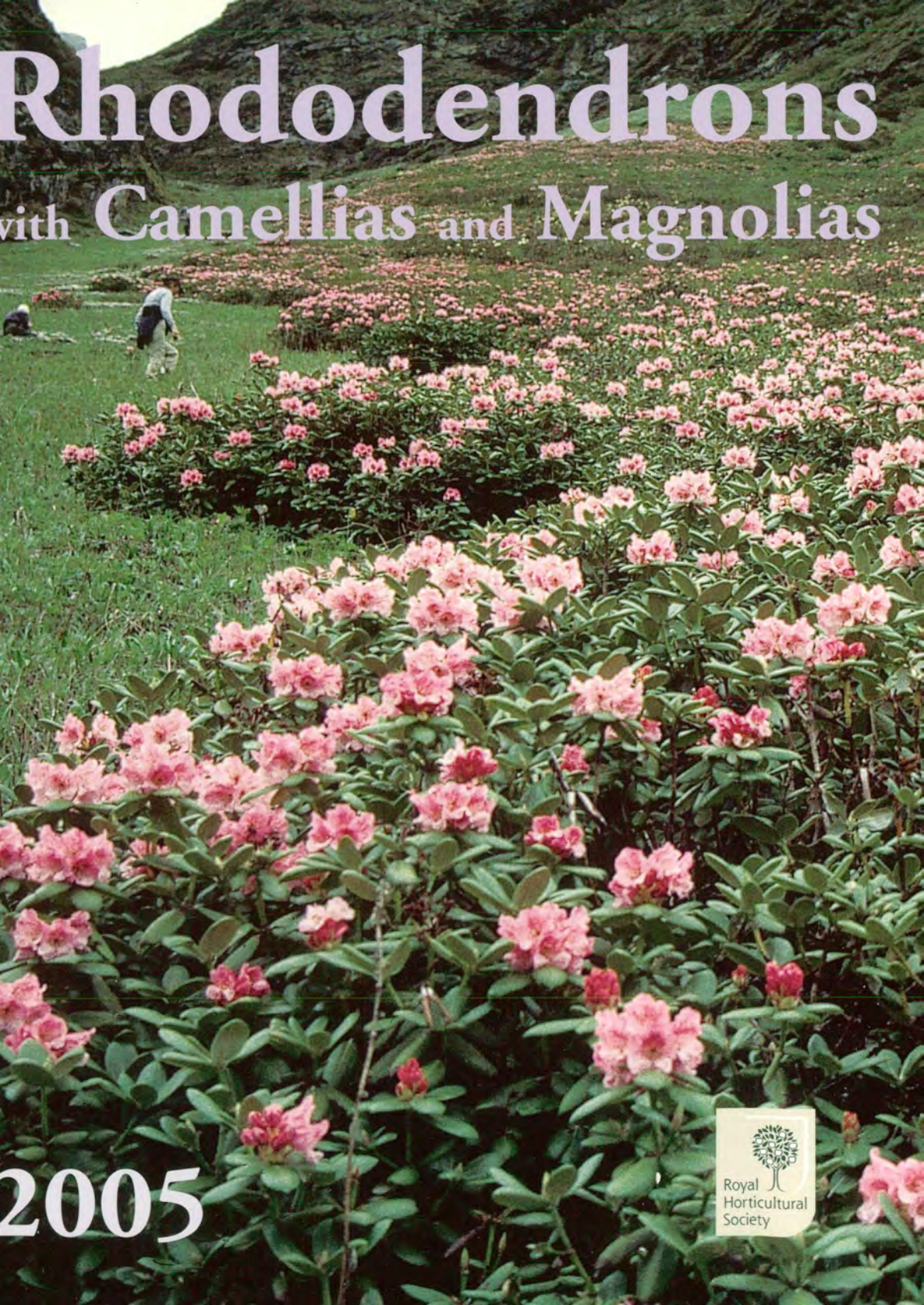
Rhododendrons

with Camellias and Magnolias



2005

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Acknowledgements

TO THIS ONLINE EDITION

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RHS
Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

RHODODENDRONS

WITH

CAMELLIAS and MAGNOLIAS

2005

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Coloured Illustrations

Chairman's Foreword

Michael Robinson

It was the best of times,
it was the worst of times

Though Dickens' incisive first sentence to his novel of revolutionary France is perhaps too often quoted, it does seem peculiarly apposite to the state of the Group at the present time.

Magnolias are increasing in popularity, camellias remain flat, and, although there are some signs of a renaissance, rhododendrons are still unfashionable.

The Group is thriving: together with the Group Committee and, above all, the Branches, my predecessors Maurice Foster and John Bond have done tremendous work in making the Group an organisation that does things instead of simply talking about them. The Group has more members than ever before: so many bright ideas have emerged from the recent circular – a plant exchange, a database of who grows what – a pollen exchange – a photographic library – work on taxonomy – and so on.

However, as with many voluntary organisations today, there is a dearth of volunteers to enable us to realise all that members wish to see done: the October bulletin contained a request for no fewer than five volunteers who are necessary for the Group to maintain even its present activities.

Thanks to Maurice Foster's excellent organisation, the study day on George Forrest in April was an outstanding success, and helped to highlight the fact that introductions of new taxa from seed collection in the wild is probably as great today as it was in Forrest's time, and, although there are not so many new species from our three genera being found as was the case 100 years ago, new species are being introduced and a great deal of new knowledge of the range of and variety within of each species is being discovered, and clarification between what is a natural hybrid and what is a species is slowly being obtained. We enthusiasts are very fortunate to live in such a time.

On the other hand the continued pre-eminence in rhododendron studies of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is not assured, the number of expert taxonomists has decreased recently, and the future of taxonomy is especially worrying at a time when all this new material is arriving.

The future of the RHS Rhododendron and Camellia Committee and the RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group is being considered as part of a general review of by the RHS. The raison d'etre of all its plant committees is being examined in detail, and the semi-autonomous position of the three RHS Groups (Fruit, Lily, and ourselves) is also under review, with reforms promised for 2006. For the benefit of our newer members in particular, it seems a good time to outline the different activities of the

Rhododendron and Camellia Committee on the one hand and the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group on the other.

The Rhododendron and Camellia Committee meets about six times a year and is an integral part of the RHS, has to follow its directions, and has a secretary, who is a botanist, employed by the RHS. All the RHS plant committees encourage gardeners to submit plants or flowers for awards, and the Rhododendron and Camellia Committee is responsible for giving rhododendrons and camellias the awards of FCC, AM or PC to plants or flowers as displayed for exhibition purposes: these awards do not test the performance of the plant in the garden but the committee does recommend varieties to be considered for the award of AGM once experience of growing them has been obtained. It therefore works closely with the separate RHS Woody Plants Trials Committee, which organises trials such as the current trial at Wisley of *R. yakushimanum* hybrids, with the number of AGMs awarded as a result now approaching double figures.

Judges for the appropriate classes at RHS shows are drawn from the membership of the Rhododendron and Camellia Committee. The committee is able to call on the assistance of RHS scientific and advisory staff when consideration of a topic such as sudden oak death is needed. It awards medals and cups on annual basis: the A.J. Waley Medal for a working gardener who has helped with the cultivation of rhododendrons, the David Trehane Camellia Cup for significantly promoting or increasing the knowledge of camellias, the Loder Rhododendron Cup for significant work on the horticulture of rhododendrons, and the Rothschild Challenge Cup for the best exhibit at an RHS show in which rhododendrons predominate.

The Group Chairman, Mike Robinson (centre), watches Mr E. de Rothschild present the Lionel de Rothschild Challenge Cup (for six species) to David Masters, Head Gardener of Nymans Garden, at the Main Rhododendron Competition at Borde Hill on 17 April 2003.

The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group (as it is styled today) was founded many years ago, as a successor to the pre-war Rhododendron Society, by enthusiasts within the RHS who felt that the Rhododendron and Camellia Committee at that time was insufficiently active or outward looking. Although the Group is affiliated to the RHS it is a self financing organisation run entirely by volunteers. Its strength is founded on the regional branches and their organisation of meetings and garden visits. In addition it runs two tours each year, publishes

this yearbook and the bulletin, donates collections of significant plants to gardens open to the public, sponsors seed collection and distribution, and runs the occasional study day.

It would seem reasonable that the RHS should serve as a model to the way the Group runs its business and copy this widely, but, even if this is too radical, there still appears to be a case for a streamlining the activities of the 'Committee' and the 'Group'. Members may like to express their opinions as to how the two bodies should relate in the future. Dr David Gray (davidgray@rhs.org.uk), the RHS director of horticulture, is based at Wisley and is in charge of the current review.

As in past years, the 2005 yearbook reflects the considerable width and depth of the Group's interests, but it is perhaps significant that recently there have been more articles on companion planting and on extending the flowering season. One of the problems with rhododendrons in particular is that, in the gardens the public visit, they are too often seen in mono-generic blocks – a necessary but perhaps unfortunate legacy of so many new species and hybrids being introduced in the early 20th century. I am sure, however, that rhododendrons would be more popular if they were regarded as part of a more diverse planting scheme, and it is right and proper that the Group should encourage this.

The following pages are filled with a rich mixture of popularity and erudition in the best traditions of the Group. I hope you will enjoy reading them, and then feel an urgent need to volunteer to help us maintain the present high standard of publication and activity. You will be made very welcome.

Kunming reticulata camellia gift to Abbotsbury

On May 7th 2005 the Group will donate to the Dorset garden of Abbotsbury, the first 14 plants (the balance to follow in 2006), of an historical collection of Kunming reticulata camellias. These spectacular plants can be reliably traced back to identical ancestors that were growing in the ancient temple gardens of Kunming in Yunnan Province of Southwest China, with a lineage, in some cases, of a 1000 years or more.

Some 20 of these plants were introduced to the West between 1948 and 1950, but few of those received in England are to be found growing here today and none are available through the UK nursery trade.

The Executive Committee of the *Rhododendron Camellia & Magnolia Group* decided to assemble a conservation collection. Abbotsbury was approached as a suitable garden to grow and maintain the collection successfully, because of its sheltered and virtually frost free environment (conditions these somewhat tender plants prefer), its staff expertise and ready access to the public.

The collection has been assembled from gardens in England and from specialist growers in Europe, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. From Kunming itself, propagating material was generously released to the Group via our colleagues of the International Camellia Society.

Editorial

Philip Evans

At first sight it might appear that the Editor has this year failed in his primary task of giving a fair balance of coverage to our three genera. For there are eight pieces broadly concerned with rhododendons, compared with two on camellias and only one on magnolias. But numbers are not everything, and in defence I would suggest:

1. The rhododendron content this year covers an exceptionally wide range of subject matter.
2. Any publication that contains contributions about camellias from both John Gallagher and Jennifer Trehane is very fortunate.
3. Mike Robinson's article on the magnoliaceae of New Zealand more than compensates in quality and originality for any numerical shortfall.

A year or so before he died, Ted Millais offered and commenced an article on later flowering azaleas, his special interest, but sadly he was unable to complete it. We are grateful that his son David has been able to complete his father's article. Ted Millais contributed several valuable articles to the Yearbook, and their joint effort on '*Rhododendron viscosum* and late-flowering azaleas' is given first place in this edition as a tribute to a great rhododendron man.

The Photographic Competition has gone, but two new features appear. First, at the suggestion of our new Chairman, there is a section called 'Taxonomy Topics'. The Chairman is the inaugural contributor, and it is hoped that members will share items of interest relating to the taxonomy of any of the three genera, and send contributions for future editions of this section. Secondly, and this was a suggestion from Peter Chappell, a series has been commenced called 'Forgotten Plants'. Peter has contributed the inaugural piece on two rhododendron hybrids, and Stephen Fox has partnered this with a piece on a neglected species. Again I would invite members to contribute short pieces for future editions about plants they feel are neglected or have been forgotten.

Finally a word on the cover. For the first time for some years there is no article on plant hunting or foreign travel in this edition. So I thought it was appropriate to devote the cover to one rhododendron species in its original habitat. Featured is the wonderful display of *R. agganiphum* on the Bimbi La. This is a pass that leads north out of the Tsari valley of southeast Tibet and was traversed by both Kingdon Ward and Ludlow and Sherriff in the 1930s, and in more recent times by some members of our Group.

Rhododendron viscosum and Late-Flowering Azaleas

Ted Millais

Rhododendron viscosum

Rhododendron viscosum is the most widely distributed azalea in North America, growing all the way down its Eastern side from Maine to Florida and westwards into Texas. It is a deciduous azalea with delightful small white flowers, occasionally pink, which are beautifully carnation scented. In North America, the 'Swamp Honeysuckle' is naturally at home beside streams and woods in damp mountain areas. Here in Surrey it seems to succeed equally well on our dry sandy heathland, where it will grow well in deep shade without becoming leggy.

To my mind, its chief use here is to extend the rhododendron flowering season, and to lighten the effect of solid walls of ordinary rhododendrons, which are often over planted. It should be used to vary the foliage effect in the same way as *R. triflorum* and *R. cinnabarinum*, but it also gives wonderful scent and does not suffer powdery mildew.

As might be expected in a species covering 1600 miles in latitude there is much variation both in habit and time of flowering. Rather surprisingly the northern clones tend to flower earlier, starting in April, while those from Florida and Georgia in the south finish as late as September.

My uncle, the author J. G. Millais (1865–1931), visited North America in 1887. After visiting my father, who was ranching in the Red Wall district of Wyoming, he travelled extensively. He must have taken a great interest in the American azaleas that he saw, as many years later when writing his two enormous volumes on rhododendrons (1917 and 1924) he gave American azaleas and especially *R. viscosum* much coverage, splitting the southern and later flowering forms into varieties *R. serrulatum* and *R. oblongifolium.*

Since then the American botanist K. A. Kron has lumped together all forms of *R. viscosum* into one species, and this has been acknowledged by RBG Edinburgh in their *Journal of Botany* Vol. 50 No. 3 published in 1993. No doubt this may be correct

botanically, even though the foliage and time of flowering may differ considerably. However, this is absolutely no help whatsoever to the keen gardener. The result is that *R. viscosum* can be ordered from a nursery, and quite legitimately it can be sent in any form that flowers from mid-May until August, leaving out the extremes at either end of the flowering period.

About twelve years ago I ordered seed of *R. viscosum* from the American Rhododendron Society seed exchange. Most of the resultant seedlings turned out to be good but quite orthodox white clones, but just a few turned out to have pink flowers and beautiful "blue" foliage, which is quite exceptional. My wife, Romy, and I visited North Carolina a few years ago, and had a wonderful holiday travelling the Blue Ridge Highway running along the top of the Appalachian Mountains. We were amazed at the different colours of *R. calendulaceum.* There were also large areas of *R. viscosum* and *R. arborescens* and their hybrids. We saw quite a number of pink forms of *R. viscosum* particularly on Wayah Bald near Nantahala Lake, but what we saw there did not approach the quality of the plants that we had raised from the ARS seed exchange, and unfortunately I never discovered where they had come from.

I suspect that the "blue" foliage present on many forms of *R. viscosum* came originally, many thousands of years ago, from crossing with *R. atlanticum,* but this species, although overlapping with *R. viscosum,* is normally found on much lower ground bordering the sea.

In order to facilitate the selection of *R. viscosum* according to the time of flowering we are now propagating several clones, some of which we expect to name shortly. They are:

1. **Grey-leaved form.** With good white flowers in late May.
2. ***R. viscosum* f. *rhodanthum.*** A very pretty two-toned pink and pinky white clone with green foliage (see below), which was distributed by John Bond from the Valley Gardens, Windsor Great Park, flowering from mid- to late July. This came to Windsor Great Park during the huge Tower Court accessions in 1951.
3. **VBF.** A stunning, very blue-foliaged form, comparable to that of *R. concatenans,* which holds its colour until autumn. Mid-pink flowers from mid- to late June
4. **Viscosum #2.** A similar clone but with purplish blue foliage flowering in late June and early July.
5. **Viscosum #5.** A good late white clone flowering in July with bluish green foliage.
6. **Viscosum #7.** A neat, lower growing form, with unique sea blue-green foliage and small, scented pink flowers in late July.

Rhododendron viscosum f. *rhodanthum*

***Rhododendron viscosum* hybrids**

R. viscosum was used as a parent in many of the Ghent-type hybrids, which came on the market in hundreds during the 19th century. One of the earliest was Daviesii (*R. viscosum* × *molle*), which dates from around 1840. Today it is still very popular and well worth growing, with white scented flowers and a yellow flare. It has inherited the greyish foliage of many viscosums. The reverse cross, 'Viscosephala' is rarely unobtainable.

However, after the precocious breeding of Ghents, it was really not until the 1960s that viscosums were re-evaluated, and very fine hybrids were bred by Messrs Felix and Dijkhuis by crossing it with *R. mollis* hybrids. 'Antilope', 'Arpege', 'Chanel' and 'Soir de Paris' are all good fragrant plants showing clarity of colour, but are not particularly late flowering.

In the 1980s, I crossed our grey-leaved form of *R. viscosum* with Knap Hill Nursery's late-flowering occidentale hybrids 'Rosella' or 'Sylphides'. These were named after some of my favourite small Scottish salmon rivers, 'Moidart', (apricot-pink, flowering in June), 'Torridon', (clear pink, end of June), and 'Cassley' (phlox pink, June/July). Although the grey-leaved form of *R. viscosum* is not an early clone, the influence of *R. occidentale* made these plants quite a lot later than the Felix and Dijkhuis hybrids. They have rather larger flowers, with very clear colours.

Denny Pratt, who lectured in Botany at Liverpool, produced some excellent late *R. viscosum* hybrids flowering in July. Many of these are comparatively small flowered, but they are produced in such profusion that the overall effect is extremely pleasing. Much of his collection is at Ness Botanic Garden or nearby at Dunham Massey (National Trust). There is a nice, fairly large plant of *R. viscosum* still growing at Ness, which he may have used as a parent, but whatever his source, many of his hybrids are very compact and low growing. Some of the best are: 'Evening Fragrance' (pink), 'Rose Fire' (rosy orange), 'Denny's White' (close to *R. viscosum*), 'Denny's Rose', 'Helena Pratt' (pink), 'Ann Cooper' (pink), 'Coral Reef' (coral pink). He also used *R. cumberlandense* and probably *R. prunifolium* to produce late-flowering reds and oranges.

He retired in 1969 to Stopham near Pulborough in West Sussex, and continued hybridising through the 1970s. Many of his hybrids were never named and were later offered back to Ness Botanic Garden under code numbers such as DP104, DP122, 'Raby' and 'Very late low growing yellow'. Unfortunately many were muddled during the move, but we have obtained several good selections, which do deserve to be named.

Denny was aided by his gardener Jack Harrington, who was given a few favourites for his own garden. Jack registered 'Stopham Lad' (pink, yellow flare), and 'Stopham Girl' (white, yellow flare). When shown at RHS Vincent Square on 22nd June 1999, 'Stopham Lad' received an immediate FCC due to its outstanding quality. Only about three deciduous azaleas have ever received this award, which goes to show the quality of Denny Pratt's work with late-flowering azaleas.

More recently, I have been trying to cross Denny Pratt's latest azaleas with very late forms of *R. viscosum* with the object of obtaining good August-flowering plants, so far with only moderate success. Theoretically there should be no difficulty in making such crosses, but in fact seed is often not set, and if it does, is often not viable. Beautiful fat seed

pods are formed, but the seed does not germinate. However, I have had some success, and some of these seedlings should start flowering in July and August over the next few years.

In America, Briggs Nurseries, the main US tissue-culture producer, has been distributing 'Parade' and 'Pink & Sweet', both mauvey pink. 'Parade' is the better plant, and flowers about a week later than the last of Denny Pratt's hybrids, but I doubt if it is any improvement. Carlson's Gardens, New York, have also registered late-flowering azaleas using *R. viscosum* crossed with later *R. prunifolium* and *R. cumberlandense,* which should be good.

These late-flowering *R. viscosum* hybrids should be a very welcome addition to our gardens, at a time when not many other woody shrubs are flowering. In fact, they should be so welcome that I would like to suggest others have a try at it. You should not have to wait too long as *R. viscosum* hybrids can be easily flowered in three to four years from seed.

Footnote

Ted wrote this article in draft form shortly before he died in August 2003. It was completed by his son David who now has the pleasure of seeing hundreds of Ted's latest hybrids flowering for the first time. No doubt several will be good enough to name in the next few years. Perhaps others might like to take up Ted's challenge!

Ted Millais , who died in 2003, was the founder of the Millais Rhododendron Nursery in Surrey, now run by his son David. He contributed several valuable articles to the Yearbook in recent years, and made several expeditions to the Sino-Himalayan region.

Forgotten Plants

***Rhododendron* (Golden Oriole Group) 'Talavera' and *R.* 'Arthur Osborn'**

The editor hopes that this might be a start to a series of articles under the heading 'Forgotten Plants'. It is not intended to extol the virtues of plants that may have been forgotten for some good reason, such as *R.* 'Elizabeth'. I bought my plant in 1961 for 10s. 6d. in a fit of extravagance to be planted in an important spot for all to see, but the larger it grew the less it seemed to impress. The foliage was simply not good enough for a prime position. My indecision as to whether I should take action was relieved by the onset of rhododendron mildew, which led to a bonfire conclusion. The idea of this article is to pinpoint plants that may have started off with some trumpeting, but which soon dropped out of favour for no very obvious reason and have never received any further serious consideration.

