



The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN – 82

JULY 2003

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Maurice Foster

Trial of *Rhododendron yakushimanum* hybrids, at Wisley.

The ten-year (1996-2006) AGM trial of *Rhododendron yakushimanum* hybrids at Wisley nears its critical final stages in 2004. A trial of this length and thoroughness is necessary for the plants to demonstrate their true level of performance, to settle in and show their paces through a whole range of different weather conditions. It is a rigorous trial in full exposure with no topcover and in a relatively low lying situation subject to low winter temperatures and late frosts.

The trial is the responsibility of the Woody Plant Trials subcommittee of Floral B committee, which comprises plantsmen, nurserymen and professional gardeners, who meet at least three times a year to assess the plants for foliage, flower, vigour and habit with the aim of recommending the best cultivars for the Award of Garden Merit.

Last year the trial was opened to the public during May. A leaflet was made available describing the general characteristics of 'yak' hybrids and listing some 125 cultivars in the trial, with a tear off slip inviting visitors to nominate their favourite. Over 1200 leaflets were taken and it was estimated that around 4000 members of the public visited the trial. Of these, 500 completed the voting slip and the top six selected as favourites were 'Hoppy', 'Schnekkissen', 'Pink Cherub', 'Dopey', 'Lady Romsey', and 'Babette.' Opening the trial was thus very successful and the level of interest encouragingly high, particularly bearing in mind the quite long walk to the trial from the Wisley entrance and the many other diverting attractions in the garden. It also points to the wide appeal of this group of plants, suitable for any garden, large or small, with a neutral or acid soil, with or without topcover shade.

The trial was opened again this year and the visitor responses are in process of being analysed.

In addition, members of the Group committee, the Rhododendron and Camellia committee and the plant suppliers were invited to join the judges at one of the assessment days and provided useful additional input.

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Rhododendron Vireya 'St. Valentine'

Photo Christopher Fairweather

See article 'Getting to know Vireya Rhododendrons' on pages 6-7.

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For next year the invitation to join the trials subcommittee in their deliberations on one of the three assessment days has been extended to all Group members.

The dates, which will be during May 2004, will be published in the October Bulletin and members invited to respond, nominating which of the days they would like to attend. The meeting is generally one of lively discussion and debate, with voting as required, in a serious and considered decision making process. It should be an instructive and enjoyable experience both as to substance and process for those members who would like to come along, so please look for the dates in the October Bulletin.

Some summer magnolias

With the spring magnolias now a distant memory, and strolling through the garden on a warm summer evening through pools of fragrance from *Philadelphus* and Rose, one is soon reminded of the very powerful, indeed dominant, fragrance of some of the valuable summer magnolias. While these do not begin to rival the precocious magnolias for massed effect in the landscape, their fragrance is exceptional and they flower over a very long season. Here is a small selection suitable not only for the woodland garden, but also for small to medium sized gardens. For the most part they flower as young plants.

Apart from the widely planted *M. wilsonii*, *M. sieboldii*, and *M. x wiesneri*, which are too familiar to need description, the much less well known *M. x thompsoniana* deserves to be more often seen. It was described in 1820, having been picked out of a pot of seedlings by Mr Archie Thompson in his nursery in the Mile End, East London. It turned out to be a hybrid of *M. virginiana* and *M. tripetala*, with upright flowers, eventually opening wide, of a yellowish cream and a powerful *M. virginiana* fragrance. The foliage is also good, semi-glossy with a whitish blue reverse on a spreading bush. While never covered in flowers, an established plant produces them over a long period, from early June until August. It makes an attractive picked flower.

Also selected from a batch of seedlings, on this occasion at Windsor, was *M. 'Summer Solstice'* which received an AM on June 21 1998. A seedling of *M. globosa*, it turned out to be a hybrid of this and a nearby *M. obovata*, the pink form. It is intermediate in habit, making a small tree to 20+ feet after as many years, and also intermediate in flower, with the inner white tepals held upright on a base of three smaller pink tepals. Its powerful fragrance is such that a single flower placed in the bedroom of a lady guest was found on the landing next morning.

M. 'Nimbus', a 'new' and increasingly popular hybrid, this time a deliberate *M. virginiana* and *M. obovata* cross which was made by William Kosar of the US National Arboretum almost fifty years ago. It makes an upright small tree or large shrub with semi-evergreen glossy leaves, white on the reverse. The flowers are beautifully cupped like large *M. virginiana* blooms and appear here in Kent from late May through June into July. It has wonderful *M. virginiana* fragrance.

M. 'Aashild Kalleberg' was raised in Sweden from *M. sieboldii* seed, evidently resulting from chance pollination by *M. obovata*. The large white flowers start cup-shaped, then open out to saucer shape. I have not yet flowered it, but those who grow it speak very highly of it as an improvement on *M. x wiesneri*.

