the risk of cross-pollination should be no greater than for plants growing in the wild.

Try magnolias from seed

Maurice Foster

2002 has been a particularly good year for magnolia seed set and there is a good selection of open pollinated seed available in our current seed list from a variety of excellent cultivars. I know that some members feel it is not really worthwhile growing magnolias from seed. There are two beliefs that appear to inhibit them – first, there is no reasonable expectation of a satisfying result as open pollination is hit and miss; and then there is a wait of decades for flowers, which can only further enhance the disappointment.

Both beliefs are misconceived. I'd like to explain why, on the basis of objective evidence, in an attempt to persuade you to have a go.

I recognise that skilled hybridists can produce excellent results with deliberate crosses, and that seed from an average *soulangeana* is likely to produce an average *soulangeana*, not really worth writing home about. However many of the finest magnolias cultivated today arose from open pollinated seed simply taken from magnolia collections. They can more than hold their own with the very best available. Indeed, **of some 100 or so magnolias given awards for exhibition or garden decoration by the RHS over the years I estimate only 22, or less than one quarter, arose as a result of a deliberate, man-made cross.**

M. 'Albatross' is a good example of chance excellence, raised from open pollinated 'Pegasus' seed at Trewithen and clearly crossed with something from the *campbellii* persuasion, as indeed is the striking 'Leda' from the same seed parent, this time from Chiverton. 'Albatross' was raised at Lanhydrock where it rubs shoulders with 'Peter Borlase', a *mollicomata* seedling of unique colour and the rich red/pink 'Lanhydrock' raised from *sprengeri* 'Diva', both arising from natural seed effortlessly harvested from Cornish gardens. 'Copeland Court' is another marvel from *sprengeri* seed, along with 'Marwood Spring', 'Burncoose', 'Eric Savill' and 'Claret Cup'. These are trees recommended for any garden, easy and reliable.

All Pickard seedlings were raised randomly from 'Wada's Picture', a large-flowered Japanese *soulangeana* cultivar, simply taken from the tree and sown. Mr Pickard named about 10 cultivars, of which some I believe will survive the competition of time.

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The much decorated x *loebneri* hybrid 'Leonard Messel' PC, AM, FCC, AGM which topped the members' poll for the ten best magnolias in 2000 came from an open pollinated flower of *M. stellata*, probably var *rosea*, at Nymans. In fact in this x *loebneri* group the majority of cultivars are 'selections', chosen from a batch of 'free' seedlings, including the outstanding 'Donna', only recently raised from seed sown by an amateur enthusiast.

The list of open pollinated seedling treasures is endless and **it is fair to conclude that results achieved for quality of flower by sowing such seed are always interesting, often excellent and occasionally worth naming and registering.**

And the wait for flowers from seed is generally no longer than it is for many other woody plants. Tales from Cornwall with the soft climate of the south west tell of 30 years from seed to flower for *M. campbellii*. Such stories have become embedded in a whole mythology about prolonged adolescence as a feature of the entire genus, based on few examples. Clearly some species take longer than others, with the pink form of *campbellii* probably holding the record. Hybrids, according to Philippe de Spoelberch, are quicker generally than species and conditions of cultivation and climate undoubtedly play a part, with shade, light levels and growth rates having an effect. I am indebted to Philippe for sending me data from the detailed records he maintains on many aspects of magnolia cultivation. He holds records of years to flowering from seed for some 33 seedlings in his collection at Herkenrode, near Brussels. They range from 5 years up to a maximum of 12 for a varied range of hybrids and species. There appears to be little pattern apart from the fact that all the species except *acuminata* var *subcordata* have taken 9 or more years to flower – *denudata*, *cylindrica*, *macrophylla* ssp *ashei*, *sieboldii*, *tripetala* and *obovata*. At the other end of the scale a series of hybrids have flowered in 5-6 years, with varied seed parents such as *stellata*, *acuminata*, 'Banana Split', x *brooklyensis*, 'Forrest's Pink', 'David Clulow', 'Miss Honeybee', 'Manchu Fan' and 'Woodsman'.

The average time from seed to flower from a range of 33 seedlings is a mere 7-8 years.

My own more limited experience in the less rigorous climate of Kent is similar; 'Pegasus', a 'Lenei' hybrid and a 'Dark Shadow' hybrid (now named 'Theodora', it received an AM last year) all flowered in 5 years from sowing and 'Spectrum' and 'Galaxy' seedlings in 6 years. I have a *sargentiana robusta* seedling showing its first flower bud after 9 years.

It is fair to conclude that in growing magnolias from seed you are planting for your own enjoyment, as well as for that of future generations.

Finally, magnolias are among the easiest of plants to grow from seed. Some guidelines for good practice for sowing and managing seedlings are to be found in an article in the 1998 Yearbook. As I said then, 'growing plants is nothing if not creating a keen sense of anticipation, pleasurably feeding the imagination; and the satisfaction of creating something from scratch can be very rewarding....' Tony Weston has clean seed, maintained at the proper temperature, ready for sowing. May I wish you good growing and seedlings of surpassing excellence.

TOURS

Valerie Archibold

Spring Botanical Tour 2003 – Belgium

– 30th April to 4th May 2003

"It is because the gardens in Belgium are so exciting that the Group is organising its Spring Visits to Belgium in May 2003, when the magnolias and rhododendrons should be at their best."