I should like to take an example from each end of the season. For the awkward period February to March *R.* (Golden Oriole Group) 'Talavera' is my selection. To cover these difficult months in my early days I was persuaded to plant species such as *R. barbatum* and hybrids such as 'Avalanche'.

Rhododendron (Golden Oriole Group) 'Talavera'

These plants were too often caught by spring frosts to make a decent return on the space they occupied. I quickly realised that I should have to rely on dwarfs and semi-dwarfs for any early flowers. I planted quite a collection, which over the years has been thinned out. *R.* 'Praecox' was the first to go as the foliage was sparse and poor; others followed leaving a nucleus of valuable plants of which *R.* (Golden Oriole Group) 'Talavera' has been the star. Bred in 1947 at Caerhays it received the FCC in 1963. The nicely formed flowers in trusses of three to four are described in the Salley and Greer's *Rhododendron Hybrids* (Batsford) as being a Dresden yellow, and are set against a satisfying canopy of foliage, which I have never seen flag even in the driest of spells, and which shows no trace of mildew. The habit is rather upright, which is a great advantage as it is able to show off its superb bronzy orange bark. My plant has only reached 5ft after 25 years. Its reputed lack of hardiness must be the main reason for its scarcity. One of its parents is *R. sulfureum* and this is rated 'D' in the old RHS hybrid book. It may well be that it is not for the coldest parts of the country. All I can say is that it has taken -11°C here without any damage to the plant and for the last five years has never failed to make an effect with its flowers. This year it was in flower most of February until -5°C destroyed all open flowers in the last week of the month. Many of the later flower buds were not affected so that as I write on 21st March there are still a hundred flowers out making a good display.

Rhododendron 'Arthur Osborn'

My other chosen rhododendron is from the very end of the season. In early days I was very taken with the idea of extending the season, which I now realise was probably a mistake. All the same I should not like to be without *R. auriculatum* casting its fragrant spell as late as August, and no doubt others would pick 'Polar Bear' as a *sine qua non.* However, these are both very large plants. For smaller compact plants flowering as late as July there only seem to be the hybrids of *R. sanguineum* subsp. *didymum* to fill the bill.

I tried all those out that had received some kind of RHS award. *R.* 'Impi' I quickly discarded as it was not all that late. *R.* 'Redcap' certainly flowers in July and it produced nicely poised, true red flowers, but here it lacked staying power, which is the one charge that could not be levied against the one real success of the late season: *R.* 'Arthur Osborn'. The flowers are a good true red set on a tabletop of dark foliage, which clothes the plant right down to the ground. To please the rhodo buff the leaves have a light faun indumentum. In height the plant is no taller than *R.* (Golden Oriole Group) 'Talavera' but the spread is a great deal more, although this could have been lessened if I had not allowed it to self-layer. In flower in the hottest part of the year it has never failed to make a display and I have not seen its mildew-proof leaves wilt, perhaps due to its *R. griersonianum* parentage, which seems to bequeath drought tolerance to some of its offspring. The plant received an AM in 1933 but since then has become a Cinderella.

Peter Chappell is the owner of Spinner's Nursery at Boldre, Hampshire, and a member of the New Forest Branch of the Group.

Rhododendron verruculosum

Some 20 years ago, Florence Auckland invited me to look around her beautiful garden in Bolton, and to take some cuttings. Among her dazzling array of species – many from RBG stock, courtesy of Mr Davidian – was a well-flowered member of the Lapponica series (subsection Lapponica), *R. verruculosum.* 'A good doer' said Florence, and so it has proved in my garden.

Once home I was at pains to look up the information on this plant, which proved not to be easy. There was a somewhat sketchy description on p.433 of *The Species of Rhododendron* (1930) and in the RHS Yearbooks, one brief reference in Vol. 1 for 1946. Turning to the 1980 'Edinburgh Revision' by Cullen, I found that the Lapponica had been omitted. For that subsection I needed – and obtained – a copy of the 1975 Notes from the RBG Edinburgh Vol. 34 No. 1. Here was published the work of the New Zealand botanists, Melva and W. R. Philipson. No index, but tucked away on p.40 under *R. flavidum*, I found their verdict:

'*R. flavidum* × undetermined species – Wilson 3464 (The Type of *R. verruculosum*). The plant referred to as *R. verruculosum* was probably raised from seed introduced by Wilson. The height of the plant would be compatible with *R. flavidum* parentage.'

Hardly a good scientific analysis, I thought – and when, soon afterwards, I obtained a copy of Vol. 1 of Davidian's great work, *The Rhododendron Species,* I found that the author was not impressed by this brief dismissal. Typically, he ignored it, and gave the plant a full description (p. 212), comparing it with *R. polycladum*, *R. bulu* and *R. impeditum*, and stating differences from these species. Significantly he made no comparison with *R. flavidum* – hardly surprising when one looks at the differences between the two:

- *R. verruculosum* has 7–8 stamens, *flavidum* 10.
- The branchlets of *R. verruculosum* are pilose – covered with long soft hairs, those of *R. flavidum* are puberulous – covered with minute short soft hairs.
- The terminal inflorescence of *R. verruculosum* has 1–2 flowers, that of *R. flavidum* 3–5.
- The leaf scales of *R. verruculosum* are 0.5 to 1 × their own diameter apart; those of *R. flavidum* are crowded or overlapping.
- The corolla of *R. verruculosum* is purple and scaly on the outside; that of *R. flavidum* yellow and usually glabrous.

These differences are substantial, and do not support the 'probable' relationship between the two species. Of course, the Philipsons may have had other, undisclosed evidence on which they based their hypothesis. Everyone accepts that many of the plants formerly accorded species status are in fact hybrids, yet surely the case for sinking *R. verruculosum* has not yet been proved.

Rhododendron verruculosum in the author's garden

Like most Lapponica, *R. verruculosum* lacks glamour, yet I would certainly endorse Davidian's comment, 'A well-grown plant is most effective when covered with purple flowers. It is rare in cultivation but well worth a place in every rock garden.'

Alas, Florence and her garden are both gone, as now is Davidian. But for me *R. verruculosum* remains a happy souvenir of friends departed.

Enthusiasts are always welcome to take cuttings from my plant, though suitable material is scarce, as the growth buds are greatly outnumbered by the flower buds!

Stephen Fox is a member of the Northwest and North Wales branch of the Group, and in 1997 created for the Group (in computer and booklet form) the first Cumulative Index of the Yearbook from 1946 to that date.

New New Zealand Magnolia Cultivars, Michelias and Manglietias

Mike Robinson

New Zealand Magnolias

A fine day in early spring; clipped curved hedges of silver conifer, the garden sloping down to a carefully crafted lake, running water, the pastel tones of flowers on the climbers, shrubs, bulbs and early perennials in the soft light; views over rolling countryside of meadows, trees and rivers. England at her best? Black tree ferns, cycads, phormiums, evergreen magnolias in flower, and that evergreen clematis is not *C. armandii*. In a sheep shearing shed a table weighed down with enormous cup and saucer magnolia flowers of every hue from white to deepest red; a group of 'experts' from all corners of the world vainly trying to identify them; the hosts and guest speaker generous, welcoming and enthusiastic: the international companionship of shared obsession. This is the 2003 Magnolia Society tour of New Zealand.

Familiar Plants

New Zealand enthusiasts have been carefully selective about the magnolias they have imported from the northern hemisphere, with the consequence that varieties relatively uncommon in the UK are grown in every enthusiast's garden.

Some of these 'English' magnolias are very rare or even extinct in cultivation in their home country. *Magnolia sprengeri* var. *diva* – the original clone from Caerhays – is alive and well at Peter Cave's nursery in the North Island, whereas the original tree at Caerhays has died, and I know of no plant growing in the UK that has definitely been vegetatively propagated from the Caerhays tree. If anyone reading this has such a plant, the Group, I and Caerhays, would very much like to know. The cultivars *M. campbellii* 'Darjeeling' and *M. campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata* 'Lanarth', *M. sprengeri* var. *diva* 'Burncoose', *M.* 'Caerhays Belle' and *M.* 'J.C. Williams' are common in New Zealand and grow well throughout the country, with flower colours very much the same as at home, although the flowers of *M.* 'Treve Holman' are a deeper red in New Zealand. *M.* 'Sweetheart', rare in the UK, was everywhere in New Zealand gardens and is outstanding. It is a seedling of *M.* 'Caerhays Belle', raised by Ron Gordon and introduced by Peter Cave from his nursery near Hamilton in the North Island. It is of a superb clear pink without the salmon shades of *M.* 'Caerhays Belle', and it holds its flowers erect at maturity.

Less common in New Zealand, but probably extinct here, and totally outstanding, is *Magnolia* 'Sir Harold Hillier', an enormous white campbellii type, which originated at Nigel Holman's garden in Cornwall. I am glad to say that Hillier's Nurseries are planning to re-import this clone and make it available.

It was nice to see a well-shaped tree of the now rare soulangeana *Magnolia* 'Grace McDade'. Although it has a weeping growth habit initially it can be pruned into a well-shaped, spreading small tree. The flowers are in the top class of soulangeana cultivars, being almost as large as *M.* 'Iolanthe', and they are sufficiently late to escape most frosts.

Of course the Jury hybrids are grown throughout New Zealand; it wasn't always easy to distinguish the more familiar cultivars, as, for example, *Magnolia* 'Milky Way' over there looked more like *M.* 'Athene' over here, with more pink in the flower (I prefer the 'English' colour), and the colours of *M.* 'Vulcan' in its native land vary considerably. On the volcanic soils and in the warmer climate of the North Island it is a magnificent red (for a photo, see the Group website), but in the cooler South Island it has more pink in it, approaching the colour we get in the UK. The later flowers are smaller and with less of the cup-and-saucer habit of the earlier ones, as at home. I think that, at home, we shall have to be content with *M.* 'Vulcan' as an extremely floriferous small tree, which will rarely have flowers of a clear red colour. It is a good magnolia; it's just a pity we expected it to be red.

Seeing the original tree of *Magnolia* 'Black Tulip' at the Jury nursery was instructive. The flowers on a 5m tree were just the same as on a small graft – no bigger, nearly all a good dark colour (the occasional pink), in fact just like a black tulip in shape and size. Although floriferous, it doesn't have the flower power of *M.* 'Vulcan', but it does have the darkest flowers of any magnolia I know.

Magnolia 'Como' (a *M. campbellii* or *M. mollicomata* seedling)

On the other hand, *Magnolia* 'Felix Jury', now apparently to be known as *M.* 'Felix', and in the past labelled *M.* 'Flamingo' by Notcutt's, was a show stopper wherever we saw it. The flowers are enormous even by *M. campbellii* standards. We saw colours ranging from an almost pure red to a good deep rose pink – all attractive with no muddy shades. The crinkled tepals are distinctive and may indicate polyploidy. It is fast growing, likely to make a large tree, and flowers at about the same time as the other Jury hybrids. It looks likely to be an attractive colour in the UK – the first flower on my plant was large and a good pink – but it is an outstanding cultivar anyway.

Less familiar but worthy of note were the sister seedlings of *Magnolia* 'Star Wars', which is surely one of the best hybrids ever raised and is a fitting legacy to its raiser, the late Os Blumhardt. Similar in every way but flower colour, and well worth a place in a collection, are *M.* 'Red Lion', a pink with more red in it, *M.* 'Early Rose', which is paler and of a less clear pink than *M.* 'Star Wars' but only a few days earlier, and the pure white *M.* 'Pat's Delight'.

Michelia doltsopa, M. yunnanensis, and *M. figo* grow well throughout the country.

The less familiar

Plants of what appear to be a single clone of *Magnolia amoena* were seen in many gardens. They have flowers larger than the description of the type and all are a very pale pink with a darker stripe. Whether they are the true species or a hybrid is not clear.

It was interesting to see *Magnolia campbellii* 'Maharajah' – one of the two clones named by Todd Gresham in California, and not, to my knowledge, in cultivation in the UK. It has a relatively small flower of an elegant cup-and-saucer shape. Also of note was the excellent very pale pink *M.* 'Como' (see above left) – a seedling of *M. mollicomata* or *M. campbellii* raised in Australia. This is a superb form similar to the best of the *M. campbellii* Alba Group seedlings so often seen in Cornwall, and it is worthy of wide cultivation.

The shock of the new

Hybridisation of magnolias and the raising of seedlings from cultivars and from collections in the wild are thriving in New Zealand. There is much activity in the commercial nurseries, with leading roles being taken by Mark and Abby Jury, Peter Cave, and, until his death recently, Os Blumhardt, who all have been creating new hybrids and making new introductions. It was also especially nice to see that amateurs, notably Ian Baldick in his garden just south of Auckland, are making an equal if not greater contribution.

Although there are continuing efforts in New Zealand to produce better yellows, ambers and orange shades, our tour was too early to see most of the taxa that have *Magnolia acuminata* in their make-up, but what we did see was the significant progress made in producing dark shades on compact trees, and in introducing and hybridising *Michelia.* The number of new taxa seen on our tour was quite remarkable, and there is space to introduce only a few of them here.

Purple shades

For me the best new hybrid we saw is *Magnolia* 'Purple Sensation' (see below) – a cross between *M. liliiflora* and *M. campbellii*

Magnolia 'Purple Sensation' (*M. liliiflora* x *M. campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata* 'Lanarth')

Magnolia 'Ruth' (*M. campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata* 'Lanarth' x *M.* x *soulangeana*)

subsp. *mollicomata* 'Lanarth' bred by Ian Baldick. This has flowers of the true Lanarth colour, poise and size on a young tree, which looks likely to get quite large. With luck it will have all the advantages of *M. campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata* 'Lanarth' without its early flowers and its problems of propagation and establishment.

Magnolia 'Purple Globe' succeeds in that it is a compact tree with large red-purple flowers accurately described by the name. It was raised by Os Blumhardt.

Magnolia 'Cathryn', which is *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra' × an unknown *M. mollicomata* clone, has slightly smaller flowers than *M.* 'Purple Sensation', but of an intense purple with silvery tips to the tepals on an initially upright tree. It was raised by Vance Hooper.

Magnolia 'Nancy', derived from *M.* × *soulangeana,* and named after Nancy Lawrence, was bred by Nancy and her husband Deryck at their garden in the North Island, and it is a world-class purple cultivar of compact growth.

M. 'Royal Purple' is one of Peter Cave's more recent creations. It is a fastigiate cultivar likely to make a large tree, and looks as though it has *M. sprengeri* var. *diva* in its parentage. The tepals are a good purple externally and paler inside, and have the classic cup and saucer shape. It should be an excellent plant for the medium-sized garden because of its very large flowers and its tendency not to spread.

At Os Blumhardt's nursery, among many deep-coloured seedlings worthy of introduction, we saw an excellent unnamed hybrid from the cross *M. liliiflora* × *M.* 'Star Wars', which was fastigiate, had large flowers and looked likely to be relatively compact.

Red Shades

Ian Baldick, among others, has produced some remarkable red magnolias in his search for strong colour and compact trees, and the following is only a selection of what was seen:

Magnolia 'Ruth' (see above) was bred from *M. campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata* 'Lanarth' and a clone of *M.* × *soulangeana;* it looks likely to make a fair-sized floriferous tree with flowers similar to, but of an even more intense colour than, *M. campbellii* 'Darjeeling'.

Ian has achieved his goal of a compact tree with flowers of a true red with *Magnolia* 'Red as Red' (previously called 'Red As'), which is *M.* × *soulangeana* 'Pickard's Ruby' × *M.* 'Vulcan'. This looks to be a plant that everyone has room to grow, and, if the intensity and purity of the colour are maintained in cooler climes, it is likely to be one of the outstanding hybrids of all time.

Magnolia 'Ian's Red', which is *M.* × *soulangeana* 'Burgundy' × M. 'Vulcan', and *M.* 'Ann's Delight', which looks like an improved *M.* 'Vulcan', are two of Ian's excellent earlier hybrids with large reddish purple flowers on strongly growing trees.

Os Blumhardt has managed to achieve a colour break with his *Magnolia* 'Mahogany Glow', bred by crossing *M.* × *veitchii* with *M. liliiflora*. The name describes the colour very well, but it is too early to guess how big this clone will become.

Magnolia 'Anya', derived from *M.* 'Vulcan' and bred by the Lawrences, is an excellent red with a flower similar in shape to *M. sprengeri* var. *diva* but a better and deeper colour.

We saw very many new hybrids lined out at the Jury nursery, and most of them looked to be superb clones. However, Mark and Abby are extremely particular about the clones they choose to name and release into commerce, and only two of the excellent red shades are likely to be selected. One may be named *Magnolia* 'Ruby Star' or *M.* 'Red Star', and it is a cross using *M.* 'Vulcan'. It has strap-shaped tepals of a strong red inside and out, and there is one other cross from *M.* 'Vulcan' that may be named and propagated. This has a very large red flower similar to *M.* 'Felix Jury' but having a clearer colour with fewer purple shades.

Just how selective the Jurys are is aptly illustrated by the fact that a clone they considered good enough only to be a rootstock was named (without permission) by someone else; this is *Magnolia* 'Eleanor May' – a compact plant with a nice-shaped flower in the red-purple range with, perhaps, not such a clear colour. There

Magnolia 'Aurora' (*M.* 'Star Wars' × *M. sargentiana* var. *robusta*)

is a photograph of this clone on the Group website.

Pink

In spite of the excellent progress made in deep-coloured hybrids, one of the finest new hybrids we saw in New Zealand was undoubtedly *Magnolia* 'Aurora' (see above) – a cross of *M.* 'Star Wars' with *M. sargentiana* var. *robusta*. This has produced a clone that covers itself with enormous flowers of a very attractive clear pink at an early age. Superb!

Another excellent hybrid from Os Blumhardt is *Magnolia* 'Picture' × *M. campbellii* – flowers of campbellii type and colour on young tree – again outstanding but perhaps not quite as good as *M.* 'Aurora'.

White

New to me, but widely grown in New Zealand is the Japanese *Magnolia* 'Suishoren', a hybrid of *M. stellata* and *M. denudata*, which has that indefinable quality of class because of the flower shape and unblemished colour – flowers as large as *M.* × *loebneri* 'Donna' but with more tepals and more poise. Also very nice was a new *M.* × *loebneri* cultivar – 'White Rose'.

Michelia

This subgenus, which has been merged into *Magnolia* recently, is not so well known in the UK outside Cornwall and Ireland, so a few words of introduction may assist some readers. As in a few cases familiar old names have been replaced by unfamiliar new ones; the traditional names will be given first.

Michelia doltsopa (*Magnolia doltsopa*) and *Michelia figo* (*Magnolia figo*) are evergreen trees with attractive foliage and strongly fragrant flowers and have been grown in milder areas for many years, but they have been regarded as too tender for successful cultivation in most of the UK. However, recent mild winters have allowed successful cultivation and flowering of *M. doltsopa* in at least two gardens in Sussex and Kent, and it is suspected that hardier forms of *M. figo* have been introduced recently.

It is especially important to note that in Washington and Oregon, where cultivation of *Michelia* is much more widespread than here, these two species are regarded as among the least hardy, so it should be well worth while trying the cultivars described below in much of this country.

Notable clones of *Michelia figo* in New Zealand are *M.* 'Smiling Face', the clone normally grown in Chinese gardens, and a possibly tetraploid form, which has oval leaves and flowers with a deeper yellow tone than usual; it is offered by the Blumhardt nursery. This clone has been (wrongly) sold in Australia as *Michelia compressa* (*Magnolia compressa*). I was told that the true *M. compressa* has fairly small purple flowers and small leaves but becomes tree-sized eventually; this is a different description from the species occasionally available in the UK, and said to be hardy. The latter is said to have white or creamy flowers.

The best clone of *Michelia doltsopa* is probably 'Silver Cloud', which seems to be much more floriferous than average, but this is not proving hardy outside except in very favoured areas of the UK. Another nicer clone is 'Rusty', which has even redder flower buds than average and is considered to be hardier, so well worth trying over here.

It is now recognised that *Michelia yunnanensis* (*Magnolia dianica*) is proving hardy not only in the east of England but also at Herkenrode in Belgium where *Magnolia campbellii* cannot be grown. The clone of *Michelia yunnanensis* (*Magnolia dianica*) 'Velvet and Cream' is becoming known here, and is, of course, rightly popular throughout New Zealand; its prominent rust-coloured velvety buds with fragrant cream flowers and comparatively small evergreen leaves are much admired by gardeners, florists and flower arrangers alike. It is perhaps the best form of the species, although we saw many excellent forms at the Jury nursery, some with flowers of a slightly deeper cream. Different clones of this species are said to have very different growth habits: 'Velvet and Cream' forms a small tree in New Zealand; we saw specimens up to 6m.

The same species has been crossed with *Michelia doltsopa* by Peter Cave and others.

Peter's best form has the buds of *M. yunnanensis* and the flowers of *M. doltsopa,* these having perhaps more tepals than either species, and some cream in the predominantly white flower. As with all michelias the scent is excellent. One would imagine this plant should be hardy in much of the UK.