M. ashei is not often seen, though there has been a plant in the Hillier Arboretum for many years. I was given a small seedling 3 years ago. I put it out this year and was immediately rewarded with one flower bud which at the end of June is not yet open. It is generally recognised as a subspecies of *M. macrophylla*, but is quite different in habit, remaining a shrub in this country to about 3-4m, enjoying plenty of sun and eminently suitable for a small garden. The pointed buds open to a large cup-shaped fragrant white flower.

The last of this brief selection is *M. 'Maryland'*, a hybrid between *M. grandiflora* and *M. virginiana*, favouring the latter in appearance. 'Maryland' was a deliberately made hybrid and part of a group known as the 'Freeman' hybrids. It was highly regarded by John Bond and makes a *grandiflora*-like neat spreading tree, which at White House Farm was smashed to a stump by the 1987 storm and has since recovered to make a balanced tree of around 25ft. It grows perfectly well in the open and bears cup-shaped fragrant flowers from June right into the autumn. Out of flower it is an attractive evergreen anchor plant in the garden.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

Whatever happened to Powdery Mildew? ... And the research at RBGE? Are we all spraying? Will *R. cinnabarinum* species and hybrids gradually disappear from our gardens? See Members Notes on page 5!

I see that the BBC is still propagating the myth about "Rhododendrons poisoning the soil"! In their recent late evening programme on wildlife with Bill Oddie, they again repeated that the pest of 'Rhododendrons' in the countryside poisoned the soil. How can we counter this calumny?

Unfortunately, I only heard about 20 seconds of the programme and, going away the next day, was unable to write or E-mail them with a correction or complaint.

Now that we have three issues a year, I need letters, reports from branches, articles etc, to keep the members up to date! So, please send me your copy for the October issue by 21st September. Send to:

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The Spinney,
Station Road,
Woldingham,
Surrey, CR3 7DD.
Tel. & Fax: 01883 653341 or E-mail: jr.eye@virgin.net.

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OBITUARIES

H.H.Davidian

We report with sadness the death of Mr 'David' Davidian, on 15th April 2003, one of the world's leading authorities on the genus Rhododendron.

Mr Davidian was educated in Cyprus and began his teaching career there. He went on to the University of Beirut, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts. He came to this country to the University of Edinburgh, where he studied Botany and graduated with an Honours degree in this subject in 1946. Immediately after graduating he began to assist the late Dr Cowan in his work on the taxonomy of the Genus Rhododendron.

The Royal Horticultural Society have honoured Mr Davidian twice for his work in the species Rhododendron. In 1961 he was awarded the Veitch Memorial Medal and in 1962 he was awarded the Loder Rhododendron Cup.

For more than 40 years, he was associated with the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, and for many years was this Group's guide and mentor. He was, of course widely known for his expertise and for his major work "The Rhododendron Species".

A fuller appreciation of his life and work will be appearing in the next issue of the Yearbook in early 2004.

Dr Homer Salley

In Memoriam - A Personal Reminiscence.

Dr Homer Ellison Salley, who died in January 2003, was Professor at the University of Toledo, and lived in a geodesic dome house surrounded by his large woodland garden in Kentucky. He specialised in growing the very hardy rhododendron species and cultivars, and toured widely to study gardens in the British Isles as well as in USA and Canada; Homer and Sally, his wife, came on two of our Spring Tours. I recall that the Tour which started in Scarborough began with a disaster for Homer and Sally, because their hire-car was stolen overnight, and it contained not only most of their luggage, but also the precious notes Homer had made during a week's research at RBG Edinburgh,

A keen photographer, he always carried his camera. It was, however, the photographs taken by Harold Greer, a well-known nurseryman, which were mainly used to illustrate "RHODODENDRON HYBRIDS" by Homer E Salley and Harold E Greer in 1986. I have the second edition, which they brought out in 1992 with 592 different photographs and additional material. In this book Homer gives the pedigree of some 5000 rhododendron hybrids, tracing the hybrid parentage back to the original species; and I believe that Sally typed all the information; it is a comprehensive and highly valued work of reference, and a book that I often turn to for answers to hybrid enquiries.

Homer was a member of the ARS, The Rhododendron Species Foundation, and an Honorary Life Member of The RHS Rhododendron Group. At a time when banks charged hugely to transact money from one country to another, he collected the subscriptions of our American members for us, and promoted The Group in the USA. As well as his vast knowledge, we appreciated his warmth and gentle manner, and his sense of fun.

Joey Warren

Mrs Betty Jackson (Betty French)

died on 6th June 2003.

Betty, widow of Charles Jackson, was The Rhododendron Group's Secretary when I joined the Group, and from old Bulletins I find she was introduced as the new Hon. Secretary in July 1982. She had been a member for a long time, and went on the Spring Tours and Autumn Weekends.

