



the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

Bulletin 122 / November 2016 / www.rhodogroup-rhs.org



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

As we approach the end of this momentous year, the Group can look back with pride at all the celebrations of our Centenary, and the publicity boost received by TV coverage at Chelsea, in magazines and the national press. We welcome new members to our Group and hope that we can enjoy each other's company and learn more about our favourite plants. Rhododendrons were always going to be the core focus of the Centenary celebrations, but for 2017 we need to redress the balance and give more prominence to camellias and magnolias. As the recent membership survey proved, there are a good number of admirers of our other two genera amongst our members. I am also aware that although we have moved Shows outside London, and into the regions, we have not served our northern members well. Hence I am delighted that Christopher Legrand, our new Events Coordinator, is planning a trip to Yorkshire at the time of the RHS Harlow Carr Rhododendron Competition to give them some well-deserved support. I really hope that local members will get more involved and consider entering blooms from their gardens into the competition and help to build it up to the standards of the Show at Wisley and even Rosemoor. Visitors, and those on the tour, will be able to see some truly outstanding plants that are exhibited by leading gardens in the area. Here you will find some superb entries, especially of rare species, that are very different from those that may be familiar at Wisley or Rosemoor. You will read elsewhere about this trip in the middle of May, and I do hope that you will consider joining what should be a fascinating short tour. But you must book early as accommodation is in very short supply due to another big event in Harrogate at that time.

Another really positive result that has come out of our Centenary, and something that I have long been hoping for, is another Show in the South during May. The RHS at Wisley were delighted with our Centenary Show that was held on the lawns outside the Wisley restaurant, and have asked us if we would stage another Show next year. High praise indeed for all those volunteers, exhibitors and quality blooms! As you will read elsewhere, the Early Show in April will move to Savill Gardens to avoid the Wisley construction works, and this will be excellent for camellias, early rhododendrons and magnolias. This is what you could call the specialist Show with lots of different classes to enter and win, and where you can learn about the differences within each subsection. But now we will also have a Show in mid-May, enabling us to exhibit our main season rhododendrons,

I am delighted that the Centenary Appeal has been kick-started thanks to the generosity of members who have kindly responded to our requests for funds. The total currently stands at more than £6000, which is a fantastic achievement



Rhododendron 'Sandling'

Photo: Stephen Harding

including azaleas, together with late season magnolias and even camellias. Rather than making this too specialist, we will retain the five simple classes for rhododendrons, (species, hybrids, tender, and deciduous and evergreen azaleas), and add new classes for late flowering camellias and magnolias. This Show will be easy for all members to enter, just give Sally Hayward some advance warning, and bring along whatever is in flower in

your garden. The entry judged to be the overall Best in Show, and this could be a rhododendron, a camellia or a magnolia, will be awarded The Centenary Cup. As well as being a great meeting place for members, it really

should appeal to the 8000+ visitors that pass through Wisley on that weekend and be an added visitor attraction for them. In return, we have a chance to discuss our three genera with the public, and hopefully turn some of them into new members. The overall theme will be 'The Wilson 50' – the group of evergreen azaleas which were selected by Ernest Wilson from Japan and introduced by him. Yvette Harvey, Keeper of the Herbarium at Wisley is currently studying these beautiful plants and will help with descriptive signage, and we are hoping for major exhibits from the collections at Windsor and the Isabella Plantation. This event should be well worth visiting!

Both the Harlow Carr and Wisley shows will be on the 13th–14th May 2017, and I do hope that you will consider supporting

Continued overleaf

one of them, but as they are more than 200 miles apart, it is probably only me that will attempt to visit both in the same weekend!

I am delighted that the Centenary Appeal has been kick-started thanks to the generosity of members who have kindly responded to our requests for funds. The total currently stands at more than £6000, which is a fantastic achievement, though more funds would certainly be welcomed. Stephen Harding and Ivor Stokes on the Plant Committee have been busy during the summer drawing up plans to propagate the rarest and most choice plants that are in danger of being lost for ever. As you will read elsewhere in the Bulletin, we are only just in time to save from extinction many choice plants that have received RHS awards in the past! We do find ourselves to be in an extraordinary time where plants that were previously highly valued have 'slipped through the net' and have not been propagated for many years. Our challenge now is to identify and locate these plants, arrange their propagation, and to place them into secure garden Trusts where they will be enjoyed and safeguarded for the future. This is such a worthwhile project, and we are re-naming it 'The Centenary Fund' so that its benefits can be extended for many years. I would like to encourage everyone to consider contributing to this Fund to help make a real difference and save these rare plants before it's too late. Please make payments to the Group via our Treasurer, and preferably Gift-Aided so that HMRC will give us an additional 25%.

