



the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

Bulletin 110 / November 2012 / www.rhodogroup-rhs.org

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Andy Simons - Chairman

As I hope you will all have read from my briefing notes at last summer's group AGM our position with respect to the RHS continues to be a problem, consuming much of my time and that of the committee. It is hard to keep an eye on the real activities of the group pertaining to plants and gardens when external and internal governance issues dominate our efforts so much. However it is important for me to keep you fully apprised of the progress being made and the work undertaken to assure the best outcome for all of you, our members.

The current status is that the RCM Group would become a formal partner organisation of the RHS, this partnership would place roles and responsibilities on both the RHS and the Group and we would expect the effect of this to mean that the visible aspects of our relationship with the RHS remain unchanged. This partnership will be backed by an agreement that would actually be a legally binding contract or Partnership Agreement. Getting this document correct is going to be a difficult but far from impossible task and your committee and I have started the work accordingly with the RHS in the lead. This partnership effectively replaces the two polarized options of full RHS integration or going it alone as a standalone society that I spoke about in the summer, with a middle way that allows the Group to operate with a clear association with the RHS, as we do now.

The implication of this Partnership Agreement is that the Group's constitution that many of us worked so hard to get correct over the last 2 years will need to be changed again. The existing constitution makes many references to the RHS deciding the governance of the Group. This will no longer be the case as we move forward under the Partnering Agreement. As many of you will know the current constitution was signed off by the RHS council and as such they will need to dissolve its binding nature on the group before we move forward with any alternative. Inevitably the transition from the existing constitution to a new one backed by the Partnership Agreement will be somewhat messy. My current thinking is that although the current constitution will cease to be binding, we will actually continue to operate under the bulk of its existing clauses other than those which make direct reference to the RHS, this approach will give us all some breathing space and allow us to work out what shape the group will have in the future. This interim arrangement will clearly need to be time limited and I will make a proposal to you when we are ready to formally engage the entire membership on the contents of the Partnership Agreement.

We are fortunate that although all this change has been



Rhododendron 'Mikado' – one of the plants from Bodnant micropropagated by the Duchy Nursery for Bodnant Garden and the Group (See page 2)

happening around us the Group's focus and objectives have not changed and our desire to mutually support our three genera and each other in that effort is constant.

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AA rather obvious but still unclear question for us all to consider is what should the group be known as? Could we, or should we, be a standalone charity with the aim of protecting and

promoting the three genera, or a plant society or club? The term group actually means little when you think about it.

Something we will need to consider as part of a new constitution is how the group's committee functions, as, although we have a reasonable sized committee, executing the essential tasks of the group is proving to be extremely arduous. We have still to secure a committee secretary which I find almost impossible to understand when we have a membership of several hundred people. This situation will only get worse as people have less and less free time to dedicate to leisure activities.

The time the committee need to allocate to meetings is becoming increasingly burdensome especially as the RHS show timetables become less and less predictable.

I think as part of the new constitution a much slimmed down committee structure should be considered. As part of this change it may be necessary to engage professional support to some of the group's functions. The logic is that if an able volunteer with the necessary skills cannot be found for essential work we will need to pay somebody to do it.

Continued on page 2

Although not specifically following from my point above concerning professional staff, but certainly related to it, is the question of subscription levels. As an individual member it may be convenient not to have noticed that for the majority of members the subscription rates have not risen for many years. This situation is now becoming impossible to maintain. Analysis of the cost of supporting each member has recently shown that for all types of paying members the cost of publications, postage etc is not covered by the membership fee, that is, each member gets more benefit out than the funds they put in. This situation is clearly untenable and consequently you are to expect an increase in subscription rates in the near future, perhaps at or near the time we simplify the methods of payment by introducing direct debit payment.

Returning to the structure of the committee, I find myself reiterating the request for a volunteer to fill the previously mentioned committee secretary role, we really struggle to operate as an effective committee without a secretary. If you are concerned that the role may be overly onerous please contact me to discuss it as it could certainly be tailored around somebody's available time rather than the other way around. As for my role as chairman I can no longer dedicate the time necessary to do the job properly as I am in full time employment and my job demands increasingly more from me. Consequently I will be stepping down as chairman as soon as a suitable replacement can be found. I will however continue on the committee if deemed appropriate.

EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

Members may remember that the Group provided some funds to support the micropropagation at the Duchy College of some unique hybrids at Bodnant gardens. It was agreed that the Group would benefit by receiving a number of those produced, for distribution/sale to group members.

A number of these plants, successfully grown on, are now in 3½" or one litre pots and ready for distribution or planting out (They are now in pots in the open and between 15cm (R. 'Mikado' and 'Cardinal') and 25 cm (R. 'Calrose') tall.

They are available to members from the Group from the website or from The Editor at the extremely advantageous price of just £6.00 each.

These plant names were registered in the RHS International Rhododendron Register and Checklist by Lord Aberconway.

(e.g.: "Mikado Group gp Elepidote rhododendron: *griffithianum* (s) x Cornish Cross Group. H: Lord Aberconway (1926), G: Lord Aberconway, N: Lord Aberconway I: Lord Aberconway (1950), INC: INCRA (1958) Fls pale rose".)