A clever botanist, with a great love of rhododendrons, small and slender, amusing, and witty with a light touch, she served the Group well for 8 years. Latterly arthritis in her hands prevented her from taking minutes, and Cynthia Postan became Minutes Secretary.

In 1988 Betty married Jock French, an old friend of hers and Charles, and moved from her beloved, prestigious flat in the Temple, to Brighton. 2 years later, because of the travelling and her arthritis, she resigned as Secretary, and handed over Hon. Secretaryship to me, and she helped me a lot.

The Chelsea Physic Garden was another of her loves, and she continued to be involved there, after giving up on the Rhododendron Group Committee.

Joey Warren

SEED DISTRIBUTION

Tony Weston

Seed List Specialities – the following items were reported in the last issue of the Bulletin.

“Camellia xylocarpa - a new introduction

So if you are interested in this rarity, please **get in touch with Tony Weston with your bid.”**

The bidding was won by

Mrs Margaret Miles and Mr Peter Betteley.

We wish them every success with germination.

The last Bulletin also discussed the raising of Magnolias from seed:

“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.”

The Editor is pleased to report that from 5 packets of seed from the Group list, he has 21 seedlings (now about 6-8 inches tall (150-200mm.) - with one further, destroyed by squirrels! The most prolific, with 8 seedlings, is *M. sprengeri* ‘Copeland Court’.

TOURS

Valerie Archibald

Report on the Spring Group Tour 2003 to Belgium – 30th April to 4th May 2003.

by Philip Evans

Some 20 members travelled to Brussels on April 30th, most by the wonderful Eurostar which, two and a half hours after pulling out of Waterloo, deposited us at Brussels Midi Station. A short ride to our first destination, the National Botanic Garden of Belgium at Meise, not far from the Belgium Royal Family's Residence. By now we had been joined by Elena Doubnova, a Russian member of the Group and two friends. We were very adequately housed and fed, for the first two nights at a country hotel in northern Flanders, and for the second two, further south in the charming University town of Leuven.

Chris van Pelt, our hard working local tour organiser and guide, had selected an excellent combination of gardens, public and private, for us to visit. The distinguished botanical collection of Kalmhout Arboretum and Jelena De Belder-Kovacic's garden, both near the Dutch border, contrasted well with Tony Suffeile's virtually monotypic garden in the Province of Limburg, the passion of a man fascinated by the genus rhododendron and its' hybridising potential. The Arboretum of Bokrijk, nearby, proved to contain (amongst much else) an excellent collection of modern magnolia varieties.

For some, the tour's highlight may well have been Herkenrode, which contains Philippe de Spoelberch's magnificent garden and the adjoining arboretum he has created. Philippe is, of course, a member of the Group and it was a great pleasure for us all to be taken around by him and, despite the April frosts, see a considerable number of his yellow magnolias still in flower. Earlier in the day we had visited his sister's garden, the Potager de Wespelaar, which adjoins Herkenrode.

And then on the final day we travelled towards Ghent to see two private gardens containing very personal collections - in the morning that of Dr Antoon Declercq, a skilled propagator and rhododendron hybridiser, and in the afternoon, of Albert De Raedt, another member of our Group, and an expert on hardy Ghent azaleas.

For a most successful and very enjoyable tour, our thanks must go to Chris van Pelt, and especially to Valerie Archibald, who organised it under sad and difficult personal circumstances.

The Magnolia Society

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

Final details are now available for this exciting Tour, which includes many of the best gardens and sights in both the North and South Islands.

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

The costs, including flights via Los Angeles, are confirmed as £2148 or £2698 respectively.

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**

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

In Northumberland

Thursday 9th to Sunday 12th October 2003.

Programme commences on Thursday 9 October:

Gather at Marriott Hotel, Gosforth Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, for Dinner - followed by an Informal Talk on Longframlington Gardens, by Hazel Huddleston

Friday 10 Oct

By Coach to Longframlington Gardens

Lunch and guided tour of Alnwick Gardens & Castle.

Howick Hall Gardens.

Return to Hotel for Dinner, and Lecture - to be confirmed.

Saturday 11 Oct

By Coach to Chester's Walled Garden, then Lunch.

Belsay Hall, Wallington Gardens.

Return to Hotel for Dinner.

Sunday 12 Oct

By Coach to Birkheads Cottage Garden

Durham Botanic Garden

Return to hotel by way of Newcastle mainline station and Airport if needed

Total cost: £265 per person, plus £25 single supplement

£50 deposit to Pat Short, ICS, 41 Galveston Road, London SW15 2RZ by 30 July.

Please make cheques payable to International Camellia Society.

The Group Spring Tour - to Scotland. At the end of April/beginning of May 2004.