The cross *Michelia doltsopa* × *M. figo,* commonly known as *M.* 'Foggii', is well known in the USA although the cross has been repeated elsewhere. The flowers of most clones tend towards *M. figo.* The *Michelia* clones 'Bubbles', 'Mixed Up Miss' and 'Touch of Pink' are the commonest in New Zealand. *M.* 'Bubbles' is so called as the flower tepals remain touching at the tips. *M.* 'Mixed Up Miss' has flowers with purple and cream shades, and *M.* 'Touch of Pink' is a bushy evergreen shrub with flowers to 7cm having a little mauve toward the tepal tips. Strangely, some clones of *M.* 'Foggii' have succeeded outside the West Country and may be slightly hardier than either parent.

Michelia 'Foggii' has been crossed with *M. yunnanensis,* and at the Jury nursery we were treated to the remarkable spectacle of some 200m of hedging of seedlings from this cross. The Jurys' aim is to combine the flower buds of *M. yunnanensis* with the flower power of *M. doltsopa* and the colour and scent of *M. figo!* Just two of the seedlings are being selected for release – one with deeper yellow shades and one a deeper pink than usual, the scent and flower buds being excellent in both.

Michelia maudiae (*Magnolia maudiae*) (see right) is present in a few collections in the UK but is widely grown in New Zealand, and it is certainly hardier than *M. doltsopa* or *M. figo.* It is a superb species with glaucous foliage and flowers of a similar size to *M. doltsopa.* It was originally introduced from Hong Kong and was therefore assumed not to be hardy, but it also occurs in colder parts of China. Peter Cave has the clone *M.* 'Golden Temple' (the name being from where it was found rather than describing any characteristics of the plant), which becomes a stately and spreading, small tree with a triangular profile and rippled edges to the leaves. Equally promising is *M. maudiae* var. *platypetala,* which has very similar flowers that glow in the midst of its very dark pendent foliage.

Michelia velutina (*Magnolia lanuginosa?*) is another dark evergreen with hanging leaves

Michelia maudiae

Michelia skinneriana at Gwavas

and with somewhat smaller flowers than *M. maudiae* var. *platypetala.* It is reputed to be hardy. *M. skinneriana* is similar, excellent-flowering tree (see above); this species is classified as *M. figo* var. *skinneriana,* but the plant seen looks to have little affinity to *M. figo.*

We saw three very nice new introductions still only identified by their Tom Hudson collector's numbers – TH631, TH901 and TH904 (which has orange young growth), and one collected one by Peter Cave. All have attractive foliage and large flowers with strap-shaped tepals, and all are from the north of Vietnam, so may well be hardy.

Lastly, the autumn-flowering *Michelia champaca,* which is a semi-tropical species with orange flowers, is grown in New Zealand as a pot plant.

The taxonomy of *Michelia* has received very little attention until recently, and it is not certain how many individual species have been introduced to cultivation worldwide. It may well be that some introductions are natural hybrids, and much work remains to be done in this area.

Manglietia

Manglietia insignis is hardy through New Zealand, and it is becoming recognised that it is hardy throughout at least the south of England. Exbury have grown a very good form with pink outer tepals for over 50 years, but the usual form is ivory white. In New Zealand a good red form is popular and would be worth introducing here.

Manglietia yuyanensis (*Magnolia fordiana*) from Vietnam and south China is said by Peter Cave to be hardy with him to -10°C.

There must be many new *Michelia* and *Manglietia* cultivars worth trying in the UK, but the sight of *Michelia* × *alba* in flower at Ayrlies garden near Auckland provided a timely reminder of just how benign is the climate in northern New Zealand – *Michelia* × *alba* is a tropical plant I last saw in Penang Botanic Garden.

It was our first visit to New Zealand, and although my wife and I expected the country to be a horticultural Mecca, we were completely bowled over by the quality and variety of plants, and by the knowledge, energy and enthusiasm of the gardeners. There hasn't been time to mention the varied landscape, the outstanding wines, the good cuisine, the friendliness of everyone we met, and (not least) the space and quietness of the place. For anyone a wonderful country; for a plantsman a paradise.

Dr Michael Robinson became Chairman of the Group in 2004 and is a former Chairman of the Southeast Branch. He gardens in the Ashdown Forest and has a fine collection of both magnolias and rhododendrons.

Kalmia x *Rhododendron* Debunked

Mike Grant, Nicola H. Toomey & Alastair Culham

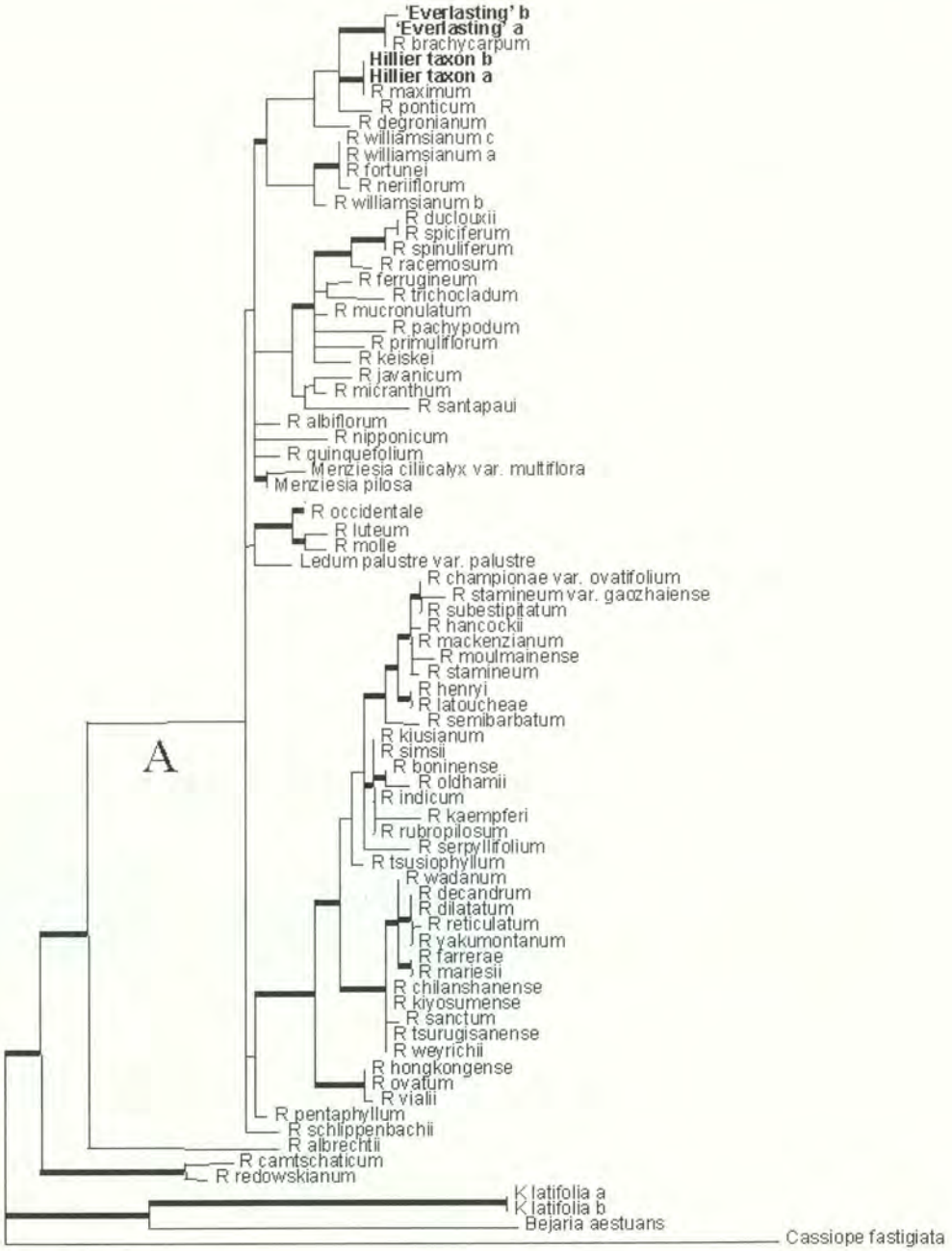
Introduction

Even if they have not grown it or seen it in the flesh, many rhododendron growers have probably heard of a reputed hybrid between *Kalmia* and *Rhododendron*. If such a thing could be confirmed it would represent the most genetically distant cross recorded in the *Ericaceae*. This article is a summary of an investigation (Grant *et al* 2004) conducted by the authors into the status of putative *Kalmia* × *Rhododendron* hybrids.

History of *Kalmia* x *Rhododendron*

The first reputed cross between *Kalmia* and *Rhododendron* (see right) was made in the 1950s by Halfdan Lem (1885–1969) in the USA, allegedly between *K. latifolia* and *R. williamsianum* (Pierce 1974). The hybrid was reported as having 'pinkish white, cup-like flowers of all kalmias, but with a larger leaf resembling the male parent, *R. williamsianum*.' (Pierce 1974). Note how this statement implies that *Kalmia* was the female parent. The one plant resulting from the hybridisation was named 'No Suchianum' (sometimes styled as 'Nosuchianum') in jest by Warren Berg in 1973. Unfortunately, when the cultivar name was brought to the attention of the International Cultivar Registration Authority for *Rhododendron* in 1996 it was noted that it fell foul of Article 17.9 of the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* (Trehane *et al* 1995) because it is styled in Latin. Therefore a new name, 'Everlasting', was coined by Pierce (Murray 1996 *in litt.*). It is quite widely cultivated by enthusiasts in north-west USA (Halligan 1994) and is favored for its long flowering season, perhaps caused by its apparent sterility, and its seemingly curious origin. 'Everlasting' is widely regarded as

Rhododendron 'Everlasting' at RHS Wisley, previously thought to be a hybrid between *Kalmia* and *Rhododendron*



Dendrogram resulting from analysis of chloroplast DNA trnL-F sequence data

being an intergeneric hybrid on the basis of its claimed parentage, apparent sterility and the seemingly *Kalmia*-like characters of a shallow, saucer-shaped corolla and widely spreading stamens. Despite the corolla and stamen characters there do not appear to be any other features of the flower that suggest an affinity with *Kalmia*.

'Everlasting' was reputedly crossed with *R. arboreum* subsp. *delavayi* resulting in a cultivar called 'Brilliant Abbé' (Anon 1985). The latter reference erroneously lists one parent as 'Brilliancy' (Murray 1996 *in litt*). We were not able to obtain material of 'Brilliant Abbé'.

The next reputed cross between *Kalmia* and *Rhododendron* is represented by a plant (hereafter referred to as the Hillier taxon) in the collection at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum in England. Harold G. Hillier obtained it from the US National Arboretum (where it may have originated) in 1961 and it is referred to as growing there in Jaynes (1997). It is also grown at Arboretum Trompenburg in the Netherlands where it is listed as an intergeneric hybrid (van Hoey Smith 2001). It was thought to represent a hybrid between *K. latifolia* and *R. maximum* (Hillier & Sons 1981) but subsequent editions (e.g. Hillier & Coombes 2002) have been more cautious and listed it under *R. maximum*. Likewise, Jaynes (1997) has questioned its intergeneric status. The reported evidence for hybridity is on the basis of the tendency of its flower buds to abort (Coombes, *pers. comm.;* Fortgens, *pers. comm.*) and its long petiole relative to length of leaf lamina; the latter character is reminiscent of *K. latifolia*. It has been suggested that its reluctance to flower is because *Rhododendron* flower buds develop on shoots of the previous season whereas those of *Kalmia* develop on shoots of the current season. However, in 2004 this plant flowered at Arboretum Trompenburg and a photograph has kindly been supplied by Dick van Hoey Smith (see p.31).

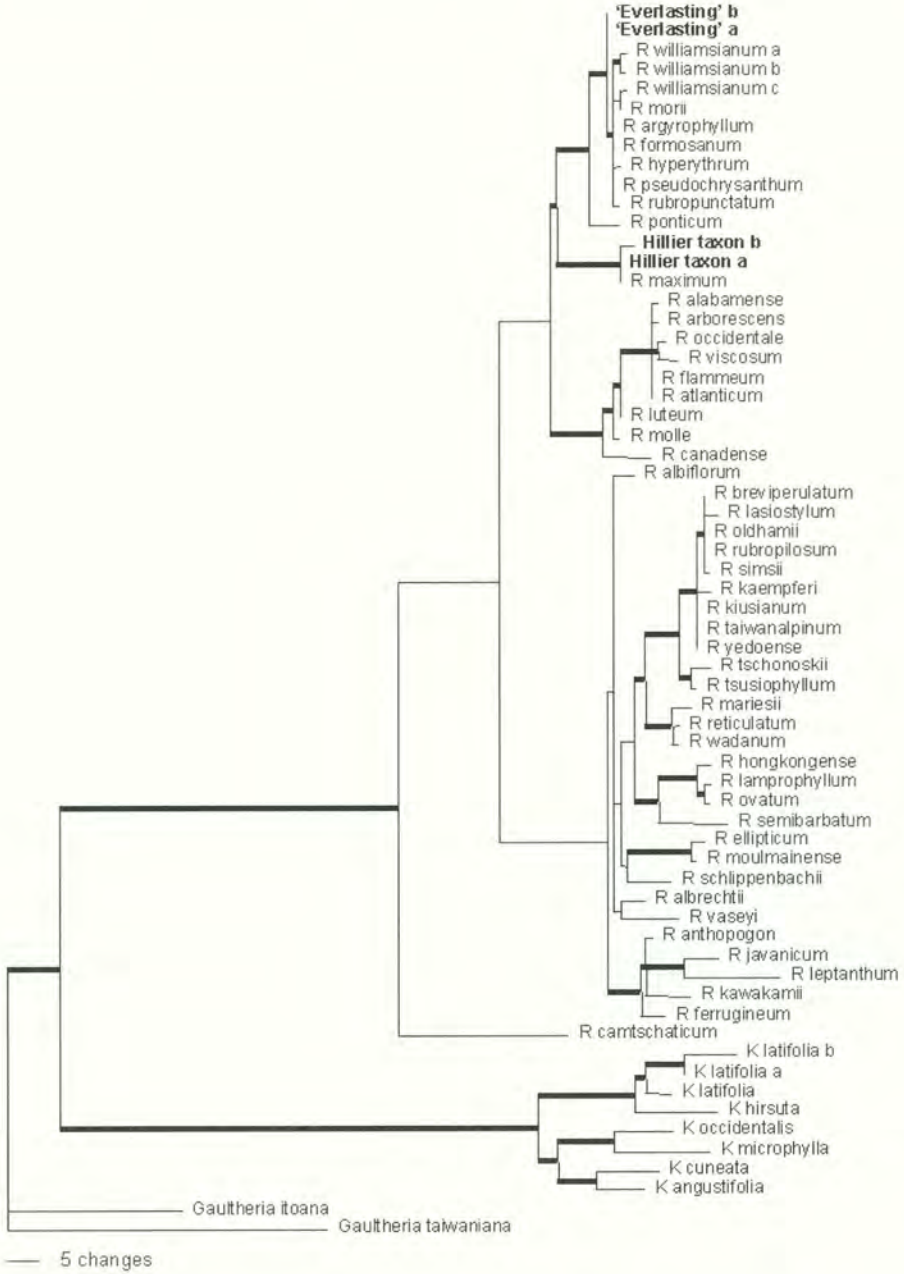
Other intergeneric hybrids in *Ericaceae*

Of other claimed intergeneric hybrids in the *Ericaceae,* the only ones that stand up to rigorous inspection are within tribe *Phyllodoceae.* These are × *Kalmiothamnus,* × *Phylliopsis* and × *Phyllothamnus* and they represent crosses between *Kalmiopsis, Phyllodoce* and *Rhodothamnus.* This interfertility reflects the close relationship between these three genera. The only cross in this group that has not yet been performed successfully is that between *Kalmiopsis* and *Phyllodoce* (Starling 1982).

Intergeneric crosses in other sections of the *Ericaceae* have all proved to be less resilient to taxonomic re-alignments. × *Gaulnettya* resides in *Gaultheria* now that *Pernettya* is sunk, × *Ledodendron* resides in *Rhododendron* now that *Ledum* is sunk and *Bruckenthalia* × *Erica* resides in *Erica* now that *Bruckenthalia* is sunk. × *Ericalluna* merely proved to be an abnormal *Erica,* not a hybrid with *Calluna.* This leaves us with the reputed *Kalmia* and *Rhododendron* hybrids mentioned above. The former belongs to tribe *Phyllodoceae* and the latter to tribe *Rhodoreae,* but Kron *et al* (2002) show that these two tribes are quite distantly related.

The investigation

Claims for intergeneric status of various hybrids are made on a fairly regular basis by horticulturists. Such pronouncements are



Dendrogram resulting from analysis of nuclear DNA ITS sequence data

sometimes worth investigating, not least because of what they may tell us about the relatedness of the genera in question. The two *Kalmia* × *Rhododendron* cases demand investigation because, if their parental status could be proved, they would represent the most distant intergeneric hybrids in *Ericaceae* and this would have important taxonomic implications. Perhaps more important is the potential for ornamental plant breeding! As International Cultivar Registration Authority for the genus *Rhododendron*, the Royal Horticultural Society has an interest in putative hybrids between *Rhododendron* and other genera. We therefore submitted material of the two available cultivars and related species to DNA sequencing. This would hopefully reveal any evidence for hybridisation and the direction of the cross should one be evident.

Materials and methods

Plant material was obtained from the Royal Horticultural Society's gardens at Wisley and Rosemoor (England), and kindly supplied by the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum (England) and Glendoick Gardens (Scotland) (see table below). DNA was extracted from the leaves and two gene regions were amplified and sequenced. One region is known as trnL-F and is located on chloroplast DNA, the other region is known as ITS and is found on nuclear DNA. As chloroplasts tend to be maternally inherited, sequencing of chloroplast DNA would give an indication of the female parent if the intergeneric nature were proved.

We also obtained numerous additional DNA sequences (including some from *Bejaria, Cassiope* and *Gaultheria*) from the EMBL/Genbank/DDBJ database, in order to put our sequences into context. All the

Name	Source	Origin	Accession no.
R. 'Everlasting' a & b	RHS Garden, Wisley	Cult.	W20012690
Hillier taxon a & b	Hillier Gardens & Arboretum	Cult.	H19841501
K. latifolia a	RHS Garden, Wisley	Cult.	W951916
K. latifolia b	RHS Garden, Wisley	Cult.	W960618
R. williamsianum a	RHS Garden, Rosemoor	Cult.	R960393
R. williamsianum b	RHS Garden, Rosemoor	Cult.	R888391
R. williamsianum c	Glendoick Gardens	Wild	None
R. maximum	Glendoick Gardens	Wild	None

Table: Accession data for plant material used in DNA sequencing

sequences were then aligned and analysed and presented in the form of dendrograms (see pp 26 and 28) showing the relationships between the species and hybrids.

Results

The analysis of chloroplast DNA trnL-F (see p. 26) shows that *Rhododendron* 'Everlasting' is very close in sequence to *R. brachycarpum,* and the Hillier taxon is identical in sequence to *R. maximum.* Neither shows any closeness to *Kalmia.*

The analysis of nuclear DNA ITS (see p. 28) shows that *Rhododendron* 'Everlasting' has no exact match (note that a *R. brachycarpum* sequence was not available for this analysis) but groups with *R. williamsianum* and its close relatives. The Hillier taxon again shows an exact match to *R. maximum.* Neither shows any closeness to *Kalmia.*

Although not the intention of this study, note how the trnL-F analysis shows that *Rhododendron albrechtii, R. camtschaticum* and *R. redowskianum* are quite distantly related to the rest of *Rhododendron,* while *Menziesia* and *Ledum* fall within the genus. Of these, only *R. camtschaticum* was available for ITS analysis but shows a similar placement.

Discussion

The claimed origin of *Rhododendron* 'Everlasting' as a hybrid between *Kalmia latifolia* and *R. williamsianum* is refuted by the DNA sequence evidence. The combination of both chloroplast and nuclear DNA evidence indicates that *Kalmia* has not contributed to the genetic makeup of 'Everlasting' but that the cultivar is closely related to *R. brachycarpum* or the *R. williamsianum* group. When regarded as a rhododendron, 'Everlasting' can be keyed out to subsection *Pontica* in section *Ponticum* in Chamberlain's key (1982) to subgenus *Hymenanthes,* except for the corolla lobe to tube ratio. The morphology of this plant fits the placement of the cultivar into subsection *Pontica* very well and this matches the molecular evidence. The open corolla tube is probably the result of a mutation in the genes controlling floral development.

The Hillier taxon also shows no sign of *Kalmia* in either DNA sequence and a close match to *Rhododendron maximum* in both sequences. The flowers produced in 2004 suggest a strong affinity with *R. maximum.* The evidence suggests that this, like *R.* 'Everlasting', is a chance mutant of a rhododendron.

