

the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

Bulletin 126 / March 2018 / www.rhodogroup-rhs.org



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Spring is just around the corner, and so far the signs are early with *Camellia* 'Donation' flowering as I write in mid-January. Bud set also looks good, so let's hope we avoid another wicked frost like we had at the end of last April, and we can have a good flowering season. Don't forget that the Seed List is entirely dependent upon donations of seed by members. Now that we can only list seed of garden origin, it would be really helpful if you could make the effort to hand pollinate some of your special species, or even try your hand at some interesting hybridizing this spring. Label the flower heads and then collect the plump seeds in the autumn and send to Julie Atkinson who looks after our seed supplies so well. See the website for more details: www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/seeds

The one certainty that we do have, is the greater uncertainty we have with the weather. I do hope that members did not suffer too much damage in the recent storm Eleanor. I understand that our friends in Northern Ireland suffered winds of up to 90mph. This has obviously caused some tree losses, and I hope they manage to tidy up without too much difficulty. I am sure that they will have everything sorted in time for our 'sold out' tour in April. Here, we lost a large eucalyptus and a birch, which was probably a blessing in disguise as they were past their best anyway, and now we have some space for re-planting. In the South East of the country, it has been a particularly dry autumn with groundwater levels far below normal. Southern Water has just applied for a drought permit with some reservoirs currently only 44% full. We now need above average rainfall to prevent a drought next summer. It's not too late to be filling ponds and water butts in preparation!

On the back cover of this Bulletin, you will find an action packed calendar of events for you to attend around the country, assembled by your Committee and Branch Chairmen. Of special mention are the two outstanding shows at RHS Rosemoor, the show at Savill Gardens Windsor, which returns on 7-8th April after its huge success last year, and the Spring Plant Weekend at RHS Harlow Carr on 5-6th May which now incorporates Daffodil and Tulip competitions as well as Rhododendrons. I do hope that you will attend as many of these events as possible, as well as your local and neighbouring branch activities.

We are pleased to announce that the Yearbook is progressing well



Camellia japonica 'Black Lace'. This photo was posted on the RCMG (forum) in Facebook last month by a contributor from Abbotabad, Pakistan and was photographed in his garden. Photo: Muhammad Fawad

Do consider joining us for our AGM on Saturday 28th April, at Westonbirt, the National Arboretum, by kind permission of the Forestry Commission. Westonbirt is rightly famous for its autumn tree colour, but perhaps less well known is the extensive collection of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. The arboretum was created by R S Holford (1808-1892) who financed many plant collecting trips around the world. His son Sir George Holford, was responsible for many of the original maple and rhododendron plantings, and expanded the arboretum across the valley into Silk Wood, and created three drives with wide verges and bays for ornamental trees. In 1956, the estate was handed to the Forestry Commission, and now there is an enthusiastic team of Friends who were our first corporate members a few years ago. The Friends are keen to improve the labelling of the rhododendrons and magnolias, and I hope that between us all, we can help at the time of our visit. Recently Keith Rushforth has been studying some of their plant records, and has been matching Forrest and Rock original big leaved species rhododendrons which are recorded ex Caerhays or Tower Court, and being planted on 19th January 1934! Westonbirt is on one of those small seams of greensand in an otherwise limestone area, and so maybe outside the regular areas visited by lovers of our genera. However, it has good access from South West, South East and Midlands, so I hope it will appeal to a good number of members from around the country. One of our members, George

Continued overleaf

Hargreaves, has kindly offered to be a guide on the day. Please see the booking instructions elsewhere in the Bulletin.

I am pleased to report that the 2018 Yearbook is progressing well. As half expected, nobody has felt able to take over the role that Pam Hayward has filled single-handedly for the past 10 years, but we were not prepared to see the historic yearbook fold. I am grateful to the four members of the Committee, who have stepped forward to become 'commissioning editors', and have requested some excellent articles from acknowledged experts around the world in each of our three genera. Special mention should go to Barry Haseltine who has kindly offered to co-ordinate the articles for us this year, and to liaise with the RHS publishers to ensure we maintain the high standards set by Pam. Interesting articles and stunning pictures are starting to be submitted by authors, and publication is scheduled for the spring as usual.

Have a great spring, and I hope I can catch up with many of you at events around the country!

David Millais

Editor's Note

The next Bulletin is the August edition. Copy date will be June 29th. I welcome your contributions which can be brief letters, perhaps provoked by what you read here or by experiences in your garden or on your travels, or longer items. The common thread should be our three genera.

Peter Furneaux

Conservation Officer's Note

Propagation of threatened plants in Swansea

During the early decades of the 20th century, Admiral Algernon Heneage-Vivian, developed a fine woodland garden extending to almost 50 acres (20 hectares) at Clyne Castle, situated midway around the sweep of Swansea Bay.

A shallow, wooded valley, following a small stream as it meanders through the estate to meet the sea at Blackpill, provided almost perfect conditions for the cultivation of tender rhododendrons and many other shade-loving plants.

