



# *The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group*

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN - 86

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2004

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mike Robinson

Just past the equinox as I write, so the days are getting shorter at the maximum rate and the leaves are falling: winter approaches. There is autumn colour to enjoy, and a sharp reminder from the lumbar spine that this is peak planting (and worse, transplanting) time. Talk of the season of 'mists and mellow fruitfulness' fit well into a Stella Gibbons purple passage, but I think that most of us regret the passing of the light and warmth of summer.

Remarkably, however, for enthusiasts of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias this is one of the most exciting times of the year – it is the time to explore and find out what has set flower bud for the next season and what has set flower bud for the first time, providing us with the excuse to look at plants in detail. Returning from my round of the garden with glass in hand I see that AC221, a new big leaved species from Vietnam is going to flower again after its distorted first attempt last year (more taxonomy in prospect here), the last of the *R. Loderi* grafts done ten years ago will flower, a *M. campbellii* open pollinated seedling raised 13 years ago before I knew any better is to flower for the second time, and there is good bud set on the sasanquas raised from seed collected by a friend in Madeira. *R. lacteum* half way down the drive is trying to flower right now: it won't succeed, foolish plant, and there won't be anything left to flower properly in the spring. A cutting of *M. sprengeri elongata* has reached 4m and is still playing a waiting game, and the *R. 'Joycelene'* grafted in 1995 has been given a stern talking to. Next week I shall be able to look at them all again, and might even find something on the plants of the cross *R. 'Ring of Fire' x R. 'Moonwax'* that are in danger of being thrown away; both have brightly bicoloured flowers and the cross will almost certainly be absolutely horrible.

Even the pleasure of waiting for a variety we know to flower is considerable, and awaiting the flowering of a species collected in the wild, a close pollinated or even an open pollinated cross is something I would not want to be without. Many good varieties have arisen through open pollination: the photograph shows *M. 'Sweetheart'*, a chance seedling from the admittedly



An open pollinated seedling – *M. 'Sweetheart'*

Photo: Mike Robinson

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aistocratic M. 'Caerhays Belle', but what a flower, and what a tree! It was raised by Ron Gordon in New Zealand and introduced there by Peter Cave. It can be found occasionally in this country, and a fine plant is grown by Maurice Foster.

Remember Lionel de Rothschild's quotation 'do start hybridising – you get years and years of pleasurable anticipation, and only one day's disappointment - when your hybrid flowers for the first time'. In my experience of growing even open pollinated seedlings that one day's disappointment is rare.

What pleasure can be obtained from anticipation! I wonder if this isn't the best part of gardening. It is certainly something completely lost by those who have their garden designed for them, made over, and - Heaven help us – *finished!*

A big 'thank you' to all those members who took the time to let me have their views on the present and possible future activities of the Group. It is always a pleasure to receive responses from people who have put a great deal of thought into their replies. Although, regrettably, I can make no pretence that I have received a representative cross section of members' opinions, it does seem that our present activities are by and large regarded as satisfactory.

The secretary's response to queries was seen as a very important part of our activities, and we have decided to try to engage the offices of the regional chairmen to provide more local responses and support in the future. The Welcome pack for new members will be enlarged to include a few more cultural tips, short lists of recommended beginners plants and gardens to visit. Branch chairmen will be asked to contact new members and encourage their participation in Group activities.

The yearbook and the bulletin seem to be liked, but I have asked the editors to consult as to what topics appear in each – reports on Shows and on the group tours might, for example, be better reported more immediately in the Bulletin, with just highlighted plants reported annually in the Yearbook. The seed list is rightly highly regarded, especially by members abroad, and the Tours are very important to a dedicated number of our members.

Responses indicated a wish to engage in many new ventures –

- Creating an image library
- Plant identification
- Taxonomy
- Rescuing endangered taxa
- Establishing more Group collections in the farther parts of the country
- Running an annual conference

So we have a membership brimming with good ideas, but are still short of the personnel needed to carry them out, as will be exceedingly evident from the request for nominations enclosed with this bulletin, and once we have the volunteers we shall be able to translate more ideas into practice.

At present we shall limit new activities to the two most popular requests in the returns you sent in: we are very fortunate to have volunteers who are willing to take on the responsibility of supervising these.

### **The establishment of a plant exchange clearing house.**

I know that some members have many surplus seedlings from their own collections and from the Group seed exchange. Now is the chance for them to sell or exchange their spare plants and to provide others with the opportunity to expand their collections.

The Group is setting up a scheme in which its function will be to connect those with surplus plants to those who would like them: it will not get involved financially and will take no commission. Private individuals and nurserymen may take part, but they must be members of the Group and, in the rare cases where a plant is in great demand, preference will be given to members who pay their subscription by bankers order. The scheme will not be limited to rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias: any plants can be included.

Stephen Lyus, a member of the South East branch has generously agreed to supervise the scheme. He will arrange to list available plants on the Group website ([www.rhodogroup-rhs.org](http://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org)) and will prepare a printed list to be sent out annually with the yearbook.

If you have any spare plants please get in touch with Stephen Lyus: I have already sent him a preliminary list. The information he should have, with an example, is:-

<u>Genus:-</u>	<u>Rhododendron:-</u>
Species plus collector's number if any:	brevinerve AC 4296
Provenance (i.e. where the plant originally came from):	Yunnan
Type: *	wcs
Size (in cm. preferably):	20
Price if any:	£2.00
Source (i.e. where you obtained this plant):	Group seed ex.
Location (town or county):	E. Sussex

Clearly this represents the ideal, and all this information will not be available for every plant, but send what information you have!