Next year's Tour will be to the West Coast of Scotland. It is anticipated to include **Eckford** and the **Younger Botanic Gardens**; not visited by the Group for some years, and **Crarae** (which was visited by the Group in 1998 but is now being run by a Trust, and some changes and additions have been made). Another garden we have not visited for some

time is **Ard-Daraich** which belongs to Lady Edith MacClaren who has kindly invited us, and it is now managed by her son, Norrie MacLaren. We will want to see **Arduane** again, it is such a wonderful garden. Mr Matt Heasman of the Scottish Rhododendron Society, has kindly suggested several **private gardens**, two at Appin, and details will be given of these when the whole programme is finalised. We hope to be able to go as far north as **Inverewe**, as this is another famous garden not visited by the Group for some years.

Complete details and the full programme should be available by August, and will of course be published in the next Bulletin (October). If you wish to book now, send a deposit of £30 per person; the exact dates will depend on the availability of rooms at the hotels.

For further information, contact: **Valerie Archibald at Starveacre, Dalwood, E. Devon, EX13 7HH.**
Tel: 01404 881221.

MEMBERS NOTES

MUSINGS ON POWDERY MILDEW

from Michael Jurgens

I am not a botanist let alone a chemist or pathologist but I am a rhododendron lover and we have been infested with powdery mildew for a number of years. I have long been trying to eradicate or prevent it but with little lasting success.

In our garden in Silchester (between Reading and Basingstoke) we suffer badly on a few plants and slightly on many. **The worst affected** groups of rhododendrons are:

1. 'Cynthia', 'Pink Pearl', 'Anna Rose Whitney'.
- 2 'Lady Bessborough', 'Jalisco', 'Bishopsgate'.
3. *hemsleyanum*, *serotinum*.
4. *cinnabarinum* Blandfordiiiflorum Group, *cinnabarinum concatenans*, 'Alison Johnstone'.

Other species infected with us are *wardii litiense* Group, *cyanocarpum*, and *thompsonii*.

Can we learn anything from their genes?

'Cynthia's parents are *catawbiense* x *griffithianum*. 'Pink Pearl' has as a parent 'George Hardy' which is the reverse cross of 'Cynthia'. There is a definite connection there. 'Lady Bessborough', 'Jalisco' and 'Bishopsgate' are also similarly connected through the first (*fortunei* ssp *discolor* x *campylocarpum*), but 'Marcia', planted next to 'Lady Bessborough' is scarcely infected and this is three quarters *campylocarpum* so perhaps that is not to blame.

R. hemsleyanum and the newly named *serotinum* are seriously infected with us which rather points the finger at other members of the *fortunei* family. Of these the *ssp fortunei* and *ssp discolor* are the worst but *ssp fortunei* is also a parent, with *griffithianum*, of the 'Loderi' group and fortunately with us these are scarcely affected.

Among the Lepidotes, some of the Cinnabarinums are particularly prone, C. Blandfordianum Group suffers badly as does 'Alison Johnstone' (C. Concatenans Group) but others such as the 'Orange Bill' (cw) are hardly affected. It is a shame that 'Lady Rosebery' and 'Lady Chamberlain' (*cinnabarinum* ssp *cinnabarinum* x *maddenii*) barely survive even at Exbury. They are not worth the effort with us.

But there is no logic here. We have 'China' and 'Idealist' side by side. 'China' (*wightii* x *fortunei* ssp *fortunei*) is badly infected but 'Idealist' (with *wardii*, *griffithianum*, *fortunei* and *thompsoni* in its ancestry) is hardly affected and blooms profusely.

My wife is a confirmed rosarian and is now convinced that roses with black spot should be excluded from the garden and not just continuously dosed with expensive chemicals that are getting more difficult to find. Should we, therefore, do away with all the above named patients and enjoy the rest that are immune or not so badly infested? 'Vivian Richards' has already been incinerated by several nurseries.

Or should we only concentrate on rhododendrons that don't get it? Which are they? Firstly, almost all those with indumentum - hairy or plastered - seem to be immune. So are almost all the giants with large leaves of the Falconeri and Grandia series. Similarly we have little trouble with members of the Arboreum, Argyrophyllum or Maculifera families. Of the lepidotes we find the Triflorums including Yunnanense and Oreotropes alliances are clean.

What are we going to do - burn or spray? Firstly, I have started thinning our enormous clumps of 'Cynthia' and 'Pink Pearl'. I have cut them in half and taken all the dead wood out of the middle to allow the air to circulate. I am sure this is sensible. I will also take the tops out of the largest to let them break again. Then I won't feel that I am spraying half of Hampshire.

With what to spray? Graham Ferguson tells me he has eradicated powdery mildew from his garden with alternate spraying with Nimrod-T and Systhane. But Nimrod T, for amateur use, will be phased out by April 2004. So it was with interest that I listened to the lecture on the subject by Stephan Helfer at the Rhodo '02 Conference at the RBGE last summer. He bombarded us with science and showed what the horrible stuff looked like magnified 100 times (very scary). But he could not tell us the brand names of the Propicanazole products he recommended.