Mike Robinson – *The Bulletin*, Dec. 2002

The programme and travel arrangements are now finalised. See the October 2002 Bulletin No. 80 for detailed itinerary.

For possible vacant places contact **Valerie Archibold at Starveacre, Dalwood, E. Devon, EX13 7HH. Tel: 01404 881221.**

The joint R.C.M.Group – ICS Autumn Weekend

– 9th to 12th October 2003

This will be held in Northumberland, and this year is being arranged by the International Camellia Society. Full information will be in the Bulletin in July.

Also, full details will be 'available this summer' from:

Mrs Pat Short, 41 Galveston Road, East Putney, London SW1 2RZ; Tel: 0208 870 6884.

The Magnolia Society

Members of this Group have been invited join the Society's Tour to New Zealand in September 2003.

More details are now available for this exciting trip.

The final dates are now (from Heathrow) from Friday 29th August and returning on either Friday 12th September for the Short Tour, or Thursday 18th September for the Grande Tour.

The **costs, including flights** via Los Angeles, are from £2148 or from £2698 respectively.

The Tour includes many of the best gardens and sights in both the North and South Islands. Visits include Ayrries, Pukeiti and Mark & Abbie Jury's garden in the North and Dunedin Botanic Garden and Larnach Castle in the South.

Further details can be obtained from **ARENA TRAVEL**, at: **Hamilton House, Cambridge Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk, IP11 7SW. Tel 01394 691200 (Fax: 01394 271043) or E-mail: reservations@arenatravel.com.**

MEMBERS NOTES

Arunachal Pradesh

A geographical note from Philip Evans on the area from where he has been collecting seed for the Group.

I have contributed some rhododendron seed to the Group's seedbank this year which I collected in Arunachal last Autumn

(2002), and I thought that an introductory note about this little known area might be of interest. Peter Cox, who with his son Kenneth led our trip, will be contributing an article in the 2004 Yearbook, describing the trip in full, so this note is merely an 'appetiser'.

The name Arunachal Pradesh means 'land of dawnlit mountains', belying its situation in the extreme east of the Indian Himalayas and immediately north of Assam. It has actually been a State itself only since 1970. Before that, and back to the state of the British 'Raj' in India, it was administratively a part of Assam and called the North East Frontier Agency (N.E.F.A.). Arunachal comprises a vast and very mountainous area with a very high rainfall, populated by a complex of many tribes, sub-tribes and clans, of mainly Tibeto-Burmese origin. It stretches northwards from Assam and the Brahmaputra river up to the Tibetan border on the crest ridge of the Himalayas. Its western boundary is with Bhutan, whilst to the east the border with Tibet continues down as far as the watershed with Burma (Myanmar). So Arunachal is very much part of that epicentre of rhododendron populations, where geographically Tibet, India, China and Burma all come together.

Arunachal is also a land of great rivers, most coming out of Tibet and ultimately feeding the mighty Brahmaputra. From the east there are the Lohit and the Dibang. From the north-east comes the Tsang Po, or the Siang – as it is called once it has emerged south of the Tsangpo Gorge. And finally there is the Subansiri which runs from north to south down to the Brahmaputra and more or less divides Arunachal in half.

The seed contributed was collected partly on the rim of the fertile Apa Tani valley in central Arunachal, but mainly further east, on a mountain range that divides the upper valley of the Subansiri from that of the Siyom, a river of the more northern Tibetan region of Arunachal. The Siyom lower down joins the Siang, not far above the point where the Siang itself joins the Brahmaputra.

Dr R.H.L.Jack – member of the Group Executive Committee: *on the trials and tribulations of travel to Committee meetings!*

I constantly admire the high attendance record of my fellow Group Committee members. To their credit many have long and tedious journeys yet their enthusiasm shows in the way business is dealt with and of course the Group benefits.

Whilst I travel the greatest distance – to and from Scotland – I have a more straightforward and often quicker journey than some others. However, it might amuse members to know of my homeward journey from the last committee meeting.

I arrived home a little later than expected. I explained that I had reached Heathrow from Vincent Square and checked in with British Midland as usual to fly their Airbus 321 to Edinburgh but in fact got onto a British Airways Boeing instead – Help! Security! How could this happen? Had I got onto a flight to Munich or Barcelona by mistake instead of Edinburgh?

Explanation: From Vincent Square to Heathrow involves the Piccadilly Line. With adequate time to get there I waited for a Heathrow train, and waited, and waited, while the crowd grew and grew and the margin of time seeped away. Eventually a Heathrow bound train arrived – we all boarded – sardine style. Nothing happened – we needed a relief driver! Anxiety about missing my flight mounted. Eventually a relief driver was found. We progressed. We reached Heathrow with time remaining until flight check-in closure virtually nil. Knowing the layout and by dint of a quarter-mile style sprint – passages, stairways,

concourse, escalator, more passages, security (always slow), a final sprint and breathing hard – just in time? But 'Sorry Dr Jack somehow your space has already been allocated and the plane is absolutely full', Sinking feeling of despair – back to London – where to stay overnight – get a new ticket for for another flight – tomorrow's work engagements – perhaps an overnight train to Edinburgh instead, then a taxi to the airport to collect my car – the mind can work very fast!