The information can be supplied in any format, though an Excel spreadsheet would give Stephen the least amount of work. Please also say if you are prepared to swap plants and if you are willing to send plants through the post (the costs usually to be borne by the buyer).

If you want a plant on the list you should contact Stephen, who will check your membership status and send you contact details for the vendor.



Stephen's contact details are:-

Email: emailslyus@yahoo.co.uk

Address: 13, Manor Drive, Surbiton, Surrey, KT5 8NE

*\* for plant type I suggest the following abbreviations: -*

*g* graft, *c* cutting, *wcs* seedling from seed collected in the wild, *ops* open pollinated seedling, *cps* close pollinated seedling – deliberate cross, *self*, *selfed* – close pollinated from a plant of the same species or hybrid, *b*, bulb, *d* division.

#### **The creation of a data base of the location of rare plants.**

Many taxa, particularly the older hybrid rhododendrons and camellias, have disappeared from cultivation in the last century: the aim of this scheme is to prevent more losses by knowing where a rare plant is growing. We have no plans to launch such plants on to the market, but simply to establish a record of where they are. The database will be strictly limited to rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias.

Pam Hayward, who is already in charge of archive sales, has agreed to run this ambitious project to see if it is viable. Its success depends on those of us with rare plants taking a little time to list them and to communicate the list to Pam. Even if you have only one rare plant in your garden may I encourage you to do this. Initially records will be limited to plants with **no** entries in the RHS Plantfinder, but if you haven't access to this publication and think your plant is rare please send Pam its details anyway.

She will be storing the data on an Excel spreadsheet using essentially the same format as for the plant exchange scheme, though obviously the exact location of the plant must be added, instead of the price: the approximate size of the plant can help identify it, and the year of planting, if known, would be useful. If you can submit the data by email or on disk it will be easiest for her: she can accept data for Mac or PC, and in most formats: if in doubt please email her beforehand. Those of us with computerised records of our gardens have no excuse for not submitting details, but please do not let the lack of a computer prevent you joining in - a written note, even on the back of an envelope, is far, far better than nothing!

The database will only be available to members of the Group, and will not be communicated to third parties.

Pam's details are:-

Email: - woodtownpam@aol.com

Address:- Woodtown,

Sampford Spiney,

Yelverton.

Devon PL20 6LJ

Telephone and Fax:- 01822 852122

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### Obituaries

We are saddened to have to report the death of a prominent member of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia world.

#### Os. Blumhardt

Oswald Blumhardt died on the 25th July 2004. A Christian Scientist, he was a deeply religious man so it was probably appropriate he died in church one bright Sunday morning in Whangarei, North Island, New Zealand.

A keen botanist with a keen knowledge of a wide range of native plants, he was given the opportunity of botanising the rich south-east Asian flora of Borneo and Thailand. Although he was searching initially for new tender Rhododendron species, he came into contact with evergreen Magnolia and Michelia species which stimulated his interest. His extensive knowledge of plant breeding enabled him to pursue distinctive breeding lines with Magnolia 'First Flush' being the first hybrid to be named in the early 1980's. Recognising the respective values of *M. campbellii* and *M. liliiflora* suggested that selection from the original 100 seedlings from the initial cross would be of value. Four years after germination, one seedling produced bright pink blooms with only a hint of mauve to be seen. The outer tepals remained rolled into tubes which stuck out like spikes on a star. The first blooming saw the flowers criss-crossed on laterals, like shooting stars which suggested the name 'Star Wars'. Now regarded as one of the best magnolias, it has recently been awarded the Award of Garden Merit by the RHS.

During September 2003, The Magnolia Society International visited Os at his Koromiko Nursery and awarded him the prestigious Todd Gresham Award for his outstanding contribution towards our knowledge, understanding and promotion of the Genus and in particular the development of new and outstanding cultivars.

In keeping with all true plantsmen, he hadn't stopped hybridising, with 'Purple Globe', 'Mahogany Glow' and importantly 'Aurora', a *M. sargentiana robusta* x 'Star Wars' hybrid already in the pipeline for enthusiasts in the UK to crave for!

He is survived by his brother Albert, who was unaware of his brothers international reputation as a plant breeder - typical of Os's understated modesty.

He will be greatly missed by the international plant community. (Photo: see back page)

*Jim Gardiner*

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### Plant distribution

I am very pleased to see a plant exchange/distribution under way. I have propagated many species (and hybrids) rhododendrons over the last ten or twelve years and they are growing taller every year and taking up such valuable space.

They also become a huge chore at the time of the droughts over the last 2 years or so. I do hate to throw them away. I too have already sent Stephen Lyus a list!

### 2005 Main Rhododendron Competition.

The RHS have agreed that The Main Rhododendron Competition will again be held at **Borde Hill in 2005**. The date will be **April 23rd/24th**, a Saturday and Sunday. Staging from Friday 22nd. It will again be held in conjunction with the ICS Camellia Competition and the S.E.Branch Magnolia Competition.

I understand, that it is hoped that it will held in a different region of the country in 2006 and 2007.

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### SEED DISTRIBUTION

Chip Lima

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*Chip Lima writes:*

"I am the new convenor for the seed distribution, having taken over from Tony Weston. I have checked through the seed inventory, and I find that there isn't a single Camellia seed in the collection!

I am therefore seeking contributions for the seed bank from all members of the Group. 2004 has been a good year for seed set in some places in this country. Please can I have your seed by 1st January 2005."