As a founding member and long-serving Vice-President of the then Rhododendron Association, the Admiral planted the woodland extensively using many wild collected species from seed collected by Forrest, Rock, Kingdon-Ward and others. He had a great interest in large-leaved species and created several interesting hybrids between these plants. One of his favourite species for this was *Rhododendron niveum*.

The maritime influence and tree cover allowed such tender species as *R. protistum* var *protistum*, *R. magnificum*, *R. kyawii* and *R. elliotii* to thrive and flower. However, the passage of time (almost 100 years) has not been kind to the plants and most would now benefit from a programme of propagation to bring the collection renewed vigour.

This challenging work is being undertaken over the next couple of years using micropropagation. If successful, this process almost

inevitably produces more plants than can be accommodated and it is hoped that the surplus can be distributed to other gardens where their future survival can be assured.



Rhododendron elliotii KW 7725 at Clyne Gardens, Swansea. Photo: Ivor Stokes

The initiative and funding for this exciting project has come from the Friends of the City of Swansea Botanical Complex. This is a vibrant society supporting and encouraging interest in several fine gardens within the city. Pamela Morgan, Chair of the Friends, said that although they had invested much to improve other sites in Swansea, she hoped that this programme of ensuring the survival of these threatened species in Clyne Gardens will leave an even longer lasting legacy of her tenancy as Chair.

The initial restoration and cataloguing of the collection was undertaken throughout the 1980s and an article on the work appeared in the 1988/89 Year Book.

Ivor Stokes

Book review

Title: Storblada rhododendron i Norge

Author: Ole Jonny Larsen

Publisher: Privately published

Size: approx A4 - 129pp

ISBN: 978-82-8339-075-9

Date of Publication: 2017

Price: 300 NOK (approx £27.00 GBP)

+ postage and packing



Big-leaf Rhododendrons - Growing the giants of the genus: Church, Smith and Greenfield; although published comparatively recently (2015) this is now surprisingly quite a difficult and expensive title to locate. However there is now a new kid on the block with a similar theme - *Storblada rhododendron i Norge* - an additional title from Ole Jonny Larsen which translates from the Norwegian as 'Large-leaved rhododendrons in Norway'. I happened to 'stumble' on this - quite by accident - whilst searching on the web for something else. Further enquiry seemed to suggest that it was not available via a retail outlet which provoked an email direct to the author. As the result I

learnt that it was privately published and could be purchased direct via email: olejonnnylarsen@hotmail.com - his website www.lapponicum.com is also worthy of perusal.

My copy arrived promptly; it is a soft-backed publication near A4 size with Norwegian text throughout! To reassure readers most of the illustrations are supported by their botanical Latin names. The cover illustration shows *Rhododendron montroseanum* foliage whetting the appetite to turn the pages!

There are numerous images both large and small distributed throughout the text on the majority of the pages. As the result the reader is able to make the most of the main threads throughout despite the language restrictions! Some knowledge of botany and rhododendrons in particular mean that many of the subject headings translate fairly readily from Norwegian to English! The major part of the book is directed towards a descriptive account of each large-leaved species and the various hybrids - in the main each with its own two page spread. In the majority of cases each also includes images showing forthcoming flower buds which I found informative and an aid to identification.

I must admit that I had preconceived ideas that Norway's severe cold climatic conditions would be unfavourable to permit survival of some of these large-leaved species. My thoughts were subsequently allayed by comments included in an email to me from Jonny which obviously contribute to his success - *"I live at the west coast of Norway, mostly a wet place with lots of rain all through the year. Still my home town (Ålesund) and our county has the highest average temperature in December and January of all Scandinavia. We have very little frost, and most years also more rain than snow. I would call our climate Atlantic/Oceanic"*. The image that shows a sheet of polystyrene sited to provide insulative root ball protection is thought provoking and not something that I have tried other than in my bulb frame.

To my knowledge this is only the second title directed specifically to large-leaf rhododendrons and contains much to commend it; overall a useful and interesting addition to the rhododendron enthusiasts' bookshelf. I guess it is a fairly small print run and will not remain readily available for long. The Norwegian text should not be seen as too much of a deterrent as current technologies are able to provide an 'instant' translation whilst many of the images convey their own story!

John Sanders

BRANCH REPORT

South East Branch

Visit to Borde Hill Gardens, 4th November 2017

The gardens are closed to the public for the winter, but South East Branch members were allowed a visit led by the Head Gardener, Andy Stevens. We gathered at 2.00pm on a rather overcast, but mild day, with the possibility of showers – which mercifully held off until we had finished!

Borde Hill estate has a very long history, and Andy gave us a quick lesson on how the estate came into being, something of its owners, and the way in which the garden itself developed. Apparently, there

was a Mr Borde, back in the late 1500's, who lighted upon the old manor house on the ridge of upland that runs east/west through the parkland of the estate; part of the manor house still exists as part of the house that is there now, much altered, of course.

The Borde family sold the house on and in 1893 Colonel Stephenson Robert Clarke (yes, the names are that way around) bought it with the specific intention of creating a garden. He purchased huge numbers of plants from the well known nurseries of the time. Of course, he had access to many new plants as he sponsored some of the great plant hunters of the age. Much paperwork from this period still survives, including the Colonel's own garden catalogue.