'No! No! Dr Jack you are just in time for check-in. It is our fault. Let me see what I can do!' Several short phone calls followed and I was led off to a separate British Airways lounge where British Midland arranged that BA would take me north on their Edinburgh flight, just closing 15 minutes behind British Midland's and 99% filled but with a space for me. To their credit British Midland handled the arrangement (and costs) and as a frequent flyer with them, by the time I reached Edinburgh there was a complimentary voucher waiting for me for my next flight and apologies for the mix up.

All's well etc. – phew! But the stresses and strains of modern travel. Moral: keep fit – travel often – then it might seem normal!

RHODODENDRONS

David Millais

What's New in Hardy Hybrids?

That is one of the more commonly asked questions I receive from the many enthusiasts who call at the nursery. The trouble is that by the time we have grown a new variety for 3-4 years and watched it in our trials garden to see how it performs, it does not seem new to us! Yes there are always even newer varieties in the pipeline, but can we recommend them to an enthusiast before we have judged 2 years flowering, and its suitability for the UK climate? The demand for the new seems unstoppable. New varieties are always the first to sell out, partly because of the time taken to bulk up production.



Rhododendron 'Graffito'

David Millais

So do these new varieties have something different and better to offer? Well yes and no. All too often the older varieties are forgotten in the excitement of the new. We have a huge demand for that old stalwart 'Gomer Waterer' (raised before 1900) which has passed the test of time, and still produces an excellent crop of beautiful pinky white flowers even in the most unfavourable of positions. Recently we were looking for a reliable mid-season medium height white to add to our range.

The ideal has proved to be not a modern wonder-plant, but a passed over masterpiece, 'Helene Schiffner', which gained an FCC back in 1893. The wide pure white flowers form a perfect tight truss. It's as lovely as a mouth-watering cone from 'Mr Softee' on a hot summer's day.

So who in the UK is hybridizing now? It does happen, but certainly not in the way that the Americans do with every local ARS chapter having hybridizers' forums and projects for the year. Peter and Ken Cox at Glendoick continue at the forefront of UK breeders, and their new range of low growing yellows come highly rated, but we have struggled to grow them satisfactorily in the South, managing either scorched leaves or very slow growth. They also have some excellent red foliaged plants in the pipeline, but we have not tried these yet.



Rhododendron 'Capriccio'

David Millais

My father, Ted Millais continues to make interesting crosses. He aims to produce a range of powdery mildew free *cinnabarinum* hybrids by using *xanthocodon* as a parent. So far we have 'Pink Gin', with apricot pink flowers, and now 'Crosswater Belle' which is yellowy cream with a pink flush in the throat. He has also been crossing some of the late flowering scented whites (such as 'Argosy' and 'Lodauric Iceberg') with other colours to extend the range available. As always we will have to wait a bit longer to see the results!

Reviewing the hundreds of new varieties we have tried from the States over the last 20 years, many failed at the first hurdle, and others are now past their sell-by date. The most captivating photograph in a magazine, catalogue or website has simply not responded to the different UK climate. Too often the breeding has focused on the flower, and has been rewarded with silver trophies from the numerous Rhododendron Shows on both sides of the Rockies. The reality is that we need plants with good foliage for the other 11 months of the year. Those which have performed regularly well for the last 10 years or so include the excellent dwarfs 'Ginny Gee' (pinky white), 'Patty Bee' (bright yellow) and 'Wee Bee' (deep pink) from Warren Berg. Hardy hybrid highlights are 'Horizon Monarch', 'Lem's Monarch', 'Nancy Evans', and 'Taurus' which remain among our favourites.

Many of the most noticeable new hybrids include either 'Nancy Evans' or 'Lem's Cameo' as parents. Those which are performing well so far include 'Coral Mist', a large flowering bi-coloured cream with pink edging, set above good foliage with reddish new growth similar to 'Nancy Evans'. 'Pridenjoy', a 'Lem's Cameo' hybrid, has huge prominent dark winter buds and opens to an impeccable truss of soft orangey yellow, glowing

above the dark green glossy foliage. 'Starbright Champagne', bred by Frank Fujioka, also shows its 'Lem's Cameo' parentage, but has beautiful creamy yellow flowers with pointed star like petals. We showed 'Unique Marmalade' on our stand at Vincent Square in 2001 and found it a difficult colour to place, but it certainly caused a stir at the show with its bright light orange flowers smothering the neat compact habit gained from Unique.

No mention of new hybrids would be complete without mentioning some of the magnificent works of Hans Hachmann who celebrated 50 years of breeding at his Barmstedt nursery, north of Hamburg, last year. Whilst he can be criticised for launching too many new varieties each year in the name of commerce, some of which are little different from those he raised 10 years earlier, most of his plants are stunning. Not only that, but they are well tested in his gardens before being released, and are hardy to -20 or even -25C. His yaks (*R.yakushimanum* hybrids) are easily visible at the RHS yak trial at Wisley, and are well worth a visit during Chelsea week. 'Fantastica', 'Marlis', and 'Polaris' are fairly similar, with various shades of reddish pink in bud, opening to pink. While they do not have the good indumentum of some of Arthur George's hybrids, and despite the late John Bond referring to them as 'cabbages', they do rank among the best yak hybrids, and all have recently gained AGM on account of their superb flowers and clean dark green foliage.