My information is:

Chip Lima, 1 Robert Bruce Court, Larbert, Stirlingshire, Scotland, FK5 4HP. E-mail: [chiplima@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:chiplima@blueyonder.co.uk)

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### TOURS

Joey Warren

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#### 2005 SPRING TOUR

**- Sunday 17th to Saturday 23rd April 2005**

**North and West Devon with East and Mid Cornwall, by coach.**

Yes, there will be a Spring Tour in 2005. Joey Warren has agreed to run it and arrangements are well advanced. **This is the first and only announcement**, and some details may differ from those set out, but make an early decision to come and **let Joey know as soon as you can**.

The first two nights of the tour will be based at the Holiday Inn on **Plymouth Hoe**, overlooking The Sound and Mount Edgcumbe, which we will visit later. Cars may be left in the open-air hotel car park for the duration of the tour which will be by coach for full five days. Although the hotel has no swimming pool, the pools at nearby Plymouth Pavilions and at the Mayflower Sports Centre are within reach. Travel to and from Plymouth, other than by car on the M5, A303 and A38, is not difficult, using Virgin Cross Country or First Great Western trains and sleepers (not available on Saturdays), or flights via Exeter or Plymouth Airports. Details will be sent following registration for the tour.



On **Sunday**, there will be an evening sherry reception, followed by dinner, and John Bodenham will bring some of his vireya rhododendrons.

**Monday** is a journey eastwards, to **Lukesland** on the southern edge of Dartmoor, where a new pinetum adds to the Victorian valley garden of ponds and cascades planted with a stunning display of rhododendrons, camellias and azaleas, a great *Magnolia Campbellii* and a huge *Davidia involucrata*. Lunch will be at your own choice and expense at **Buckfast Abbey**, which boasts a good herbary. Then to **Higher Knowle**, a steeply-sloping granite-strewn woodland with rhododendrons, camellias and, particularly, magnolias. The day ends with dinner at the Plymouth hotel, following which will be a **talk**, by Peter Clough, on relevant Cornish families.

On **Tuesday**, the Cremyll foot ferry takes us to **Mount Edgcumbe**, holding the National Camellia Collection. The coach will have travelled by road to meet us there and take us to **Antony House**, the home of our President Sir Richard Carew-Pole, for the garden, lunch and the woodland garden, with its National Camellia Japonica Collection and fascinating views. The day will end at the excellent accommodation of the Arundell Arms Hotel at **Lifton** where dinner includes wine, and where we stay for three nights.

**Wednesday** is a busy day. **Lancarffe**, combining a formal garden with woodland planting of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias and a maple avenue. **Tremeer**, where, in the 1960's, and inspired by Mr E P J Magor, "*General Harrison possessed 1000 rhododendrons and 300 camellias, to which were added 200 Azaleas from Tower Court*". **Lamellen**, the subject of John Hammond's article in the ARS Journal of Summer 2004, and home of the late Major E Walter Magor, a founder of the Rhododendron Group. **Pencarrow**, meriting a long stay at some other time, but limited, on this occasion, to providing us with lunch. After dinner, an **illustrated talk** by Dr John Marston on his recent plant-hunting expedition in Sichuan.

**Thursday**, to **Werrington Park**, where the woodland was home to seeds and specimens brought home by the plant hunters for Caerhays and elsewhere. **Penheale Manor**, a house restored by Lutyens with plantings upon the advice of Gertrude Jekyll and with a woodland providing a home for rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. **Endsleigh House**, a "country cottage" by Jeffrey Wyatt with landscape by Humphry Repton for the Dukes of Bedford on the banks of the Tamar, with lakes, cascades and waterworks, due to be the grounds of an up-market hotel opening in May. Lunch will be at **Homeleigh Garden Centre**, near Launceston, with dinner again at Lifton.

**Friday** includes the longest coach ride to two gardens near Barnstaple. **Marwood Hill**, the famous garden of the late Dr Jimmy Smart and, after lunch in the Village Hall, we visit **Gorwell House**, a revived and new garden surrounding an 1825 house, with fine vistas and intimate corners. The last evening will be back at the Holiday Inn at **Plymouth**, to bid farewell to our coach driver, collect cars, take the evening train or the overnight sleeper, or enjoy a last dinner, bed and breakfast at the hotel.

**The tour will end on Saturday morning.**

Tour members returning east by car may care to visit, on their way, the gardens and nurseries of: Nigel Wright, **The Old Glebe**, Eggesford, off A377 south of Bideford, and/or Alan Mort, **Fast Rabbit Farm**, off A3182 west of Dartmouth, both well worth while and with plants for sale.

The Rhododendron Group is very privileged to be welcomed to these, mostly private, gardens and estates. They have been chosen for their variety and for their historical significance, as well as for the beauty of their gardens and plants but remember that some paths may be steep and slippery. Looking at the buds now, we should be in for a good flowering year but, as ever, some flowers will be over and others yet to come.

**The cost of the tour is not yet fully worked out but the price is likely to be between £470 per person for double/twin occupancy for 5 nights and £590 per person for single occupancy for 6 nights.** The tour price includes cost of bed, breakfast, morning coffee and dinner (with wine at Arundell Arms), 3 lunches, accommodation in twin/double or single rooms with bath or shower, for 5 or 6 nights, coach travel, entrance to 12 gardens and lecture fees. The price excludes personal expenses, bar drinks, cancellation and other insurances and any gratuities. There may be a charge for 5 or 6 nights parking at the Holiday Inn.