In 1970 the garden and estate passed to the Colonel's grandson, Robert, who was known to some of the present membership as having a truly remarkable memory for the names (and numbers) of all the plants that he grew. He once put on a quiz for members of the South East Branch, and only one person, a guest, John McQuire, got one single name correct! Robert Clarke died in 1987 and his son Andrew John Stephenson Clarke took over the estate, and was our host for the visit.

We saw most of the formal 17 acre garden part of the estate, but the parkland runs to 100 acres or so (all open to the public, when they pay their entrance fee) so we did not see that much! We were particularly shown the new magnolia plantation that has been designed by Jim Gardiner; it is just about to be planted up, and will increase the 150 or so magnolias currently in the garden to over 200.

The garden and surrounding parkland and woodland is full of unusual plants of many genera, Col. Clarke collected a diverse selection of mainly woody plants (although he also had notable collections of nerines, orchids and alpinas). The Colonel's ethos was to place his plants in spots where he thought they would thrive. The collection today covers an area of more than 300 acres, sadly not all publicly accessible.

As we went around the garden Andy frequently referred to the champion this or the champion that, and we learnt that Borde Hill is in the top 10 gardens for the number of champions that it has - currently 78. At the end of the visit, several people had brought a few plants along, and we were able to find them new owners, with a benefit to the Funds of the Group. The auction was followed by tea and cake in the splendid Elvira cafe.

Barry Haseltine

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

It was most unexpected to have been given the honour of life membership of the Group. My long list of horticultural forebears would be very pleased and impressed! David Millais quite rightly alluded to my "amateur" status as far as accounts are concerned and I could not have done the job without the regular help of Martin Gates, and it was Martin, not me, that sorted out a somewhat difficult situation left by one of our predecessors.

Continued overleaf

It has prompted me to write a brief note to encourage others to take an active role in the Group, whether it be on the main Committee or within the branches, which are the life-blood of the Group. When I joined the Committee I was in my 30's, knew little about the plants, having simply fallen for Magnolias on a visit to Inverewe some years earlier, and I was keen to make some contribution to the RHS. The most important thing was that my ignorance about the plants was no barrier to my being helpful to the Group and I was warmly welcomed. I then had 29 very enjoyable years, getting to know some marvellous people, learning lots (though never enough) and putting my non-gardening skills to use for the benefit of the Group. If you think you can help in any way when you hear the Group or Branches are looking for help, don't hesitate to put your hand up - you will be made very welcome.

Alastair Stevenson

Dear Editor,

It is an odd season this year. Normally our *Magnolia grandiflora* flowers from August until November but this year it has continued to produce buds, as have a few of the roses.

This Magnolia had started to flower in July in 2017 and only started to slow down in December: although none of the buds made recently have opened properly as indicated in my photo taken on 18th January.

I know it is a tough "old bird" as in the 2010 winter the top of the then 14 year old tree was broken off by the sheer weight of snow which was up to 30 inches deep in places, even here in Devon. I pruned off the broken branches fairly quickly and despite the serious damage which took off its leader at around 10/12 feet in height, it has flowered marvellously ever since and is now showing signs of creating a new leader.



Buds of *Magnolia grandiflora* in mid January Photo: Caroline Bell

They are surprising plants and I wonder if anyone else has found their plant behaving in a similar fashion this year?

Caroline Bell

MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

We welcome the new members who have joined in the past few months and hope they will enjoy all the benefits of membership of the Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group.

UK

Mr Mike Williams Launceston, Cornwall
Mr Christopher Lacey Chilworth, Surrey
Lady Ballyedmond Newry, County Down
Mrs Jane Anderson Bedham, West Sussex
Mr James Wood Hindhead, Surrey
Mr Michael Hoskins Bridstow, Herefordshire
Mrs Patricia Goodfellow Hale Purlieu, Hampshire
Mr Charles Forde Seaforde, County Down
Mrs Tracy Hamilton Toye, County Down
Mr and Mrs P Mackie Comber, County Down
Averil Milligan Ballynahinch, County Down
Mr Neil Porteous Newtownards, County Down
Mr Fredrick Okaroh Badwell Ash, Suffolk
Mr Jonathan Chevenix-Trench Madresfield, Worcestershire
Mr Richard Chevenix-Trench Llanbedr, Powys
Mr Brian McKnight Waringstown, County Down
Mr Paul Macauley Abbeystead, Lancashire
Mrs Denise Poole Trinity, Jersey, Channel Islands.
Mr Brian Smith Jackson Bridge, West Yorkshire
Mr Simon Wood Whitchurch, Devon

Norway

Mr Dag Tjernshaugen Hellaveien, Fjellstrand

Japan

Mr Tsuyoshi Umezawa Ageo-shi, Saitama-ken

New Zealand

Dr Marion MacKay Tokomaru

The Shimane Azalea Project

It is sad when you hear of plants that are no longer in cultivation, whatever the reason. I always wonder whether that plant is happily growing in a corner of somebody else's garden, perhaps not labelled and therefore an 'unknown'. In Japan, some of the recorded Azalea cultivars are no longer grown there but are thought to still be in cultivation in the West. Professor Nobuo Kobayashi, of the Shimane University in Japan, is trying to establish if these lost cultivars are still growing in parts of Europe.