Rhododendron 'Belkanto'

David Millais

'Belkanto' is one of Hachmann's hardy hybrids gaining popularity. It has won numerous medals in Germany since 1991 with its golden orangey-yellow flowers and reddish spotting in the throat. 'Blutopia' is another award winner with deep violet blue flowers and prominent olive green speckling with excellent deep green broad foliage. Travelling around Northern Germany in 1999, I kept being impressed by 'Diadem'. This was raised in 1983 and is now rightly popular over there. It is like a much improved 'Furnival's Daughter', with pale pink flowers and a stunning wine red blotch, with excellent dark green shiny foliage. This is sure to become popular here soon. Hachmann's 'Charmant' has been described by Per M. Jorgensen of The Norwegian Arboretum, Bergen, as the best new hybrid in Europe. It features white flowers with a wavy pink edge and a bold crimson flare, giving a bicolour effect, complete with dark shiny leaves. Because of plant breeding restrictions, its distribution in the UK will be limited for sometime. 'Kabarett' is another of Hachmann's featuring a prominent blotch. Here is a frilled pale lilac with wide open flowers displaying a huge wine red blotch on the upper lobe. For those interested in

Hachmann's work, Gerald Dixon provided some excellent descriptions of key varieties in the RHS Rhododendron yearbook 2002.

Hachmann's catalogue is a work of art with good sized photos and descriptions in German. It costs 20 Euros from the nursery.

Visiting 'Rhodo 2002' at Westerstede in Northern Germany was an experience I can thoroughly recommend. Shows are held every 4 years, so plan your trip for 2006! The main marquee was beautifully staged, with displays from numerous local nurserymen merging with each other, so the whole marquee looked like one exhibit. Also present were contrast plants such as Acers, conifers and primulas, complete with water features and pedestrian bridges linking different areas. Outside there were more excellent displays merging with each other around the whole town centre, taking in the church and traditional market square as the centre point. With typical German efficiency, the Park and Ride scheme took you from the edge of town to the entrance gates of the show with less than 5 minutes wait at either end. The exhibits were a show case of up and coming new varieties on a scale I have never seen before.

Hachmann hybrids certainly dominated the show, but there were good new offerings from other leading growers such as Bolje, Bruns, Heinje and Vorwerk. Among those that most attracted my attention were 'Capriccio', a beautifully specked *dichroanthum* hybrid; 'Cassata' with its pale pink flowers and huge reddish pink flare, and 'Graffito' which is similar but a larger more open flower. 'Gundula', 'Marsalla', and 'Sapporo' looked good, and are all better and much tidier versions of straggly 'Sappho'. Many of these are subject to Plant Breeders Rights, which no doubt go some way to covering the huge expense of breeding and introducing new varieties, but it will mean that within the UK they remain fairly exclusive, and their introduction will be slow.

George Hyde from Ferndown in Dorset, raised many deciduous azaleas about 30 years ago of which Exbury promoted some. More recently his daughter Rosemary Legrand has launched some of her father's evergreens and these can be seen performing well on Battleston Hill at Wisley. More releases are in the pipeline soon. Denny Pratt's late flowering deciduous azaleas, such as the superb 'Summer Fragrance' AGM, are a wonderful extension of the season particularly for cold gardens but are only slowly gaining respect.

Lately we have selected late flowering forms of deciduous azaleas such as *viscosum* and *occidentale* and crossed them with some of Denny Pratt's varieties to improve the range and extend the flowering season into July and August.

CAMELLIAS

Brian Wright

Kunming Reticulatas – A Collection

It has been announced that The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group is to get together a collection of the 'Lammerts/Peer' Kunming reticulatas. These rarely seen plants will be donated to and planted out at **Abbotsbury Sub-Tropical Gardens** in Dorset for public reference and enjoyment. For camellia enthusiasts this ought to be one of the most stirring pieces of news to have emerged for some time; although for Group members generally, this initiative, begun by the late John Bond and now driven by Maurice Foster, the current Group Chairman, should be of more than marginal interest.

To explain why, perhaps you will allow me to go back over some old ground.

In 1948 and '49, Dr. Walter Lammerts and Mr. Ralph Peer (two eminent Californian camellia-philos) imported consignments of *reticulata* cultivars into the U.S.A. from the Yunnan Botanical Institute in Kunming. This milestone marked not only the beginning of a widespread appearance of Kunming reticulatas in the West but was also a remarkable achievement in itself since, at the time, most of the globe was struggling to re-adjust after the ravages of the Second World War, communication was slow and unreliable compared to the instant, hi-tech contact we have today and China was in the chaotic throes of ideological upheaval. In spite of this situation, Walter Lammerts, after much research and investigative work, finally traced a source of these intriguing plants to Yunnan.