R. 'Calrose'.



R. 'Cardinal'.

R. 'Mikado' - See the front page

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I need your letters, reports from branches, articles, future events etc, to keep the members up to date! So, please send me your letters and copy for the next issue

BY 8TH FEBRUARY 2013

for the March 2013 Bulletin

Please send to: John Rawling, Hon. Bulletin Editor,
The Spinney, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.
E-mail: jr.eye@virgin.net or telephone 01883 653341

TOURS 2013

Judith Hallett

Spring Tour 2013

Sunday 14th - Friday 19th April

Plans for the Spring Tour to Cornwall are now in place. We shall be staying at The Alverton Manor Hotel in Truro from Sunday 14 until Friday 19 April. I have timed the tour hoping that members will take the opportunity to go on to The Main Rhododendron Competition at The Rosemoor show (20 and 21 April) at the end of the tour.

We shall visit nine exciting gardens, including many private gardens:-

- 'Lukesland' (Rosemary Howell).-.(pretour),
- 'Bottalick' (Peter and Pat Bucknell),
- 'Tregoning Mill' (Graham Mills),
- 'Caerhays' (Charles Williams),
- 'Trewithen' (Michael Galsworthy),
- 'Ethy House' (Andrew Leslie),
- 'Tregehan' (Tom Hudson),
- 'Ince Castle' (Lady Alice Boyd)
- and 'Tremeer' (Lady Vanessa George).

The full details of our tour to Cornwall next April can be found on the enclosed leaflet There is already considerable interest in the tour so if you want to join, please return your application as soon as possible.

Members are welcome to join us on a daily basis:- Please email (judy.hallett@gmail.com) or telephone me (01981 570401) if you wish to consider this option, or for any further information.

Judy Hallett
Hon Tours Organiser

Joint ICS & RCM Group Tour 9th-10th October 2012

Twenty four members collected at East Lodge Hotel, Rowsley, Derbyshire for the start of our joint Autumn Tour.

With the recently regilded windows and parapet glistening in the early morning sunshine, arriving at **Chatsworth** really was a golden moment! A full day had been organised by head gardener Steve Porter. We were pleased to welcome day members Mary and Richard Chaplin and also Chris Loder and Everard Daniel and colleagues (on a works outing from Loder nursery).

We presented Steve with a young *R. calophyllum* (wild collected in Yunnan) on behalf of the group, then he and his colleagues Faye Steer and Lucy Wharton set the scene for our visit, providing background history of the house and 100 acre gardens and an explanation of each of their respective roles in managing such an extensive estate.

In smaller groups we viewed the vegetable and cutting gardens and the glass houses. The extensive kitchen garden, created by the Dowager Duchess in the late 1980s, supplies the house and the Chatsworth farm shop with high quality vegetables, fruit and flowers throughout the year. In the service house flowers and pot plants are propagated and grown on, to be used by the florists to decorate the house.

The 1st Duke's greenhouse is home to about 150 named cultivars and varieties of camellia, some in pots and others planted in the ground. Of these there are 103 different *Camellia japonica*, and 27 *C. x williamsii*, some frequently gracing the show bench (and taking many prizes!) With limited space and having been in the soil for sixty to seventy years many of the plants are now very tall and straggly. Group members and staff discussed how best to manage these mature plants, with suggestions ranging from drastic cutting back, keeping just a representative number, to replacing old plants with modern camellia cultivars. Our chairman hopes we shall be able to support the estate as plans develop.

We saw the vine house at its very best: with Muscat Alexander grapes hanging in voluptuous bunches along the length of the house. The 95 year old vine produces sufficient bunches annually to supply the house,with excess being sold to Waitrose (Knightsbridge)



Autumn Colour on the hillside above Chatsworth.

Photo The Editor

After lunch many of us set off to look at the woodland garden while others opted to view the treasures of Chatsworth House. There is a constant programme of careful removal of trees to create areas for new planting; currently about 3 hectares is being cleared of *Rhododendron ponticum* – what an opportunity for replanting! The current duke and duchess are extremely interested in the gardens and enthusiastic to introduce more species of plants, shrubs and trees each year: acers, liquidambars and eucryphias looked to be particular favourites. We saw good examples of large magnolias and some very mature *Rhododendron barbatum* (thought to be the product of seed brought back by Kingdom Ward).

Anxious to reduce their carbon footprint Chatsworth is working on a project that will make good use of their constant supply of low value timber. A biomass-fuelled renewable heat and power system is being built that will convert timber into a clean, combustible gas. In turn the gas will create 72% of the electricity needed for heating and hot water in the house.

Wednesday 10th

Bluebell Nursery is a popular source of trees and shrubs for many of our members. A visit to the nursery and their lovely woodland garden and arboretum was viewed with some excitement as we boarded the coach to take us to Ashby-de-la-Zouch. On arrival nursery owner Robert Vernon greeted us, and after coffee and delicious home-made cakes (produced by Robert's daughter in law) he spent the morning showing us the treasures in the garden and arboretum. As we entered the garden the enormous blooms of *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Phantom' took our breath away. This was the day to see trees and shrubs beginning to take on their Autumn hues, with Robert pointing out the very best for Autumn colour. We saw far too many treasures to mention them all here, so I offer a short list of my favourites:

- *Acer x conspicuum* 'Phoenix' (golden leaf),
- *Carya ovata* (golden yellow)
- *Euonymus alatus* (crimson-scarlet),
- *Fraxinus augustifolia* 'Raywood' (glorious rich plum purple),

Two *Liquidambar styraciflua* 'Slender Silhouette' (strong red, orange and yellow colour) and 'Stella' (eye-catching dramatic shades of plum purple and rich red).

As he pointed out the impressive fruit on *Magnolia sieboldii* Robert confessed to only recently becoming interested in magnolias – we forgive him! He now has an interesting collection on display in the nursery and good examples in the arboretum.

Few of our party left Bluebell Nursery without a purchase or two!