A new cultivar name

The plant that we have referred to as the Hillier taxon clearly needs a cultivar name. We therefore provide a name here and give a validating description. The name has been registered with the International Cultivar Registration Authority for *Rhododendron.* A nomenclatural standard herbarium specimen has been deposited in the RHS Herbarium at Wisley (WSY) and a duplicate at the Harold Hillier Herbarium (provisional code HILL). The name we have chosen reflects its historical, but erroneous, connection with *Kalmia.*

***Rhododendron* 'Kalamity'**

An elepidote *Rhododendron* cultivar derived from *R. maximum,* recognised by its abnormally long petiole relative to leaf length and flower buds that often abort, propagated vegetatively. Leaves evergreen, c.100–120 × 20–30mm; leaf blade elliptic, apex mucronate, underside with thin, scattered, non-persistent, brown indumentum; petiole

Rhododendron 'Kalamity', previously thought to be a hybrid between *Kalmia* and *Rhododendron*

c. ½ as long as total leaf. Flowers as in *R. maximum.*

Nomenclatural standard (designated here): Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum, accession no. 1984.1501, herbarium barcode WSY0046145, 1 January 1996, Cult. (WSY; duplicate at HILL).

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MIKE ROBINSON & JOHN MCQUIRE

Observations on rhododendrons AC 1142, 1175 and 1211 irrorata subsection.
Collected by Alan Clark in 1995 from Xiaocoaba - Yiliang NE Yunnan 1800–2000m. **SHRUB** with bushy upright growth – 1.4m high and 1.2m across, in about 10 years.

BRANCHES almost glabrous with a very few stalked glands, older branches completely glabrous.

LEAVES lanceolate 12 × 3.9 – 7 × 1.9cm midrib grooved making the leaf v-shaped but not rigid, apex acuminate. Base tapered, primary veins slightly impressed; under surface paler but shining, not matt, not glaucous, epapillate, primary veins prominent along half their length. **Petiole** deeply grooved above, rounded below, 1.8–2.5cm long, glabrous when mature or with vestiges of a very few short stalked glands and a very few (possibly ramiform) hairs on younger leaves.

INFLORESCENCE **Rhachis** 4–6mm glandular with short setose glands with dark tips. 10/12-flowered. **Pedicel** densely glandular near the calyx and glandular all along its length. **Calyx** 2mm long, 5-lobed with rounded rims that are *densely to moderately glandular* with short stalked glands having dark tips. **Corolla** *tubular campanulate*, 5-lobed, 4cm long with nectar pouches – yellow in throat shading to almost white with or without a touch of pink at tips: with or without moderate maroon spotting on upper part of lobes, glabrous externally, but with a few hairs internally at the base. **Stamens** 10, about 3.2cm long, slightly shorter than the corolla, pubescent with very short setose hairs near the base becoming glabrous near the anthers. **Ovary** conoid truncate, 6mm long, *densely puberulous with adpressed setose hairs, and with a very few scattered clumps of glands.* **Style** almost as long as the corolla – 4.5 to 5cm long, curved, with short stalked glands having red tips along its entire length. **Stigma** maroon, expanding to twice the width of the style.

The above plants have characteristics that exclude:

1. ***R. irroratum*** in the predominately FLOCCOSE OVARY (*R. irroratum* has a glandular ovary)
2. ***R. pogonostylum*** as the CALYCES OUTSIDE are HEAVILY GLANDULAR (*R. pogonostylum* is floccose)
3. ***R. ningyuenense*** as the CALYCES OUTSIDE are HEAVILY GLANDULAR (*R. ningyuenense* is glabrous)
4. ***R. araiophyllum*** as the corollas are TUBULAR-CAMPANULATE (*R. araiophyllum* has a broadly cup-shaped corolla)

Rhododendron irroratum (Alan Clarke collection series AC 1142; 1175; 1211). A new subspecies?

These plants therefore appear to be a new subspecies of *R. irroratum,* and we suggest the name ***R. irroratum* subsp. *yiliangense.***

The key for the irrorata subsection in Davidian[1] has been used as the primary source of this information, though the descriptions of Chamberlain[2], Feng Guomei[3] and Stevenson[4] have been taken into account.

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Extending the Season with Eucryphias

Everard Daniel

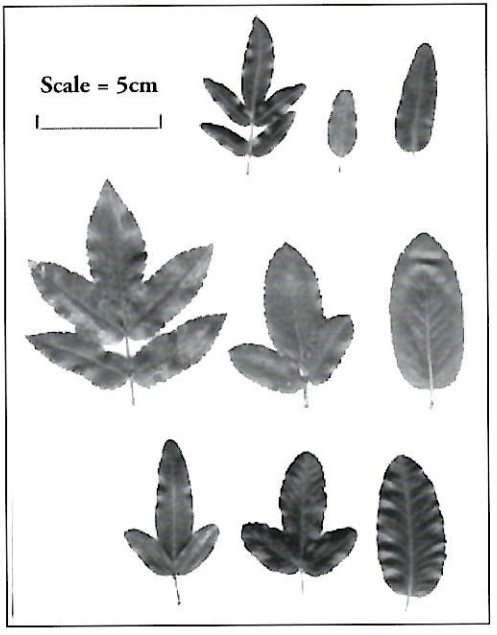
It's a great game, choosing our top ten, whether it be wines or roses or even opera divas, and don't we always manage to squeeze at least 15 finalists into the top ten? What about the top ten garden plant genera? Of course, if you are reading this, then we all know the top three, but its more than my life is worth to put these three into order. So, we fill our gardens with these glories of spring and early summer, and its all a bit green by midsummer. Until our Chairman's research and breeding of summer-flowering rhododendrons bears fruit, we have *Magnolia grandiflora* and *Rhododendron auriculatum* and its hybrids. So we turn to other genera and of course to hydrangeas, those great stalwarts of the shrubberies and rhododendron gardens, and rightly so, as they give such colour for so many weeks. What else do we put among them? Walking up my garden and with an honourable nod 'en passant' towards *Fuchsia magellanica*, especially 'Tricolor', and my wonderful *Hoheria*, I wish to commend to you the eucryphias.

The deciduous *Eucryphia glutinosa*

As this is a small genus of basically five plus species and some hybrids between them, it is a manageable genus, unlike some! Their wild distribution is surprising and shared with several other plants and animals, including the opposums. This is one of the pieces of evidence for continental drift, as they occur both in Chile and Australia, now so far apart but known to have once been fused as part of a supercontinent. Curiously, I find very few of my favourites are southern hemisphere natives, but this group is indispensable, as they are covered in July and August with white flowers made up of 4 petals and a mass of stamens – they remind me of *Hypericum*. The bees love them. All except one are evergreen, and grow into large,

upright bushes or small trees. Identification is aided by the leaves being either single or compound (pinnate), i.e. made up of several leaflets like an elderberry or ash tree.

There are two contrasting species from Chile. ***E. cordifolia***, known locally as ulmo, is quite widespread in the temperate rainforest. This is the strongest grower of them all, forming a very columnar tree with simple evergreen leaves somewhat reminiscent of holly but no prickles and strikingly distinctive in pairs, all up the stem. It will throw suckers from the roots and often well away from the stem, as at Trewithen in Cornwall, so it is easy to propagate. The white flowers are relatively small but borne in profusion and filled with light brown anthers. It has a reputation for being rather tender, so I was very encouraged to find mature specimens at both South Lodge and Leonardslee in Sussex, where it grows in a relatively exposed position on high ground near the car park. ***E. glutinosa*** (see opposite page) is the other South American and arguably the most useful in the average-sized garden, as it forms a large shrub to perhaps 3m and it has two distinguishing strengths. Firstly, it has the largest flowers in the genus, which are filled with stamens, just like a white version of *Hypericum calycinum.* Opening in July, it is the first into flower. Secondly, it is the only deciduous one, so it is able to contribute valuable rich colours to the autumn scene. It has compound leaves with 3–5 leaflets and interestingly was first described, in the absence of flowers, as a species of southern beech (*Fagus,* now *Nothofagus*). From the RHS, not only does it have the Award of Garden Merit (AGM) but also the First Class Certificate (FCC) twice, for flowers and for autumn foliage. It has a reputation for being hard to establish and given to 'cot death'; give it a moist, peaty soil. Forms with double flowers (Plena Group) are quite common, but are, to quote Bean, 'of little value'.



The variety in shape of *Eucryphia* leaves: (from left to right):
TOP: Australian *E. moorei, E. milliganii, E. lucida.*
CENTRE: Chilean *E. glutinosa, E.* x *nymansensis* 'Nymansay', *E. cordifolia.*
BOTTOM: *E. lucida* hybrids *E.* x *hillieri* 'Winton', *E.* x *intermedia* 'Rostrevor', *E.* 'Penwith'

These two worthy Chilean parents have been brought together by those discerning plantswomen, the Nymans bees, who have produced so many valuable hybrids. The offspring are ***E.*** x ***nymansensis*** and combine the best of both parents, being strong, upright evergreen trees with large rose-of-Sharon flowers. The oft-repeated story is that there were several seedlings known as Nymans A, Nymans B, etc, and

when the first got an Award of Merit, the name, recounted verbally as Nymans A, got written down as **'Nymansay'** and that was that. It has since been awarded FCC and AGM. Another seedling went to the chalk garden at Highdown, West Sussex, where it showed they have inherited tolerance of alkaline conditions from the ulmo (*E. cordifolia*). **'Mount Usher'** is the same cross, from the garden of that name in Ireland; this clone is more like *E. cordifolia* and often has double flowers. Also in Ireland, at Castlewellan, this cross produced **'George Graham'**, which is like 'Nymansay' but two weeks later into bloom.

We spin the globe and look to Australia for the other species, and to Tasmania in particular, where ***E. lucida*** has its wild home and is known as Leatherwood. In the wild they grow in temperate rainforest in the valley bottoms, especially around Mount Wellington, mixed with *Eucalyptus regnans,* or even forming the dominant vegetation. There they become big forest trees. However, in UK gardens they are well-behaved upright evergreen shrub/trees to perhaps 7m. The simple leaves are small for the genus and distinguish it from its hybrids except 'Penwith', which has a glaucous underside to the leaf. The flowers have shorter anthers than the Chilean cousins, and they have a particular purity and elegance. They are delightfully scented and the leatherwood honey produced from them is well worth seeking out. I can detect the scent of the flowers in its strong flavour. The Tasmanian bee-keepers move their hives to the forest, much as others move theirs to the heather moorlands in due season. It is in the wild that a colour break has been found. Two pink clones are now in cultivation: **'Pink Cloud'** and more recently and probably more convincingly pink, **'Ballerina'**. **'Leatherwood Cream'** has a creamy margin to its leaves.

Eucryphia x hillieri 'Winton', an all-Australian hybrid: *E. lucida* x *E. moorei*

The other species are less valuable as their flowers are much smaller. ***E. milliganii*** is a dwarf version (possibly a subspecies) of *E. lucida,* also from Tasmania, with tiny leaves and flowers smaller than a five-pence piece. The specimen on Battleston Hill, at the RHS Wisley garden, would fit into the smallest garden. From mainland Australia, New South Wales, comes ***E. moorei***, whose pinnate leaves have up to 13 leaflets, giving an attractive ferny texture. Generally too tender for south-east England, it has reached 16m or more in Cornwall and Ireland. There are two other Aussies, *E. wilkiei* and *E. jincksii,* both from Queensland and not in general cultivation as yet.

E. lucida has passed on its elegance and scent to several hybrids, two of which are

Eucryphia x *intermedia* 'Rostrevor' (*E. glutinosa* x *E. lucida*)

inter-continental, Tasmanian × Chilean. All have flowers very similar to *E. lucida:*

1. 'Winton' (see opposite page) was produced when the bees crossed it with *E. moorei* at Hilliers. I find it valuable as it is upright with the ferny leaves of *E. moorei* and slightly smaller flowers than *E. lucida*, but over a long period – one year at its best in September to October.

2. 'Penwith' is *E. cordifolia* × *E. lucida* from Trengwainton garden in Cornwall and distinctive as it has a glaucous underside to the leaf.

3. 'Rostrevor' (see above) is *E. glutinosa* × *E. lucida* (*E.* × *intermedia*) and is fast growing and smothered with scented flowers in August. Its quality is recognised by the FCC and AGM. Simple and trifoliate leaves can both occur on the same plant, as they can on *E.* 'Nymansay'.

As the bees love the genus so much, it is not too surprising that many set seed quite freely. The hard seed pods and fine seed are very reminiscent of rhododendrons. The pods take over a year to ripen and split. The seed germinates quite freely on the surface of a peaty compost. They are also propagated from cuttings, by layering and by lifting root suckers. They certainly prefer a moist, humus-rich soil, and especially while first establishing – they will then grow out into less favourable soil. Drought years such as 2003 cause problems and losses, and dry conditions in August will of course spoil the flowering. Biting cold winds in a hard winter can defoliate and make them look very sick, but generally they recover. In shade, there may be little or no flower – one among the camellias at RHS Wisley was smothered in flower last year, but only on the top where it caught the sun.

So, a small genus of upright evergreens flowering at a very useful time, with lovely scent in many and all loved by bees. What could be better for August than a bank of hydrangeas and fuchsias backed by eucryphias or even a winding path with banks both sides? And it is time we planted them in groups, rather than singly – it is good to see a young grove starting to flower

near the top end of the railway at Exbury Garden in Hampshire. On a big scale, these could be a show-stopper for visitors to our great woodland gardens.

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Everard Daniel is a member of the Southeast Branch of the Group

Forrest's Camellias

John T. Gallagher

Of all the great plant collectors, I find myself very much in sympathy with George Forrest. This is probably because on leaving school, like me, he set out to be a pharmacist, but unlike me, gave it up to become one of the world's greatest plant collectors instead. From his rugged appearance in the old photographs, I fear he could have lacked a certain bedside manner, but his knowledge of pharmacognosy, or the botany of drugs and a working knowledge of medicines and first aid, would have stood him in great stead on his collecting expeditions.

It is my task to write about his camellia introductions and their fate since he introduced them to this country in the early 1930s. Although Forrest made over a staggering 30,000 collections in the Yunnan, his four camellia introductions were *Camellia saluenensis* (introduced as *C. speciosa*), wild *C. reticulata. C. forrestii,* and *C. taliensis.* I think even he would be surprised how successful he has been with his camellia introductions!

Camellia saluenensis is distributed from northeast Yunnan to near the Burma border and northward into southern Sichuan. It is widely distributed and can be seen on the roadsides and in deforested, brushy fields that are often grazed. It makes a small shrub of 3–10ft depending on disturbance. A close inspection will usually show it growing from a larger base as stump sprouts. It is very

Natural habitat of *Camellia saluenensis* near Kunming, southwest China

Camellia saluenensis var. *tenuivalvis*

floriferous and showy with colour variation from virtually white to medium pink and rarely deep pink. The habitat is generally very dry and often eroded from deforestation. It is a tough plant usually found around 6,000ft elevation.

In northern Yunnan there is a sacred mountain, Jizu Shan, or Chicken Foot Mountain. Since it is a holy place, the old forest is intact. *Camellia saluenensis* grows all over the mountain to near 10,000ft at the summit. It is typical saluenensis in every respect, but the area has not been deforested. On that mountain *C. saluenensis* grows as a small understorey tree or large shrub up to perhaps 12–15ft tall.

Southern Sichuan has a rich array of relatives of *Camellia saluenensis* (and *C. reticulata*). The typical *C. saluenensis* can be seen on the roadsides from time to time. In Huili County near the town of Huili there are populations of extremely floriferous, but relatively typical populations of *C. saluenensis.* Recently Chang named these as *C. huiliensis,* but they are typical *C. saluenensis.* The true *C. saluenensis* are diploid. In this area are populations of a tetraploid that looks like *C. saluenensis,* but it is a little larger in every way. Chang named this *C. boreali-yunnanica;* it will be interesting to see what the botanist does with it next.

Near Huili is a wonderful mountain, Longzhousan. It is about 12,000ft and has rich and diverse vegetation. On the summit area there are square miles of rhododendron thickets. At 10,700ft there is the highest known stand of a camellia species. It occurs on an exposed southwest-facing deforested field as shrubs up to 10–15ft and as an understorey tree in adjacent *Lithocarpus* forests. The understorey trees can be big, with some trunks up to 1ft in diameter and the trees up to 24ft tall. Chang names this plant, known only from Longzhousan, *Camellia tenuivalvis.* The leaves, particularly in the open field are larger and more leathery than typical *C. saluenensis* and the flowers are larger. The colours are light to dark pinks. Parks believes this plant should be called *C. saluenensis* var. *tenuivalvis* (see above), but he does not intend to make the change until he has collected more data.

I have a note from Clifford Parks to say that all the collections he has seen labelled *Camellia pitardii* var *pitardii* are *C. saluenensis.* Plants from the eastern range may go by different names now such as *C. tunganica* or *C. hunanica.* Without further collections he will not merge *C. saluenensis* and *C. pitardii* in his forthcoming book although he suspects with more work, he would find one variable wide-ranging species.

Returning home, Jim Gardiner gave me a copy of a letter from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh dated 7th April 1931. It makes fascinating reading:

> 'The bulk seed collection left Tengyeh on the morning of the 5th March consigned to Messrs Cook and Sons of Rangoon with full instructions

Camellia x *williamsii* 'Pink Gin', bred by the author

to the firm to expedite the despatch of the case to this country.

Subscribers are to understand that the postal packages of seed cannot contain a very large quantity, but that better species and varieties will be duplicated in later sendings. It will be an advantage to duplicate, as successive sowings in Mr Forrest's opinion may prove satisfactory with some of the more difficult species. He is now able to give a rough estimate of the amount of seed collected by his men during the preceding season. The bulk collection will contain 195 different kinds of seed plus 102 packets of rhododendron, about 297 in all. This, however, will not include the seed of many species (say about 100), which he is endeavouring to send home by post in registered packages. The approximate total will be 400!

Mr Forrest makes special mention of one large package of *Camellia speciosa* seed which he said was particularly good that year and also one large package of seed of *Camellia forrestii*.'

When I first became interested in camellias in the early 1960s, we took a cottage in Cornwall at camellia time in early spring. Many of the gardens were not open to the public in those days and I wrote to the late Mrs Johnstone for permission to see her garden in spring. She agreed and we presented ourselves at Trewithen at the appointed time after lunch.

Mrs Johnstone appeared perfectly dressed with hat and coat and gloves as if she was on her way to a garden party! The ladies went ahead and I was left with a rather grumpy head gardener, the late Jack Skelton. It turned out that Jack was really missing his late employer, George Johnstone, who had recently died, and he was very much a one-man dog! At the end of the long lawn there was a bank completely planted with *Camellia saluenensis* seedlings from Forrest's original seed. I was amazed at the variation in colour especially the dark red forms. At my enthusiasm Jack softened and we went through the plantation, him pointing out even darker reds. There were no very light colours and certainly no white forms.

We carried on to a batch of *Camellia reticulata* seedlings, which included the beautiful 'Trewithen Salmon', and the deep rose semi-double 'Trewithen Pink'. I asked for scions

but Jack Skelton was not putting a foot wrong with his 'new boss'! Mrs Johnstone politely told me to write in with a list of what I wanted – Oh those dark red saluenensis! I never heard another word from the good lady and although I met her many times in later years, by that time practically all the good colours had been killed in the 1963 winter. We went on to Caerhays afterwards, but I never saw such a range of colours again.

Camellia reticulata was originally imported to this country as the huge semi-double 'Capt. Rawes' in 1820 and named in honour of the Captain, and also by John Parks in 1824. In fact the wild species now known as 'Wild' form grows in open pine forests, scrubs and thickets around Tengyueh and was collected by Forrest during the years of 1913–25. As the Yunnan Province was famous for its development of cultivated varieties over centuries it seems strange for these to have been completely missed by Forrest and that only came to light in the West at the RHS Conference on Magnolias and Camellias by Prof. T. T. Yu in 1950.

The third species collected by Forrest was *Camellia taliensis,* very similar to *C. sinensis* but having larger flowers with more numerous wide-spreading petals. It makes a loosely branched shrub or tree 6–21ft high and found in the scrub at altitudes of 7,000-9,000ft. It flowers in August to December, but chiefly in November and December. The only known plant of this introduction was at Exbury, but it was lost during Hitler's war when bombs destroyed the Rhododendron House at Exbury. It used to be offered by Hillier's Nursery in the old days, but there is little interest in it as a horticultural plant.

The camellia, which carries Forrest's name, *C. forrestii,* is recorded from four well-separated areas in southern and central Yunnan. Forrest collected at Tsu Yung Fu in central Yunnan. A shrub with the young shoots and branches densely pubescent, flowers small, white and faintly fragrant. It has been growing in the peat garden at the Hillier Arboretum for a few years. No doubt it would be completely hardy in warmer gardens in Cornwall.

Lastly, a delightful, small-flowered species: *Camellia tsaii,* closely allied to *C. cuspidata,* having small and white, delicately scented flowers borne in arching sprays. Forrest collected it in the hills between the Tengyueh and Shweli Valleys and another collection at the Shweli-Salween divide. There is a fine specimen in the Temperate House at the Savill Gardens, which was given an Award of Merit by the Royal Horticultural Society.