Camellia 'Butterfly Wings'

Jennifer Trehane

Then, after various difficulties and prolonged negotiations with concerned authorities, Lammerts, quite independently of Peer, managed to arrange an air shipment which arrived in California early in 1948. The Kunming *reticulata* door opened in a somewhat different way for Ralph Peer. In his continual quest for new and unusual camellias he decided on a round-the-world air trip. With stop-offs in various countries, the journey (part business, part camellia search) took almost five months, from September 26 1948 to February 20 1949, at not the best time in history to take a global tour. Peer talks of encountering a huge refugee problem involving some 7,000,000 people in India and Pakistan, bombing and machine-gun fire in Shanghai, the Dutch army about to engage the Indonesian Republicans and various other disturbing incidents. However, he did meet up with Mr. William Hazlewood, the New South Wales nurseryman who, by this time, had made contact with Professor Tsai, of the Yunnan Botanical Institute, who had agreed to send him some Kunming reticulatas. William Hazlewood passed on the professor's name to Ralph Peer and suggested that he should meet him when he arrived in China. In actual fact the two men did not meet but made contact during Ralph Peer's tour by letter and radio message. The result was that a generous supply of different varieties of Kunming *reticulata* was sent to Ralph Peer in the U.S.A. and arrived shortly after his return. This meant that consignments of these fascinating plants had now been sent to Dr. Walter Lammerts, Mr Ralph Peer and Mr William Hazlewood. But this wasn't the celebrated event that it should have been since many of the plants were lost due to the rigorous fumigation procedures carried out by Australian and American quarantine officials. In spite of this set-back, the three

subsequently got together to organise further shipments, and records show that by 1950 some twenty varieties of Kunming reticulatas were established outside of China.

It wasn't long before these absorbing new plants, and their subsequent hybrids, were being grown by camellia lovers in the U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand and Europe. But Lammerts, Peer and Hazlewood did more than universally introduce us to a new passion, they positioned in the West, anciently revered plants whose origins stretched back over a thousand years to the temple gardens of Yunnan. Since most of the Kunming reticulatas have always been propagated by grafting, western growers have now joined the Yunnanese gardeners (ancient and modern) in prolonging the life of those original cultivars that first delighted Chinese eyes all those centuries ago. This, in my view, is reason enough to commend and support the Abbotsbury plan although there is, of course, another more obvious and somewhat more sensual reason for conserving these plants and this is the display of their spectacular flowers. Stirling Macoboy calls reticulatas 'The Glamour Girls'. In bloom they are not sedately beautiful in an 'Old English Garden' sense nor, to my Western eyes, are they garden goddesses in perhaps a Yunnanese way. They are Ann Miller, Cyd Charise, Rita Hayworth and Ginger Rogers all rolled into one, gorgeous and exciting – glamour girls, just like Mr. Macoboy says.



Camellia 'Chrysanthemum Petal'

Jennifer Trehane

The Kunming reticulata story doesn't end, however, with Walter Lammerts and Ralph Peer's accomplishment for, after some fairly widespread distribution, it was realised that there were some weighty identification and nomenclature problems to be solved. The difficulties appear to have resulted from the fact that several different Chinese names could exist for one plant (a confusion that was perpetuated when the plants were distributed and marketed under their freely translated Western names) and that some incorrect labelling took place.

As part of an identification programme which involved round-the-world enquiry and repeated importations of Western reticulata cultivars, the eminent New Zealand camellia authority, Colonel Tom Durrant, established direct contact with the Yunnan Botanical Institute in 1963. After an exchange of much information and a further shipment of Kunming reticulatas (this time to New Zealand) the evidence was compiled and considered. The outcome was that the original Lammerts/Peer introductions were rationalised and identified as follows.

1. **Chrysanthemum Petal** (Juban)
2. **Pagoda** syn. **Robert Fortune** (Songzilin)
3. **Purple Gown** (Zipao)
4. **Shot Silk** (Dayinhong)
5. **Crimson Robe** (Dataohung)
6. **Butterfly Wings** (Houye Diechi)
7. **Moutancha** (Mudan cha)
8. **Professor Tsai** (Tinhung Diechi)
9. **Lion Head** (Shizitou)
10. **Cornelian** (Damanao)
11. **Chang's Temple** (Zhangjia cha)
12. **Willow Wand** (Luange yinhong)
13. **Tali Queen** (Dali cha)

Although these plants will be the focus of the Group's attention in putting together the Abbotsbury collection, I feel we might add the following which were not considered to be part of the original Lammerts/Peer/Hazlewood importations but which, via later importations, are growing in the West today.

Osmanthus Leaf (Xiaoguiye), **Takieyeh** (Daguiye), **Noble Pearl** syn. **Red Jewellery** (Baozhu cha), **Early Crimson** (Zaotaohung), **Early Peony** (Zaomoudan), **The Dwarf** (Hentienko), **Spinel Pink** (Mayehyinhung), **Buddha** and **Confucius**.

In the Peer Memorial Lecture given by Tom Durrant to the New Zealand Camellia Society in 1967, he talks of 'Osmanthus Leaf', 'Early Crimson', 'Early Peony', 'The Dwarf' and 'Spinel Pink' as being later received from Yunnan as part of his 1964 importation. In this address, he also refers to 'Buddha' and 'Confucius' in terms of, "said to be recent *reticulata* x *pitardii* hybrids raised in Yunnan". He has no quarrel with the identity of these plants which he says were named in the U.S.A. after export from China, but with the use of the word 'recent' as late as 1967, he implies that these were not part of the original Lammerts/Peer/Hazlewood importations.