This is a part of the Shimane Azalea Project which will focus on traditional Japanese Tsutsuji (Azalea) cultivars. In late 2017 the RHS was asked if it would consider becoming the UK partner in this project. The RHS immediately recommended our Group as the way forward in this venture and we have agreed to participate.

Briefly, the Professor needs lists of all species, hybrids and cultivars of *Rhododendron* subsection *Tsutsusi* (evergreen Azaleas), with their history and provenance where available, that

are growing in both public and private gardens in the UK. He will then select the plants of interest and samples will be taken for DNA testing at the Shimane University. If, like me, you are an evergreen Azalea enthusiast then please get in touch and you could join the Project as a private garden. Those of you who are involved with gardens that are open to the public and have collections of Japanese evergreen Azaleas, please don't be shy about sharing your records for this collaboration. I already have two public gardens that have given tentative agreement to participate and a couple of private gardens too. By the time you read this I hope to have a few more public gardens and more private ones willing to participate. The Project will begin in 2018 and continue until 2020.



Cover of the Shimane Azalea Project booklet

The Professor's UK representative is Yoko Otsuki. Based in Oxford, she specializes in Japan's wild and garden plants and advises the RHS on Japanese cultivars. I have been asked to lead the Group involvement. No doubt, Yoko and I will be in touch with each other on a regular basis. In return for our help, Professor Kobayashi aims to send to the UK Kirishima Azaleas that are only grown in Japan at present and to offer participants a booklet; the cover is shown above. It is in Japanese now and will be translated into English for us. Full details of the project will be published in the Yearbook along with a paper written by Yuji Kurashige and Nobuo Kobayashi. Mr Kurashige is a friend of our International Branch Chairman Rama Lopez-Rivera and it is Rama who recommended the article for publication. Our thanks go to Yoko Otsuki for agreeing to translate the full article from Japanese into English.

This is a large project with many aspects to it, not just lost cultivars. Professor Kobayashi's vision covers areas that will make the Project a definitive work of conservation and heritage for Japanese Azaleas. If you are interested in participating and I have not contacted you already, please get in touch with me.

Polly Cooke

RCM Group Secretary

polly.cooke@btinternet.com

Proposed RCMG Outstanding Gardens Scheme

Following an inspirational talk by Jennifer Trehane extolling the benefits of the International Camellia Society Gardens of Excellence scheme, the Committee was delighted to receive an offer from Nick Butler and Mark Bobin, to investigate and launch a similar scheme on behalf of the Group to recognise outstanding rhododendron and magnolia gardens. These two members of the New Forest Branch are adapting the ICS scheme for our needs, which will complement the existing ICS scheme. The Committee is very grateful for the support and cooperation received from the ICS to enable us to proceed with our own Outstanding Gardens Scheme. We would also like to thank Nick and Mark for their work on this. As always, any offers of help from members are always welcome!

The International Camellia Society (ICS) run a Gardens of Excellence program to introduce people, whether they are Camellia enthusiasts or casual garden visitors, to gardens that contain fine collections of Camellia. This program has been very successful and now boasts almost 50 gardens worldwide that have chosen to participate and have met the strict criteria. See further details online: www.internationalcamellia.org/about-this-programme

At the November AGM of the New Forest branch of the RCMG, Jennifer Trehane suggested that the RCMG should have a similar scheme for Rhododendron and Magnolia gardens, modelled on the ICS scheme. Nick Butler (new amateur member) and Mark Bobin (Head Gardener at Minterne) volunteered to help put a proposal together.

Now is the time to introduce the proposal to the RCMG community and find out how many gardens with great Rhododendron and Magnolia collections are interested in participating, and how many of those would meet the criteria. To avoid biting off too much in one go, we propose to limit ourselves to gardens in the UK, before expanding to incorporate gardens throughout the world. Clearly, we will not create a scheme for Camellia gardens as they are already covered by the ICS.

Besides the benefit to prospective visitors, the scheme will provide opportunity for the gardens to promote themselves, and network

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with each other and exchange best practice, to the general benefit of the Group and the plants we all love.

Gardens that wish to apply would create a dossier assessing the garden against the criteria, which would be judged by the Plant Committee, followed by a visit by three assessors from the Plant Committee, which could include a delegate co-opted by the committee. If approved, the garden would be recognised as a RCMG Outstanding Rhododendron Garden, RCMG Outstanding Magnolia Garden or both. We also anticipate publishing a list of those gardens that have demonstrated that they are working to meet the criteria within the next couple of years.

Since many gardens also have Camellia collections our goal is to have criteria that are closely aligned with those already used by the ICS. In outline the key criteria proposed are:

- The garden is well established, and open regularly to the public.
- The garden need not be devoted completely to Rhododendrons and Magnolias, but must feature them prominently, with sufficient species and cultivars (400 for Rhododendrons, 100 for Magnolias), maintained to a high standard and mostly well established.
- The garden maintains a register of all its Rhododendrons and Magnolias with their location in the garden, which should be available on request, and all cultivars and species have identifying labels, where known.
- The garden is a member of the RCMG and promotes the Group to visitors with display information, leaflets, and so on.