None of our Centenary events would have happened without a lot of work in the background, and I would like to thank everyone that has contributed in some way to the success of the year. Strongest praise is certainly due to our remarkable Secretary Sally Hayward who masterminded the Top 100 project, and so much of the detail that went on behind the scenes at the Centenary Show and our Silver-Gilt winning Chelsea exhibit. The rest of the Committee have also been hard at work in their respective areas, often making huge personal contributions to the running of the Group. Our monthly Skype meetings have proved invaluable in keeping everyone on board and discussing matters in a timely manner. And I would also like to thank everyone who kindly volunteered to man our various exhibits and shows around the country; these events could not have worked without you. I feel sure that everyone who helped did enjoy their 'shift' and meeting members of the public to discuss our genera. So if you have not helped at one of our events before, do please volunteer and spread the load more fairly. As the saying goes 'many hands make light work'!

As I write this, at the end of the growing season, I can reflect on a summer which was at times cool and wet, and then too hot in the South of England. We had several days in a row with temperatures over 30°C, which the plants just didn't like. I am sure we have all seen leaves suffering and turning yellow due to too much sun, but I have never experienced so much leaf scorch damage when plants which were apparently moist at the roots, could not move water fast enough to their tops. This was seen both in the garden and in the nursery, and it seemed to be connected with young roots not able to support their shoots sufficiently on hot days. Some varieties seemed to suffer more than others, but for some reason it was often red hybrids, especially *Rhododendron* 'Markeeta's Prize', 'Tromba' and even 'Nova Zembla' which should have been as tough as old boots! Although some leaves are unsightly, the plants are fine and most are looking good. Budding for next spring is looking particularly encouraging, and that's certainly something to look forward to!

David Millais

EDITOR'S NOTES

Peter Furneaux

I need your letters, reports from branches, articles, future events, etc. to keep the members up to date. Please send your copy for the **March 2017 Bulletin by 27th January**.

Images made on a digital camera, iPad or mobile phone, as well as transparencies, are acceptable and should be taken as 'large' files, so that they are of the high quality required for printing. Please ask for specifications if you require more detail. Looking through your old picture folders might well encourage you to pen a note for the Bulletin.

Please send your contributions to:

Email: peterfurneaux@gmail.com

Peter Furneaux, Lucton Court, Lucton, Leominster HR6 9PQ

TREASURER'S NOTE

Jenny Fly

A gentle reminder that membership subscriptions are due!

Direct Debit Payments

A reminder to those members who pay their annual membership by Direct Debit that their annual membership payments of £20 are now due. This will have been collected from bank accounts on the 1st November 2016 and will be identified by 'EAZYCOLLECT' on bank statements. For anyone wishing to change to DD, forms are available on the Group website or direct from me.

Cheque, PayPal & Card Payments

If your subscription is due for renewal you will have received a reminder and a form for completion by email or if you do not have an active email account, it will be included with this Bulletin. If possible, payment by debit card or PayPal is preferred over credit cards which incur much greater charges. Renewal is easy online and you do not need a PayPal account to make payment. Visit: www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/information/renewal/ follow the 'buy now' link and 'checkout as guest' on the PayPal website.

Gift Aid

A big thank you to all our UK members who have signed up to Gift Aid. This extra funding will help our Society plan future projects, research and events.

Jenny Fly, Group Treasurer

Pinecroft, Bracken Close, Storrington, West Sussex RH20 3HT

Email: treasurer.for.rcmg@gmail.com Tel: 01903 742350



The 'Augustinii' Glade at Ray Wood, one of the gardens to be visited on the forthcoming Group Tour (see page 7 for details) Photo: Bill Ballam

Through the summer months your Plant Committee has been busy trying to decide where the monies raised from the Centenary Appeal should be spent. All will be revealed soon.

We have been busy gathering information on all the AGM, FCC and AM rhododendrons and azaleas which are now rare in cultivation so that we may propagate some of these garden-worthy plants. Just because a plant does not hold a current AGM it may still be a good plant to grow and therefore worth saving. A list of FCC and AM plants will be posted on the website soon and we would ask that you take the time to look at it and let me know if you know the whereabouts of any of the listed plants.



Rhododendron (Azalea) 'Amber Rain'



Rhododendron 'Champagne' syn. 'Tortoiseshell Champagne'



Rhododendron (Azalea) 'Goldcrest'

All the above photos of endangered cultivars: Stephen Harding

This is the next stage of the conservation project and is running in conjunction with the 'Critical List' currently on our website. A new, updated critical list will be released by the RHS and Plant Heritage soon.

As a group, we are working in partnership with the RHS, National Trust, RBG Edinburgh and the National Trust for Scotland in naming plants in their respective gardens. These organisations have submitted lists of plants in their gardens, from all three genera and I would like to thank personally all those concerned. What we really need to fulfil our obligations as a CIO, with set aims, is that you, our membership, continue to participate in this work. We really do need more of you to send plant lists across all three of our genera in order to find where our 'hidden treasures' are in the UK. We have had a good response to the original list and would encourage you all to help us in finding more. Lists can be sent to me in any format, email is preferred but posted, handwritten letters are just as good.