For full details of the tour, please contact **Mrs Joey Warren, Netherton, Buckland Monachorum, Devon PL20 7NL**  
**phone and fax 01822-854022**  
**e-mail WarrenJosephine@aol.com**

A deposit of £50 per person is requested, not later than **10th December**, and the full fee by **10th February**. Cheques should be payable to the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group. Joey cannot take money by credit card.

Members living locally to the tour may like to join it and, subject to space being available, will be welcome. Experience has shown that for the greatest benefit and enjoyment, the tour should be limited to a maximum of 30 persons. If space is available, the cost is expected to be about £20 per person per day, to cover tea, coffee, entrance fees and expenses. It would exclude accommodation, dinner, bed and breakfast, lunch, and coach travel, the latter being possible for an additional £10 charge. Prior booking will be essential and, if available, will be on a first-come first-served basis after the full-tour booking is closed.

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## MEMBERS NOTES

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### *Rhododendron coeloneuron* and *R. denudatum*

by Peter A. Cox

My first experience with so-called *R. coeloneuron* was on Erlang Shan in C.E. Sichuan in 1990. What we thought was this species turned out to be a very thick indumentum form of *R. wiltonii*. My next meeting was with seedlings from seed collected by



other people on Jinpo Shan in S. Sichuan and another batch from N. Guizhou.

Before these were mature enough to really consider them, I was out in C.S. Sichuan and N.E. Yunnan in 1995. Two collections were made in Sichuan from handsome foliaged plants with dark concave bullate leaves, with a grey-brown indumentum. These have proved to be very vigorous and upright in habit with rose-coloured spotted flowers in fairly full trusses. Scattered cut over plants were seen here and there in this terribly degraded Chinese forest.

Moving to the south of the Yangtze river into N.E. Yunnan, equally degraded, we found a different but seemingly related plant with less bullate convex leaves. Seedlings from this population have turned out similar to the collections from Jinpo Shan, and N. Guizhou. These are less vigorous and less formal in growth habit. Flowers have been similar but a little paler in a much more open floppy truss. It certainly appears that these plants can be referred to *R. coeloneuron*. But this species had been placed in subsection Taliensia which is obviously a mistake; it is quite different from any Taliensia species in its habit, foliage, flowers etc. Hence our confusion on Erlang Shan in 1990. Also, we were much more in Argyrophylla country; Taliensia run out to the north and west.

Now we have to consider where these two fit in with the rest of subsection Argyrophylla. *R. denudatum* is definitely close to *R. floribundum*, which differs in its narrower paler less shiny leaf upper surface, greyish indumentum, more purplish blotched flowers and is a less easy plant to grow satisfactorily as it so often has chlorotic foliage in cultivation.

We are left with the little known *R. farinosum* which does not appear to be in cultivation and yet overlaps in distribution. Chamberlain says it differs from *R. denudatum* in its blunt apex to its smaller leaves, less thick indumentum and white flowers. Other members of subsection Argyrophylla are not so closely related as these four species are to each other.

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## RHODODENDRONS

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*I am very grateful to Stephan Helfer and the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, for permission to publish this paper given by Stephan Helfer at The International Rhododendron Conference, Edinburgh, 2002.* Ed.

### **Rhododendron powdery mildew - a continuing challenge to growers and pathologists.** by Stephan Helfer

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh,  
20A Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5SL, UK

There appears to have been a resurgence of powdery mildew infection of rhododendrons in the recent past. This is probably mainly due to environmental factors, but at least in some cases a spread of the pathogens responsible for the disease can be assumed. Reports from growers in Scotland indicate that powdery mildew

has been on the increase during the past two years, mainly affecting known susceptible cultivars but also spreading out onto plants which have been considered resistant in the past. On the other hand, new pathogens have been discovered (one of the specimens collected 10 years ago has turned out to be a species new to science) and hitherto geographically confined species have been reported from new, previously unaffected areas. Thus the 'North American' species *Microsphaera azaleae* Braun has recently been found in Britain and notably in the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. The common 'British' *Rhododendron* powdery mildew continues to be an enigma, as it is still known only in its anamorphic (asexual) condition. Rhododendrons in North America have now also been found infected with this pathogen. Possible control measures are discussed and suggestions for future research strategies are presented.

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## Introduction

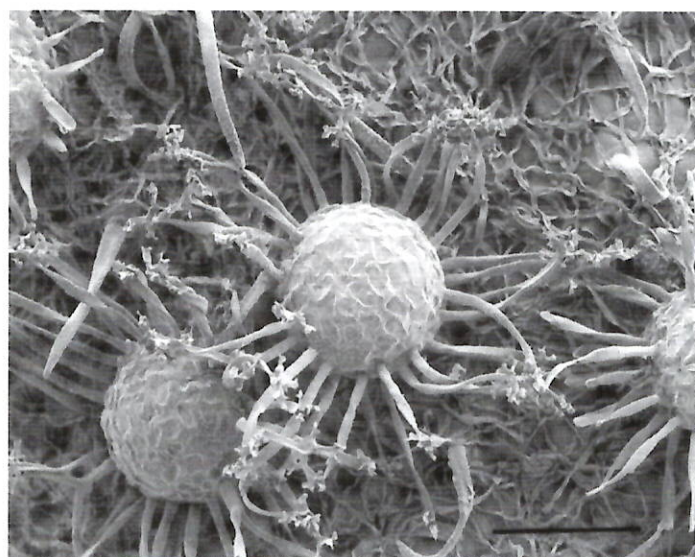
Powdery mildews, diseases caused by members of the Erysiphales, are still causing major problems in *Rhododendron* plantings in many parts of the globe (Farr *et al.* 1996). Problems with powdery mildew on this genus were first reported in 1955 (Anon., 1955). In the 1980s powdery mildew diseases became increasingly important to growers, and now 12 taxa of mildew pathogens have been described for this host (Table 1). Unfortunately it has not been possible to verify all of these, and Braun (1987) lists only five taxa with a possible sixth (our main pathogen).