After lunch at Calke Abbey we headed back to Bakewell on the coach for our final visit, to Thornbridge Hall, a garden suggested by Richard and Mary Chaplin. The home of Emma and Jim Harrison since 2002, the Hall had previously been owned by Sheffield City Council and used as a multipurpose education centre.

Thornbridge Hall is set in 100 acres of parkland and formal gardens. We were guided around the more formal parts of the gardens by young gardeners Brian, Carl and Chris. This garden has everything: ha-ha, tufa grotto, thatched summer house, knot garden, water garden, orchard and woodland garden. Mature trees provide a perfect backdrop to these garden features.

Ambitious restoration projects are underway and already the garden boasts an impressive Italian Garden, restored glass houses, an Orangery (complete with under-floor heating!) a

colourful parterre garden where grass tennis courts once stood, and water gardens that no longer leak! There is splendid statuary throughout the garden, much of it purchased from Clumber Park by Charles Boot, a previous owner. In the woodland area we spotted old rhododendron hybrids, edged with lumps of tufa found around the garden. After tea and home-made cake in the new dining area there was one further surprise: we were privileged to be taken into the Great Hall to view an amazing stained glass window by William Morris and Burne Jones. This may not be a garden steeped in our genera but in other ways this was a truly astonishing delight!

Evening talks

Each evening we had a pre-dinner talk (a far better time than after dinner, when food, wine, and a day in the fresh air are conducive to gentle slumber!)

Andy Simons got us off to a fine start with part one of a virtual tour of New Zealand, 'visiting' gardens in the north island, starting in Auckland and seeing superb examples of our genera. Andy's photos certainly dispelled any uncertainty about the need to run a tour to NZ!! In our whistle stop tour that evening we saw superb examples of vireyas, Kunming reticulata camellias, daffodils, Japanese cherries and exceptional rhododendron blooms.

On the second evening John Rawling 'took' us to Yunnan as he recounted the Group tour of 2008. This was more of an expedition than a tour. Hotels were often basic and roads were certainly not motorway standard! This trip was not for the faint hearted. As we saw from John's photographs the excitement was in discovering plants in their native habitat, often in profusion, such as *R. hippophaeoides* but sometimes just an outstanding lone *R. vernicosum*, in full bloom by the side of the road

On the final evening we were entertained once again by Andy as we travelled the south island of New Zealand through his photographic record. We saw superb examples of our genera including what Andy considers to be the best collection of modern camellias, at Pollard Park.

These talks identified so clearly the nature of two very different tours: in New Zealand we see our genera 'in captivity'; in China we see plants in their original and natural habitat. Both offer opportunities of a lifetime for our members - please let me know if you are interested in either/both of these trips.

The tour ended on Thursday morning, with assurances that many of us would meet again next spring for the Cornish gardens tour.

Judy Hallett

(A very well organised two day tour. The East Dene Hotel was very pleasant and with friendly and very helpful staff – and the cuisine was interesting. Our thanks to Judy The Editor)

SPECIAL EVENTS

Rhododendron Seed workshop, at Millais Nurseries

David Millais will run a Rhododendron seed workshop at Millais Nurseries on **Friday 18 January 2013, 10 for 10.30am until 1pm.**

The RCM Seed List is one of the many highlights of the Group membership. Growing your own seed and watching seedlings develop is a particularly exciting and enjoyable part of the Rhododendron world. This workshop is designed to help

members get the most out of their seed purchases, and encourage more amateur breeding. January is one of the best months for sowing seed, so this workshop is timed to help at the start of the season, and enable members to return home confident of greater success, whether novice or experienced in seed sowing.

Topics covered will include hand pollination, seed collecting, cleaning, storage, and sowing, followed by seedling pricking out, care and growing on for the first year.

The workshop is FREE to members, so why not bring along a friend or prospective new member so that they can sample the benefits of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group? The charge for non-members is £15.00 payable to Millais Nurseries, but this can be saved by signing up to the Group first!

The morning will begin with Coffee and biscuits at 10.00am, with the workshop starting at 10.30am, and finishing by 1.00pm. Good value meals are available at the CAMRA award winning pub in the village.

Numbers will be limited. Bookings please to sales@rhododendrons.co.uk or by post to Millais Nurseries, Crosswater Farm, Crosswater Lane, Churt, Farnham, Surrey. GU10 2JN

From the ICS President (Patricia Short) Symposium in Nanning, China

This is not an ICS members-only symposium, although we are supporters of it. So if any of your RCM members who are not also ICS members are interested in attending, please know that they would be most welcome at what promises to be a very interesting visit to a very interesting part of China. Feel free to include in your newsletter & website if desired.

Yellow Camellias

Here in the U.K. we cannot grow the yellow camellias of the semitropics of Southeast Asia. Even in our mildest region, Cornwall, they don't thrive – they sulk. In warmer regions around the world, they do okay, but usually need shelter to help provide them the best conditions. So the 3rd International Symposium on *Camellia nitidissima*, in Nanning, Guangxi Province, China, from **21 February to 26 February, 2013**, is an opportunity not to be missed, to see these glorious camellias where they thrive. The Nanning Garden Bureau, the Nanning Golden Camellia Park, and the Camellia Branch Association in China have teamed up to present the symposium, and they are preparing the final program. Our colleagues at the Nanning Golden Camellia Park are working with Dr. Li Jiyuan, vice-chairman of the Research Institute of Subtropical Forestry in Fuyang, Zhejiang Province, to collect papers for the symposium. They are also evaluating the possibility of a visit to the forests where the yellow camellias grow in the wild, working with Guangxi's local Environmental Protection Bureau. If you are interested in attending, please let me know, and I can relay your interest to our colleagues in Nanning.