Writing in the 1964 Rhododendron and Camellia Yearbook, Mr T. Hope Findlay, that renowned former Keeper of the Gardens at Windsor Great Park, refers to Buddha as being one of the twelve Kunming reticulatas that he received from Ralph Peer in 1956. In his book, 'The Camellia Story' published in 1982, Tom Durrant again refers to Buddha and Confucius as being 'recent'. So 'recent' in 1967 and again in 1982.



Camellia 'Pagoda'

Jennifer Trehane

Ancient Chinese literature records that in Yunnan there are many more reticulatas than those which are the subject of this summary but this knowledge is for another time and perhaps another project.

How you can help?

Generally speaking the above plants are not widely grown in the UK but there are some in existence. Already the Group has obtained Purple Gown, Professor Tsai, Tali Queen and Noble Pearl but if anyone can help by offering material for grafting from any other of the above listed varieties or, even generously contribute or supply actual plants, please contact me:

Brian Wright, Kilsaran, Fielden Lane,
Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 1TL.
Tel: 01892 653207 Fax: 01892 669550

MORE ON SEEDS

Maurice Foster

Seed List Specialities

Camellia xylocarpa – a new introduction

Keith Rushforth, during a visit to Yunnan last autumn, was shown a population of *Camellia xylocarpa* by a Chinese colleague and was able to obtain just 6 seeds. He kindly sent the Group one third of these, namely 2 seeds! He said in his note 'You can now decide how to handle these golden fruits'. And setting temptation aside, we thought it both fair and reasonable to make both seeds available to the highest bidder. So if you are interested in this rarity, please **get in touch with Tony Weston with your bid**.

There is little in the literature on this species. The Rushforth number is KR 7465 and the collection was made south of Dali at 2240metres, which might just indicate a degree of hardiness, certainly in favoured spots. The flowers are red. Dr Clifford Parks e-mailed me some background information, summarised as follows: It was transferred from Yunnan to *Camellia* by Chang, but his descriptions do not give much information. Its claim to fame is in the very thick walls on the capsule. In 2000 Ming merged it with *C. reticulata*. It is close to *C. reticulata* and a group of red flowered tetraploids found in southern Sichuan; a tetraploid count is recorded for *C. xylocarpa*. Thick capsule walls crop up in some of these tetraploid populations, which Chang divided into many species. Clifford's view – "I doubt that with scrutiny it will maintain species status". However, he added that he wished he could afford to bid on the seeds, "but perhaps the winner will give me a scion later". Please note.

Michelia doltsopa

Here in Kent we have a vigorous 10m specimen of this doubtfully hardy tree planted in a SW facing angle of the house but with its top now exposed to all weathers. Cornish friends do not believe it. It flowered copiously in the spring and we were aware of a few green seed cones visible in the lower branches, which we collected and sent the contents off to the seed exchange. No seed had ever been set before. Following a short but sharp gale in mid- January the ground was suddenly strewn with bright red seeds evidently shed from seed cones hidden high in the evergreen canopy. We collected around two hundred. They are sinkers and appear perfectly viable, so if any member believes in global warming and would like to try to raise a few seedlings, please apply to Tony Weston who now has plenty of seed. The tree is 14 years old and has never been damaged in our run of mild winters, down to a minimum of -8C and sheltered pretty well from north and east winds. A specimen survived at Wakehurst for some years.

LETTERS

Camellia transnokoensis

I recall references last spring to *Camellia transnokoensis* being too tender to put out except in the mildest part of England. Our experience here in Vancouver leads me to think that it is hardier than most believe. As benchmarks for our garden *Eucryphia lucida* 'Pink Cloud' has been growing close by for 10 years, and *Crinidendron hookeriana* has been frozen to the ground twice in 25 years, springing back to life each time.

We received our camellia as a rooted cutting in 1997. We grew it in a one gal. pot (5 litre) under open cover before putting it out in a sheltered part of the garden 2 years later. Although slow to fill out, it has done well. Our lowest temperature since putting it out has been -8C. We usually experience somewhat colder winters.

At the University of British Columbia Botanical Garden 8 plants of the same clone were put out in the wooded Asian Garden in 1992 after being grown on from cuttings for about 4 years. Although given reasonable care, they were not babied. Four have survived. The non-survivors perished in 1993 when we experienced -12C. Our coldest temperature last year occurred (-8 to -10C) when the early Magnolias were in flower and these were considerably damaged. *C. transnokoensis* had only a little damage, but by then flowering was almost over.

This a lovely camellia in the garden and worth a gamble. We prefer to take our chances with it, always being sure that there are rooted cuttings in the wings.

Charles Sale

North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

The North Wales Arboretum Trust

(I reproduce below, an edited copy of a letter sent to Tony Weston and copied to me. Ed.)

I recently re-read Bulletin 78 wherein you sent out a plea for alternative sources of wild-collected seed.

The Trust is about to begin planting on the 300 acre Vaynol Estate near Bangor in North Wales. The arboretum is to be planted with, so far as possible, trees and shrubs grown from wild-collected seed, and I am particularly concerned to ensure a continuing source of such material and the note set me to wondering how the Trust could assist the Group's search for alternative sources of seed at the same time as furthering the Trust's charitable aims.