I look forward to working with you all on this.

Stephen Harding, Group Conservation Officer

Plant Committee Report

Most members will be aware that, over the years, the Group has initiated living reference collections of each of our genera at various sites in the UK. These range from a Hardy Hybrid Collection at Ramster, in Surrey, through a collection of general rhododendron species and the 'Alan Hardy Rustica Flore Pleno' azaleas at Wisley, to a 'John Bond Memorial Collection' of large-leaved rhododendron species (mainly *Grandia* and *Falconera* Sections) at Abbotsbury in Dorset.

Besides these there are *Magnolia x loebneri* cultivars at Oxford University Botanic Garden's Harcourt Arboretum and a collection of Kunming *Camellia reticulata* cultivars also at Abbotsbury, sourced and propagated for the Group from collections in Kunming in western China, the United States and elsewhere.

As with many voluntary organisations that have regular changes within their management structure – as new folk get elected and others retire – it was almost inevitable that the continuity of diligent monitoring of the condition and performance of these collections became neglected. With the exception of those at Wisley, which have been checked regularly, up until now any visits have been very much on an *ad hoc* basis.

Members of this committee are now visiting each of the sites to determine how well these collections are faring, with a view to extending them with new taxa and replacing, if appropriate, any failures.

Accompanied by two local group members, Russell Beeson and Robin Whiting, I recently visited Abbotsbury. The tour of the garden, in the company of Steve Griffith the Curator, was an eye-opener for me; despite annual rainfall not exceeding 28" (70cm), a plant of *Rhododendron protistum* var. *protistum* planted in January 2002, had achieved a height of 13ft (4m), with leaves more than 18" (45cm) – far longer than many in, supposedly, more favoured locations. *R. montroseanum*, although not quite so sizeable was thriving nearby, whilst a plant of *R. sinogrande* var. *boreale*, planted at the same time was less than half the size but sporting foliage more than 20" (50cm) in length.

With the exception of a couple of plants that appear to have been attacked by *Armillaria* (honey fungus), the overall

impression of these magnificent plants was that they are well suited to their sites and I must rethink my presumption that they need to be in a constantly moist cloud!

Although there are many handsome specimens of *Camellia reticulata* cultivars and selected seedlings, growing happily at Abbotsbury, for some reason, none of the Kunming plants have survived and we must consider how to replace these.

David Millais, our Chairman, managed to visit the *Magnolia x loebneri* collection at Harcourt Arboretum and has reported back favourably on their performance beneath the mature trees. There has, however, been some deer damage to the plants and Ben Jones, the Curator, has now installed wire cages around them all. There are some exciting development plans for the Arboretum, which should increase the number of visitors who are able to enjoy these plants.



Magnolia x loebneri 'Leonard Messel' at Harcourt Arboretum

Photo: David Millais

Once Steve Harding, our Conservation Officer, has managed to whittle down the Conservation lists to a manageable size and the plants located, a programme of propagation will be undertaken and consideration will be given to establishing further collections around the country that will be readily accessible to members.

There are many fine hybrid rhododendrons, exhibited and award-winning, that have never made it into commerce and are to be found only in the gardens of the raiser and a few friends. Many of these that appear on the, now defunct, RHS Award of Merit and First Class Certificate lists are of historic value and need tracking down. We also need to find propagation material for such botanically important hybrids such as *Rhododendron* 'Griental', whose parentage was, seemingly, the first to combine elepidote and lepidote species.

Ivor Stokes, Plant Committee Chairman

The large leaf *Rhododendron* species collection at Abbotsbury Subtropical Garden

When I took over as horticultural manager at Abbotsbury in 1990 the challenges were immense. The garden had just suffered the biggest storm of the century; hundreds of trees were blown over leaving holes in the shelter belts, exposing the valley to gales from the English Channel. The garden was mostly dark, dry woodland with acres of wild garlic, ivy up the trees and gangs of roaming peacocks ruled the roost. It had an air of neglect, yet a magical atmosphere. There had been some stop-start attempts at restoration with some new introductions from the Sino-British expedition to China in 1984. The woodland mostly consisted of giant *Quercus ilex* and *Q. robur*; the Holm oak being evergreen is a great contributor in helping to maintain the unique microclimate in the valley. The understory was nearly all tall *Rhododendron arboreum* hybrids, many layered and re-layered over the years to form vast thickets. There are some good specimens of *R. macabeanum*, *R. grande*, *R. sinogrande*, *R. decorum* and late flowering *R. griersonianum* hybrids all growing well in the rich leaf mould, an indicator that the site is suited to add more to the collection. The average rainfall does not compare to the west coast of Scotland with most of the rain coming in the winter months and an average of 28 inches a year, so the garden does suffer drought conditions in summer echoing a very typical Mediterranean climate.