So that we can gauge the degree of interest, it would be very helpful if gardens in the UK who are interested in the scheme would send an email to Nick (nick321butler@gmail.com) and Mark (markbobin@hotmail.co.uk) with a very brief assessment against the above criteria, preferably including approximate numbers of species and cultivars of each genus that you have. Any other comments are also welcomed.

David Millais

Matching New Zealand colour quality in Magnolias

The overall quality and flower colour of magnolias in New Zealand is probably the best in the world. At least, when I was out there a few years ago it was constantly suggested this was the best place to grow magnolias and I should move. My only defence was that with 2000 hours of sunshine, 100 inches of rain, benign temperatures and 70 feet of mineral rich topsoil, - while trying to keep a straight face - there was no challenge. Give me the pale perfidious Albion climate any day.

Replicating the quality and vivid colour of New Zealand magnolias is of course a challenge in UK conditions. Cold and fluctuating spring temperatures, wet and overcast with an absence of sun can affect growth and produce dull and muddy colours on selections that could stop the traffic in the North Island. Here I'm going to comment on two newish introductions to the UK, one red/purple and not quite so new, the other yellow and more recently available.

Both are performing well at White House Farm, if not to New Zealand standards, probably close.

When first introduced, **Genie** was promoted to the point where the bar was set high for it to live up to its image and several growers were disappointed. Some were critical of its performance. The Hillier Manual states 'Has not done well in a number of gardens in the British Isles, the branches dying back'.

However, this has not been my experience and having lived with it for 7 years I am happy to defend it and can see merit in a pleasing combination of features for our conditions. Maybe the dieback was due to soft imported tunnel grown plants suddenly subject to the rough and tumble of an English spring? Or jet lag after long haul travel and a change of season?

Starting as a strong 3ft graft, **Genie** has now reached about 12ft, neat and upright, but with lower branches spreading to the horizontal and displaying the shapely goblet flowers very nicely among dark slender twigs, bearing many buds.



Genie – continuity of flowering is a major asset. Photo: Maurice Foster

Although the flowers are of only medium size, they are a rich unfading dark red/purple and the outer tepals curl and reflex prettily at the edges. Flowering continuity is a major asset, with flowers being produced over many weeks from April to June, the last appearing atop the unfolding leaves. For the impatient, flowers are also produced on small plants. The ultimate growth is described as being modest and containable, so it could be a considered choice for a small garden. All these characters, together with comparatively small leaves, suggest a strong *M. liliflora* influence, a good sign for UK performance.

Vance Hooper, the raiser, wrote in a Yearbook article that it was not troubled by -15C in Holland so it should be reliably cold hardy here.

In the 2017 Yearbook, Abbie Jury wrote of **Honey Tulip** 'It is still early days – ask us in another twenty years how we rate it.' Here am I having the temerity to comment on it after only three years from planting, so on her estimate you may have to take these remarks with more than a pinch of salt.

But I have been impressed in particular by the quality of the flower - and in the end it is the flower that sells the plant.



Honey Tulip – something new in yellow magnolias. Photo: Maurice Foster

Here it is not so much the tulip shape of say Black Tulip – but more an elegant, balanced, wide goblet shape, in the manner of the old *M. denudata* cultivar ‘Purple Eye’. For me this gives it style and a touch of class. Above all, it is precocious, flowering before and with the first leaves, allowing it to show off the shape and colour to perfection. There are few if any signs of *M. acuminata* in its make-up, in particular of this species small gappy yellow flowers.

The term ‘yellow’ applied to magnolias takes in a very broad spectrum of colour and tone. ‘Honey’ is about right to describe the colour of this plant. It is reminiscent of a pale set honey, a colour as distinctive as its shape. It has a darker base. The tepals are of heavy texture and to date appear quite weather resistant for a pale flower and do not appear to fade with age. It flowers as a young plant. Habit and ultimate size are still to be determined. The shoots are stout and robust and on my young plant heading north by up to two feet last year. It could make a substantial tree – or not. Cold hardiness is so far so good, tested here to date to only -5C, but reputedly undamaged by -15C.

It’s true, it is early days, but this is a cultivar that looks full of promise for UK conditions and may be blazing a new trail for yellows. Why emigrate?

Maurice Foster

Forthcoming title

Ken Cox describes a new book he has written. It will be available in May.

If there was ever a book which should appeal to the members of the RMCg, then this is probably it. Though the term ‘woodland gardening’ can cover a very wide range of gardening styles from plantings an arboretum to ‘improving’ a patch of woodland by naturalising bulbs and encouraging wild flowers, for this book, I narrow the definition to focus on a style of horticulture we are all familiar with. This is planting in or at the edge of woodland, in an informal manner, usually in three layers: the canopy and backdrop of trees, the middle layer of shrubs, and the understory or woodland floor layer of perennials and bulbs. Plants used are predominantly exotic and include rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias, magnolias, hydrangeas, under planted with woodland perennials, ferns and bulbs.