Pat Short, 41 Galveston Road, London SW15 2RZ
patricia-short@btconnect.com

MAGNOLIA STUDY WEEKEND

Arboretum Wespelaar, Belgium
13th & 14th April 2013

Open to the members of the Magnolia Society International, RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group & Belgian Dendrology Society

Saturday 13 April

■ **Arboretum Wespelaar**

Grote Baan 63, B-3150 Haacht-Wespelaar

Tel.: +32 (0)16 60 86 41

09:00 - 09:30 Coffee

09:30 - 10:15 Philippe de Spoelberch –

“Arboretum Wespelaar, Herkenrode and its Magnolia selections”

10:15 - 11:00 John Grimshaw –

“New and recent Magnolia introductions”

11:00 - 11:15 Coffee break

11:15 - 12:00 Andrew Bunting –

“American Magnolia cultivars and U. S. native species”

12:00 - 12:45 Jim Gardiner –

“Magnolia introductions from the UK”

13:00 - 14:00 Lunch

14:00 - 14:45 Koen Camelbeke –

“Yellow flowering Magnolias: an overview”

14:45 - 17:45 guided tour of Magnolia collection in Arboretum

Wespelaar and Herkenrode

Sunday 14 April

■ **Arboretum Bokrijk**

Bokrijklaan 1, 3600 Genk

Tel.: +32 (0)11 22 45 75

10:00 – 12:30 Jozef Van Meulder - Welcome & guided visit of

Magnolia collection in Arboretum Bokrijk

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 17:00 Free visit of Bokrijk Arboretum and/or return

back home

Costs: 60,00 EURO for both days (or 30,00 EURO per day).

Deadline for subscriptions is the **1st of April 2013**

Subscriptions are mandatory: please contact Arboretum Wespelaar at info@arboretumwespelaar.be

The Rhododendron Red List:

Establishing Priorities and Action

The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh and the Rhododendron Species Conservation Group are planning to jointly host a two-day Conference with keynote speakers on **Saturday 20th & Sunday 21st April, 2013**, in the Lecture Theatre of the R.B.G.E., to discuss the contents and impact of *The Rhododendron Red List* and will work towards answering the question: Where do we go from here in terms of conservation priorities and actions?

This is advance notice of dates for the diaries of R.C. & M. Group members and a detailed Conference Programme and Registration Form will be available in the early-Autumn, when information will appear in a future issue of the Bulletin.

John M. Hammond

RHODODENDRONS

David Millais

Growing Rhododendrons In A Wet ‘Summer’

The record breaking wet summer ranks as one of the most difficult growing seasons ever for any farmer or grower.

Crops have not germinated, yields are lower, and pest and diseases have been rife resulting in higher wheat prices and damaged fruits in the supermarkets. Rhododendron gardeners may have thought that this has been one of the best growing seasons ever, with high summer rainfalls giving the impression of Himalayan monsoon conditions so loved by our plants in the wild.

Our plants and gardens have been luxuriating in the ample volumes of summer rain while we have been shivering indoors. Rhododendrons have responded to the rain with ‘trifid’-like growth instead of the more usual stumpy twigs seen on older and more mature plantings in a typical dried up South-East English summer. I have never seen such good extension growth on Rhododendrons, and if ever there is a time to be propagating from old plants, this is it! Do make use of this useful propagating material, and get out and try a few cuttings, or even some nurse grafting onto Cunningham’s White cuttings and you may well be surprised by the results. Otherwise, do get in touch if you have something rare and we can try to save it for you.

However, although the growth has been good, not everything has been as sweet as it seemed. As a Rhododendron nurseryman, I think it has been the most challenging I have known. The cold and wet early summer resulted in very poor root growth - something that many gardeners may not have noticed at the time, being out of sight and out of mind. Root growth was so slow that it was probably 4-6 weeks behind usual for much of the summer. This was caused by the low temperatures in the soil, and at times the rootballs were too wet for root growth. With poor root growth and excellent top growth, we found on hot days in June that new growth was collapsing as the roots could not support all the longer than usual shoots. Around midday, the long new shoots would collapse and sometimes bend double, requiring us to apply a brief watering in the sun (not recommended!) to keep up humidity levels even though the rootballs were plenty damp enough. Fortunately the shoots would regain their turgidity overnight, but sometimes with a slightly kinky stem. All this put the plants under more stress than ever before, and we had to monitor for pests and disease more than is usual.

Any fertilizer that was applied was washed out after the first few weeks of rain, and we have seen many customers bringing in yellow and starved leaves where they have not been fed. Young plants and those growing in containers have been particularly prone to running out of feed partly due to the rain, and partly due to the plant growing more and using more nutrients. On the nursery, as well as regular top-dressing, we used dry days to apply more liquid feed than usual to keep the foliage looking healthy and dark green. At this time of year (October) it is too late to be applying high Nitrogen fertilizers which would encourage soft, frost prone growth, so wait until spring next year when many plants will need more than usual. However, fertilizer levels are currently so low that a high potash feed now would be beneficial and would really help to toughen your plants up for winter.

Fungal leaf infections such as *Monochaetia* leaf spots and *Botrytis* have favoured the warm damp conditions and can be spread by water splash, so we have brewed our own ‘compost tea’

which is full of beneficial microbial and bacterial activity, and have applied Serenade, a natural microbial fungicide containing *Bacillus subtilis*. With frequent applications most weeks of the summer, we have produced one of our cleanest crops ever and have used minimal chemical sprays.