Rhododendron protistum var. *protistum* at Abbotsbury with Stephen Griffith

Photo: Ivor Stokes

In 1998 John Bond was brought in as an advisory consultant to help steer future plans and development of the garden. John being a great plantsman and the late chairman of the RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group, put forward Abbotsbury as a possible site to plant a large-leaved *Rhododendron* collection. This took place posthumously on 17th January 2002 and the collection was formally named the John Bond Memorial Collection.

Since then the collection has had its successes and failures. The

soil is quite variable in the garden with the more acid soil being found where the iron ore content is at its highest and consequently the rhododendrons grow their best there. The site for the collection is in the lower Himalayan glade with a good amount of filtered overhead oak canopy creating ideal dappled light. The collection, mostly supplied by Millais nursery, has had a slow start but now is putting on some good growth. Little did we know at the time but the area at the bottom of the glade seems to be riddled with honey fungus, typical of a woodland valley, and so it was here that we had the most casualties. Some plants were transplanted and recovered, others took a long time dying! On the positive side we still have over 70% of the collection doing fine.



Rhododendron sinogrande var. *boreale* at Abbotsbury Photo: Ivor Stokes

Rhododendron asterochnoum Cox 7051 has developed a full crown up to 2.5m and is moderately tomentose, a probable ally of *R. calophytum* according to Cox. The most successful group are *R. sinofalconeri* with no losses and looking quite healthy with deep glossy leaves. *R. glanduliferum* has grown steadily and has really romped away in another site in the garden with lots of new flower buds developing for next year. The star plant is *R. protistum* var. *protistum*. It has grown into a full structured crown up to 4m with large healthy glabrous leaves. Even though the plant is growing quite close to a huge *Quercus robur* it seems unaffected by root competition. *Rhododendron coriaceum* is looking good as is *R. Subsection Falconera* aff. AC431. Oddly enough, the *R. sinogrande* var. *boreale* CNW417 has superbly dark green large leaves and looks healthy yet it has made no more than 1m growth in height since planting in 2002. A specimen of *R. grande* TSS1 was donated by Tom Spring Smyth from seed he collected in eastern Nepal in 1961; alas this was recently affected by some pathogen and has now perished. He also gave me a cutting of *Rosa brunonii* from the KTM valley Nepal which has now romped away high into an oak tree and flowered wonderfully this year. As a good ground cover to associate with the rhododendron collection I planted *Strobilanthes attenuata* that has purple flowers in late summer. Now that is too much of a success story, it has marched all over the valley – in a nice way!

Some you win some you lose, that's gardening.

The Collection:

Rhododendron asterochnoum Cox 7051
R. arizelum var. *rubicosum* Needham
R. Subsection Falconera aff. AC431
R. glanduliferum EMG347
R. coriaceum AC1921
R. montroseanum
R. praestans
R. protistum var. *protistum*
R. rex EGM295
R. rex AC901
R. rex ssp. *gratum* AC3009
R. rothschildii
R. sinofalconeri SEH229
R. sinofalconeri Cox7183
R. sinogrande var. *boreale* CNW417
R. sinogrande
R. suoilenhense TH261
R. macabeaunum (original plant in garden)

Stephen Griffith

SECRETARY'S NOTES

In order to reserve space within the Bulletin for articles and photographs the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Ramster on 10th May 2016 have been posted on the Group website. If you are unable to access the website and would like a copy of the Minutes posted to you, please contact RCM Group Secretary Sally Hayward, 9 Old Park Avenue, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1DL (Tel: 01227 761369).

RHS Early Rhododendron, Main Camellia and Spring Ornamental Competition 8th/9th April 2017 – Venue Confirmed!

You will recall that, in the last issue of the Bulletin, the venue for these competitions had not been settled by the RHS. Since the competitions were moved out of London, they have been staged at RHS Wisley for the last four years. However, the forthcoming construction work to form the new front entrance at RHS Wisley will prevent access to the usual marquee site in Wilson's Wood.

I am now able to let you know that the RHS has made arrangements for the 2017 competitions to be staged at **The Savill Garden, Windsor** by courtesy of The Crown Estate. I accompanied Georgina Barter to assess the proposed site for the show and can confirm that it is excellent, with really good supporting facilities and vehicle access to be able deliver exhibits, and nearby parking. You will receive more information regarding the competitions nearer the time.

This is a really great opportunity to put on a magnificent show in a prestigious setting. We hope that you will feel encouraged to enter the competitions next year, or at the very least come along and take the opportunity to visit The Savill Garden too, so please make sure that you put the date in your diary now: **8th/9th April 2017.**

The RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group Show, 13th/14th May 2017

Exciting news! Following on from our very successful Centenary Rhododendron Show at Wisley last May, we have been invited back by the RHS to stage a follow up event, to take place on the main lawn on 13th and 14th May 2017.