*Erysiphe rhododendri* Kapoor, a pathogen which has been found only once in Sikkim, *Microsphaera azaleae* on North American deciduous azaleas and *M. izuensis* Y. Nomura from the Far East have been reported from wild-growing rhododendrons, with the latter two also occurring on cultivated species and hybrids. The other taxa have so far been found only on cultivated *Rhododendron*.

## Recent research and findings

At the International Rhododendron Conference in Bad Zwischenahn in 1992, two papers were submitted on the subject (Helfer, 1994; Kenyon *et al.*, 1994), and these provided the baseline of the recent research into these diseases. Most of the conclusions of the 1992 presentations are still valid, with some additional ideas on recommended control measures and pathogen taxa. A world survey on the problem was initiated, and results published in 1995 (Basden & Heifer, 1995, 1996). This highlighted the host range of the mildew pathogens as well as different environmental conditions favoured by some of the various pathogens involved. At that time 69 species and a further 123 hybrids or cultivars were found to be susceptible to mildew. The species most often mentioned were *R. cinnabarinum* Hook. f. and *R. thomsonii* Hook. f. However, no new light could be shed on where the current mildew epidemic might have originated. Further occurrence of powdery mildews on rhododendrons in cultivation has also been reported since from other localities in Europe (Braun, 1997).





*Rhododendron* powdery mildew caused by *Erysiphe (microsphaera) azaleae*: cleistothecia (SEM). Scale bar = 100µm

The biology of the main pathogen on British (outdoor) rhododendrons has been studied by Kenyon *et al.* (1994, 1995, 1997, 1998a, b, 2002) and others (Beales & Hall, 1994; Hall & Beales, 1998; Inman *et al.*, 2000). Kenyon *et al.* (1995) developed a method of sterile dual culture of the pathogen on micropropagated *Rhododendron* plantlets, which allowed a number of in-depth studies to be carried out. It transpired that pathogen development is favoured by cool temperatures in high humidity and at low light levels; this was attributed to higher disease resistance in plants under higher light levels and longer photoperiod (Kenyon *et al.*, 2002). Higher light levels and a longer photoperiod also induces the mildew to form appressoria less frequently, leading to overall smaller colonies.

In a further study selected fungicides were applied to plantlets *in vitro*. Eight fungicides were evaluated for activity against *Erysiphe* sp. using *Rhododendron ponticum* L. microplantlets grown *in vitro*. Pathogen development changed with both the type of fungicidal compound and the concentrations applied. The most active materials were fenpropidin and penconazole, which showed high activity at the lowest concentrations. Six of the compounds performed more effectively than a mixture of bupirimate and triforine (Nimrod T), the then standard recommendation for control of this pathogen on *Rhododendron*. All fungicides showed an effect on the sporulation of *Erysiphe* sp., with propiconazole, pyrazophos and triadimenol causing a significant increase in sporulation at the lowest concentrations. At higher concentrations, sporulation was significantly reduced by all treatments. No phytotoxic effects were detected with any fungicide at any concentration. The growth of plantlets in most treatments showed no significant difference from the untreated controls (Kenyon *et al.*, 1997).

**Table 1** Taxa of powdery mildew on *Rhododendron* spp.

<i>Oidium</i> sp. on <i>Rhododendron</i> sect. <i>Vireya</i> under glass
<i>Oidium</i> sp. on evergreen outdoor rhododendrons
<i>Oidium</i> sp. on deciduous outdoor azaleas
<i>Oidium eridnum</i> Erikss.
<i>Erysiphe polygoni</i> DC. reported from California and Virginia
<i>Erysiphe</i> sp. on outdoor rhododendrons ( <i>cinnabarinum</i> )
<i>Erysiphe rhododendri</i> Kapoor
<i>Microsphaera azaleae</i> Braun (outdoor azaleas, USA, Germany)
<i>Microsphaera digitata</i> Inman & Braun (/? <i>Mecogense</i> ex Belgium)
[ <i>Microsphaera vaccinii</i> (Schw. ) Cook & Peck]
[ <i>Microsphaera izuensis</i> Nomura]
[ <i>Phyllactinia guttata</i> (Wall.: Fr. ) Lév. ]

Currently recommended control measures of the powdery mildew problems include most of the older recommendations plus several additional observations (see Box 1). A number of rhododendrons have shown at least some lasting resistance. These are the dwarf rhododendrons, taxa of subsection *Triflora*, Asiatic rhododendrons such as *R. yakushimanum* Nakai (= *R. degronianum* Carriere ssp. ) and relatives, and subsection *Arborea*. Further feedback from growers is needed to complement this list. Recently the use of bicarbonate-based products has shown promise, as has treatment with propiconazole (Robson, 2000; Elmhirst, 2001; Pscheidt, 2001) and the phylloplane fungus *Ampelomyces quisqualis* Ces. ex Schltdl. (Pscheidt, 2001).

## Conclusions

Powdery mildews are continuing to cause extensive damage to rhododendrons. The nursery trade is particularly affected, as no economically viable control is possible at the moment. However, new control strategies are available to growers, and there are a number of resistant plants which can be exploited in breeding programmes. The taxonomy of the main pathogen (*Erysiphe* sp. ) on outdoor rhododendrons in Britain is still unresolved, as no cleistothecia have been observed so far. *Microsphaera azaleae*, hitherto known mainly from North American deciduous rhododendrons, has now spread to Europe including Britain, and appears to be increasingly problematic.