I have already mentioned the damp rootballs during the summer, and this is potentially more damaging than being too wet in winter because root diseases such as *Phytophthora* and *Rhizoctonia* spread more quickly when the weather is warmer. We have been very conscious of trying to make sure that the roots have not been too wet and have dug several emergency drains to lead excess water away so that the plants have a chance of drying out. Saturated ground is no good for *Rhododendrons* which like a soil with plenty of drainage and aeration for the roots. If your ground is wet, do think about improving the drainage with trenches, flexible perforated pipe and gravel to draw the water away.

So it's been a challenging season and it's taken extra time to prevent plant health problems, but the plants are looking great. What's in store for next year?

CAMELLIAS

Robert Moule

A NEW CAMELLIA



Camellia 'Lamorna'

A new camellia cultivar, *Camellia* 'Lamorna', was grown as a seedling at Chyghurno, Lamorna, a beautiful three-acre cliffside garden in West Cornwall, owned by Robert and Carol Moule. The garden is situated on the west side of the Lamorna valley and has spectacular views overlooking Lamorna Cove and the sea. *C. 'Lamorna'* first flowered in 2006 and was recognised as distinctive by the Moules as well as visitors to the garden and local camellia experts.

C. 'Lamorna' flowers while young and has a long flowering period, from December until April in Cornwall. It is floriferous, self-grooming and propagates easily. The blooms are medium-sized, single and pink with a whitish flare. They are bell-shaped at first, opening wide with a cistus-like quality to the petals. The pink of the petals fades from dark to light, producing a pleasing variation of shades over the whole plant. The dark green leaves are glossy and veined, and have a slight twist, making the plant interesting and attractive throughout the year.

C. 'Lamorna' has been growing in the garden at Lamorna for 12 years and is now about 2 x 1.5m. Although Lamorna generally has a mild climate, over that period the garden has endured frosts as low as -10°C; apart from holding back flowering, these extreme temperatures have caused no problems to the plant.

After showing *C. 'Lamorna'* at the RHS meeting at Caerhays Castle in 2009, the Moules were encouraged to name the seedling and commence propagation. The name 'Lamorna' was registered in 2010 and a stock of young plants will be available in 2013. At present, there is a small quantity of older plants, which are being offered to RHS members. All plants are grown in treated compost and can be purchased by mail order.

For details of plant availability and price, contact Hotplants: 07710 259582, www.hotplants.co.uk.

MAGNOLIAS

Nigel Edwards

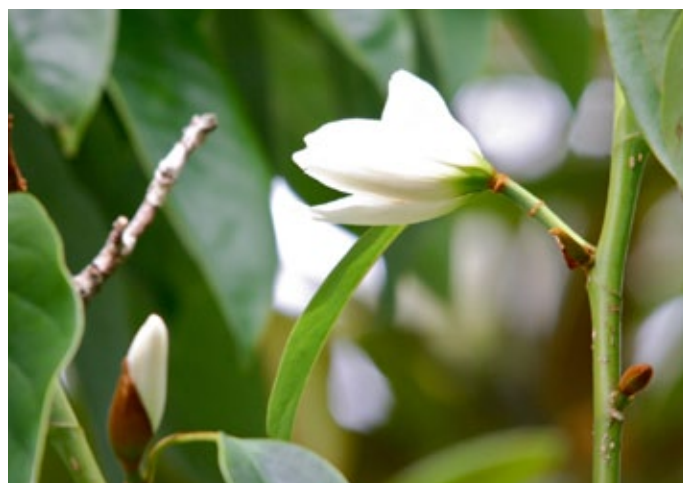
The effects of the weather/rain

Second bloomings of *Soulangeana* type Magnolias are common, but this year was the first time (to my knowledge) that I had a second blooming of *M. doltsopa* (South Devon). For the third spring in succession the early blooms were all but wiped out with very cold and often wet weather from the winter, but with the tree trying to re-establish itself for the following spring, some effect on bud formation is of course expected.

I was therefore surprised to discover in late August (2012) that a number of the 'next year' buds had started to open.

This seemed somewhat spasmodic as there were only a limited number of them, but what seemed unusual to me was the fact that the blooms were more funnelled as opposed to roundish and opened on the end of a shoot about 2/3 inches in length as shown in attached images.

I am curious to know if members may think that this is a result of the exceptionally wet Summer we have all had



M. doltsopa

Photo: Nigel Edwards

nigeandfraninthedoghouse@hotmail.com
Crossgate, Shute Hill, Bishopsteignton,
Teignmouth, Devon, TQ14 9QL.

Caring for the High Beeches Gardens - 2012

This year we had to find funds for a fence. We had an expert contractor to do the work and managed to include most of our 25 acres. We could not afford more than one grid, they are extremely expensive, so all car parks etc had to be outside. Also, we could not afford the fine mesh rabbit wire, which also has to be dug in to be effective. The whole thing has to be maintained.

We made a big mistake in that we did not expel all deer before we closed the fence. Deer will absolutely not be driven through a gate. In the end, the last three had to be shot. But they will sneak through any gate left open, even with people standing near! They will also jump the fence, damaging themselves and the fence, if stampeded, especially downhill.

Now that we have got rid of the deer, we still have rabbits to live with.

Some of the perennial plants that we use for underplanting the rhododendrons and large shrubs may be of interest. All seem rabbit proof here.