George Forrest did camellia growers proud with his introductions, and the speed and success at which some of them were integrated into breeding programmes. J. C. Williams at Caerhays in Cornwall was the first to demonstrate the use of *Camellia saluenensis* as a parent, producing wonderful, free-flowering hybrids that are being developed, even to this day. With such a wealth of breeding material available, this cross is well worth repeating, and I try to make a few similar crosse each year. The pollen parent for *C.* × *williamsii* 'Pink Gin' (see p.41) was *C. japonica* 'Nuccio's Jewel'. The wild form of *C. reticulata* soon produced superb hybrids such as *C.* 'Inspiration' and *C.* 'Leonard Messel' long before the introduction of the Yunnan reticulatas in the 1950s. Fitting memorials to a great plantsman.

John Gallagher is a member of the Group and is also Vice Chairman of the RHS Rhododendron & Camellia Committee. He is well known as an expert on both Camellias and Magnolias.

Allelopathy and *Rhododendron ponticum*: What's The Evidence?

Mike Grant

Rhododendron ponticum naturalised on Thursley Common, Surrey

In recent years there have been several claims in the British media, most notably in TV programmes presented by Sir David Attenborough and Bill Oddie, that rhododendrons inhibit growth of other plants by poisoning the soil. These instances are recorded by Foster (2002a, 2002b) and Rawling (2003), and a published exchange of letters between Cox & Cox (2002) and Steel (2002). Similar claims also appear in sources ranging from relatively staid conservation literature (Forestry Commission c.2001; Agate 2003) to Germaine Greer's column (2003) in a daily broadsheet.

While *Rhododendron* understorey, in common with other evergreen understoreys, can inhibit tree seedling growth (Nilsen *et al* 1999), there has been much speculation that chemicals produced by rhododendrons are the cause of the inhibition. The release of

chemicals by certain plants that inhibit growth or germination of other plants is known as allelopathy. Because of the problems caused by the non-native *R. ponticum* invading sensitive habitats in the UK, the possibility of a toxic threat has a certain appeal to the media. Commentators tend to ignore the simple physical effects on other plants of competition for water, nutrients and light and a slow-rotting leaf litter.

A number of studies have investigated the possibility of allelopathy in *Rhododendron,* particularly regarding *R. maximum* in North American forest plots. It has been assumed by casual observers that there is a real link. However, a chronological review of the published evidence shows that results from laboratory experiments are conflicting and results from field trials show that allelopathic effects are not significant.

Early days

An early source alluding to allelopathy in *R. ponticum* is Cross (1975) in which he says it is "probable" that *Rhododendron* has a deleterious effect on soils by releasing polyphenols that mobilise cations. He cites a number of studies in which polyphenols, protein-precipitating materials and a phosphoric ester have been extracted from *R. ponticum* and other species. However, none of these studies actually measured the effects of these chemicals on other plants. Cross does cite a 1964 study in which earthworm numbers were reduced in soil where *R. ponticum* grew, and pulverised leaves of *R. ponticum* added to the soil had the same effect. He immediately counters this by stating that one of the same earthworm species was actually common in *R. ponticum* leaf litter in Killarney! Perhaps more tellingly, Cross observes that, after clearance of *R. ponticum,* the remaining humus dries in the sun to form a baked crust that inhibits seedling germination.

In the dish

There have been several *in vitro* studies testing the ability of *Rhododendron* extracts to inhibit seedling growth. Rotherham & Read (1988) tested extracts of *R. ponticum* on sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*), Takahashi *et al* (1995) tested *R. japonicum* on lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*) and Modgil & Kapil (1990) tested *R. arboreum* on amaranth (*Amaranthus cruentus*) and red clover (*Trifolium pratense*). The former two studies found an allelopathic effect with *R. ponticum* and *R. japonicum* respectively, but the latter found no effect with *R. arboreum;* indeed it promoted germination of the amaranth seeds! Whilst these laboratory studies may be enough to convince some that potential allelopathic effects can be extrapolated to complex ecosystems, researchers seeking to demonstrate it in the field have not been so successful.

In the field

Later workers have conducted field trials. Clinton & Vose (1996) found that survival of *Acer rubrum* seedlings was reduced under *R. maximum.* Their study compared three treatments: *R. maximum* understorey, open understorey and open understorey with shadecloth. They speculated that allelopathy may have been a cause but readily admit that soil moisture was "significantly lower" under the *R. maximum* than either of their two control treatments. That seems a more likely reason for *Acer* seedling failure!

Walker *et al* (1999) studied mycorrhizal colonisation and growth of *Quercus rubra* and *Tsuga canadensis* seedlings within and without of *R. maximum* thickets in North Carolina. Results were mixed but in some instances the

presence of *R. maximum* did inhibit colonisation by mycorrhiza. The authors speculate that reduced light availability or competition for resources may be the cause. However, they specifically state that "accumulation of biotoxic compounds from *R. maximum* in the soil is not strongly supported by this study". They conclude that investigating the relationship between light levels and mycorrhizal colonisation would provide more of an insight into the dynamics of seedling suppression.

Despite that suggestion, almost the same group of authors (Nilsen *et al* 1999) quickly return to the subject. Again, they find very little evidence of allelopathy and summarise that the low-level allelopathic effect they managed to observe in the minority of experiments "is not manifest in field sites and is not likely to be an important cause for the inhibition of seedling survival within thickets of *R. maximum*".

In 2003 Nilsen & Horton published further studies on *R. maximum* and found even less evidence for allelopathy. They summarise that their "studies point to a resource competition model for canopy tree seedling inhibition by *R. maximum*" and add that their results may be useful for understanding how *R. ponticum* inhibits tree seedlings in the UK. Their use of *R. maximum* is not irrelevant to the British situation as it is a close relative of *R. ponticum* and hybrids between the two species have been detected in our naturalised material (Milne & Abbott 2000).

Practical relevance

The factors that enable *R. ponticum* to invade suitable habitats in Britain are summarised by Rotherham (2001; 2003). These are prolific seed production, capacity for winter photosynthesis, tolerance of shade, ectomycorrhizal nutrient processing, toxicity to herbivores, dense growth habit and ability to capitalise on site disturbance. Allelopathy is only mentioned as a possible factor, based on the sheep's fescue laboratory study (Rotherham & Read 1988). However, the field studies mentioned above relating to *R. maximum*, especially the most recent summary (Nilsen & Horton 2003), discount allelopathy as a significant effect.

I suggest that, once *R. ponticum* is established, the over-riding reasons that it excludes other plants are its capacity to compete for water, nutrients and light and its slow-rotting leaf litter. Indeed, once *R. ponticum* has been removed, regeneration of native flora is usually successful. Mitchell *et al* (1997) showed that re-establishment of native flora is more successful on sites cleared of *R. ponticum* than it is on sites cleared of birch (*Betula*) or gorse (*Ulex europaeus*). The latter two colonisers cause increases in pH and nitrogen respectively. Likewise, successful heather (*Calluna*) regeneration after removal of *R. ponticum* has also been reported (Symes 2003). No doubt, rhododendron growers will be able to report similar successes in re-establishing garden plants on land cleared of *R. ponticum.*

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Underplanting the Genera with Herbaceous Plants

Kevin Hughes

The term herbaceous represents a very large caste of plants, often defined as those with soft or deciduous top-growth rather than woody, and as such I feel for the purposes of this article I should narrow it a little. So to this end I will not deal with any grasses or ferns. Even with this reduction the subject remains too vast to do more than give a flavour of the possibilities.

Many of the subject trees and shrubs will be either growing in shade or casting it themselves, so the bulk of herbaceous plants most suited to associate with them will themselves be woodland plants. As such these herbaceous plants will be predominantly vernal in season, which is also when most rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias are in flower. I intend to concentrate, though not exclusively, on those herbaceous plants that have more than just spring interest.

As with bulbous plants the deciduous rhododendrons and magnolias will offer the most opportunities for planting herbaceous plants, simply because they allow more light to reach the ground in the autumn to spring period. Unlike the bulbs, however, some of the herbaceous plants can become aggressive competitors for moisture, nutrients and even light, and this should be borne in mind when selecting companion plantings for your rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. For instance, planting *Rhododendron impeditum* among comfrey (*Symphytum* spp) would, I suspect, be a failure.

There has been something of an explosion of enthusiasm for epimediums in recent years, and rightly so, because they are adaptable and charming woodlanders. Both deciduous and evergreen types occur and some will even thrive on poor soils in dry shade. It pays to cut away the old leaves from the evergreen types in late winter to better display their spring flowers and young foliage. Both the leaves, which can have attractive spring and autumn hues, and the spidery, columbine-like flowers are held on wiry stems above a woody, creeping rhizome.

The natural distribution of epimediums is split between those found in the Mediterranean basin and those in eastern Asia. From China there have been many new exciting species imported in recent years, and with a promiscuity akin to that of aquilegias a large selection of hybrids has already become available. Yellow is a common flower colour for this genus and two good evergreen, but different Chinese species of this type are *Epimedium franchetii* with its very large, spine-edged leaves and *E. wushanense*, with elegant sets of long, narrow lanceolate leaflets. *E. wushanense* panicles can support up to 100 flowers and rise to just under 1m

in height. A few Chinese species have exceptionally long flowering seasons. In my own garden, one of these, the yellow *E. membranaceum* from Sichuan, starts in late April but reliably continues into September.

A species with an exceptionally large range of cultivars is the beautiful *Epimedium grandiflorum*. The flower colour can vary from dark reddish (e.g. *E. grandiflorum* 'Shiho') through pink (e.g. *E. grandiflorum* 'Sirius') to the splendid white *E. grandiflorum* 'White Queen'. This is a deciduous species, which I find does best on reasonably fertile soils. It is, however, vulnerable in spring to the attention of both voles and gastropods that graze its freshly emerging shoots; despite this, it is worth all efforts to establish. I have found that many of the Asians I grow are a bit demanding about where they are placed and do not thrive in dry, rooty soil.

This cannot be said of the Mediterranean species. These are capable of thriving in the company of large evergreen trees such as *Taxus* spp and *Magnolia grandiflora*, even when the natural soil is gravelly. *Epimedium pinnatum* and the only African species, *E. perralderianum*, form such dense evergreen dwarf thickets that even bindweed (*Calystegia* spp) and couch-grass (*Agropyron repens)* are excluded. This weed-suppressing habit can be useful but it also makes some epimediums rather too competitive for planting near dwarf, small and some medium-sized rhododendrons. Especially beware of *Epimedium alpinum*, which can run widely and pop up unattractively in the middle of your dwarf shrubs.

Cast iron plants (*Aspidistra* spp) have long been grown in the gardens of the south-east USA and Asia, but it is only recently that they have been used outdoors in Britain and some are proving to be surprisingly tough. Apart from questions of hardiness, if they have one problem it is their slow growth; were it not for the cleansing rain it would be necessary to take a feather duster to them. Feeding and watering helps to speed up growth and with a bit of patience they will in time make handsome clumps of tough evergreen foliage. Aspidistras will even grow in the heavy shade cast by large evergreens such as camellias. One of the quicker-growing species is *Aspidistra linearifolia*, which has quite grassy leaves about 50cm long in maturity. A good selection of this is 'Leopard' collected by Jim Waddick in China. In this form the leaves are heavily patterned in golden yellow spots. Another good one to try is *A. lurida* 'Amanogawa', which has broader lanceolate leaves splashed with cream spots and stripes. Using these under large evergreen shrubs not only utilises a difficult place in the garden but provides extra winter protection for the aspidistras.

Many gardeners despise spiderworts (*Tradescantia* ssp) but I think this is more than a little unfair. Personally I think that some of the *T.* × *andersoniana* hybrids are a tad too developed, partly because they often fail to be self-supporting. An exception is *T.* × *andersoniana* 'Sweet Kate' with good-quality golden leaves and deep blue flowers. *T. virginiana* is frequently sold in the trade but is, perhaps, less often true to its name. If you find the correct species it will form a dense, bushy plant, about 60cm high, topped by delightful three-petalled flowers, usually blue, from June until frost, and they will never be without pollinating insects. In spring the newly emerging grass-like leaves are attractive in their own right and there are some selections with bronzy purple foliage. A

smaller plant is the much scarcer *T. hirsuticaulis,* which has larger flowers relative to the size of its densely hairy leaves and is especially desirable in its pink forms.

A recent find, surviving against the odds on an inaccessible rocky outcrop in an over-grazed wood in Alabama, was *Tradescantia* 'Big Bugger'. This is probably a form of *T. virginiana* but its spring leaves are large and 'tropical' in appearance, and when in flower it reaches 1m in height. Like other members of its genus it does well in light shade and its grassy leaves and late flowers make it a good companion for spring blooming trees and shrubs.

From Mexico comes a close cousin of the spiderworts: *Tinantia pringlei.* Growth does not commence until mid-summer, but then it proceeds quickly, forming a low spread of dark greyish green leaves, each heavily mottled with brown blotches and topped with blue, three-petalled flowers. For the best foliage this plant is best grown in shade and once flowering starts, it continues until the frost.

The genus *Dicentra* includes some very fine subjects for the woodland garden. All dicentras typically have ferny foliage, and the 'bleeding-heart' flowers exemplified in the Asian *D. spectabilis.* This is, perhaps, the most readily obtained but likes deep fertile soil to thrive. The rosy red flowers of the typical form, if grown well, are held on arching stems about 1m high in spring and early summer. There is also a superb white form, *D. spectabilis* 'Alba', which has unjustifiably gained itself a reputation among some gardeners for being a longer-lived perennial than the pink type.

The Chinese *Dicentra macrantha* has coarser foliage and grows to about half the height but delights the gardener with its pale yellow flowers. It is, however, rather demanding, preferring moist yet well-drained

The bluish ferny leaves and deep pink flowers of *Dicentra* 'King of Hearts'

The 'DNA plant' – the white baneberry
Actaea pachypoda

soil that never quite dries out, and shelter from all but the gentlest of wind.

Rather easier are some of the North American species, chief of these being *Dicentra formosa,* a native of the west coast. It grows as creeping, low mounds of beautifully dissected foliage above which are held the hearts of pink or white flowers. This species is ideal as summer ground cover, although by August the leaves are looking a little tired and it can be too aggressive to plant with some of the more dwarf rhododendrons. *D.* 'Bacchanal' has the darkest flowers, a deep rose colour, but if allowed to seed, its inferior offspring can smother it, so pull off the seed capsules. One of the finest selections is the white *D.* 'Langtrees', which has glaucous leaves, but it is very vigorous. Superficially similar, but more restrained, is *D. eximia* 'Snowdrift' from eastern USA, which I find flowers into August and holds its foliage longer.

The late Marion Ownbey hybridised the American *Dicentra formosa* subsp. *oregana* and *D. eximea* with the choice northeast Asian alpine *D. peregrina* to produce what is probably the best pink dicentra of all. This is *D.* 'King of Hearts' (see previous page). It does not run but instead forms superb, tight hummocks of bluish green, ferny leaves above which are held deep pink, almost red flowers. The flowering season and good-quality foliage lasts from May until October, providing the soil is not allowed to dry out, but good drainage is essential. It is sterile and because it cannot seed about and does not creep beyond its bounds, it is suitable for planting with dwarf rhododendrons.

Last but not least I should mention *Dicentra scandens* from Asia. This species differs from those previously discussed in being a climber. Like *D. spectabilis,* it too appreciates fertile soil in order for it to thrive. Given this, and a suitable subject to clamber over such as a large old shrub, it will cover itself in yellow flowers from mid-summer through to autumn. When they coincide, its flowers combine especially well with the onset of autumn colour in large deciduous rhododendrons, such as *R. luteum.*

Baneberries (*Actaea* spp) are so named because their fruit is dangerously poisonous. They do best in light shade planted in moist well-drained soil. Their foliage is similar to that of astilbes and in spring and early summer they bear heads of dense, rather insignificant white flowers that are followed in August and September by berries. It is in these berries that their main claim to garden worthiness lies. The European native, *A. spicata,* has dark blue-black berries but is eclipsed by its American relatives. *A. pachypoda* or 'white baneberry' (see above) has porcelain white berries borne on red

Sucissa pratensis 'Buttermilk' – a form of the Devil's-bit scabious

pedicels that closely resemble a laboratory model of DNA; one of its more modern vernacular names is the 'DNA plant'. The berries weigh down the fruiting stems so that they arch out from the plant adding to its distinctive beauty. There is also the 'red baneberry', *A. rubra,* again from the USA, which has glistening red berries, except in its form *neglecta,* in which they are white. The berries of all the species usually persist on the plants for about a month.

From the Caucasus region comes *Brunnera macrophylla,* a very tough perennial with heart-shaped leaves and fine sprays of forget-me-not flowers in spring and early summer. In the normal blue form and the white-flowered 'Betty Bowring' it is fairly undemanding about site or soil, but the two-variegated selections are rather more fussy. The most dramatic of these is 'Dawson's White', which has broadly white-margined leaves. These scorch easily in too much sun and the plant tends to wither or revert to type on dry soils. A bit tougher is *B. macrophylla* 'Hadspen Cream' with less obvious, cream-margined leaves, but it still needs good soils in order to thrive, and in late summer the variegation fades away.

Recently, an outstanding form was selected in the USA and named *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost'. This is the kind of plant one dreams of finding. Essentially its leaves are silver, but this is highlighted by the green veins that dissect them, and they remain in good condition well into autumn. Its flowers are the typical blue type and unlike the variegated selections it is not at all demanding about where you plant it. It is very effective if placed in front of dark-leaved shrubs such as healthy camellias or, even better, in association with the blackish-purple-leaved *Sambucus nigra* 'Black Lace'.

Devil's-bit scabious, *Succisa pratensis,* is a much-neglected European native plant. In its natural habitat it often grows on very poor soils, from moorland to woodland, and this adaptability makes it useful to the gardener. Typically it is about 80cm with mauve-blue scabious flowers that start in August and continue into October. Recently a few

selections have been made for the garden. 'Forest Pink' and 'Peddar's Pink' are very similar and coloured as their names imply, while 'Forest Pearls' is a good white form and 'Buttermilk' (see previous page) is creamy yellow. They are highly attractive to all manner of insects including hoverflies and butterflies.

The hardy gingers (*Hedychium* spp) associate really well with large shrubs such as rhododendrons, which should be no surprise as they often grow together in Asia. Despite this they have an exotic look about them and along with cannas have often been associated with tropical bedding. Ignore this and plant them into your woodland garden and they bring great interest in the late season. Ginger lilies grow from large rhizomes that are best planted only 10cm or so deep and mulched in winter. During the growing season they require a fertile, well-watered soil. The strong, leafy stems begin to appear in late spring and by late summer may reach 1.5m in height when they begin to flower.

One of the longest to be grown as a hardy plant is *Hedychium densiflorum* from the eastern Himalayas. Its dense spikes of orange flowers are produced from late August and give it its name. There is a cultivar, 'Assam Orange', that seems to be just as durable but has bigger flower spikes and narrower leaves. *H. coccineum* is similar with larger, very scented orange-red flowers and broad banana-like foliage. A new selection named 'Disney' has leaves that are glaucous on top with reddish undersides. The hybrid 'Stephen' is a tall grower with dense spikes of soft, yellow, richly fragrant flowers. For white flowers it is worth considering *H. coronarium*. It likes a warm spot to do well, but as the fat, pine-cone-like buds swell in late summer you find yourself checking it in daily anticipation of the first deliciously fragrant flowers.

Finally, a small selection of some of my favourite red-flowered herbaceous plants. This is a colour that often works best when toned down in a shady or woodland garden. In the northern USA and Canada among the herbaceous flora are many that have red flowers to attract migrant hummingbirds.

Aquilegia formosa and the smaller forms of *A. canadensis* are orangey red columbines that bloom in May at about 35cm. Unfortunately they are rarely used in group plantings, which is a shame, as in a drift on the woodland floor, perhaps under a large deciduous magnolia, they can look quite stunning. Spot planted among dwarf rhododendrons such as *R. campylogynum* Myrtilloides Group also works well for them, although beware of mixing them with unsympathetic coloured types.

For a site in light shade, *Spigelia marilandica* can lift the garden with a firework display of red, upward-facing tubular flowers in June and July. The explosions come when the petals open into red-backed yellow stars. An easily obtained cultivar is 'Wisley Jester'. If it is cut back immediately after the first flowers fade the plant will sometimes send out a second flush of flowers in late August or September. Try it in combination with *Rhododendron prunifolium* to really heat the garden up.

There are several red campions from the USA too. Perhaps the best for the woodland garden are *Silene virginica* and *S. regia*. They require well-drained soil and no more than light shade. Their flowers are true red on plants up to 50cm tall in early summer.

The bedding plant nasturtiums, *Tropaeolum majus*, from South America have

a few hardy climbing cousins, one of which, *T. speciosum* is known as the flame creeper because of its brilliant red flowers. In the cool climate of Scotland it can become something of a pest, but in southern gardens it is a real challenge to grow it well. Although it likes a cool, shaded root run it also needs to climb up into the light in order to flower abundantly. I have found that the flame creeper also appreciates growing through the fibrous roots of rhododendrons and conifers from which I think it gains a measure of protection. In such a situation it pays to water it well during the growing season – it despises drought – and then it should scramble up through its host to repay your kindness with a scorching display of red flowers. These show best on shrubs with small leaves. The young shoots that emerge in late spring are like caviar to rodents and gastropods, so some measure of protection at this stage is worth considering. Snails will even follow the creeper up into the bush and eat the petals, which rather defeats the point.