Though many famous woodland gardens are large, there are plenty of great smaller and private ones, and many, both large and small

are featured in this book. It has international coverage including New Zealand, coastal South Australia, Japan, southwest China, North America and many regions of Europe, including as you expect many gardens in the UK and Ireland.

There have been books published before on woodland plants by Beth Chatto, Keith Wiley and Karan Junker and volumes on specific gardens such as The Royal Parks at Windsor, England, Le Vasterival in France and Pukeiti in New Zealand. But my book is first to trace the history of this gardening style, to describe its features and to celebrate the wide range of woodland gardens in many parts of the world. Many of the great British and Irish examples of this gardening style were established or ‘improved’ from 1900 to 1939: The Savill Garden, Caerhays, Trewithen, Nymans, Wakehurst, Leonardslee, Exbury, Bodnant, Mount Stewart, Mount Usher, Crarae and many more. One of the challenges we now face is how to renovate and manage some of these venerable gardens to allow them to survive for another 100 years. Gardens of this age are the cumulative work of many heads and many hands. When John Anderson became head gardener at Exbury in 2002, he had already been head gardener at Mount Usher in Ireland, another 100-year-old woodland garden. He arrived at another of almost the same age, which celebrates its centenary in 2019. Exbury was the vision and creation of Lionel de Rothschild, sons Edmund and Leopold, and grandsons Nicholas and Lionel, not to mention their head gardeners who included Fred Kneller, Arthur Bedford, Francis Hanger, Fred Wynniatt and Duggie Betteridge. Exbury is just one example of the multi-generational evolution of a single woodland garden and its plants. I have been fortunate to have visited hundreds of woodland gardens in many countries and advised on the creation and maintenance of many of them. Although woodland gardens have a palette of plants in common, the setting, climate, gardening tastes and styles make each one unique. Unlike more ephemeral gardens, woodland gardens can be brought back to life, even after periods of neglect: a few trees removed, some cutting back, removal of brambles and the garden can be restored. Leonardslee is an example in point; the 200 acres garden, sold in 2010 by the Loder family, lay semi-abandoned till it was purchased in July 2017 by South African-based entrepreneur Penny Streeter who is restoring and upgrading it to open to the public again later this year (2018). I rate Leonardslee as one of the top five woodland gardens ever created.

Woodland gardens don’t always get the best press. This style of gardening - and rhododendrons in particular - have been sneered at by some members of the garden mafia. Garden designer Russell Page for example wrote: ‘I have yet to see a well-planted rhododendron garden.’ There has certainly been a tendency for woodland gardeners to amass extensive collections of the popular woodland genera, and the variety and sheer numbers of rhododendrons, magnolias, camellias and hydrangeas does make it rather easy to get carried away. Certainly, colour planning is something which most woodland gardens lack and in many cases, would be improved if this was given more thought. It has long been apparent to me that the green backdrop of most woodland gardens does go a long way to soaking up the strident colour combinations and usually makes them more acceptable. Deciduous azaleas in oranges and yellows are set off well by the brilliant green of emerging young leaves.

Continued overleaf

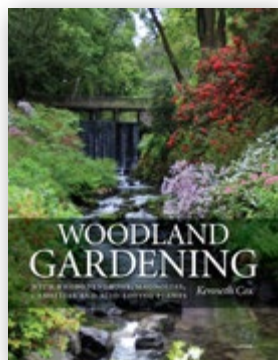
William Robinson, the 19th century father of woodland gardening, and author of *The Wild Garden*, plays a prominent role in the story, and readers will enjoy both his wisdom and his bad-tempered rants at any aspect of gardening he did not approve of. Amongst other things, bedding plants, statues and terraces get blasted with both barrels. Robinson's key contribution to this gardening style is his promotion of 'naturalising' plants which can look after themselves and increase or spread over time. Both William Robinson and his friend and colleague Gertrude Jekyll warned of the over-use of rhododendrons in woodland plantings. Robinson advocated leaving space between them to allow their form to be appreciated. Jekyll describes the concept of 'incidents' or clumps of rhododendrons in pleasing combinations, placed around the garden with palatable other plants between.

My hunch is that contemporary garden designers don't like woodland gardens because they don't mature quickly enough. I discussed this with garden designer Christopher Bradley-Hole, famed for his minimalist garden designs, and he admitted that most of his clients wanted a 'finished' garden in less than three years and often quicker. This is relatively easily achieved in gardens which are dominated by man-made structures and plantings of perennials, rose and topiary. In contrast, a woodland garden, however it is planned and planted, will take 20–50 years to mature.

And as we look to the future, new pests and diseases, climate change, the lack of investment in the next generation of head gardeners and the restrictions on plant hunting are all challenges ahead for some of the most important woodland gardens. I'm optimistic and still as keen as ever to create more woodland gardens. I hope that this book will be seen as a colourful and hopefully inspiring look at the woodland garden in all its glory. And perhaps lead to a greater appreciation of this garden form.

Woodland Gardening

Will be published and distributed by
Glendoick
Publishing in May 2018
416 pages HB.
560 colour photographs.
15 b&w 290mm x 230mm,
ISBN 978-1-5272-1787-4
£40 plus £10 for postage and packing.