Bergenia, *Convallaria* (native), *Cyclamen*, *Crocsmia*, *Camassia*, *Darmera*, *Dierama*, *Epimedium*, *Erythronium*, *Euphorbia*, *Gentiana asclepiadea*, (naturalised), *Gunnera*, *Hosta*, *Hedychium*, *Iris sibirica*, and Pacific coast Hybrids, *Inula hookeri*, *Lysichitum*, *Leucojum aestivum*, *Lythrum salicaria*, *Polygonatum x*, *Polygonum campanulatum*, *Primula*, *Rodgersia*, *Rheum*, *Symphytum*, *Onoclea sensibilis*, *Osmaunda regalis* (native).



Gentiana asclepiadea

Photo: High Beeches

Most provide nectar for bees and other insects. Some may be too invasive.

Rabbits from different parts of the country may have a different diet! Sometimes they only attack young plants, but if themselves diseased, may go mad and attack anything, even quite large trees and shrubs.

Now we can grow Hydrangeas and Roses, which we had quite given up, and much else.

Anne Boscawen

High Beeches Gardens Conservation Trust.

South East Branch

The Denny Pratt azaleas – workshop at Millais Nurseries

Millais has always been a name to conjure with. From the famous Victorian painter, down through a connection whose informative illustrated books on rhododendrons are to be found on the shelves of many country house libraries, to David Millais. He was our kind host when the South East Branch visited his nursery on 23rd June. It was a memorable occasion. Unfortunately, our chairman, Barry Haseltine, had succumbed to shingles, so was unable to join us.

We had been invited to a workshop on the late flowering Denny Pratt azaleas and to see examples of other late flowering rhododendrons and azaleas. Crosswater Farm is not an easy place to find and is modest in its presentation. Tucked away in unspoilt woodland just on the border with Hampshire, the country reminded me of the acres of woods which lie across the southern flank of Surrey. Undulating lanes twist and turn and criss-cross each other. It was a relief to arrive.

Our morning was well organised. We started by going into a large out-building where trestle tables had been set up to show off vases of cut blooms. Bear in mind the date of this meeting and you can imagine how amazed we all were. Carrying a welcome cup of coffee we wandered around sniffing and exclaiming at the amount of stuff still at its best.



Azalea 'Stopham Lad' (Denny Pratt hybrid)

Photo. Millais

Then we were moved on to take our seats for slides and a lecture. David explained the provenance of these late flowering Denny Pratt beauties - what a breakthrough! Seeing picture after picture of stunning azaleas, one called 'Stopham Lad' springs to mind, there was a strong urge to get going and see them in situ.

We were led off through the nursery which was much more of an enterprise than I had been expecting. We walked past huge greenhouses given over to propagation. Seen through the windows were trays of tiny rhododendron seedlings in their earliest and most vulnerable stages of germination. All appeared to be emerging and growing on with the utmost confidence, every stage of development catered for, misting, shading, temperature control etc. Wandering on, with eyes peeled, I became aware of something else - the *genius loci*. This is a very favoured situation, sheltered and silent, small stream so slightly damp, with an acid soil, fecund and rather secret. It seemed to have a micro climate all its own.

Following our leader, we went ever further away from the entrance and were thrilled to be shown regimented rows and rows of rhododendrons all potted up ready for sale. All appeared to be bursting with health.

Was indumentum ever so mealy or were Grande leaves so leathery? This enterprise is large scale and is nurtured by an extensive system of irrigation. Nothing is left to chance and the stock is not everyday stuff but includes many names which can be hard to come by. There was a good selection of the Grande series, including some really robust examples of *R. macabeaenum*. Personally, I was glad to see both *R. sutchuenense* and *R. calophytum*, both lost at Riverhill in 1987. However it was not just large varieties, there was a cross section of every size down to alpinas.

Our tour was coming to an end but we had to see the summer flowering azaleas growing in situ. After admiring stunners like Stopham Lad and Midsummer Mermaid on slides, to be standing by them, enjoying the scent, proved just how desirable they were.

Thank you David Millais for sharing your expertise and enthusiasm. No one who visited Crosswater is likely to forget the experience and I have already been back. It is just about an hour from my home in Sevenoaks.

Eve Rogers
Riverhill, Sevenoaks, Kent.

South West Branch – Gardens Visits 2012

21st March 2012

Lady Banham's Garden at Penberth and Trewidden Gardens at Buryan Bridge, both near Penzance.

For the third year running our early spring visit to Cornwall was blessed with beautiful weather – the sun was shining, the birds singing and butterflies floated dreamily about. In typical Cornish fashion, Penberth House, stands in a small, sheltered valley, its gardens following a stream down to the sea, a mere half mile away. Here there is a tiny fishing settlement and the great wooden winch, once used to drag the boats to safety through the rocks ringing the only landing place – all beautifully preserved.

This western tip of Cornwall is very mild and very rainy; shrubs grow with such gusto that keeping them under control is a constant challenge. On the day of our visit it was, inter alia, leptospermum cultivars coming under the axe – they were smothering the magnolias! Throughout the garden camellias were particularly fine. Outstanding amongst the early rhododendrons was an exceptional *Rhododendron leucaspis* clambering happily over a boulder and in full flower.

On our departure our hostess directed us to the nearby Logan Rock Inn where Cornish crab sandwiches and draught Guinness made our visit even more memorable.

It was a twenty minute drive to Trewidden which, in marked contrast to Penberth, occupies an elevated and relatively level plateau with fine views up the English Channel towards St. Michael's Mount. It is one of the two great gardens planted by the Bolitho family in the last quarter of the 19th century; nearby Trengwainton is the other.