Another climbing nasturtium that is hardy is *T. ciliatum*. This is so tough that it often remains evergreen through the winter. In the summer it has small yellow flowers. Beware – this tuberous species is a rampant spreader and if not sited with great care will have you wishing it was bindweed that you planted into your magnolia and not *T. ciliatum*.

I have tried to give you a small taste of some of the vast range of mostly later season herbaceous perennials that will look good with rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. Planted sympathetically, herbaceous plants will enhance such a collection of shrubs, which would otherwise be fairly dull in summer.

I think that mixed gardens with both shrubs and herbaceous plants offer the gardener much more fulfilment. I also think this sort of garden provides native fauna with more opportunities to survive in an increasingly harsh, human world, and this is no bad thing.

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An Autumn Surprise

Philip Evans

One damp September morning of our 1997 'Salween' trip (*Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias No 50 1999, p.45*), we were walking up the road of the Pianma Pass in southwest Yunnan. At the edge of the road we saw a lump of earth, the remnant of an earlier earth slip, and in the middle of this sat a small rhododendron; despite the late season it showed one or two small, single, yellow tubular flowers. A rare example of the plant coming to the planthunter! Peter Cox identified it as *R. monanthum* – not a particularly exciting plant, except that an autumn-flowering rhododendron of any kind has to be of interest. Kingdon Ward described *R. monanthum*, rather unkindly, as 'scraggy and fustian and remarkable for nothing'.

Rhododendron monanthum flowering in the Salween Valley (southwest Yunnan, China)

Five years later, in October 2002, at about 7,000ft on in the Subansiri watershed of Arunachal Pradesh (*Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias 2004, p.39*), we were confronted by another yellow-flowering rhododendron: an epiphytic plant straggling over a rock face and with a few tubular campanulate flowers visible. The first thought was that this was also *R. monanthum*, but Peter Cox pointed out some old capsules on the plant that showed it was not single flowered, but with clusters of three to five. It was identified provisionally as *R. kasoense*, confirmed some days later when we were reunited with our main baggage, and a copy of 'Cullen and Chamberlain'.

R. kasoense is a more attractive plant than *R. monanthum*. The flowers are larger and the end of the corolla tube more campanulate, with reddish anthers protruding well beyond the petals. The colour is quite a deep yellow. The leaves are longer than *R. monanthum*, virtually lanceolate. Higher up we saw it growing as a lax, free-standing shrub up to 6ft or so. I would describe it as having the appearance of an autumn-flowering *R. triflorum*.

In fact *R. monanthum* and *R. kasoense* are two of a small but distinct group of four (or possibly five) rhododendrons all sharing the characteristic of producing their flowers in

early autumn. I will next describe the background of each of the species of the group, and also comment on possible synonymy occurring.

Rhododendron monanthum

Discovered in 1905 by George Forrest, according to Davidian on the Lupo Pass on the Mekong-Salween divide of northwest Yunnan, i.e. somewhat to the east of where we found it in 1997, *R. monanthum* (meaning 'single flowered') was at first identified as *R. sulfureum* but later reclassified as a new species, yet retained within the old 'Boothia Series'. In a 1948 article, Cowan and Davidian moved *R. monanthum* from 'Boothia' into what would now be Subsection Uniflora, because of the distinguishing single flowers, but an aberrant species with its larger leaves and leaf scales, and a taller growth habit. *R. monanthum* remained classified within Subsection Uniflora until 1980.

Rhododendron kasoense

This species is named after Mt Kaso, a 14,000ft peak, in the Delei valley, of what today is eastern Arunachal Pradesh. The type specimen KW8522 is described as collected by Kingdon Ward 'on Kaso Peak', and Ward's Field Notes record the date as August 15. In his account of his 1928 journey from Assam to the Delei Valley in *Plant Hunting on the Edge of the World,* Ward says he spent August not on Mt Kaso, which he had climbed that Spring, but on Mt Polon – a mountain to the south. He had intended to climb Mt Kaso again, but the local villagers prevented him, and he withdrew down the valley to Mt Polon. He explored the main Polon ridge on August 15, finding a dozen species of rhododendron including *R. lindleyi* and *R. manipurense* (*R. maddenii* subsp. *crassum*), the latter being still in flower. There is no mention in the text of his book of *R. kasoense* on either Mt Kaso or Mt Polon, although the plant index lists two *R. kasoense* collections: KW8522 and KW8700. The explanation is almost certainly that *R. kasoense* was not in flower as early as August (there is no flower description in the Field Note) and KW8522 was one of the dozen rhododendrons found that day on the Polon ridge.

Rhododendron kasoense in the Subansiri watershed of Arunachal Pradesh (northeast India)

Rhododendron concinnoides

This is a purple-flowering rhododendron that Kingdon Ward did find and describe on Mt Polon in August 1928. He had collected it previously under the number KW8227. The name indicates it was first thought to be a dwarf relative of *R. concinnum,* but it is a pink or purple form *of R. monanthum.* Ward seems to have seen it first in 1926 near the Seinghku Valley in the watershed area between Upper Burma and Arunachal Pradesh. He wrote:

> 'not often do rhododendrons flower in the autumn, before the rains are over. Yet this is what

a small epiphyte did in the Mishmi Hills. *R. concinnoides* is a scraggy little plant with small bronze leaves and tiny purplish-pink flowers. We had watched it anxiously right through the summer, till in September, it flowered.'

The herbarium material in Edinburgh is apparently poor, but *R. concinnoides* seems to be distinct from both *R. monanthum* and *R. kasoense.*

A Yearbook report on the 1951 Westminster Rhododendron Competition credits Lord Digby with second place in the Triflora Class for *R. concinnoides* from his Dorset garden, Minterne.

Rhododendron flavantherum

Kingdon Ward includes *R. flavantherum* ('yellow anthers') in a description of the epiphytic rhododendrons of Upper Burma in *Plant Hunting on the Edge of the World.* He had originally collected it in 1924, under KW6313, in the Tsangpo Gorge of southeast Tibet. Cullen describes it as very similar to *R. monanthum* and doubts if it is distinct, but describes it as 'three-flowered', which makes it more likely to be *R. kasoense.* Davidian describes *R. kasoense* as being closely allied to *R. flavantherum* and much alike in general features. Kenneth Cox has inspected the Edinburgh herbarium specimen, and I understand also doubts it is a distinct species.

In a 1947 article on the classification of rhododendrons by seed type, Kingdon Ward again treats *R. flavantherum* as a distinct species. And the 1950 Yearbook Report on the RHS Westminster Rhododendron Competition for 1949 records an entry from Bodnant to Class 54 (Triflora) described as *R. flavantherum.*

On balance, it seems more likely that *R. kasoense* and *R. flavantherum* are synonymous, in which case the *R. flavantherum* name, being the earlier, would take precedence.

Rhododendron chrysolepis

In the 1947 article, Ward suggests four species – *R. kasoense, R. concinnoides, R. flavantherum* and one other, *R. chrysolepis* ('with golden scales') – should all be placed into the then Maddenia Series by reason of their winged or 'epiphytic-type' seed. In *Plant Hunting on the Edge of the World,* Ward describes *R. chrysolepis* as a winter-flowering lepidote rhododendron, in flower before Christmas, and he includes the yellow-flowered *R. chrysolepis* in the list of epiphytic rhododendrons in Upper Burma at 7,000ft.

Of the taxonomists, Davidian places *R. chrysolepis* in the Tephropeplum Series and his description of the stamens and style as extending no longer than the corolla seems to set it apart from *R. kasoense* and *R. monanthum,* where the style and stamens are exserted (i.e. extend prominently beyond the corolla). Davidian incidentally also states that a 1937 Ward collection of *R. chrysolepis* KW13500 subsequently flowered at Wisley but did not survive. Cullen, on the other hand, says the species is known only from two *fruiting* specimens and places *R. chrysolepis* in his list of 'Doubtful an Imperfectly Known Taxa'.

In the herbarium of the Natural History Museum (London), there are two specimens of *R. kasoense:* one is a 1933 Ward collection KW 11052, and the second, LS&T 6583 collected in southeast Tibet in 1938 by Ludlow Sherriff and Taylor has a second plant specimen added to the sheet and described as *R. chrysolepis* Ward & Hutchison. Neither the *R. kasoense* nor the *R. chrysolepis* specimen has

flowers but otherwise seemed to me to be identical.

R. chrysolepis is thus likely to be synonymous with *R. kasoense*, but the question could only be resolved by some hardy enthusiast revisiting the Seinghku Valley of Upper Burma, an arduous and probably politically impossible proposition at the present time. Until then it will remain a mystery and one of Cullen's 'Doubtful Taxa'.

Classification

Originally the taxonomists placed *R. monanthum* in the Boothia Series, later, as already seen, moving it to Subsection Uniflora while *R. kasoense, R. concinnoides* and *R. flavantherum* were all placed in Subsection Triflora.

Kingdom Ward in his 1947 Article was closer to the mark in pointing to the relationship of these rhododendrons with other natural epiphytes. In 1980 Dr Cullen considered the four species, *R. monanthum, R. kasoense, R. concinnoides* and *R. flavantherum*, while consigning *R. chrysolepis*, as we have seen, to his 'Doubtful Taxa' list. He concluded that while related to both Boothia and Maddenia, the four share two distinct characteristics: the exserted style and stamens, and the winged and finned seed. For this reason, he placed them in a subsection of their own, which he called Monantha after *R. monanthum*, the most widespread of the group and therefore the type species.

Conclusion

It has recently been pointed out to me that whilst these species of subsection Monanthum are all autumn flowering, it is not because they are late flowering but actually very early flowering. That is to say they come into flower immediately after forming their new flower buds.

There are now seedlings in this country of recent collections of both *R. monanthum* and *R. kasoense*. The latter has yet to flower, but *R. monanthum*, I understand, has flowered indoors at Glendoick and may have flowered outside this year (2004). Both appear in the current main Glendoick Gardens Ltd Catalogue. It will be interesting to see, in due course, how they fare in UK conditions. *R. kasoense* should be the more showy of the two, I feel sure, but as yellow lepidotes flowering in the autumn, perhaps their greatest value may turn out to be to the hybridiser.

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Philip Evans is a member of the Southwest Branch of the Group and has been Editor of the Yearbook and a member of the Executive Committee since 1996.

The Hachmann Legacy

Gerald Dixon

Early in March 2004, the Rhododendron community lost the most prolific and effective hybridiser of modern times. Hans Hachmann was returning from a short holiday on a North Sea island, a break he regularly enjoyed before facing the demands of yet another busy season. The news of his death travelled through rhododendron circles like a shock wave; he was only 74, young for a rhododendron hybridiser, and generally in good health, making this tragedy completely unexpected.

Hans Hachmann

He was so much looking forward to the coming flowering period, the first in which the new hybrids produced by his son Holger were proudly displayed together with his own life's work, in a newly published catalogue, commemorating the family's 75 successful years in the nursery trade. He had also decided to include a small number of his own latest introductions, but many were held back for further testing.

His hybridising philosophy was very straightforward: unlike the classical breeders, he didn't assume that he could simply improve on nature by careful choice of parent in a single cross. His aim was to make use of natural diversity by repeatedly crossing and re-crossing his best hybrids, either with each other or with carefully chosen introductions of other breeders, new or old. He believed in making as many different combinations as possible, only selecting the healthiest, toughest seedlings for further use. It didn't matter if he had to eventually destroy 95 per cent of these seedlings; he was looking for the exceptional not the average and was well aware that any new seedling selected in the current season may well be improved upon in the following years.

When he was fortunate enough to find an outstanding seedling, it was only selected if it had something new to offer. This might

be a new colour combination, flower shape, growth habit, foliage quality or any other attribute. It had to be different to, or an improvement on, what was currently available. This meant of course that many of his hybrids were eventually superseded by similar but improved varieties. He willingly accepted this, and for each batch of new introductions, others would be taken out of propagation, often making it very hard for the enthusiast to source older varieties.

Since making his first crosses in 1953, he had never missed a year and at the last count the total number of crosses he made was just short of 5,000, averaging around 100 per year. He raised around 4 million seedlings of which 1 million were grown to flowering stage and about 450 selected and named. His own personal favorites out of all these varieties were 'Charmant', 'Fantastica' and 'Goldprinz'.

He was always good company and loved walking around his test garden with other enthusiasts. Such occasions usually took up a whole morning, followed by the typical north German hospitality, kindly provided by his wife Edith.

Although he was extremely proud of what he had achieved, he was always glad to exchange a few words with, or answer the questions of, the casual visitors to his nursery, regardless of whether they were experts or just garden lovers looking at rhododendrons for the first time.

He didn't judge a person by what they knew about rhododendrons but simply enjoyed discussing them with anyone showing interest or appreciation.

In order to update the information provided in the 2002 Yearbook, I had planned to visit the Hachmanns once again this spring, together with my good friend Hans Robenek. These two 'grand old men' of German rhododendron culture had known each other for many, many years and it was always a wonderful experience to see them lively discussing almost every variety encountered, not always in agreement but always carefully listening to each other's views. Sadly, this year's visit turned to one of condolence, once again enjoying the kind hospitality of the family, but this time spending a large part of the visit reminiscing about the past. Once again we wandered through the beautifully kept test garden for a couple of hours, but it just wasn't the same experience without the presence of it's creator.

Thanks to his son Holger, we did manage, however, to see many of the new introductions, some of them beautifully displayed in the newly built show house. This new facility, landscaped as a small private garden, will be used to display the best of the available hybrids a good two weeks in advance of their normal flowering period. The aim is to enable customers to see the plants in full bloom and be able to buy the same varieties still in bud.

Although Holger Hachmann has been responsible for running the nursery for over ten years, his father was always actively involved in the day-to-day business and will be sorely missed.

The following descriptions are of just a few of the more than 30 new introductions made since 2002 and are based mainly on information received from Holger Hachmann, supplemented at times by my own observations. The flowering times given are for Barmstedt, Germany, but are similar in an average year for southwest England. All

the photographs were taken by Hans or Holger Hachmann and may be found in the latest Hachmann Catalogue.

New hybrids raised by Hans Hachmann and introduced 2002–2004

'Goldsprenkel' 12–26 May
('Suella' × 'Goldstueck')
Closely filled trusses of up to 21 widely funnel-shaped flowers in a clear deep yellow with copious chocolate brown spots spreading across the upper three lobes. Slow growing with a compact habit.

The clarity of the distinctive markings provides a unique contrast, similar in effect to the hybrid 'Paprika Spiced' but with much more attractive colouring. The ball-shaped trusses are 15cm high, each flower about 6cm across. The heavy texture of the flowers ensure a very long flowering period of at least two weeks. Neat, mid-green, oval-shaped foliage on a wide-growing rounded bush. This new variety is another example of a cross between two Hachmann Hybrids, which themselves were never introduced.

'Macarena' 3–20 May
('Belladonna' × 'Fred Wynniatt')
Flat-topped trusses of 9–11 very large, open-faced flowers, 10.5cm wide, on an upright bush with oval, light green foliage. The outside of the deep yellow flowers is tinted rosy red, as is the inner edging of all 7 lobes. On the inside, the flowers are a deep yellow-orange with a wine red basal marking. The 3cm-large calyx is similarly coloured and help give the truss an even fuller effect.

Possibly the best of Hachmann's orange hybrids and a result of his repeated use of 'Fred Wynniatt' as a male parent. The neat oval foliage on a compact but medium-growing bush makes this a very attractive plant.

'Marianka' 26 May–10.June
('Soubrette' × 'Sarasate')
Compact, perfectly rounded trusses of up to 16 large flowers (ca 7.5cm) in a fascinating combination of light red with a white centre and a cherry red flare spread over the upper three lobes. The white filaments accentuate the contrast between the centre and the surrounding red, giving a light and airy overall effect. Good, shiny dark green foliage on an wide-growing compact bush.

The female parent, 'Soubrette', is a hybrid of 'Kokardia' and was effectively used with 'Sarasate', a hybrid

Rhododendron 'Macarena'

between 'Nova Zembla' and 'Thunderstorm', to produce the remarkable flare. A very unusual and pleasing colour combination.

'Marylou' 8–22 May
('Paprika Spiced' × 'Corinna')
Elegant loose trusses containing around 7 creamy yellow, wide open flowers, each 6.5 cm across and with light-rose edgings. The strong orange markings on the upper lobes contrast beautifully with the creamy background. A relatively slow-growing bush bearing attractive deep green elliptical leaves.

The use of the second generation repens hybrid 'Corinna' as the male parent ensures the excellent habit and low growth, something seldom found in combination with pastel colouring.

'Samtkrone' 26 May–10 June
('Tarantella' × 'Kilimanjaro')
Gigantic dome-shaped trusses of up to 21 very large flowers in an intense deep red with very dark markings on the upper lobes and with white filaments. The flowers are of a waxy consistency and retain their colour without any fading. Deep green narrow foliage on a upright-growing bush.

This new hybrid flowers later than most reds and holds its colour consistently over the whole flowering period. The female parent 'Tarantella' was produced by crossing 'Oratorium' with Hachmann's 'Feuerschein', both very successful hybrids in their own right. 'Oratorium' is again a hybrid of Hachmann's 'Feuerschein' and 'Thunderstorm', illustrating Hachmann's practice of repeatedly re-crossing his best hybrids with the occasional introduction of older, less hardy but proven varieties.

Rhododendron 'Samtkrone'

'Santorina' 8–22 May
('Belladonna' × 'Fred Wynniatt')
Full rounded trusses of 8–9 large, light yellow flowers, each 8.5cm across, with rosy red edgings on both sides of the 7 wavy lobes. The reverse is flushed orange-red and in the centre of the flower is a clearly defined wine red flare. The large calyx is similarly toned in yellow and orange-red. Beautiful shiny, oval foliage in light green on a slow-growing and compact bush.

A beautiful new 'Fred Wynniatt' hybrid, sister to the excellent 'Gordian', free-flowering and sure to become very popular.

New Hybrids raised by Holger Hachmann and introduced 2004
Each hybrid is accorded three to five stars to indicate personal preference, as described on page 48 of *Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias 2002.*

'Hachmann's Picobello' * 5–24 May**
('Kabarett' × 'Schneespiegel')
A compact truss, 14 cm wide, of about 11 large funnel-shaped flowers (ca 8.5cm) with elegant wavy edgings. The colour is pure

white with the most striking deep red flare on the upper lobe. A compact, wide-growing bush with beautifully shiny, dark green foliage.

In this well-thought-out cross between two of his father's most successful hybrids, Holger has combined the heavy consistency of the white-flowered 'Schneespiegel' with the beautiful clear markings of 'Kabarett'. Released in the spring of this year, after having been awarded a gold medal at the 2003 IGA in Rostock and sure to become one of the most popular varieties.

'Orange Flirt' ** 20 May–6 June**
('Ken Janek' × 'Clivia')
Up to 11 funnel-shaped flowers held in very compact trusses. The inside of the flower is a deep yellow, strongly flushed orange towards the rim and on the reverse of the petals. The large calyx is similar in colour, making the truss seem even more compact. It forms a slow-growing, compact bush with attractive, shiny mid-green foliage.

A clever combination of two compact-growing hybrids, keeping the full truss of *R. yakushimanum* and without loss of the strong orange colouring. Seems to be very free flowering over quite a long period.

'Goldzwerg' *** 28 May–16 June**
('Goldbrokat' × 'Karibia')
Perfectly rounded trusses, about 14cm wide, of up to 14 pure yellow, widely funnel-shaped flowers each of which is 7.5cm wide with frilled edges. The wine red markings across the upper 3 petals are just strong enough to lighten the overall effect without causing muddiness. Very slow-growing and compact, this variety reaches a height of only 55cm after ten years.

Rhododendron 'Goldzwerg'

This is one of the best yellows of all the Hachmann hybrids, slowly building up into a wide but compact bush with light green foliage.

It will obviously take many years before the last of Hans Hachmann's crosses have been evaluated and possible new hybrids appear. Only then can the success of his life's work be adequately assessed. As one of the most knowledgeable rhododendron experts of modern time, his whole life revolved around these plants and his enthusiasm was of the sort capable only of genuine plant lovers. He will be sorely missed by his many friends and admirers.

His son Holger will continue to build on this work, following the same tradition of gradual improvement, and will hopefully achieve a similar success to that of his remarkable father. His own newly released hybrids are the result of many years co-operation and involvement with this complex breeding program and certainly bode well for the future of European rhododendron culture. The newly published

catalogue, containing colour illustrations of all current hybrids, is available from the Hachmann Nursery or can be ordered directly through us (Tel. 01404 831689).

The comments regarding Plant Breeders Rights, included in the previous article (see *Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias 2002*, page 52), are still relevant and the Hachmann Nursery will continue to protect it's new varieties in this manner.

All the hybrids described in the above article will be available from our nursery near Axminster in the coming season, although some will need to be pre-ordered.