One of the Trust's two charitable aims is conservation of endangered species of trees and shrubs, both in situ and ex situ, and it seems to me that we can achieve that in part by providing support for future expeditions by suitably experienced collectors. The other charitable aim is education in its broadest sense and we could pursue this in tandem with supporting future expeditions by providing funding for young botanists to take part in those expeditions in order that they can learn from the experts in the field. In this way I am sure we would encourage the rise of a group of new young collectors to carry on this country's great plant collecting tradition. Do you think this might be workable and if so how would it be best to progress it?

The Trust has already established plant exchange schemes with many organisations including the National Pinetum, Bedgebury, Ness Botanical Gardens, RBG Kew, RBG Edinburgh, the

National Botanical Garden of Wales and the National Arboretum, Westonbirt. In this way we hope to rapidly build up a substantial stock of trees and shrubs of known wild origin for planting out in the arboretum in the coming years. Needless to say, we would be delighted to receive donations of trees and shrubs, or indeed seed, of known wild origin from Group members and I would take great pleasure in showing any members around the Estate if they find themselves in the Bangor area and can give me a little advanced notice.

Martin Thompson

8 Rhodfa Sychnant, Conwy LL32 8RD

April 2002

Tel: 01492 596161

R. ponticum

After reading of the claim that rhododendron poisoned the soil. I repaired to apparently barren ground beneath a mature stand of *R. fortunei*, *griersonianum*, *Planetum* and others.

Disregarding surface litter, I transferred a portion of top-soil to a seed tray, where lettuce was sown. Placed in a cold house, the lettuce germinated well, accompanied by a selection of weed and grass seedlings common to the garden.

Toxic, no. Not even sterile and while I refuse to believe that any root secretions from the species and cultivar mentioned would differ from *R. ponticum*, perhaps members with stands of *R. ponticum* would care to repeat the experiment and thus bury this enigma.

Geoff Taylor

Pant-yr-Holiad Garden

Notes from a botanical bibliophile:

My purchase of the three-page supplement to 'The Encyclopaedia of Rhododendron Species' by Peter & Kenneth Cox aroused my interest to pursue an addition to my bookshelf.

The Cox's refer to Volume 3 of 'Rhododendrons of China' – (Edited by Feng Guomei & Yang Zenghong) – included in their account of *Rhododendron gongshanense*. Volumes 1 and 2 have been residing in my collection for several years and I was blissfully unaware that a third volume even existed. A telephone call to Glendoick kindly provided the ISBN required; the computer then came to the rescue and provoked a response to my searches from Ken Poole at the Internet Bookshop UK Ltd (www.internetbooksuk.com or even Tel: 01453 519436 and/or Fax: 01453 519437).

Six weeks or so later the volume has been safely received via the USA and completes the set as published to date! (not cheap but some stunning photographs and various new species).

I must admit that I am addict of much in print – this is authoritative and informative and comes under the broad umbrella of 'ericaceous' – but this volume had escaped my notice. I include these details just in case readers have got the first two volumes and now want the third!

Have YOU located anything in print that the rest of us do not know about?

Happy and successful book searching.

John Sanders

Tiverton, Devon

BRANCH REPORTS

Norfolk Branch

Jane Idiens

On Tuesday 12th November the Norfolk Branch paid a visit to Holkham Garden Nursery, to hear a talk by Tim Leese, a R.C.M.Group member, on Garden Design. Tim is a garden designer by profession. He showed beautiful slides of a great variety of gardens in the UK, Europe and the U.S. The focus of his talk was the use of vistas, in gardens large and small, and the desirability of situating the garden well within its landscape. Some of the gardens had made splendid use of the view beyond, whether on a grand scale on the hills outside Siena, or more humbly, beyond the garden gate. Chat with tea and biscuits followed, and we all admired the lovely blooms of camellia 'November Pink', both on the table and against the nursery walls. In dull, cold November it was a joyous sight. A precious plant of this lovely late-season camellia awaits planting in my garden. It will be a pleasant reminder!

SW Branch

Alun Edwards

2002 was another successful year for the Branch with the meetings continuing to be well supported. In mid-March some of us were lucky enough to visit John and Prue Quicke's garden at Sherwood, Newton St. Cyres, where the magnolias were putting on a very good show. This garden now holds a NCCPG collection of Magnolia (and of Knaphill azaleas). It is open on every Sunday from 2 to 5.

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In April we visited two gardens near Truro. Firstly to Tregothnan, where the Hon. Evelyn Boscawen showed us this very large garden that overlooks the Fal river. A great deal of work is being put into this garden both as restoration and of new planting. The presentation plant was *R.leptocladon* KR2932. In the afternoon we visited Nansawsen, Ladock, the home of Michael and Maureen Cole. As seems to be usual re-development is taking place making more room for more rhododendrons and camellias. We presented *R.reticulatum*.

In May we travelled to North Devon and visited Gorwell House, Barnstaple, where John and Vanessa Marston are planting up a large paddock with a great variety of plants. There is some emphasis on magnolias but no worthwhile Genus or Family is ignored. The plant added to this collection was *Magnolia stellata* f. *keiskei*. At Bishops Tawton, Hugh and Rachel Thomas welcomed us to Elm House. There were many camellias and rhododendrons. The latter gave the excuse for discussion (and disagreement) about names, always enjoyable. Magnolias are being added to the garden and we were able to contribute with *M. 'Wada's Memory'*.