6 copies can be purchased post free for £240 so this would be the best way to buy copies for the local RCMG branches.

Woodland Gardening won't be available from Amazon and only a limited number of book shops will stock it. Please visit www.glendoick.com for more details or email orders@glendoick.com for details on how to order the book. If woodland gardens would like to stock and sell the book please contact me.

Ken Cox

Members' Photograph Competition

Our four new classes for the Photo competition did eventually receive a number of entries with the Macro class being the most popular. The 2017 winners are:

Three genera. (18 entries)

Birmingham Botanic Garden by: George Hargreaves

View from a Garden Visit (8 entries)

Tea with Prince Andrew at Royal Lodge by: Jenny Fly

Macro (46 entries)

Magnolia flower bud by: Roy Bilbie

Amusing Photo (2 entries)

Vireya 'Neesa' with Roy Bilbie by: Lorraine Bilbie

International Rhododendron Registrar

Members will be sad to hear that Dr Alan Leslie will be retiring from the RHS in June. Alan has been the International Registrar for Rhododendrons since 1983, during which time he has formally registered nearly 7750 rhododendrons from around the world - an amazing record! Alan's diligence and accuracy has been exemplary, and he will certainly be missed by all those who he has helped to register plant names correctly. He was awarded the Loder Cup in 2015 in recognition of his contribution to the world of rhododendrons.

The RHS will shortly be recruiting for a replacement Registrar. This is a part-time position, so if you know of anyone interested, please contact the Chairman, David Millais

How to contact RCMG committee members:

Chairman

David Millais
email: sales@rhododendrons.co.uk
tel: 01252 792698

Treasurer

Jenny Fly
email: treasurer.for.rcmg@gmail.com
tel: 01558 823233

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Advertising officer

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email: slyus@yahoo.co.uk
tel: 0151 200 0265

New General Data Protection Regulations 2018

New Data Protection legislation will supersede the previous Data Protection rules as from May 18th, but rest assured, the data about your RCM Group membership (name, address and phone/e-mail) are still secure and are only used for the processing of our members' benefits. More detailed information will appear on our website in due course.

John Marston and David Millais

RHS Magnolia Day, Windsor Great Park, 18th April 2018

Members will be interested to hear about a great opportunity to learn about Magnolias at Windsor Great Park. Join Keeper of the Gardens, John Anderson, and magnolia experts Jim Gardiner, Maurice Foster and other members of the RHS Woody Plant Committee for a guided tour and presentation amongst the outstanding collection in the Valley Gardens at Windsor Park, which should be looking at its best.

Meet at the Valley Gardens Carpark at 1.45pm. This can be busy in spring, and you may need to park at the Savill Garden Carpark, which is a 20 minute (1.25 miles) walk to the Valley Gardens. There is no charge for the event, but you will need to pay for carparking which is £10.00 per day, cash only at the machine. Satnav: TW20 0UU and follow the signs. Further details here: <http://www.windsorgreatpark.co.uk/en/visit/parking>

David Millais

Rhododendron workshop at National Trust Mount Stewart, 21st April 2018

The Northern Ireland Heritage Gardens Trust is organising a seminar to learn about rhododendron species identification skills. This is being lead by Kenneth Cox (Glendoick) and Seamus O'Brien (National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh). The seminar will help understand scales, glands, and indumentum with cut material, complimented by studies of plants in the garden. With 2 excellent tutors, plus Head Gardener Neil Porteous, it should be a really interesting day. Further details and booking form here: <http://www.nihgt.org/events>

David Millais

The Rhododendron Camellia & Magnolia Group

Annual General Meeting Saturday 28th April 2018

The 2018 AGM will be held at 11.00am on Saturday 28th April at The Great Oak Hall, Westonbirt Arboretum, Tetbury GL8 8QS, by kind permission of the Forestry Commission. The Agenda, accounts and reports will not be posted to members, but will be available online at least 2 weeks before the AGM at <http://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org> Paper copies may be requested from the Hon. Secretary.

Please note the special arrangements on the day. There is no charge to attend the AGM, but all attendees must be booked in to gain free entry to Westonbirt. On arrival at the welcome building, please state that you are part of the RCMG, and your names will be checked off a list. Please arrive in good time if you wish to purchase coffee and refreshments in the café or restaurant before heading to the Great Oak Hall. After the AGM, you will have time to purchase lunch before the tour of the arboretum which will start at 1.45pm.

The tour is kindly being organised by RCMG member Dr George Hargreaves, who is also one of the Friends of Westonbirt. George is very familiar with all the trails and has been photographing the trees and shrubs there since 1968. Entrance and the tour will cost £5.00 on the day to cover some of our costs on the day. Please note, if you do not book in advance, you will also have to pay £10.00 on the gate! Westonbirt are looking forward to hosting our AGM and to showing us their wonderful collection.