As for me, I am going to experiment spraying with Twist, the highly recommended Trifloxystrobin fungicide made by Bayer and sold for use on wheat and barley. It is said to reactivate itself when the leaves are moistened, which in our rainy climate sounds miraculous. It is also said to have systemic qualities so maybe we won't have to spray so much next year. As for dosage, I am following the

recommendations on the box as concentrations for arable use is unlikely to hurt shrubs. I'll report again next year but in the meanwhile I am hoping to find out where and under what name I can buy Propicanazole.

The Editor and the writer would welcome comments and to hear the experiences of others on the issue of Powdery Mildew.

RHODODENDRONS

Christopher Fairweather

Getting to know Vireya Rhododendrons

Among the luxuries that we, in the twenty first century, can enjoy is the growing of exotic plants which none but the very rich could have hoped to sustain before modern conservatories became affordable. Nowadays you can if you wish, recreate a tropical wonderland at home, by cultivating some of the living gems that originate in faraway lands.

One such jewel of a plant seems ready now to regain the highly fashionable status, which it enjoyed towards the end of the nineteenth century. The vireya Rhododendron is very suave and stylish, and its flower shapes avoid the blowsy excesses that characterised so much Victorian plant breeding. Many of the flower colours that Vireyas present also manage to achieve a boldness and subtlety.

A new enthusiasm for Vireyas is arising now, from the ease with which they can be maintained in conservatories that probably boast double glazing, heating, good ventilation and irrigation, or at least some of those facilities. After all they are tropical plants, but adapt surprisingly well to our different climate.



Rhododendron Vireya 'First Light'

All the vireya photographs are by Christopher Fairweather

Vireyas have revived in modern awareness less readily than orchids probably just because they are members of the Rhododendron family, which is much associated in most minds with the hardy hybrids and species and their outdoor springtime displays. In fact vireyas form a major part of that family: about 300 of the total 900 species. They come to us broadly from the Indonesian region, and were known from the time that European exploration began there as East Indian Rhododendrons.

Various characteristics distinguish the vireyas from their hardy relations. Most important, of course, they are not hardy and will not tolerate any frost. Their flowering time can be erratic, they follow no particular season and various hybrids can be relied on to flower through the year. It is quite possible to have vireya rhododendrons in flower on midsummer's day, and again on Christmas day.



Rhododendron Vireya 'Just Peachy'

So how easy are they to grow? If you follow a few simple rules they are in fact very easy.

To understand, and learn how to grow Vireyas, it is useful to consider how they grow in the wild. They are in many cases epiphytic, and can be found growing high in the fork of a jungle tree, and others on old tree stumps. On the ground, you would expect to find them rooted in well-drained, open soil, typically in a clearing with good light. The equatorial rainforest keeps them watered with a daily downpour, which drains away quickly.

So what are the rules to ensure successful vireyas in our cool climate?

1. Protect from frost. Vireyas will withstand surprisingly low temperatures. I have left them in an unheated conservatory through the winter where temperatures drop to only a few degrees above zero.

2. Good drainage is essential. Plenty of bark and coarse peat is useful to create really open well-drained acid compost. Something more akin to an orchid mix.

3. Watering. During the growing season (March to October) keep the compost moist. Vireyas will not tolerate

waterlogged conditions. It is better to allow plants to get quite dry between applications of water. In winter it is best to keep plants quite dry.

4. Good air circulation is essential, especially during the winter months. A small fan installed in your greenhouse or conservatory can help to keep your plants healthy.

5. Feeding. Vireyas respond well to feeding during the growing season. The easiest solution is to add slow release fertiliser to the potting compost. Otherwise use a suitable liquid feed such as Tomorite every three or four weeks during the growing season.



Rhododendron Vireya 'Gwenevere'

6. Pruning. Essential to ensure a bushy plant. This is best done in the early spring when the vireyas are starting to grow. Pinching young shoots can also help to make a well-shaped plant.

7. Containers. Plastic, clay or ceramic pots are all suitable so long as they have plenty of good drainage holes in the bottom. Many of the lower growing vireyas thrive in hanging baskets.

If you follow these simple rules you should have few problems with Vireyas, they are surprisingly disease free. Greenfly and mealy bug are the only two insect pests that can appear. Keep them inside a conservatory or greenhouse when there is a danger of frost, and outside in their pots when the weather is warm.

CAMELLIAS

Brian Wright

Kunming Reticulatas - A Collection

The Group's collection of reticulata camellias for planting at Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens in Dorset is progressing steadily. More information should be available in the next Bulletin.

Yellow magnolias in Belgium in May 2003

The Group tour of Belgium was even more interesting than expected, and I was excited to see many new and attractive yellow magnolias. The ones that stick in my mind are:

Daphne

Raised by Philippe de Spoelberch at Herkenrode, this is a small semi-fastigiate tree with flowers of a good yellow and a similar size to Miss Honeybee. The first flowers open before the foliage, but the later ones stand out from the foliage so the tree looks like a child's drawing of a lemon tree from a distance. Small enough for all but the tiniest garden, this must have great future.