We are planning to have, as our background theme, an informative display showcasing the 'Wilson 50 Kurume Azaleas' (see *Chairman's Notes*). It is hoped to have a good display of as many of the fifty as can be mustered, and also an information display from the RHS Herbarium, who are currently carrying out a major study of these plants.

There will also be a simple competition enabling you to bring along all of your best blooms on the day. The classes will be the same as for the Centenary Show, but in addition there will be a classes for camellias and magnolias. The winning entries in each class will be further judged to find the 2017 winner of The Centenary Cup.

We are hoping to be joined by Matt Biggs, writer and radio presenter, who is passionately interested in the endeavours of the great plant hunters.

Let us hope for a kind winter and a warm spring which will go together to produce an abundance of colour and spectacle for the visiting public. It would be really wonderful if we could achieve a gigantic display of azaleas, both deciduous and evergreen – the gems that are normally too late to get to the party.

Whilst there will not be an associated tour arranged to complement this event, why not consider coming to stay in the area for the weekend, to visit some of the many gardens in the South East which will be perfect just then or maybe to revisit gardens that you enjoyed on last year's tour.

Please put the date in your diary – **13th/14th May 2017** and if you have never entered an RCMG competition before – well this is the very best way to 'dip your toe in the water' and have a go!

Watch out for follow up information in the next edition of the Bulletin.

Update on the Nagoya Protocol

I have received the following update from Dr John David, RHS Head of Horticultural Taxonomy, Chair of the Nagoya Protocol Working Party and RCMG member:

'EU Exit (as Her Majesty's Government is now officially referring to Brexit), does not change much as far as Nagoya Protocol is concerned. As the UK is a signatory in its own right of the Nagoya Protocol and has implemented legislation to enforce the NP, we are a fully ratified party to the Protocol, separate to the EU. There is discussion about what happens to EU Regulations, which are not, unlike EU Directives, translated into UK legislation, but are adopted as UK law without being added to the statute book. There are too many such regulations to be gone through one by one to decide whether to add them to the statute book unamended, to amend them or reject them, in the time available. The Defra Secretary of State has indicated that she does not intend to propose substantial changes to EU Regulations relating to the environment and the favoured option seems to be that an 'enabling act' will be proposed to accept all such Regulations as UK law, and then sort out amendments afterwards. Although there might be some benefit in making the EU implementing

acts to the Nagoya Protocol less complex and burdensome for the UK, which I have suggested to Defra when they asked about implications of EU Exit. As it stands, we will need to comply with the EU Regulation certainly until the point the UK leaves the EU, and probably for some time afterwards.'

I will update you further as and when further information is available.

Sally Hayward

Group Secretary & Member of the Nagoya Working Party

CENTENARY FUND

As you have been reading elsewhere, the Centenary Appeal is to achieve lasting status as the Centenary Fund, allowing us to continue our conservation efforts for the foreseeable future. This will help us plan and develop meaningful funding for the curation, propagation and establishment of threatened varieties and representative collections of our three genera.

Thanks to the generosity of our members, the fund has got off to a flying start and our plans are well underway. We now need to keep the momentum going and develop other initiatives to raise money such as reviving the Surplus Plant Exchange and organising second-hand book sales. Other ideas will be very welcome.

Should you wish to support the Centenary Fund please visit: www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/information/fund/ for a form or to donate online.



The Pond Path at the Himalayan Garden, one of the gardens to be visited on the forthcoming Group Tour in 2017 (see next page for details)

Photo: Jenny Wells

Yorkshire, at the time of the Harlow Carr Rhododendron Show May 13th – 16th 2017

You will need to book up by early January for the Group Tour as hotel accommodation is limited.

The tour is based at the Dower House Hotel, Knaresborough (approximately 5 miles from RHS Harlow Carr) and the itinerary includes visiting the RHS Rhododendron Show, and time to enjoy RHS Garden Harlow Carr, conducted tours of Ray Wood (part of the Yorkshire Arboretum at Castle Howard) and Peter and Caroline Roberts' Himalayan Garden and Sculpture Park, plus visits to Harewood House and Garden together with a selection of smaller gardens, and including a talk on at least one evening.

Dinner, bed and full Yorkshire breakfast at the hotel have been negotiated at a daily rate of £150 for a double/twin room (£75 per person) and £110 per room for single occupancy.

Members and guests **MUST BOOK AND PAY FOR THEIR ACCOMMODATION DIRECT WITH THE HOTEL** using the code **RCMG** to identify the rates that apply to the tour.

The cost of the tour is **£110** and includes:

- Entry to, and a conducted tour of, Ray Wood, Castle Howard.
- Entry to, talk and a conducted tour of the Himalayan Garden and Sculpture Park.
- Entry to Harewood House, including the Grounds and Gardens, the Bird Garden, Below Stairs and the State Rooms.
- Coach travel to all venues on Sunday 14th & Monday 15th May.
- Entry to all other gardens.