Box 1 Advances in control measures. Refinement of and additions to earlier recommendations

*Earlier recommendations (still) holding true*

- Where possible plant resistant cultivars
- Apply good hygiene
- Avoid over application of fertiliser (soft growth)
- Be vigilant, reacting to first signs of disease
- If necessary use sulfur-based fungicides

*New recommendations*

- If necessary use bicarbonate-based products
- Propiconazole products have been shown to be effective
- *Ampelomyces quisqualis* may be used for biological control

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Due to space and printing limitations, I regret that this printed article does not include all the tables, photographs, graphical figures and the references illustrating Stephan Helfer's paper.

The full paper is published in the Proceedings of Rhodo'02: "Rhododendrons in Horticulture and Science" published by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. This is available from the RHS Bookshop, Wisley, amongst others.

## LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Reading in the Yearbook of your invitation for members to submit transparencies of interest, I wondered if the enclosed photo taken earlier this year in my garden and showing that wonderful moment when a new seedling flowers for the first time, would fall into that category.

From time to time I like to make a few crosses and then wait patiently for the next few years to discover the result. It's a magic moment when a seedling flowers for the first time.

This particular rhododendron kept me waiting five years, a little longer than some, but is already budding up well for next year. The cross was made between R. 'Harkworth Premier' (white with a dark 'splodge') and that wonderful 'Yak' variety 'Hydon Dawn' and it seems to have kept many of the attributes of the latter, forming a nice dwarf plant and having some large heads of flower – even if the hoped for dark 'splodge' did not materialise!

I know that there are lots of pink *yakushmanum* hybrids but for me this one is that 'bit special', having rewarded me for my efforts with a unique plant which will hopefully grow up to give me pleasure for years to come.



Photo: David Stoneleigh

Although I only have a small garden, you may notice from the background of the slide that the azaleas and rhododendrons (including a number raised by me over the years), provide a wonderful splash of colour each May, despite being confined to containers or polythene lined holes in the ground. This being necessary to overcome the constraints of having a chalky soil.

David Stoneleigh,

Carshalton, Surrey.

## BRANCH REPORTS

### SE Branch

Barry Haseltine

Visit to The Malthouse

The Branch usually has an autumn garden visit to look at all the beautiful colours in a Member's garden, or one open to the public. This year the Autumn came on August Bank Holiday Monday, when about 15 of us went to Graham Ferguson's splendid garden at The Malthouse, Chithurst, Rogate, just outside Midhurst.

Most of the visitors fortified themselves before the visit in local hostelrys, after avoiding an exuberant Buddhist fete that had closed the nearest pub to the garden. The fortification was well justified, in the light of the somewhat hairy ride up the narrowest of lanes in order to reach the field in which Graham was waiting to greet us!

The garden lies in and around the house, which is in an almost sunken area at the foot of hills and undulating ground all around. The bulk of the garden is on a slope, sometimes quite severe, but all packed with trees and shrubs of all manner of types that provide interest, throughout the year. Hardiness does not seem to be a problem in this spot, as the members of our Branch were very surprised to find healthy and thriving examples of plants that are usually thought to be very unlikely to survive outdoors in the South East. There were three different species of Acacia – *A. dealbata subalpina*, *A. pravissima*, which flower every year, and a newly planted *A. pataczekii*.



In the summer, Graham's speciality is hydrangeas, of which he has over two hundred varieties, some inherited from his father in law, Michael Howarth-Booth, but Graham, together with his gardener Paul, has built up a magnificent collection containing many rarities. We had been warned that the date of the visit was likely to be a little late for many of the hydrangeas, especially as the very warm weather at times during the summer had brought them on quite early. So it was that many of them were fading fast, but there was still a lot of interest, and a number that were still more or less at their peak, for example macrophyllas such as the often planted and splendid *H. veitchii*, the wonderful *H. Beaute Vendomoise*, the elegant blue lace cap *H. Stourton Lace*, many cultivars of *H. paniculata*, *H. serrata* (for example *H. Mikanba gaku* with splendid shiny foliage), and some unusual species such as *H. hirta*. Plenty to see therefore, and we did not really miss the many hydrangeas that were over as there was so much else of interest – just the topography, layout, varieties of trees and surrounding scenery were enough to gladden the eye.

We were particularly taken with the number and variety of the rhododendron and camellia plants in the garden; we have already resolved to ask Graham for a visit in Spring, in a year or two's time. However, our Chairman's well known interest in late flowering rhododendrons was aroused by the number of late rhododendron flowers that could be seen throughout the garden.

Some of them, for example, the Howarth Booth hybrid R. 'Zannah' (an unregistered late flowering hybrid of *R. dichroanthum*) were just flowers a month or two late, but others were genuine very late flowering varieties. Considerable interest was generated by R. 'Leonore', seedlings from the original cross (*R. kwayi* x *R. auriculatum*) were given to the garden by Lionel de Rothschild, and the many hybrids of it have been raised in the garden. Outstanding were R. 'Leonore' x R. 'Argosy' and R. 'Leonore' x a late red from one of Graham's gardening friends. This is a beautiful cerise pink, and was in full flower for our visit – and surely an FCC plant.