Please notify the Hon Secretary, Polly Cooke by email polly.cooke@btinternet.com or phone 01932 863719 by Friday 20th April if you wish to attend so that you can gain entrance, and so that we have sufficient guides on the day. A map of Westonbirt is available here:

[www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/WestonbirtMap2016.pdf/\\$file/WestonbirtMap2016.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/WestonbirtMap2016.pdf/$file/WestonbirtMap2016.pdf)



The Rhododendron & Azalea Centre

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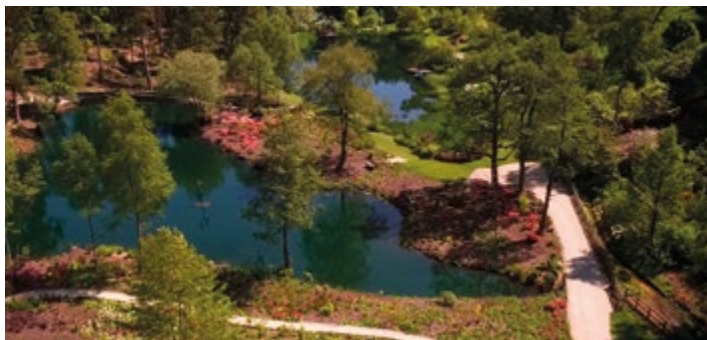
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Sunday 13th May**

10am - 5pm

Admission £5 - Children Free

OPEN FOR ONE DAY ONLY

Sandling, Hythe CT21 4HN

Allow 2 hours for the garden tour

Tee, coffee and hand made cakes will be available

Free Car Parking

The garden is situated 1 1/2 miles NW of Hythe. Entrance from the A20 only.
From M20 J11 turn east (left) onto A20 towards Folkestone. Entrance 1/4 mile.

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Woodland Garden unsuitable for wheelchair access



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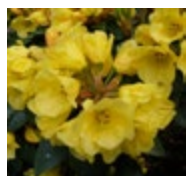
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the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group forthcoming events



MARCH 2018

10th-11th

RHS and South West Branch

RHS Rosemoor Torrington, Devon EX38 8BP

Early RHS Rosemoor Show Early Camellia Competition South West Branch Spring Flower Show

Georgina Barter
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk
020 7821 3142

Dr John Marston
artavianjohn@gmail.com
01271 323202

22nd

New Forest Branch

Exbury Gardens, Exbury
Nr Southampton SO45 1AZ

Conducted Morning Tour of Exbury Gardens

Martin Gates
mgates@talktalk.net
023 8025 2843

APRIL 2018

7th-8th

RHS

The Savill Garden Wick Lane, Englefield Green TW20 0UU

Early Rhododendron Show Early Rhododendron Competition Main Camellia Competition

Georgina Barter
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk
020 7821 3142

10th-13th

RCM Group Committee

Bangor
Northern Ireland

Spring Tour of Northern Ireland

(The tour is full, bookings now closed)

Christopher Legrand
clegrand@pirltd.org.uk
01202 873344

18th

RHS

Valley Gardens, Windsor
Virginia Water GU25 4QF

Magnolia Day with John Anderson.

Meet at the Valley Gardens
Car park at 1.45pm

Karen Culpin
karenculpin@rhs.org.uk
07764 787039

21st

The Northern Ireland Heritage Gardens Trust

National Trust Mount Stewart

Rhododendron workshop

Members are more than welcome to attend events at any branches

21st-22nd

RHS

RHS Rosemoor
Torrington, Devon EX38 8BP

Main RHS Rosemoor Show Main Rhododendron Competition

Georgina Barter
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk
020 7821 3142

Dr John Marston
artavianjohn@gmail.com
01271 323202

24th at 10am

New Forest Branch

Trehane Camellia Nursery,
Stapehill Road, Nr Ferndown,
BH21 7ND

Tour and workshop meeting at Trehane's, followed by a visit to Knoll Gardens, Stapehill Road, BH21 7ND

Martin Gates
mgates@talktalk.net
023 8025 2843

28th

RCM Group AGM

The Great Oak Hall
The National Arboretum,
Westonbirt, Tetbury GL8 8QS

AGM and Conducted Tour of Westonbirt Arboretum.

AGM starts at 11am.

Pre-registration is essential to benefit from the concessionary rate for the conducted tour.

Christopher Legrand
clegrand@pirltd.org.uk
Please email for pre-registration

MAY 2018

5th-6th

RHS Harlow Carr

RHS Harlow Carr
Crag Lane, Beckwithshaw,
Harrogate HG3 1QB

RHS Harlow Carr Show Harlow Carr Rhododendron Competition

Georgina Barter
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk
020 7821 3142

6th-7th

North West England & North Wales Branch

Ness Botanical Gardens

Branch Show, Bulley Room, Ness Gardens

Ted Brabin
angela.brabin@btinternet.com
0151 353 1193

12th at 2pm

South East Branch

Legsheath Farm,
Legsheath Lane,
East Grinstead RH19 4JN

Garden visit to the home of Mr Michael Neal

Barry Haseltine
barry.haseltine@which.net
01342 713132

**To advertise in this publication call
01568 780828**

Event updates to Christopher Legrand please:

24 Riverside Road, West Moors, Dorset BH22 0LQ Email: clegrand@pirltd.org.uk Tel: 01202 873344