Not included in the tour price are:

- Hotel accommodation (to be booked directly with the Dower House)
- Meals, drinks and refreshments other than those included in the hotel booking.
- Voluntary gratuities.
- Entry to Harlow Carr (RHS members and family guest free).

For further information and booking forms please visit the RCM Group website Tour page:

www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/services/tours

or contact Christopher Legrand email: clegrand@pirltd.org.uk

Please make sure you identify which class you are entering when sending me your entries! These classes will be judged by a group of three of our members. So I am also looking for volunteers who have some experience of photo competitions to make themselves known to me.

Whilst we are making this change to rejuvenate the competition, I must reiterate that we still need good conventional images of our plants, particularly if they are better than the ones we had when the website was created. Such photos will no longer be in the competition.

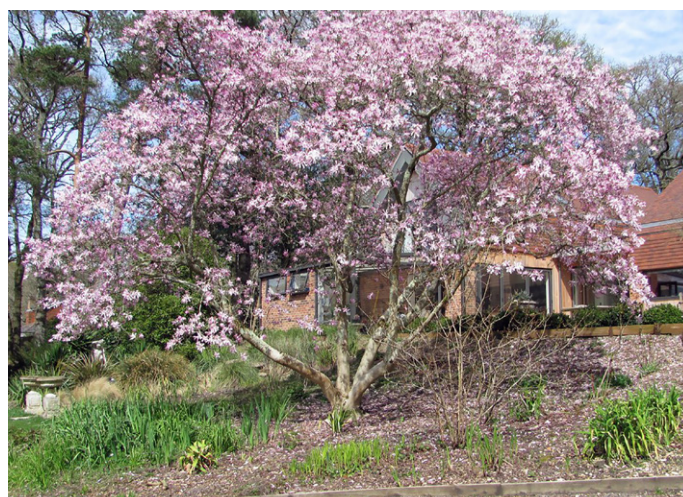
I must take this opportunity to thank everyone who sent in the photos we needed of the AGM plants, we now have all of them! I would encourage you all to check them out. Maybe you will change your Christmas wish lists?

Stephen Lyus

BRANCH NEWS

New Forest Branch

It is eight years since the New Forest Branch visited Spinners Garden near Lymington in Hampshire and in that time much has changed. Not least the sad passing of Peter Chappell who started the garden and nursery 50 years ago. The garden is now run by Andrew and Vicky Roberts. Amongst the changes they have made has been the removal of a very large *Cupressus x leylandii* hedge along the boundary of the lower part of the garden, thus opening up a vista of the surrounding countryside. The garden has now been effectively split in two. The upper part woodland, the lower part herbaceous borders, arboretum and a nursery area.



Magnolia x loebneri 'Leonard Messel'

A superb *Magnolia x loebneri* 'Leonard Messel' in full flower greeted us as we met at the visitors' cabin in the garden for our visit in mid-April. Andrew took the nine members of our group on a tour of the woodland part of the garden. We were fortunate to arrive at a time when the erythroniums, trilliums and wood anemones were at their very best, carpeting the ground beneath the shrubs and trees. A particularly fine *Stewartia monadelphica*, not yet in leaf but with superb peeling bark stood amongst a large group of narcissi. Many mature camellias grow under the oak canopy together with some very fine rhododendrons. We all admired the lovely foliage on *Rhododendron edgeworthii*, further on we were very pleased to see the beautiful flowers on *R. 'Golden Oriole Talavera'*. Much too early in this very late spring, but showing much promise for later on were a grouping of *R.*

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

We have decided that we are not getting enough contributors for a serious competition, so from the date of this Bulletin until the end of 2017, there will be four new classes:

- Class 1** A group of our 3 genera in a garden setting
- Class 2** A view from a garden visit with RCMG members visible
- Class 3** A macro shot (close-up) of a diagnostic feature e.g. leaf bud, flower part, indumentum, scales etc.
- Class 4** An amusing glimpse of plant collector/ gardener with their plants

degronianum ssp. *yakushmanum* that must have been planted by Peter Chappell soon after he started the garden.

So in some ways it was a sad reminder of the legacy that Peter had left in the garden, but things move on and it was good to see the many worthwhile changes that Andrew and Vicky are making to the garden.



Rhododendron edgeworthii



Rhododendron 'Golden Oriole Talavera'