Gerald Dixon is a member of the Group and is the founder of Brooklands Nurseries at Shute near Axminster in Devon

Obituary

Pam Gordon
in the garden at Hethersett with Hustle, her devoted companion

Pamela Gordon, who died in April this year, was born in 1921 and brought up in Edinburgh. She remained a devoted Scot all her life. Some of her happiest days were spent masterminding large family summer holidays in Scotland, where fishing, shooting and dogs played an important part. In 1947 she married Lord Adam Gordon, younger brother of the Marquis of Huntley. He was a keen gardener, as was his mother, Mrs Violet Gordon, who first sparked Pam's interest in rhododendrons, and from whom she learned so much. Mrs Gordon, then living at Fulbrook near Elstead in Surrey, knew the house and garden at nearby Littleworth Cross, where Gertrude Jekyll had first met Edwin Lutyens. Harry Mangles had built the house and created the garden in the 1880s. He and his sisters were among the earliest pioneers in the art of hybridising rhododendrons. The property was now divided up, and much neglected, but Mrs Gordon purchased a 10-acre section of it, which she cleared, discovering and saving many of the historic old Mangles hybrids. In 1958 Adam and Pam were able to buy half of the old house, Hethersett, plus a further section of the garden. The huge job of clearing, identifying, and conserving the existing plants, while planting and planning for the future continued. When Mrs Gordon died in 1968, the task she had started was in safe hands. Adam and Pam, with enormous energy and enthusiasm continued the restoration until they created the magical woodland garden that is Hethersett today.

After Adam's death, Pam continued alone, with the help of one gardener, coping positively with the dreadful damage caused by the gales of 1987 and 1990. She arranged, with John Bond, for scions to be taken of all the old Mangles hybrids in the garden, and there is now a complete set growing at the Savill garden and also at Wisley. So 'Glory of Littleworth', 'Beauty of Littleworth', 'Fulbrook' and 'Rose Newcome' have a safe home. Naturally Pam was also interested in hybridising herself, and using *R. cinnabarinum* registered and named several crosses after members of her family.

Pam was always most generous with her time and her knowledge, and loved nothing more than taking interested visitors around her garden, which was frequently open to the public. Debates on identification and breeding often became long and heated, and ended up with a truce being declared over a glass of whisky. Pam was the most entertaining companion, and a generous hostess. As well as her family, her other great interests were opera and Italy, where she spent happy holidays after Adam died. For many years she served on the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group Committee and gave much time and dedication to the Chairmanship of the Wessex Branch.

How fitting it was that 'Sue Gordon', a seedling registered by Pam, from the enormous plants of *R. fortunei* originally planted by Harry Mangles, should be in full flower on the day of the Thanksgiving Service for her life.

Miranda Gunn is the Group's Membership Secretary and a member of the Executive Committee. She is also Chairman of the Group's Wessex Branch, and she holds the Group's collection of Rhododendron Hardy Hybrids in her garden at Ramster, near Chiddingfold in Surrey

Group Tour to Scotland

Overview

As usual, everyone made their own travel arrangements and met for dinner at the Commodore Amethyst Hotel at Helensburgh, which has lovely views of The Clyde, and where the cars were left.

Throughout the tour, Argyll was blest by sun, every day was fine, warm and with good visibility, a joy when travelling in the coach through beautiful mountain scenery, to gardens ablaze with rhododendrons.

Valerie Archibold arranged a very good tour: two gardens each day, some public, two National Trust, some private. We filled Creggans Hotel for two nights, and two people and the driver had to be accommodated elsewhere at an equally delightful hotel on the lochside. We enjoyed two nights at the prestigious Lock Melfort Hotel, where our luggage was taken to our rooms whilst we met Maurice Wilkins at Arduaine. The lunch at Ard-Daraich, and coffees, or teas, provided by our hosts, were an extra joy; the finger buffet provided at Stag Hotel, Loch Gilphead was particularly good.

The truly sad thing was that Valerie had a fall whilst staying with Alastair and Jan Stevenson in Herefordshire *en route* to Scotland, and she was unable to join the Tour.

Glenarn – a view from the house

Joey Warren, with much help from Martin Gates, made sure that everything went well, and takes this opportunity to thank everyone again for their co-operation.

It was again an international tour with three people from Russia, two from Canada, one from Holland, and an American living in Belgium. Everyone enjoyed it.

Joey Warren

Glenarn (26 April 2004)

What an ecovative start to the Tour! From the first *Rhododendron falconeri* standing like a sentinel just inside the gate, the garden beckoned upwards, the lower glen filled with the trunks and flowers of stately rhododendrons.

The house at Glenarn was built in the late 1830s, and the garden received plants from the Joseph Hooker 1849–50 Sikkim expedition. The Gibson family arrived in 1927 and over the next 50 years created the basis of the present garden. Further plants arrived from the expeditions of Kingdon Ward and Ludlow and Sherriff, and from other Scottish gardens.

We were shown around by Michael and Sue Thornley, the owners. We walked up the glen with its collection of *Rhododendron sinogrande, R. macabeanum, R. niveum, R. augustinii, R. viscidifolium* and *R. sidereum.* At the head of the glen near the house stands *R. falconeri*, raised from seed collected by Hooker in 1849. To quote from the Thornley's article in *The Book of Rhododendrons* by Marianne Kneller, 'the old tree sits like a Bhudda, a reincarnation from another continent and time, whose vast flesh coloured limbs have grown into an oriental pattern against a grey Scottish sky'.

Further up, above the house, we came to the only flat area of the garden, known as Granny's Hens, where the Gibson Brothers had planted a number of their own large-leaved hybrids including *Rhododendron* 'Fortune', a cross they had also made. This area is ringed by tree magnolias including *Magnolia cambellii* and *M. mollicomata.* Further on, in the upper glen, stands a group of *R. falconeri,* progeny of the original Hooker plant

On our way back to the house we saw *Rhododendron* 'Ronald', another Gibson cross, *R. hodgsonii* × *R. sinogrande,* and we also noted *R. nerriflorum, R. hookeri, R. ramsdenianum* and *R. thomsonii.* In front of the house the big lawn falls away towards Gareloch, flanked with blood red *R. arboreum,* and further down *Sequoiadendron giganteum,* together with a group of magnolias including *Magnolia kobus* and *M. wilsonii.*

The garden contains far more than rhododendrons, for the Gibsons were exceptional all-round gardeners, and the spring bulbs were also a fine sight. Our visit concluded with an excellent lunch, sitting in warm sunshine, where we were able to thank Michael and Sue for their hospitality. It was the best possible start to our Tour.

Martin Gates

Ardkinglass Woodland Garden (26 April 2004)

In the afternoon we visited the memorable Ardkiglass Woodland Garden. Situated near Loch Fynne at approximately sea level it has an annual rainfall of over 100in (2.5m) *per annum.*

A long narrow strip, between the moor and the small river, has been planted with a large variety of trees – mostly conifers – and

in more recent times with a wide variety of shrubs including rhododendrons.

The real treasures of the garden are their five great champion trees. These are all deemed to be the tallest and broadest in the British Isles according to the Tree Register of the British Isles. They are mostly from North America and thrive in these conditions.

The greatest, appropriately, is the *Abies grandis* planted in 1875. It is now over 62m in height with a girth of 6m. The first tree in the British Isles to pass 200ft (60m), it suffered some dieback at the tip, but now, after surgery, it is after new records.

The oldest tree is the *Abies alba* from Europe planted in 1750. It is currently 48.5m tall with a girth of 9.5m. Other wonders include: *Thuja plicata* planted in 1875, *Chamaecyparis pisifera* planted in the same year and now over 20m, and a *Fitzroya cupressoides* planted in 1870 of 22m × 2.5m. The latter tree was introduced by William Lobb in 1849 from Chile and Argentina and named after Captain Robert Fitzroy, the Captain of the *Beagle*.

Michael Jurgens

Eckford (27 April 2004)

On a wonderfully warm and sunny morning we left the Creggans Inn and motored down the Cowal Peninsula alongside Lock Eck to just south of Benmore Botanic Garden.

Tucked away into the hillside and facing south-southwest, two fields distant we saw Eckford House surrounded by a riot of colour. The siting of the house provides two distinct advantages over Benmore in that when hurricane winds blow down Glen Masson, this garden, it is reckoned, will suffer only a fraction of the damage sustained by its neighbour. Secondly, the sun doesn't penetrate the garden until mid-morning and frost damage is substantially reduced. Tender plants that are therefore difficult to establish at Benmore, such as *Rhododendron protistum,* grow happily at Eckford.

David Younger, the current owner, proved to be a most genial and entertaining host, inviting us to treat his garden as 'Liberty Hall', with nothing off limits and to feel at home.

There is no formality surrounding the house, which melds into this superb wild woodland garden. A huge *Rhododendron campylocarpum* ssp. *caloxanthum* shone its bright yellow colour like a beacon; it was as Mr Younger said 'A Corker!' The path was littered with primroses (*Primula vulgaris*) and wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), and we were quickly into the forest, which gave light shade to a wonderful display of rhododendrons *viz. R. arboreum* ssp. *cinnamomeum, R. edgworthii* and *R. maddenii* ssp. *crassum*. The latter plant had grown from a branch of the parent plant, subsequently deceased, which had blown down in 1982 and regenerated in the moss that covered the forest floor.

We passed what is called The Seven Sisters: a stand of 160ft-high, 130-year-old Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). These huge trees are a remnant of 6.5 million that were planted in Strath Eck by James Duncan of Benmore.

The show continued; in this garden, which had been retrieved in the 90s from ten years of 'being left to its own devices' in the 80s, *Rhododendron campanulatum* hybrids were everywhere and a good form of *R. albrechtii* was giving a tremendous display.

Our sparkling host's voice carried to everyone of the group as he related how one

Rhododendron campanulatum hybrid, which was on thin soil overlying rock, had been deadheaded after a prolific flowering season on the lower branches, but those higher up had been left as they couldn't easily be reached. The lower branches flourished but the branches that had not been deadheaded died.

We smelled *Rhododendron heliolepis* leaves that were like *Vicks* balsam and saw a large *R. macabeanum* that had been in flower for four weeks and still looked perfect.

There was a layer of a *Rhododendron mallotum* plant, which was a very good form, and we were told that other garden owners were 'dribbling' over it.

Rhododendron sinogrande and *R. macabeanum* seedlings were everywhere and in one wet area, near the top of the garden, these seedlings had grown *en masse* to a height of about 6ft, creating a real thicket.

The forest floor in places looked beautiful with the spent flowers of *Rhododendron macabeanum.* A vigorous discussion took place (always entertaining) over the pronounciation of *R. macabeanum* and *R. falconeri.* The final comment being, 'we'd better ask Mr Macabe and Mr Falconer!'

We carried on past two burns, which run through the garden and are a delight whether 'whispering or roaring', to a large plant described to us as "*Rhododendron* 'Eckfordianum'" (not registered). This is a natural hybrid with *R. niveum* as one parent, and the other unknown. However, the flower buds were just breaking to reveal an ink black flower colour, which on being fully developed is a very deep purple. This plant must be a treasure and surely deserves a second visit in its own right.

I didn't think there could be a lot more to see but onwards we went over a large tree trunk with steps, which had been cut into it. Here we found *Rhododendron decorum* ssp. *diaprepes,* which has a George Forrest number and is not known to grow elsewhere. It was not flowering this year, unlike a large *R. protistum,* which was just showing the mauve coloured edge on the flowers.

In this micro climate *Rhododendron morii* was coming into flower under a large *R. niveum,* which was in flower, and both were above a *R. burmanicum,* which spilled down the hillside and promised to give a good display later.

There were several examples of old plants, particularly *Rhododendron sinogrande,* which had apparently died, but in this fecund area had regenerated at or near ground level. Some were surely seedlings, but others were undoubtedly the original plant itself. In 99 per cent of instances these plants would have been 'outed'; however, in this environment with 10ft of rainfall in each year, no action is taken to give up on a plant that might stand a chance.

We passed 'Royalty Corner' where there were planted *Rhododendron* 'Queen Wilhelmena' (*R.* 'Königin Wilhelmina') and *R.* 'King George', who looked as if he might be coming to the end of his time.

This garden was proving to be a 'classic', with *Rhododendron vernicosum* in full flower *R. fulgens* dipping its feet into the second burn and a third *R. niveum* in flower, which Mr Younger had either never previously noticed or was flowering for the first time, having reached 20ft in height. We passed a good *R. fulvum* in flower, *R. griffithianum* 20ft high and *R. hunnewellianum,* both of which were resting this year. The bark on

several plants was also providing much beauty, particularly on a *R. arizelum,* which was a cinnamon colour, and *R. triflorum,* which was as good as any *Acer griseum* and looked magnificent.

We then left the forest and entered a large glade where a large planting of *Gunnera manicata* had been restrained, after making its way up the burn in former years.

Standing now in bright sun was an example of *Rhododendron cinnabarinum* ssp. *xanthocodon* Concatenans Group with sulphur yellow flowers cascading down the plant.

There were further plants along the driveway back to the house, with one as identified by one expert as *Rhododendron davidsonianum* and by a second professional as *R. yunnanense.*

Our host expressed a healthy and respectful suspicion of all 'experts', 'professionals', and – for some reason I forget – 'merchant bankers'.

Coffee and biscuits rounded off what had been a visit to a real treasure trove of plants, all of which had been enhanced by the 'wildness' of the garden and the most informative and entertaining of commentaries.

Ralph Millward

Benmore (27 April 2004)

After our meeting with Mr Younger at Eckford we proceeded to the Benmore Botanic Garden. Following a light lunch at the garden restaurant we pleased ourselves in viewing these beautiful gardens.

At the end of April the air was cool and fresh, slightly moist, but very sunny, putting to mind what the countries of origins of the multitudes of plants to be seen at Benmore must be like.

The entrance is marked by an avenue of Wellingtonia (*Sequoidendron giganteum*). Planted in 1863, these trees measure more than 50m. Perhaps one day they will equal 'General Sherman' in California, which presently reaches 84 metres.

Passing the giants we were guided to the Rhododendron Bank. Again, we were in the presence of giants, many dating back to the early 1900s: *Rhododendron arboreum,* alight in blazing red, reaching to more than 17m, a breathtaking sight. It was understoreyed by *R. decorum* in all directions, seeding around in its environment. Coming upon *R. barbatum* with its peeling bark and its glowing crimson-scarlet flowers carried in dense trusses, one can only envy those who live with such beauty in their midst. Also seen were: *R. falconeri,* the bright pink buds with flowers fading to white; *R. ririei,* large enough to stand beneath and view the silvery undersides of the leaves; *R. oreodoxa,* the dark red buds beginning to show the ultimate pink colouring of the flowers; *R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *xanthocodon* in full yellow splendour; the wonder of an *R. macabeanum* in full flower with foliage as spectacular as its yellow trusses.

Into the Bhutanese Glade one is transported to a hillside in the Far East. The glade is wonderfully constructed to present the indigenous plants of that region to best advantage. Among the many specimens that can be found are the blue pine (*Pinus wallichiana*), *Berberis cooperi, Buddleja colvilei, Hedera nepalensis* as well as *Rhododendron nivale, R. baileyi, R. campylocarpum* ssp. *caloxanthum, R. hodgsonii* and *R. keysii:* rhododendrons to make us all reflect on just how few we cultivate in our own gardens. Fortunately, we

Rhododendron campanulatum 'Roland Cooper' at Benmore

can return time and again to Benmore to experience the collections being assembled and maintained there.

An area presently under development is the Chilean Rainforest Glade. While not containing rhododendron specimens, it is nonetheless of interest to any fervent gardener. It will one day provide an insight into the South American continent and the plant specimens to be found there.

For myself, I look forward to a future visit to this garden to fully explore all the special areas and learn more about the plants that grow there.

Charlotte Jacobson

Crarae Gardens (28 April 2004)

After a successful appeal for endowment funds, the National Trust for Scotland acquired Crarae, near Inveraray, in April 2002. Maurice Wilson is the Curator and splits his time between Crarae and Arduaine. The priority has been to upgrade the paths and put up signs for the different circuits available to tour the garden. The circuits are of differing length and steepness.

Beside the Visitor Centre we were greeted by the sight of a long, low hedge of *Rhododendron yakushimanum* – all in excellent bud – and by the sound of willow warblers. The long route takes one up to the highest part of the garden with good views over Loch Fyne.

Throughout the garden are various cultivars of *Acer palmatum,* particularly pleasant to see as the new foliage was just beginning to unfold. Other genera well represented include *Magnolia, Malus, Viburnum, Cornus, Berberis, Eucryphia, Pieris* and *Betula.*

There is an extensive selection of the large leaf rhododendrons with a particularly good *Rhododendron arizelum.* Subsection Triflora is well represented. Of particular

Cynthia Postan (former Yearbook editor) and Joey Warren (former Hon. Secretary) examining a fine specimen of *Rhododendron sinogrande* at Arduaine

memory was a sheet of *R. schlippenbachii* in flower, some 20 plants on a steep slope. This alone was worth the visit. Nearby is a grove of *R. macabeanum.* As we walked through this planting we felt sorry that we could not see the flowers some 4m above us. However, when we climbed higher, we looked down on the whole group covered in bloom of a good yellow with Loch Fyne as the background. More wanderings, past a collection of *Acer cappadocicum* and another of *Eucalyptus gunnii,* brought us down to the glen and burn. This area was reminiscent of the valleys in Yunnan with vegetation covering the hillside and overhanging the burn. It is very aptly named the Himalayan Glade. The plants revel in the growing conditions. Here there is a good specimen of *R. neriiflorum* 'Rosevallon', planted on a rock, high beside the path so that the pigmentation of the underside of the leaves is easily visible. Nearby is a *R. yakushimanum* some 2m tall. Also in the glade is a very good form of *R. macabeanum.* Nearby, *Picea grandis* lives up to its name, and in the dappled shade it provides *R. barbatum,* shows its trunks well. On the way back to the Visitor Centre we passed through an avenue of *R. falconeri,* dated by large label to 1918.

All this, too much to take in with a visit of only one morning, makes Crarae well worth a detour.

Alun Edwards

Arduaine (28 April 2004)

We were fortunate to have the Curator Maurice Wilkins leading us through the multi-storied magic of Arduaine. Here is a very balanced collection from many parts of the world, set on a stunning site thrust out to sea. Outstanding mature specimens dot the high canopy, including a 100ft *Magnolia campbellii,* and a 75ft *Trochodendron aralioides,* along with a superb grove of eucalyptus. The good collection of mature large leaf rhododendrons were in full flower. We saw an especially fine *Rhododendron arboreum* ssp. *zeylanicum* planted in about

1910. The sweetly scented hardier L&S form of *R. lindleyi* was just coming into flower and as in most of the gardens visited, *R. macabeanum* was magnificent. Also noted were *R. sinogrande* with perfect flowers and a 45ft-tall *R. protistum,* planted in 1936.

The tree ferns – *Dicksonia antarctica* – were in good shape having survived a brief spell of -8°C.

Two tender vines stood out: the clinging *Pileostegia viburnoides* from China with viburnum-like foliage, and *Asteranthera ovata,* a ground cover from Chile, which will climb tree stumps and the like. It was too early for *A. ovata* to show it's red tubular flowers. It was remarkable that such plants grow at the same latitude as Davis Inlet in the Canadian Arctic.

Arduaine's large collection of smaller rhododendrons was showing very well. We liked the intense yellow of *Rhododendron* 'Saffron Queen' very much, and there was a good example of the old stand-by *R.* 'Blue Diamond'. Also noted was fine plant of the lovely pink-flowered *R. primuliflorum* 'Doker-La'. An excellent companion plant for these rhododendrons, *Vaccinium nummularia,* was in flower as was *Drimys lanceolata.*

Much could also be said for the great many herbaceous beds found throughout the garden, but for our particular day a Chatham Island Forget-me-not, *Myosotidium hortensia,* in perfect condition, captured it all. The large glossy leaves reflected how pleased we were to have been in this delicious balance of woodland and display, of sea and pond. Arduaine, while a marvellous collection, gives greatest pleasure by being a magnificent garden.

Charles Sale

Ard-Daraich Hill Garden (29 April 2004)

After the enjoyable scenic drive north from Oban (Loch Melfort), our spirit of adventure increased as we made the short ferry crossing of the Corran Narrows to Ardgour and the mountains of the highland region. We followed the 'Road to the Isles' for a short way along the shore of Loch Linnhe and suddenly there was a little side road with *Lysichiton americanus* set out like a guard of honour to greet us – we had reached Ard-Daraich.

We were welcomed by Norrie Maclaren, and after a brief history and introduction, he let us loose on the hillside to explore.

The lower part of the garden, around and below the house with its well-established shelter and canopy, is packed with camellias, maples, rhododendrons and many other choice trees, shrubs and shade-loving perennials in the understorey. Among notables are *Rhododendron bureavii, R. kesangiae* (with magnificent foliage), a dainty, perfectly formed *R. primuliflorum,* almost overshadowed by the flamboyant *R.* 'Phalarope' (see next page).

With some trepidation we took a walk on the wild side, climbing the hill. Narrow winding little pathways weaved between lichen-covered boulders and had us trudging through spagnum moss and ling, to find treasures that kept popping up to surprise us at every turn (like the well-budded specimen of *Rhododendron hemsleyanum*). There were young, naturally regenerating birch and rowan with maples planted for future canopy. A shelter belt of the native Caledonian strain of *Pinus sylvestris* had been established to provide a future screen from the north. The view from the hilltop was spectacular. How do you garden on such a hill? Yet the garden is home to over 300 species of rhododendron alone.