M. 'Daphne' (Herkenrode)

John Rawling

Yellow Bird

At Herkenrode this was flowering with the foliage and looked very similar to Daphne, but more rounded in growth and on a larger scale.

Banana Split

Again raised at Herkenrode, its flowers are held well clear of the open foliage. They are large, curved (like a banana) and a good yellow with some pink shades. The name is a good one! The habit of growth is similar to *M. soulangeana*.



M. 'Banana Split'

Mike Robinson

Sunsation

A great cross from the late Auggie Kehr in the USA; this has really large flowers of a shade almost as deep as a daffodil. It is said to be late flowering, so probably doesn't flower before the leaves are open, but even with this deficiency it was a spectacular young tree in Antoon Declercq's garden near Ghent.

LETTERS

A sporting azalea!

Dear Editor,

A year or two ago I bought a white Azalea from a market garden stall in Bantry. It has one bright pink branch and another two branches which are half pink - the rest is pure white. Is this unusual? I have certainly never seen an Azalea or Rhododendron similar. I enclose a photograph which clearly shows the colouring.



H.V.Gardiner.

Lauragh, Co. Kerry, Eire

BRANCH REPORTS

Norfolk Branch

Jane Idiens

The Norfolk Branch enjoyed two events this spring. On Saturday 3rd May three woodland gardens in the village of Aylmerton, on the acid soil of the Cromer - Holt ridge in North Norfolk welcomed members and friends. Beaconswood, (Mr & Mrs Idiens), Withern, (Mr & Mrs Mitchell), and Wildwood (Mr & Mrs Brittain), share similar settings, but widely contrasting treatment. Early May is a magical time here, and the gardens looked beautiful. Withern and Wildwood are also open under the National Gardens Scheme for the first time this year. Teas were enjoyed at Wildwood later.

On Sunday 11th May we visited the extraordinary garden of Kenneth and Gillian Beckett at Stanhoe, near Kings Lynn. Some 2000 species are crowded into just under one acre, and thrive in the micro-climate created there. Ken has a particular interest in trees and shrubs, especially those less

commonly grown. For example, among the trees are *Poliothyrsis*, *Emmenopterys*, *Parriottiopsis*, *Tetracentron*, *Davidia*, *Hoheria* and *Eucalyptus* (10 species). Among the shrubs are 23 species of *Viburnum*, 15 of *Olearia* and *Lonicera*, about 30 *Hebe*, 8 *Pittosporum*, plus singles of such genera as *Heptacodium*, *Jamesia*, *Rostrinucula*, *Crinodendron*, *Decaisnea* and *Vestia*. There are about 40 species of *Rhododendron*, and 50 of various conifers. Most of the plants have been raised from seed collected by Ken in the wild, notably many from New Zealand, South America and China. Ken holds the Veitch Memorial Medal for his contribution to horticulture, in particular for his contribution to horticultural literature. The visit was a rare treat for the plant lover, and we are indebted to Ken and Gillian for their kindness.

SE Branch

Everard Daniel

We began this Spring with our buffet supper and talk at Ardingly College, given by Keith Rushforth, who showed us a large number of very informative slides of plants that he has seen and collected from the wild. Chris Loder did sterling work repeatedly unblocking the projector with a carving knife!

Our visit to our Branch Chairman's garden gave us a chance to buy and sell our surplus plants and to enjoy his large collection of Magnolias at their best. Many of us found it especially interesting to compare many of the Jury hybrids, well established and growing side-by-side.

For the first time, our Show was held at Borde Hill Gardens and so was able to be opened to the public for the Sunday. It was well-supported, with over 100 competitive entries, and three nurseries and two big gardens having stands. We have 25 classes and the winner in each class collects a plant kindly donated by our sponsors. The Magnolia Cup went to Mike Robinson, the Camellia Cup to Peter Betteley and the Rhododendron Plate and Banksian Medal for most points in the Show was presented to Sarah Bray and High Beeches Garden.

Our garden visit took the form of an Azalea Day, starting at Sheffield Park where Jim Inskip showed us the National Collection of Ghents, sharing with us much of his fascination and researches into this group. We went on to High Beeches for lunch and a discussion and identification session, and ended at Loder Plants where a wide range of these and other azaleas could be admired and purchased.

New Forest Branch

Robin Whiting

Our first visit in late April was to the garden of Michael Jurgens at Silchester. Michael and his wife have lived there for 30 years and had worked hard to achieve the splendid results. They escorted us on our tour of the garden and pointed out some of the many notable plants, amongst which were a very fine *Rhododendron 'Penheale Blue'* and a superb *rubiginosum*. The camellias, although near the end of their

season, were lovely and seemed to be having a bumper year. An outstanding one was the hybrid 'Spring Festival'.