Roses, or more particularly rose hips, abounded -some of the hips being of architectural shape. Climbers could be seen to great height, more or less obliterating the host plant from sight. At the end of the visit, Graham and his wife Alice provided us with very welcome cups of tea and home-made shortbread, served in front of the very old picturesque house, and in a welcome spell of warm sunshine. The Branch gave Graham three plants including a seedling of R. 'Beverly Lear' (R. 'Leonore' x R. 'Barclayi'), and a seedling of *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Bracken's Brown Beauty' by way of grateful thanks for an inspiring afternoon.

## SW Branch

Margaret Miles

A special day to celebrate the Centenary of George Forrest's first expedition was held at Caerhays Castle on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April. Some fifty members and friends enjoyed a tour of the main gardens highlighting some of the original introductions. After lunch Charles Williams led us through new areas recently planted with magnolias, and also a valley of large old plantings of camellias, rhododendrons and magnolias not normally open

to the public. The following day, Saturday 17<sup>th</sup>, members visited the garden of Sara and Graham Mills, (Graham is our new Group Webmaster) at Tregoning Mill near St. Keverne, a visit rescheduled from March due to the frosty weather. We were impressed by the progress made over ten years in this new garden and admired many magnolias, rhododendrons, and a wide variety of other plants.

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April saw our first Branch Show at Rosemoor, (See back page) an informal affair but rated a success by all who attended. Malcolm Pharoah kindly judged the classes and considered some entries equal to those at Borde Hill. Following lunch we visited the garden at Marwood Hill where we enjoyed an informative tour under Malcolm's guidance.

## Lakeland Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Society

Bill Revell

Many of our members work as volunteers in the 12-acre Holehird Gardens, near Windermere, which are run by the Lakeland Horticultural Society. This year's spring blossom was the best for many years, with *Magnolia* 'Caerhays Surprise' laden with its most attractive flowers from early April until late May. Light levels during the high summer months have been below normal and we also had a very wet August. It will be interesting to see what effect these unusual conditions have on next year's blossom; evidence suggests rather less flower buds and much more vegetative growth.

Our Society has its own 2-acre woodland at Holehird which, in 2001 was planted with a selection of species rhododendrons donated by Alan Clark. Three years on, we have learnt which species are particularly attractive to deer (the trifloras!) and have taken precautions to protect the vulnerable ones. Now we have permission to erect a deer fence around the wood and, with funds allocated for this, it is hoped the work can be carried out this winter, enabling the restrictive netting cages to be removed from individual plants for the next season.

Our winter programme kicks off with our AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> October, after which there will be an illustrated talk on the very successful spring 2004 tour to the gardens of Argyll. In November, one of our members, Shelagh Newman, who is in charge of the National Collection of Hydrangea at Holehird (which contains over 250 species and cultivars) will be extolling the merits of this genus as the ideal companion for rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias, providing such an astonishingly rich tapestry of colour between July and October. In December, Dr. George Argent will be telling us about his work with *Vireya* rhododendrons and, in January, our Annual Dinner will have Eric Robson, the Chairman of the BBC's "Gardeners Question Time" as a guest speaker.

With membership now around 70, we are looking forward to another very active season.



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## MEMBERSHIP

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Miranda Gunn

It's that time of year again, and all **subscriptions are due on November 1st**. The subscription rates have changed slightly this year, as the Hon. Treasurer informed everybody in the July Bulletin, and are now as follows.

### Annual Subscription

#### United Kingdom

Payment by bankers order or cheque (no increase)	£15.00
Payment by debit or credit card	£17.50
<u>Europe -</u>	£18.00 (€25)
<u>Rest of the World -</u>	£20.00

### Payment for Three Years in Advance

<u>United Kingdom</u> (any method)	£45.00
<u>Europe -</u>	£50.00 (€70)
<u>Rest of the World -</u>	£55.00

This year I am again sending subscription renewal forms only to those members who need to send us money. If there is NO form and NO envelope in your Bulletin, you do NOT have to take any action, as you have either already paid for this year, or you pay by Bankers Order, and the subscription will automatically be debited from your account on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Members who pay by credit or debit card, please note, we do NOT keep records of your card numbers, so you must fill in the form and send it back even if your card number has not changed from last year.

You can also fax, telephone, or e-mail it to me.

Tel. (44)(0)1428 654167 or fax (44)(0)1428 658345

e-mail [Miranda@ramsterweddings.co.uk](mailto:Miranda@ramsterweddings.co.uk)

(please note change of e-mail address)

Many thanks to all of you, in advance for paying promptly. Perhaps this will be the longed for year when I do not have to send out any reminders!

**We are delighted to welcome the new members listed below:**

#### UK

Mr A.C.Needham,  
Westwood, 13 Prospect Avenue,  
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Mrs Alla Samoilova,  
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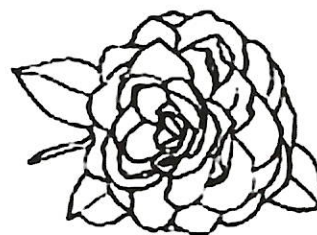
Ms Svetlana Sazhina,  
Kutuzovskiy 18-56, Moscow 121151, RUSSIA.  
Tel. +95 243 75 76

#### AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

Mr Ivan Johnston,  
PO Box 33, Waratah, Tasmania 7321, AUSTRALIA.

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## NOTICES

Pat Bucknell, Hon. Sec.

The 2005 Annual General Meeting is to be held on 12th April next year. Several officers and committee members will be required.

### Officers:

David Farnes is to retire in December after 27 years on the Committee. He will be retiring as both Vice Chairman of the Committee and Chairman of Peak Branch. We will therefore be seeking a new Vice Chairman of the Group.