Trewidden claims to grow more than 300 camellia cultivars which was easy to believe on the day of our visit. Clearly, conditions at Trewidden suit the genus perfectly because I have never seen them grown better. Anyone wishing to see reticulatas at their best should certainly make a pilgrimage to this garden. Magnolias prosper too, and the gardens have some giant

specimens, especially *Magnolia dawsoniana* and *M. sargentiana*, the latter being some of the first planted in the UK.

We were shown round by the Head Gardener Tom Morton who completed our day by presiding over a vigorous and ultra-learned debate between our members on the origins of R. 'Early Cornish Red', at least two forms of which were in flower in the garden. I don't think a consensus was achieved, various people claiming they were

R. 'Altaclarensis', R. 'Russellianum Group' or R. 'Smithii Group'. Perhaps they were all right!

12th April 2012

Visit to Werrington Park, Launceston.

We were very pleased to be invited by Michael Williams to visit Werrington to inspect this most important planting of predominantly Chinese rhododendrons. At the end of the 19th century Werrington belonged to J.C. Williams and was one of the places selected to receive seed collected by George Forrest and Ernest Wilson from c 1903 onwards. Detailed records of the plantings were kept, many of which have survived. The plants themselves grow on a hillside across the valley from the house, sheltered by conifers.

For several years now, South West Branch member Mary Ashworth has been working to relate the plants with the records of their planting, more than 100 years ago and to identify the survivors – a daunting task! She has become very expert in the process. The presence of her and Michael Williams during our visit was a crucial assistance.

We all had a wonderful afternoon exploring that amazing hillside, especially the botanists and taxonomists amongst us who had to be dragged away.

Our sincere thanks to Michael Williams and Mary Ashworth for making our visit so rewarding.

3rd May 2012

Alan Mort's Garden at Fast Rabbit Farm and the National Trust Garden at Coletton Fishacre, both near Dartmouth.

Two more different gardens it is difficult to imagine. Alan Mort, a member of the South West Branch, started landscaping and planting Fast Rabbit Farm nearly 25 years ago. The size, health and diversity of his original plantings, all these years later, bear witness to his vision and plantsmanship – and he is still landscaping and planting today on a scale that few would attempt. On the day of our visit we were able to admire (from afar) a whole new hillside with new paths cut and the bright splashes of colour of newly planted rhodos.

We explored his original plantings – an eclectic collection of large, healthy trees and shrubs where we were all able to find our favourites. Mine were the several pieris cultivars which were at their spectacular best. So were the late flowering red rhododendrons such as Gwillt King, and other griersonianum hybrids.

Sadly, Alan had received a last minute summons from the local hospital to have some stitches removed and missed our visit altogether. But he had detailed colleagues to show us around and to provide refreshments. Our thanks to them and to Alan who had worked so hard on our behalf.

We then dropped down into Dartmouth itself and crossed the river on the fine new ferry. It is then a long and steep climb up the other side before dropping down again to Coletton Fishacre,

surely one of the best hidden National Trust properties. The house is a fine example of the Arts and Crafts style of architecture, built for the D'Oyly Carte family in 1925.

Its gardens is typical of so many South West gardens, built on either side of a deep valley with a stream running down to the sea far below. It is, however, very much a designed, landscaped and planted garden which uses the plants to achieve the intended effect rather than merely constitute a collection of plants. The fine selection of rhododendrons certainly do this as do the magnolias and camellias. Head Gardener, Steve Marshall, and his team are to be congratulated.

It is also a garden in which to see tender plants flourishing – I have never seen such vigorous *Myrtus luma* which is used as standard tree, espalier fence, hedge or bush throughout the garden and which seeds itself too. Memorable also were the orange and yellow deciduous azaleas, (*Klondyke* or maybe the older *altaclarensis*) which is used to edge the stream where it has become a formal rill opposite the house.

Out of deference to my adopted county, I must also record that the crab sandwiches served by the National Trust at Coleton Fishacre are as memorable as any we encountered in Cornwall.

Colin Brown

Wessex Branch

Autumn meeting at Ramster

We usually meet for a walk round Ramster gardens in the Autumn, and this time about 10 of us set off on a lovely afternoon. I asked everyone to write a sentence on what had interested them, or things that we had noted.

This year the visit was earlier than usual, which meant that the maple leaves were all on the branches, and the grass beneath remained fresh green to compliment the golden leaves of the maples. The vista looking down the valley at the changing leaves on the acers was outstanding. Many unusual hydrangeas caused much interest especially a small delicate blue flowered hybrid, serrata 'Tiara', bred by Maurice Foster, and the colour of the lacecap hydrangea 'Nightingale'. An unusual fusion of blues and greens. How well the hydrangea flowers complement the autumn foliage, and the dark leaves of the rhododendrons.

The very old *Acer palmatum* cultivars, with their curled and gnarled branches suggested how the Japanese gardens must be, like large scale bonsais. The moss covered area near the pond was beautifully restful and uncluttered, another Japanese touch. What a lovely rhododendron 'Sir Charles Lemon' is, with the backs of the leaves burnished copper in the sun. The cinnamon curls of *Acer griseum*, and the conker coloured ones on *Prunus serrula* shone in the sun. The honey fungus, dangerous but rather beautiful, marching across the grass, following the dead roots of a felled tree, perilously close to the magnolias. (Why did the mushroom go to the party? Because he was a fun-guy.) A memorable walk with knowledgeable people, glorious sunshine, glorious colours, and delicious cake at the end.

Miranda Gunn

MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

We are delighted to welcome another substantial group of New Members. We hope that they will enjoy their membership and make full use of the facilities and activities available.