All photographs by Robin Whiting at Spinners Garden

Robin Whiting

South West Branch

Visit to Owlacombe, Roborough, North Devon
on 17th May 2016

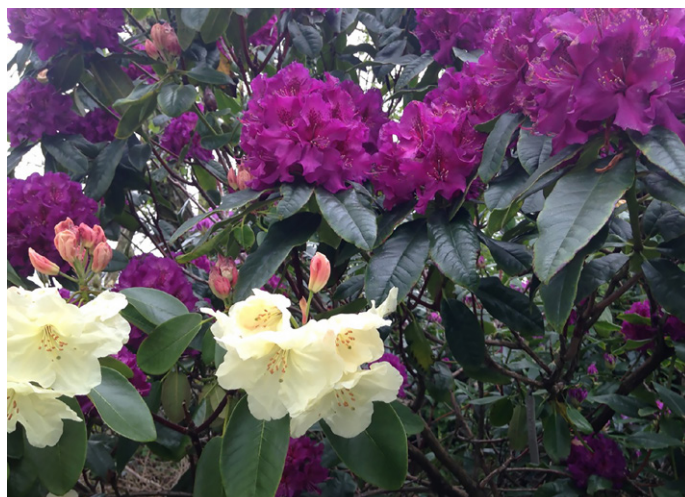
Long-standing South West Branch member, John Jemmett, had written to me about a friend who farmed near Roborough in North Devon, and who had been creating a garden containing at least 300 rhododendrons, many of which had originally come from Nigel Wright, whose garden we had just visited. He thought it would repay a visit by our Branch. Indeed it did, and was quite amazing. Having passed massed rhododendron bushes and a gorilla (!) we were welcomed by Rob and Ros Pickard and gathered by the side of the farmhouse with its wonderful views across country and filled with bleating sheep and lambs in the foreground; an idyllic start. Although Rob has lived here almost all his life, he and Ros caught the gardening bug in 1993 and set about creating a garden around and below the house, creating lakes and planting a great many rhododendrons, mainly hybrids of good breeding. As gardens do, this one has expanded and now takes in a lovely wooded valley with a stream and two lakes, one at the top and one at the bottom. The top lake has an electric fence at low level to dissuade

the otters from taking the prize fish. (The first time I have come across an anti-otter fence!) They are allowed in the lower lake. The garden was immaculate without a weed (or slug) in sight, and the rhododendrons were in good health, flowering well, and all were labelled which in itself was very informative producing much evidence of notebooks and scribbling.



Rhododendron labelled *R.* 'Souvenir de Dr S. Endtz'

The upper garden had plenty of mixed planting of an herbaceous nature, and especially noticeable were many hostas, all 'unholey'. A 'hot' bed was a new venture below the terrace and was already sprouting well for later in the season. The soil is in excellent heart as silt from the fields above is washed down and used in making the beds. There were interesting mixed plantings around the pond below the terrace, and an immaculate copper beech hedge descended the sloping lawn to another small pond serving as a colourful backdrop to the rhododendron flowers. The valley garden is entered via a gate and at the top Rob has built an iron bridge with deep foundation pillars.



Rhododendron 'Ightham Yellow' and *R.* 'Colonel Coen' at Owlacombe

From here one can look down the valley stream where there were bluebells and primulas and also the unfurling leaves of gunneras: a stunning sight. There were many wood carvings, mainly fashioned from the trunks of dead trees which were a tribute to Rob and Ros's skill at carving, and in Rob's case, the artistic possibilities of the chain saw.

More rhododendron and azalea plantings bordered the path down the valley to a large lake at the bottom. The path up the other side had a bank of bluebells, 'Pheasant's Eye' narcissi, campion and other flowers with *Rhododendron luteum* bushes above – a wonderful experience of harmony in both colour and scent. Ros rushed up the path to prepare an amazing cream tea

to finish our visit in delicious style. Rob and Ros claim not to be gardeners and still learning. The garden they have created speaks to them having already learned an awful lot, and is a credit to their hard work, energy and enthusiasm; and by the way, they also run the farm!



Rob Pickard with Rosemary Howell and Katie Dunstan

John Marston / Photographs: John Marston

(Reports of other garden visits by the SW Branch are available on the RCMG website *Ed*)

MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

We welcome the following new members and hope they will enjoy the benefits offered by the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group

GOLD MEDAL SUCCESS AT CHELSEA!

The Group sends its warmest congratulations to both Burncoose and Millais Nurseries for the Gold Medals awarded to their outstanding exhibits at the Chelsea Flower Show in May. Coupled with our own Silver-Gilt Medal, rhododendrons have been properly acknowledged by the judges this year – long may this recognition continue!



The Gold Medal-winning Burncoose Nurseries exhibit at Chelsea celebrated the centenary of the Rhododendron Society and had as its focal point a stunning mature plant of *Rhododendron sinogrande* lifted from the gardens at Caerhays Castle.

Photo: Sally Hayward



Millais Nurseries won their Gold Medal for the sheer quality of the rhododendron blooms on display - all at the peak of perfection for the judges to admire.

Photo: Sally Hayward

SEED DONATIONS

With the limits placed upon us by the Nagoya Protocol, we are still reliant on members to help make a vibrant seed exchange a reality. Without the time and effort of a relatively small number of members in 2015, we would not have produced such a varied and worthwhile list in 2016 and we are deeply grateful to them all. Maybe this year a lot more of us can find something to send to help us make the 2017 list just as interesting.