On November 9th, we held our Autumn meeting at RHS Garden, Rosemoor. The Bring-and-Buy plant sale was a rapid sellout. John Bodenham organised the Quiz which was won by Philip Evans, the editor of the Year Book. After lunch Dr. David Chamberlain spoke to a full lecture hall on "The taxonomist's approach to Rhododendron".

Mrs. Margaret Miles is now the chairman of the Branch.

NOTICES

Joey Warren

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2003

is to be held on Tuesday 29th April at 2pm,
in Room 31 of the RHS Lawrence Hall.

Please come; the AGM is important.

The Chairman is mid-term, so we do not vote for him until 2004. There is no contest this year for committee members, indeed **there is a VACANCY for which no-one has yet come forward.**

Martin Gates is our new Treasurer; we are very grateful to him for taking over in mid-term from Chris Walker, who was overburdened with work in his job. Mrs Pam Hayward took over the sale of old Yearbooks from David Farnes, and is extending the job, which is now named Yearbook Archivist. Brian Wright continues to assist as co-opted Committee Member, and Tony Weston continues to organise the Seed List.

The two retiring Committee Members this year are Dr Robbie Jack and Miss Cicely Perring. Both are willing to serve a further 3-year term of office, and need your vote. So do the Officers, who are all willing to serve a further year. You will find the **Voting Form** as a loose sheet with this Bulletin; please complete it, and send it to the Hon. Secretary:

Mrs J.M.Warren, Netherton, Buckland Monachorum, Devon PL20 7NL, by **25th April**, making due allowance for postal delivery.

When did you last visit?



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FORTHCOMING EVENTS – 2003

Date	Organiser/branch	Event	Contact
April			
April 5th	South East	Members' plant sale and silent auction	Mike Robinson 01342 822745
April 6th	ICS	Camellia Show at Borde Hill	Pat Short (ICS) 020 8788 7976
April 11th-13th	RHS	Main Camelia Competition & New RHS Plant Roadshow at Bournemouth	RHS
April 26th-27th	South East	Annual Show – this year at Borde Hill	Mike Robinson (as above)
April 27th	Wessex	Visit to members' gardens	Malcolm Nash 01483 275013
April 29th	Group	Group AGM & Executive Committee	See Bulletin
April 29-30th	RHS	Main Rhododendron & Ornamental Plant Competitions	(London)
Apr 30-May 5th	Group	Botanical Tour to Belgium	Valerie Archibold (See Bulletin)
May			
May 1-4th	ARS	Annual Convention, Olympia, Washington.	ARS
May 3rd	Norfolk	Visit to 3 woodland gardens	Jane Idiens 01263 837779
May 11th	Norfolk	Visit to Bramley Cottage (2000 species)	Jane Idiens (as above)
May 3th-4th	North Wales & NW	Branch Show at Ness Gardens	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
May 31st	South East	Ghent Azalea Day at Sheffield Park & High Beeches.	Mike Robinson (as above)
June			
June 1st	Wessex	Annual Show at Ramster	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
July			
July 12th	South East	Annual Propagation Day (At Hindleap)	Mike Robinson (as above)
September			
Sept.16th	Group	Executive Committee	Joey Warren 01822 854022
November			
Nov.25th	Group	Executive Committee	Joey Warren (as above)

Binders for Bulletins

In response to requests, binders are now available in White with Green labelling. They come with suitable attachments to retain the Copies. Each issue can then be fully opened without having to remove it from the binder. The cover will contain issues, at three per year, up until 2007 or probably 2008 (See below). The binders are available at £11.75 each plus postage and packing.

Contact the Hon. Editor, John Rawling.

Details on page 3



Stop Press:

I have just received details of the Scotland's Gardens Scheme of over 350 gardens open for charity during 2003. Full details available from 22 Rutland Square, Edinburgh EH1 2BB. Tel: 0131 229 1870, or E-mail: office@sgsgardens.fsnet.co.uk.

Year Book Photographic Competition 2003

The Competition will again be held in 2003, but I am intending to make this the last year. It is a feature that has run for a good many years, and I thought it was time for a change. If a lot of the Membership felt otherwise, I could be persuaded. But for 2003 the conditions are the same as for last year.

Entries may be either transparencies or prints, but a maximum of three entries from any one person. The subject must be of rhododendrons, camellias or magnolias, taken in their natural habitat or in any public or private garden. The winner will receive a cheque for £25, and the first three will be printed in the 2004 Year Book. There is a class reserved for entries from spouses or partners and for this there is a £10 prize for the winner and publication in the Year Book – there were no such entries in 2002.

All transparencies and prints will be returned after publication in January 2004.

Entries to – Philip Evans, Hon Yearbook Editor,
West Netherton, Drewsteignton, Devon, EX6 6RB.

A reminder from our Yearbook Archivist,
Pam Hayward to say:

For YEAR BOOK Back Numbers

– Telephone 01822 852122

– or E-mail: RCMGPublications@aol.com.