No garden should stand still and it was pleasing to see new areas being developed. A huge 'Pink Pearl' had been cut back to allow fresh planting of young rhododendrons. Other areas were being similarly extended and planted up.

Our hosts very generously provided us with refreshments, both before, and after the tour of the garden.

In late May we went to Minterne in Dorset. The weather was pleasant when we arrived but after coffee with Lord and Lady Digby, the heavens opened, and it rained solidly during the remainder of our visit.

The garden was laid out in the 18th century and a stream, which flowed through the garden, had been dammed to make a series of small lakes and cascades. Many of the rhododendrons and trees here originated from the early plant collecting expeditions, including several Davidias. An interesting rhododendron hybrid raised at Minterne but never named was *R. xanthocodon x keysii* with lovely orange yellow tubular flowers. Further on in the lower part of the garden near the stream, were several *R. 'Loderi'* hybrids, but their scent was lost to the dismal conditions. Inevitably as soon as we reached our cars the rain stopped.

MEMBERSHIP

Miranda Gunn

We are delighted to welcome the following new members, (since the publication of our Members List in March). Membership has now passed 800, for the first time!

Miss B.Barry, (SE) 1 Fife Court, Links Road, Hanger Hill Garden Estate, London W3 0EL.

Miss R. Brian, (SW) Ivy Cottage, Cross, Croyde, North Devon EX33 1PL.

Tel: 01271 340310 rosemary.brian@dcha.co.uk

Mr. Tim Clarke, Midridge, Hopton Wafers, Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire DY14 6JA.

Tel: 01189 244760 tim.clarke@oracle.com

Mr. C.Cronin, (SE) 85c Balfour Street, London SE17 1PB
Tel: 0207 735 3704

Mr. A.N.L. Edgar, (SE) Penhurst Field, Penhurst, Nr. Battle, East Sussex TN33 9QN.

Tel: 0207 600 1000 andrewnledgar@aol.com

Mr H.T.J.Evans, Glebe House, Cunnery Road, Church Stretton, Shropshire SY6 6AQ.

Tel: 01694 722100 gardenboy1@mac.com

Mr. Bob North, (SE) 6 Lambourne Close, Furnace Green, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 6SW

Tel. 01293 563613 bob.north@thales-ttc.com

Mr. G.Schoeningh, (SE) 31-32 Ennismore Gardens, London SW7 1KE

Tel: 020 736 8422

Mrs. Olga Smirnova, (OS) Simferopolski Boulevard, 16-5-2
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smirnova_o@mail.ru

Mr B.J.Stagoll, Chair, Editorial Committee, Australian Rhododendron Soc.Inc.,
170 Knees Road Park Orchards, Victoria 3114 AUSTRALIA

Dr. A.Vincent, (SE) 60 Kenerne Drive, Barnet, Herts EN5 2NN.
Tel: 07775 650700 alistairvincent.l@btinternet.com

NOTICES

Joey Warren

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2003

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

Chairman: Mr Maurice Foster

23 people attended. **Apologies** were received from Mr Ted Brabin, Dr Alun Edwards, and Mr John Sanders.

Before giving his report, the Chairman called for the Meeting to stand in silence in memory of Mr Bruce Archibald, the longest-serving chairman of The Rhododendron Group, who had died recently.

The Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2002, which were printed in Bulletin No. 80, October 2002, page 11, and inserted page, were agreed to be a true record and were signed by the Chairman.

Two Honorary Life Members had also died recently, Mr H H Davidian, and Dr Homer Salley.

Chairman's Report

Lady Cynthia Postan, editor for 9 years of the Yearbook, and of "The Rhododendron Story" which marked 50 years of publishing the Yearbook, had been awarded The Loder Cup.

Membership of the Group now stands at 790, the highest ever. The Group stands between a rock, in that it can only recruit from RHS members, and a hard place, in that it has no means of reaching those RHS members. Promotion in the open market must continue. The Leaflet has been reprinted, and many gardens and nurseries stock them.

Portable Exhibition Display. A professionally produced unit, thanks to Mike Robinson, to be used at every opportunity.

Website. Thanks are due to Mike Robinson and Chris Callard, and it has achieved 9,000 hits since it was started.

It incorporates hotline news. and all award winning plants.
Contributions and suggestions welcome

Yearbook. Published to a very high standard, as our flagship benefit and recognition symbol. Thanks are due to Pam Hayward, our Yearbook Archivist, with a sales and exchange facility, has found scarce back numbers of the Yearbook.

Bulletin. In its new format it has reverted to 3 times a year, partly funded by advertisements, thanks to Brian Wright. John Rawling wants articles, letters, views, to promote sharing of knowledge and information among members

Seed List is the best we have ever had, much of it is rare, and mainly donated by 3 contributors. Tony Weston runs it very effectively.