The Editor

Member's Photographs

So far this year there has been a steady trickle of excellent contributions. We now have new photos for 21 Rhododendrons, 13 Magnolias and an amazing 15 Camellias, compared with the measly 3 sent in last year. There is still plenty of time for everyone to review their photos taken earlier this year and to submit them to me before the end of December. Russell Beeson has already submitted his, so the challenge is there to see! From my experience, 2012 was an excellent one for blooms of all 3 of our genera. Further details of the competition and how to send photographs are given on the web site.

Surplus Plants

There is only one Magnolia and one Camellia currently available. However there are still quite a few Rhododendrons, including, for the first time, 3 rare Bodnant hybrids that have been micropropagated for us by the Duchy College and are now available – see page 2.

Membership renewals

When the time is appropriate please remember that membership renewals may be made via the web site. Save yourself postage and a trip to the Post office!

If there are additional features that you would like to see added to the site then please contact webmaster@rhodogroup-rhs.org

GROUP SEED LIST

Notes for Seed Donors 2012

Donations from members are essential if we are to continue producing a varied and interesting seed list. Here are a few suggestions for the treatment of seeds in order to maintain maximum viability as well as easing the task of distribution.

RHODODENDRONS: Using, preferably, only wild or hand pollinated rhododendrons, pick seed pods just before they start to split open. Store the seed pods in a dry, airy place, away from direct heat, and allow the seeds to drop out naturally. Separate the seeds from the pods and store in dry place in paper packets, but, if refrigerated, place inside sealed plastic bags to prevent drying out.

MAGNOLIAS: Harvest seed pods just as the red seeds begin to show. Remove the seeds and soak them in water for a few days until the red seed coat can be washed off. Rinse the seeds thoroughly and place in plastic bags with damp perlite (**not** peat, compost or vermiculite). **Do not allow the seeds to dry out.**

CAMELLIAS: Harvest seed pods as they begin to split. Remove seeds from pods and place in plastic bags. **Do not allow seeds to dry out.**

Seeds other than those of the above genera are also very welcome. We will also accept seeds of species that exhibit early germination such as Aesculus, Quercus, Castanea, etc. and advertise these by email or on the Group website for early distribution before the end of the year.

All seeds should be sent in bulk – one packet for each species, with clear, waterproof labelling showing full, correct, botanical name, whether hand or open pollinated, collector's number, location collected plus any other relevant information.

If you have seeds but cannot manage to clean them then just send them anyway and we will deal with them appropriately.

If you have the opportunity to collect in the wild we would particularly like to hear from you.

For inclusion in the main printed list seeds should be received by 30 November. Exceptionally, late ripening seeds may be sent up to the end of the year but notification of an intended seed donation should still be received by 30 November, where possible. Seeds received at other times of the year may be advertised using email or the Group website.

All seeds can be stored temporarily in the warmest part of a domestic refrigerator – **DO NOT FREEZE** – before sending them, in a padded mail bag, as soon as possible, to:- Mrs Julie Atkinson, 184 Crow Lane East, Newton-le-Willows, ST HELENS, Merseyside, WA12 9UA

If you are still not sure about something, contact:

julie.soundgardenrhododendrons@hotmail.co.uk

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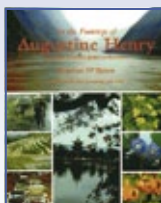
the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group forthcoming events



JANUARY / 2013	FEBRUARY / 2013	MARCH / 2013	APRIL / 2013	MAY / 2013
12 North West Branch Ness Gardens Talk by Ross Underwood on "The Garden at Hodnet Hall" Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193	13 North West Branch Ness Gardens Talk by Steve Lyus on "The 2012 Camellia Congress in Yunnan" Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193	16/17 RHS & SW Branch Rosemoor Garden Early Camellia Competition plus SW Branch Rhododendron and Magnolia competitions RHS or Colin Brown 01674 277268	9/10 RHS Wisley Garden Early Rhododendron and Main Camellia Competitions RHS	4/5 RHS & Harlow Carr Rhododendron Group Harlow Carr Garden Late Rhododendron Show RHS or John Harsant 0151 342 3664
18 Group Millais Nurseries Workshop: Grow Rhododendrons from seed Millais Nurseries sales@rhododendrons.co.uk See page 4		20-28 Magnolia Society International Newquay and Guildford Tour of part of UK MSI and/or Jim Gardiner	14-19 Group Cornwall Spring Tour Judith Hallett 01981 570401	11/12 North West Branch Ness Gardens Branch Show Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
			20/21 RHS & SW Branch Rosemoor Garden Main Rhododendron Competition plus SW Branch Camellia and Magnolia competitions RHS or Colin Brown 01674 277268	22 North West Branch Visit to Sue Kenwell's garden at Rowen and Aberconwy Nursery Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
			22-26 NW Branch South East England Branch Tour Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193	

The following publications are offered to Group Members exclusively and sold in support of the Group.
 Back issues of the yearbook from 1946 and previously advertised titles not featured here may still be available – please enquire.

In the Footsteps of AUGUSTINE HENRY
Seamus O'Brien
 376pp Garden Art Press
 Full Price: £40 Member's Price: £27.95
 Postage: UK £5 Europe £6
 Rest of World £10



Pocket Guide to RHODODENDRON SPECIES
John McQuire & Mike Robinson
 704pp RBG Kew 2009
 Full Price: £59 Member's Price: £42
 Postage: UK £5.50 Europe £8.50
 Rest of World £15.50



PUBLICATIONS

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