Please send your donations to:
Mrs Julie Atkinson, 184 Crow Lane East, Newton-le-Willows,
St Helens, Merseyside WA12 9UA

John Gallagher VMM

It is with great sadness that we report the death of our fellow member, John Gallagher, at the age of 85. He was an authority on rhododendrons, camellias and especially magnolias, and was a member of the Rhododendron and Camellia Committee from 1975 to 2007, acting as vice-chairman from 1992. From 1993 to 2007 he was a member of the Woody Plant Committee and he was also a member of the Rhododendron Group Committee, the Woody Plant Trials Committee, and the Ornamental Plant Show Schedule Committee. His service to horticulture was recognised in 2007 when he was awarded the Veitch Memorial Medal.

John wrote for the yearbook on several occasions over the last forty years, including the Centenary Edition. Remarkably, his 2016 contribution is the only one to have been written about magnolias, the others all concerned camellias.

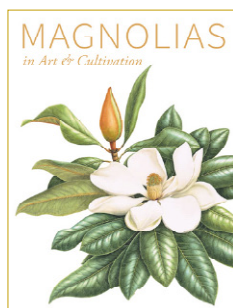
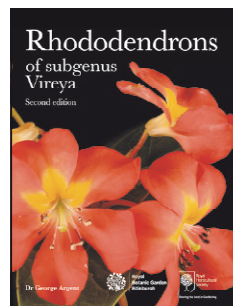
His name lives on in the wonderful *Magnolia campbellii* hybrid M. 'John Gallagher'.

He will be much missed by the woody plant community and a full tribute will appear in the forthcoming yearbook.



John Gallagher (with Kevin Hughes to his right) at Rosemoor, March 2015
Photo: Vaughan Gallavan

The following publications are offered to Group Members exclusively and sold in support of the Group.



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11/16



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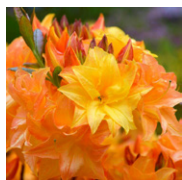
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the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group forthcoming events



NOV	JAN 2017	APRIL 2017	MAY 2017	
19 New Forest Branch Hillier Gardens Talk Rosemary Legrand 'Camellia and Magnolia time in the Gardens of Lake Maggiore and Switzerland' Martin Gates mgates@talktalk.net 02380 252 843	14 North West Branch Ness Botanic Gardens Quiz, book auction, social Ted Brabin angela.brabin@btinternet.com 0151 353 1193	8/9 RHS / South East Branch Savill Gardens, Windsor RHS Early Rhododendron, Main Camellia and Spring Ornamental Competitions Georgina Barter georginabarter@rhs.org.uk 020 7821 3142 Sally Hayward schaywar1@btinternet.com 01227 761369	13/14 RCMG RHS Wisley RCMG Show with theme of 'Wilson 50' Azaleas and Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Competitions for the Centenary Cup Sally Hayward schaywar1@btinternet.com 01227 761369	20 Wessex Branch Ramster The Ramster Flower Show Andy Fly pinecroftgarden1@btconnect.com 01903 742350
19 North West Branch Ness Botanic Gardens Talk Lloyd Kenyon 'An Exploration of Bhutan' Ted Brabin angela.brabin@btinternet.com 0151 353 1193	FEB 2017 11 North West Branch Ness Botanic Gardens Talk Donna Young 'Liverpool Museum Herbarium' Ted Brabin angela.brabin@btinternet.com 0151 353 1193	22/23 RHS / South West Branch RHS Rosemoor RHS Main Rhododendron Competition and SW Branch Camellia, Magnolia and Floral Display Competitions Georgina Barter georginabarter@rhs.org.uk 020 7821 3142 Dr John Marston artavianjohn@gmail.com 01271 323202	13/14 RHS RHS Harlow Carr RHS Harlow Carr Rhododendron Competition Georgina Barter georginabarter@rhs.org.uk 020 7821 3142	22-26 North West Branch Eastern Scotland Group Tour Ted Brabin angela.brabin@btinternet.com 0151 353 1193
	MARCH 2017 4 Wessex Branch Ramster Slide show and talk John Talbot 'Propagation in the 1980s' Andy Fly pinecroftgarden1@btconnect.com 01903 742350		13/16 RCMG Yorkshire RCMG Spring Tour Based at The Dower House, Knaresborough. Includes RHS Harlow Carr Rhododendron Competition, Harewood House, Ray Wood, Himalayan Garden etc Christopher Legrand clegrand@pirltd.org.uk 01202 873344	
	11/12 RHS / South West Branch RHS Rosemoor RHS Early Camellia Competition and SW Branch Early Rhododendron and Spring Ornamental Competitions Georgina Barter georginabarter@rhs.org.uk 020 7821 3142 Dr John Marston artavianjohn@gmail.com 01271 323202	30/1 MAY North West Branch Ness Botanic Gardens Branch Show Ted Brabin angela.brabin@btinternet.com 0151 353 1193		

Event updates to Christopher Legrand please:

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 clegrand@pirltd.org.uk
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