Tours. Thanks to Valerie Archibald, last year's Tour to Germany was very good and the high quality of their rhododendrons taught us not to be too smug about rhododendrons in the UK. The autumn get-together with the ICS in south Wales was much enjoyed. The Spring Tour to Belgium starts tomorrow, and the autumn weekend is being organised by ICS in the North of England. The 2004 Tour is to Scotland.

Branches. A very busy programme of visits, shows and lectures, enabled members to talk plants throughout the country. Regional meetings are what the Group is all about.

Conservation Plantings. In addition to rhododendrons at Wisley, at Ramster and the large-leaf wild-collected rhododendrons at Abbotsbury to commemorate John Bond, we now have *Magnolia x loebneri* cultivars planted at the Harcourt Arboretum against a backdrop of *R. ponticum*. *Camellia reticulatas* are being sought; Mr and Mrs Short of

ICS obtained some scions of Kunming varieties for the Group and Brian Wright is in charge of grafting. Future suggestions include a collection of maddenia rhododendrons.

Links with RHS have been made firmer; they have appointed Chris Weddell, Senior Horticulturist, and Jennie Lowe, Publicity, who are working with Committees and Groups, and giving active support to the Forrest centenary events next year.

Treasurer's Report (Accounts enclosed.)

The income and expenditure account, and the balance sheet, were tabled. Mr Gates spoke on these accounts, referring to Seed Sales, which will be in next year's accounts, although the amounts given to Seed Collectors are in this year's accounts. The Bulletin costs have increased, for a much improved product. Publicity expenses are higher, due to the promotional leaflets. Mr Gates was thanked for sorting out the previous muddle.

Postal Vote

55 completed voting forms were received by the Secretary, confirming all officers in post, and re-electing

Dr R H L Jack and Miss C E Perring to the Committee. The vacancy on the Committee had been offered to Mr Rupert Ely, whose reply was awaited.

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Election of Auditors

The RHS Auditors were again elected.

Any Other Business

No notification of items for discussion had been received.

Thanks were given to Mrs Daphne Weston for her help in packeting the seeds.

Date of Next Annual General Meeting:

Tuesday, 27th April 2004, at 2 pm, in RHS Lawrence Hall.

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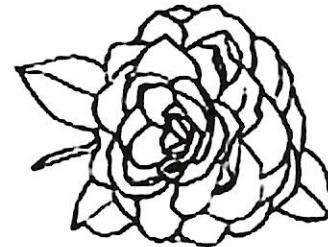
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FORTHCOMING EVENTS – 2003

Date	Organiser/branch	Event	Contact
July			
July 12th	South East	Annual Propagation Day, at Hindleap Lodge, Forest Row, Sussex	Mike Robinson 01342 822745
September			
Sept.16th	Group	Executive Committee	Joey Warren 01822 854022
October			
Oct. 9th -12th	Group/ICS	Autumn Weekend in Northumberland	Pat Short, ICS 020 8874 4633
Oct. 19th	Wessex	Members Afternoon at the Garden of Lady Adam Gordon, Littleworth	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
Oct. 19th	South East	Visit to Ivy Hatch, Nr. Sevenoaks, the Garden of Group Chairman Maurice Foster	Mike Robinson 01342 822745
November			
Nov. 15th	Wessex	Talk by David Millais at Wisley on the Rhododendron Nurseries of Germany	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
Nov.25th	Group	Executive Committee	Joey Warren (as above)

Magnolia x loebneri. The Group collection planted at the Harcourt Arboretum, Oxford.

26th March was a beautiful sunny morning for the official planting of the Group's collection of as many of the *Magnolia x loebneri* cultivars available at the present time.

Due to illness and other reasons, only a few members were able to be present to witness the event, along with the Curator, Louise Allen, and the Arboretum Supervisor, Piers Newth.

The plants had been very carefully planted and the final cultivar, *Magnolia x loebneri* 'Donna' was planted by our Chairman, Maurice Foster.

Already planted were *Magnolia* 'Leonard Messel', 'Merrill', 'Pirouette', 'Powder Puff', 'Raspberry Fun', 'Snowdrift' 'Spring Snow', 'Star Bright', 'Wildcat'; ten in all, with 'Ballerina' to come.

On a recent visit to the Arboretum at the end of May, all were growing enthusiastically, except for the plant of 'Snowdrift' which will need replacing in the next planting season.

The arboretum is well worth a visit, with a splendid collection of conifers and magnolias plus many other trees and shrubs from around the world.



Maurice Foster plants *M. x loebneri* 'Donna', assisted by Piers Newth, Louise Allen and the Hon. Editor, as well as Rosemary Foster, who took the photograph.

Year Book Photographic Competition 2003

A reminder, that the Competition is again to be held in 2003.

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. Entries must be **submitted by 31st July** to: Philip Evans, Hon Yearbook Editor, West Netherton, Drewsteignton, Devon, EX6 6RB.