Miranda Gunn, our Honorary Membership Secretary, will be retiring after 5 years in the post. She has nobly agreed to continue until a successor is found.

### Committee Members:

Both John Harsant and Alastair Stevenson are due to retire from the Committee after their three year term. Both are seeking re-election.

Alastair Stevenson would like to focus his energies into forming a new West Midlands branch; if he does this we shall need a new Publicity Officer – a post that would suit someone used to dealing with the press and press officers.

### Branch Chairmen:

Margaret Miles is also retiring in November as Chairman of South West Branch, in order to devote more time to her studies. Therefore a South West Branch chairman will be required. In addition, the Peak branch will require a new chairman (see above).

An Assistant Yearbook Editor is also needed to deal with the production and printing side of the Yearbook. More information from the Hon. Yearbook editor, Philip Evans.

**A Nomination form is enclosed.** Please come forward yourself or nominate someone, making sure he/she agrees; a proposer, a seconder and a brief horticultural history of the nominee are all that are required. Please phone the Chairman on 01342 822745 or the Hon. Secretary on 01503 220215 if you require any further details.

### NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

**I still need your letters, reports from branches, articles etc, to keep the members up to date!**

**So, please send me your copy for the MARCH BULLETIN by 14th February.**

**Please send to:**

**John Rawling, Hon. Bulletin Editor,  
The Spinney, Station Road,  
Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.**

**Tel. 01883 653341 or E-mail: jr.ey@virgin.net.**



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*The following publications are available to Group Members and are sold in support of the Group:*

#### **GEORGE FORREST – Plant Hunter**

Highly acclaimed new biography published to celebrate the centenary of Forrest's first plant hunting trip to Yunnan. Superbly illustrated. 239pp. Full Price: **£29.50** Member's Discount Price: **£25**. Postage: UK **£3.50**, Europe **£7**, Rest of World **£7** (Surface) **£13.50** (Air).

#### **VIREYA Rhododendrons – National Plant Collection**

A clear, concise and colourful introduction to all aspects of growing species and hybrid Vireyas. 46pp, illust. **£5.95** post free. Airmail: add **£0.50**.

#### **THE RHODODENDRON HANDBOOK 1998**

Includes full descriptions of all rhododendron species in general cultivation in Europe and the USA, including Vireyas. 352pp, illust. **£30** post free. Airmail: add **£5**.

#### **THE RHODODENDRON STORY**

224pp illust. UK: **£12** RoW: **£13.50** (Surface) **£17** (Air).

#### **YEARBOOK Back Numbers**

Available for 1979 – 2003, except 1980/81 and 1992. Prices are per book and include UK postage. Add **£0.50** per book for overseas addresses (Surface mail). Airmail surcharge at cost. Price: **£7.50** except 1981/82, 1998 and 1999: **£15.00**. Second-hand copies are available for most years from 1946 onwards – please enquire.

#### **YEARBOOK CUMULATIVE INDEX 1946-1997**

UK: **£19** post free. RoW: **£20** (Surface) **£23** (Air).

Please make cheques (Sterling or Euros) payable to: *The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group*.

Payment can also be made by Mastercard or Visa.

Please quote name on card, number and expiry date.

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2004 - 2005

Date/Time	Organiser	Location	Event	Contact
<b>November</b>				
November 9th	Lakeland	Holehird Gardens	Talk by Shelagh Newman on "Rhododendrons & companion plants"	Fred Tattersall 01539 443963
November 12th	<b>Group</b>	<b>RHS</b>	<b>Executive Committee</b>	Pat Bucknell 01503 220215
November 13th	S.W. Branch	Rosemoor	Talk by Graham Rankin on "Magnolias"	Margaret Miles 01326 270229
November 20th	Wessex Branch	Wisley	Talk by Colin Crosbie, on "The Woodland Garden in all its Glory"	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
November 27th	S.E. Branch	Ardingly College	Talk by David Millais on "New Rhododendrons in Germany"	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
November 27th	N.W. & Wales	Ness Gardens	Talk by Peter Radcliffe on "Rhododendrons in New Zealand"	Ted Brabin 01513 531193
<b>December</b>				
December 14th	Lakeland	Holehird Gardens	Talk by George Argent on "Vireya Rhododendrons"	Fred Tattersall 01539 443963
<b>2005</b>				
<b>February</b>				
February 19th	N.W. & Wales	Ness Gardens	Talk by Chris Saunders on "Himalayan Trees & Shrubs"	Ted Brabin 01513 531193
<b>March</b>				
March 5th	Wessex Branch	Wisley	Talk by Herb Short on "Early Camellia introductions from China"	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
<b>April</b>				
April 6th-8th	Wessex Branch	S.W. Wales	Branch Trip to Aberglasney, Clyne, and Nat. Botanic Gdn of Wales.	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
April 12th	<b>Group</b>	<b>RHS</b>	<b>Group AGM</b>	Pat Bucknell 01503 220215
April 17th	Wessex Branch	Ramster	Branch Show	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
April 17th-23rd	<b>Group Tour</b>	<b>Spring Tour of Devon &amp; Cornwall - See Page 4&amp;5</b>		Joey Warren 01822 854022
April 23rd -24th	RHS + SE Branch	Borde Hill	RHS Main Rhododendron Competition & branch Magnolia Competition	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
April 23rd -24th	N.W. & Wales	Ness Gardens	Branch Show	Ted Brabin 01513 531193



One of the exhibits at the S.W. Branch Show at Rosemoor.

Photo: Pam Hayward



**Os Blumhardt**

Photo: Jim Gardiner