Peter Cox's hybrid *Rhododendron* 'Phalarope' (*R. pemakoense* x *R. davidsonianum*) at Ard-Daraich

The Nursery specialises in producing a wide range of shrubby and perennial plants, many from their own collection. There is a real 'Collector's Corner' of maples. Traditional propagation is used and there are some rare items in the pipeline at most reasonable prices.

Our visit ended with an excellent home-cooked lunch and we took our leave with lasting memories of a unique garden experience and genial hospitality.

Tom Wood

Druimavuic Gardens

The last garden of the tour – Druimavic Gardens, Appin, Argyll – owned by Newman and Lillian Burberry, looked well managed; the lawn mown and neat flower borders, and a large ceanothus growing up the rear of the house, neatly pruned and just starting to flower. On the right hand side of the garden flows a stream, which powers a hydro-electric turbine for the property.

Moving out into the woodland garden there was a selection of the Dexter hybrid rhododendrons and also *Rhododendron racemosum* in flower. There were large banks of lilies of the valley in flower, and also *R. cinnabarinum* 'Conroy' with orange-coloured flowers. Two very large, dark green conifers formed an archway over the path, beside which were *Meconopsis* with primrose-coloured flowers.

Next came the kitchen garden and nursery beds, with blackcurrants, gooseberries and raspberries all under a wire-netted frame.

Then came banks of *Caltha palustris* with white flowers. In a plastic tunnel were large plants of early potatoes, strawberries in flower, over-wintered geranium plants and bedding plants pricked out into trays.

Outside again we saw *Enkianthus campanulatus erecta*, the red rhododendron hybrid *R.* 'Grace Seabrook', and very large *Meconopsis* plants on the banks of the stream.

Then came an unnamed white rhododendron hybrid with flat flowers, *R.* 'College Pink', the Hobbie cross *R.* 'Gartendirector Rieger' with attractive, large pale pink flowers, *R.* 'Rothenburg' another *R. williamsianum* cross with large white flowers. There were also several 'Loderi', including a specimen *R.* 'Loderi King George'.

Many of the rhododendron hybrids were fairly new plants, perhaps 5 years old, most with new labels and top-dressed with compost or old farmyard manure.

Altogether a most attractive garden followed by a pleasant drink and snack in the house.

Derek Faulkner

Competitions

Early Rhododendron Show
6 April 2004

Although this re-scheduled show was held only two weeks before the Main Rhododendron Show, it was a good job it was no earlier. Gardeners found little in bloom that would not normally be flowering in mid- to late March, but the quality of the exhibits was high. It was a pity there were only six competitors, but the return of Borde Hill to the competition after many years was very welcome indeed.

Among the species *R. semnoides* from Exbury was absolutely beautiful – deep rose pink in bud opening to pink flushed with yellow giving the truss a warm glow, but even this was beaten into second place in Class 6 by a wonderful *R. sinogrande* from Gore's Wood at Borde Hill – almost certainly a Kingdon Ward collection. The corollas were held more upright than usual and had a butter yellow line between the lobes – one of the best sinograndes I have seen.

Brian Wright showed a vase of a very fine *R. lutescens,* not quite perfect, so given third in Class 10. It was nice to see the unusual *R. hylaeum* from Borde Hill on show, and welcome the return of one of their many *R. principis* (*vellereum*), though this was not one of their three named clones.

Among the hybrids, 'Lionel's First' (*R. lacteum* × *R. sutchuenense*) was a pleasing pink, with a good truss and nicely veined foliage, and Borde Hill's *R. barbatum* × *R. arboreum* had a fine globular truss on a *R. barbatum*-like plant – a fine hybrid worthy of both a clonal name and an award. Brian Wright's *R. mallotum* × *R. eximium* was a good purplish pink with leaves intermediate between the parents – also worthy of being better known. The vireya 'Jiminy Cricket' from Chris Fairweather was outstanding – long tubular campanulate flowers of a subtle but bright two toned pink. It was nice to see Kew entering the semi-tropical competition with their third in Class 21 with vireya 'Pink Delight'.

The winners in each class were:

Class 1 (2 entries): Exbury for *R. macabeanum, R. sinogrande* and *R. calophytum*

Class 2 (1 entry): Exbury for *R. campylocarpum*

Class 3 (3 entries):Exbury for *R. semnoides*

Class 4 (1 entry): Exbury for *R. arboreum* var. *roseum*

Class 5 (1 entry): Exbury for *R. barbatum*

Class 6 (3 entries): Borde Hill for *R. sinogrande*

Class 7 (3 entries): Dr Jack for *R. oreodoxa*

Class 8 (1 entry): Exbury for *R. beanianum* (2nd prize only):

Class 9 (2 entries): Brian Wright for *R. eclecteum* (yellow):

Class 10 (3 entries): Brian Wright for *R. racemosum*

Class 11 (7 entries): Dr Jack for *R. balfourianum*

Class 12 (2 entries): Exbury for *R. fulvum* (2nd prize only):

Class 13 (1 entry): Exbury for Shilsonii Group, 'Lionel's First', 'Robin Hood'

Class 14 (1 entry): Exbury for 'Lionel's First'

Class 15 (3 entries): Exbury for 'Janet'
Class 16 (2 entries): Borde Hill for *R. arboreum* × *R. barbatum*
Class 17 (1 entry): Exbury for 'Janet'
Class 18 (2 entries): Brian Wright for *R. mallotum* × *R. eximium*
Class 19 (2 entries): Exbury for Fortune 'Annapolis Royal'
Class 20 (4 entries): Brian Wright for 'P. J. Mezzit'
Class 21 (5 entries): Dr Jack for 'Fragrantissimum'
Class 22 (3 entries): Chris Fairweather for 'Jiminy Cricket'

There were enough superb flowers on the benches to attract much public attention, and our thanks are due to those who keep this show just ticking over; I'm sure these few regulars would welcome a run for their money, and that there are many gardeners who could exhibit at least a few flowers in this competition, and win some prizes.

Michael Robinson

The Main Rhododendron Show – Species
Borde Hill Garden, Sussex
18 April 2004

Eighty years ago, in the heyday of rhododendron activity, when so much seed was coming in from the great plant hunters such as George Forrest, Reginald Farrer and Frank Kingdon Ward, there was intense rivalry between these mens' sponsors and other great gardeners to show the finest forms of floral gems newly introduced and to improve on them by hybridisation. The annual rhododendron show in those days was a spectacle on which to feast the eyes, with rank upon rank of exciting exhibits, many new to the public. In recent years the number exhibits has sadly diminished – until now.

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's *Rhododendron roxieanum*, which won the McClaren Challenge Cup at the Main Rhododendron Competition at Borde Hill for the best truss of a species

This year, in Sussex, the downward trend was gloriously reversed. More than twice the space allocated to rhododendrons at Vincent Square was filled to overflowing, and there were five times as many entries as in last year's London Show, and from more than four times the number of competitors. With the unfortunate exception of Wakehurst, all the historic gardens in the southeast exhibited, and it was a delight to welcome a delegation from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and the return of Windsor, Riverhill, and Sheffield Park to competition. What is more, even though collections of Forrest, Rock, and Kingdon Ward won prizes, recent introductions were also well represented among the prize winners, with the work of Peter Cox and Keith Rushforth reaping the rewards it deserves. Perhaps things are not so different from the old days?

Rhododendron fargesii, winner of the Roza Stephenson Cup, for a spray of one species, for High Beeches Garden, Handcross, Sussex

There were 22 competitors, of whom twelve were amateurs, showing 168 exhibits, and the high standard of the exhibits was evident from the considerable number of fourth prizes the judges awarded. The reintroduction of classes for gardens of fewer than 3 acres was much to be welcomed.

Nymans' winning entry for class one (six species), which took the Lionel de Rothschild Cup, contained an outstanding *R. wardii* KW 5736 – clearly early flowering, and a very good clear creamy yellow with no noticeable blotch above dark unmarked foliage, the excellent and new *R. denudatum* CH 7118 with subtle mauve shades above rugose foliage similar to *R. floribundum,* and the large truss of a fine new taxon of *R. barbatum* CH 2086. Exbury's second place included their outstanding blood red *R. arboreum* 'Rubaiyat' AM, which should be widely grown. Outstanding in Windsor's third place was *R. fulvoides* F 25744 with beautifully spaced long and comparatively narrow leaves

Nymans winning Class 2 entry (three species) contained a delightful *R. calophytum* KR 142 introduced from Sichuan in 1980, and Exbury's pink-tinged *R. semnoides* in their third place made me more determined than ever to get this superb clone.

The McLaren Cup (Class 3 – a truss of one species) was deservedly taken by Edinburgh for the best and largest truss of *R. roxieanum* I have ever seen, though Brian Wright's *R. coriaceum* was a nicely presented second, with a well-named *R. elegantulum* from Nymans third. Fourth was an intriguing *R. magnificum* aff. from Benmore: the fine close-packed truss of deep magenta pink was held above long, markedly oblanceolate matt leaves with a thin plastered fawn indumentum. It would be interesting to know the provenance and hardiness of this outstanding plant.

High Beeches won the Roza Stevenson Cup (Class 4 – spray of one species) with a spray of tightly flowered *R. fargesii* in a clear rose pink – not the biggest flowers ever seen on this species but beautifully held. Nymans *R. wardii* KW 5736 must have been a close second.

R. denudatum CH 7118 appeared again as the winner of Class 5. This species is, thankfully, commercially available. It would be nice if Borde Hill's delightfully coloured *R. arboreum* var. *roseum* (third) was available too.

Class 6 was won by Val Fleming of Stonewall Park, Edenbridge, with a wonderful truss of that most beautiful of species *R. pseudochrysanthum* – a plant for every garden. This was a large truss, tinged pink externally with nicely contrasting sepals.

The *R. campanulatum* from Windsor, which won Class 7, was just one of the good clones from the Valley garden – this one pale

was almost a picotee mauve above contrasting dark leaves.

Borde Hill's *R. sinogrande* in Class 8 – one of the Gore's Wood collection that did so well in the Early Show is one of at least two plants there deserving a clonal name – upstanding flowers of a good colour both in bud and when fully open.

R. orbiculare from Windsor (Class 9) is a fine pink far away from the hot magentas one sees too often in this species.

It was remarkable to see Exbury not winning Class 10 with their *R. irroratum* 'Polka Dot' – so often a winner in past years, but they had to be content with second place behind a truly remarkable and bigger truss of the same taxon from Borde Hill.

There were two outstanding plants in Class 12: Nyman's *R. weihsiense* F 26478 with large trusses of almost scarlet flowers over large leaves (which seem to have nothing to do with *R. sperabile!*) , and a vibrant *R. piercei* of almost Scottish dimensions – also from Nymans – two species for everyone here I think – free flowering and comparatively easy to grow.

Also from Nymans was a densely flowered and compact *R. ciliatum* in Class 17.

Exbury's *R. desquamatum* of clear pale blue shades is a delightful plant resembling a good *R. augustinii,* and showing clearly the open corolla which distinguishes it from *R. rubiginosum* – this clone's colour is unequalled in my experience.

The exhibits in Class 21 reminded us what a lovely colour *R. concatenans* is – surely a plant worth having even if it does need spraying against mildew.

High Beeches' *R. pemakoense* was as marvellous as this species always is when given a sheltered site, and the *R. albrechtii* that Windsor has in Class 29 had fine and large flowers.

Rhododendron orbiculare, which took first place in Class 9 (Subsection Fortunei) for Great Park, Windsor.

The winners in each class were:

Class 1 (six species), 6 entries: Nymans for *R. alutaceum* var. *russotinctum, R. wardii* KW 5736, *R. pachysanthum, R. weihsiense* F 26478, *R. denudatum* CH 7118 and *R. barbatum* CH 2086

Class 2 (three species), 6 entries: Nymans for *R. arboreum* var. *roseum, R. calophytum* KR142 and *R. macabeanum*

Class 3 (one species), 14 entries: Edinburgh for *R. roxieanum*

Class 4 (one species – spray), 12 entries: High Beeches for *R. fargesii*

Class 5 (Arborea, Argyrophylla), 3 entries: Nymans for *R. denudatum* CH 7118

Class 6 (Barbata, Glischra, Maculifera), 9 entries: Val Fleming for *R. pseudochrysanthum*

Class 7 (Campanulata, Fulgensia, Lanata), 4 entries: Windsor for *R. campanulatum*

Class 8 (Falconera, Grandia), 14 entries: Borde Hill for *R. sinogrande*

Class 9 (Fortunea), 7 entries: Windsor for *R. orbiculare*
Class 10 (Irrorata), 7 entries: Borde Hill for *R. irroratum* 'Polka Dot'
Class 11 (Taliensia), 7 entries: Nymans for *R. alutaceum* var. *russotinctum*
Class 12 (Neriiflora), 4 entries: Nymans for *R. weihsiense* F 26478
Class 13 (Pontica), 5 entries: Windsor for *R. hyperythrum*
Class 14 (Thomsonia, Selensia, Campylocarpa), 4 entries: Nymans for *R. wardii* KW 5736
Class 17 (Maddenia), 2 entries: High Beeches for *R. ciliatum*
Class 19 (Triflora, Heliolepida), 6 entries: Exbury for *R. desquamatum*
Class 20 (Augustinii), 1 entry: Exbury
Class 21 (Cinnibarina, Tephropepla, Virgata), 2 entries: Nymans for *R. cinnabarinum* subsp. *xanthocodon* Concatenans Group
Class 22 (Campylogyna, Glauca), 2 entries: Nymans for *R. prunifolium*
Class 23 (Lapponica), 2 entries: Nymans (3rd prize) for *R. cuneatum*
Class 24 (Saluenensia, Uniflora), 1 entry: High Beeches for *R. pemakoense*
Class 25 (Scabrifolia), 2 entries: Brian Wright for *R. racemosum*
Class 26 (Pogonantha, Lepidota), 1 entry: High Beeches for *R. primuliflorum*
Class 29 (Deciduous azaleas), 3 entries: Windsor for *R. albrechtii*
Class 30 (Evergreen azaleas), 1 entry: Exbury for 'Amoenum'
Classes 15, 18, 27 and 28 had no exhibits.

Mike Robinson

Main Rhododendron Competition – Hybrids 17 April 2004

In the March 2004 issue of *The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group Bulletin* I wrote that if this event (being held outside London for the first time ever) was half as successful as the very first competition held in 1926, then it would be a triumph indeed. Well, it was a triumph with many more blooms being shown than at any Vincent Square competition for over 20 years and many more members of the public eagerly crowding the showbenches.

The show was formally and appositely opened by Sir Edmund de Rothschild. I say appositely, (a) because his father was so influential in bringing about the first 1926 competition, (b) because he is among the foremost of rhododendron, camellia and magnolia enthusiasts, and (c) because through thick and thin he, like his father, has been a regular and stalwart exhibitor at the London competitions.

Congratulations must go to the RHS Shows Department, the staff and management of Borde Hill, the International Camellia Society (particularly Pat and Herb Short) and the Southeast Branch of *The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group* led by Dr Mike Robinson for putting on such a fine show. Thanks too should go to High Beeches Gardens, Loder Plants and the Starborough/Reuthe Nurseries, whose local sponsorship is of considerable value in mounting such events.

Before finally getting on to who won what and why in the rhododendron hybrid classes, mention must be made of the contribution made by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, whose staff drove over 400 miles to set up a superb and informative display of George-Forrest-collected rhododendrons. The in-flower sample material they brought arrived in excellent condition and this was borne-out by their *R. roxieanum,* which won the McLaren

Challenge Cup for the best truss in the species section.

There was also a breathtaking, competitive display of camellias (see Jennifer Trehane's separate report on page 88), which stretched from one end of the marquee to the other. Don't ask me how many hundreds of blooms there were but they were spectacular. As well as the camellias, there was also a magnificent line up of magnolias, the like of which, for quality and quantity, has never before (at least in my experience) been seen on a UK competitive showbench. This was organised by the Southeast Branch of the RCM Group and is perhaps an indication that the RHS should consider including magnolia classes in future competitions. Indeed, such was the overall flower power that the RHS may want to consider holding one single large, mid-April event – embracing rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias – as opposed to the early and main competitions, which they presently schedule.

The hybrid classes (and this would also apply to the species) were perhaps more like a grand reunion than a competition. The big names in gardening, whose blooms had not graced the London show benches for some years were there in force: Leonardslee, Sheffield Park, Ramster, The High Beeches, The National Trust Gardens of Nymans and Borde Hill (naturally) and Exbury, whose exhibits are always to be seen in London. At the other end of the gardening scale, it was encouraging to see enthusiasts such as Barry Haseltine, Michael Jurgens and John Rawling, who have probably never before shown at Vincent Square, take part and win prizes. Although everyone who entered this event to make it the success that it was should take a bow.

Prize-wise, it was Exbury's hybrids that led the charge with a haul of 17 prizes, a dozen of which were 'Firsts'. The two trophies on offer went to Dr Mike Robinson and Brian Wright. Mike Robinson won The Crosfield Challenge Cup for three hybrids of different parentage bred and raised in the garden of the exhibitor. His three (all unnamed) were: 'Lionel's Triumph' × *R. macabeanum, R. calophytum* × 'Avalanche' and *R. calophytum* × *R. niveum*. This was a particularly good victory as he beat strong entries from Exbury, who frequently win this cup, and Leonardslee. Brian Wright won The Loder Challenge Cup for a single truss, from twelve other entries – his being the Exbury creation, 'Janet'. This plant, from 'Avalanche' × 'Dr Stocker' displays huge trusses, each comprising over 20 large, white flowers with

A bench of entries for the hybrid classes at the Main Rhododendron Competition at Borde Hill on 17 April 2004

a burgundy blotch. Unusually, for a hybrid, the plant the winning truss was cut from has taken over 20 years to bloom; but now with the Loder Cup to its credit, in its maiden flowering season, all is forgiven! Although Exbury-bred exhibits featured prominently in this Cup class, Exbury themselves were surprisingly not among the prize winners, such was the competition. Those who were, were Sheffield Park, the runners-up, with a fine 'Lionel's Triumph' – easily good enough to win in less exacting circumstances, High Beeches in third place, with their very impressive *R. sinogrande* × *R. macabeanum* and Nymans in fourth with the exotic red, campanulate-flowered 'Taurus', a 'Jean Marie Montague' × *R. strigillosum* cross.

In the remaining classes there was so much that was so good that it is impossible to mention every prize winner but those of particular note were:

Class 31 for six different single trusses. This class was a feast for the viewing public as the first four prize winners produced, between them, 24 different, top-quality hybrids. Exbury came out on top with a sextet of 'Lionel's Triumph', 'Gaul', 'Aztec', 'Queen of Hearts', 'Carita' and the big-leaved 'Colonel Rogers' – all home-raised apart from the last named, which was an 'Admiral Algernon Walker Heneage Vivian' hybrid. Runner-up was the Great Park Windsor with a formidable entry of three 'lacteums' – 'John Barr Stevenson', 'Galactic' and 'Beatrice Keir' plus 'Nausicaa', 'Double Winner' and 'Trelawn', which was described as *R. calophytum* × *R. arboreum*. I am not familiar with this plant, although there is a Gill hybrid *R. arboreum* × *R. barbatum* called 'Trelawny'; could there have been some confusion here? In third place was Mrs Ann Hooton with a delightful entry consisting of 'Cornish Cross', 'Lunar Queen', 'Matador', 'Quaker Girl', 'Taurus' and 'Mariloo'. Fourth prize went to High Beeches with 'Boddaertianum', 'Barclay Fox', 'Königin Wilhelmina' and three unnamed exhibits, i.e. an *R. arboreum* hybrid, *R. yakushimanum* × *R. arboreum,* and *R. calophytum* x *R. sutchuenense.*

Class 32 for three different single trusses. The winner here was Miranda Gunn of Ramster who succeeded with an entry of three good, old 19th-century favourites, *viz.* 'Ascot Brilliant', 'Boddaertianum' and 'Rosamundi' – a very fetching exhibit of red, white and pink. Second was Windsor with a trio of *R. griffithianum* crosses: 'Katherine Fortescue', 'Königin Wilhelmina' and 'Violet Paget'. Third was Exbury with two brilliant reds, 'Gibraltar' and 'Taurus', teamed with a particularly good *R. macabeanum* cross.

Class 34 for single sprays produced the event's most outstanding hybrid. It was a massive, full-flowered Exbury exhibit of 'Rothenburg' in absolutely superb condition. From the top of the vase it measured 30×30in and bore at least 15 heavily laden trusses of beautiful primrose yellow flowers. 'Rothenburg', a 'Diane' × *R. williamsianum* hybrid, is usually readily available in the trade and worthy of a place in any collection. It was too much for even Mike Robinson's excellent 'Taurus', which came second.

Class 42 for single trusses of Subsection Falconera of *R.* 'Grandia' parentage. This class attracted some interesting exhibits, among which was Exbury's virtually unbeatable 'Fortune', a majestic FCC plant that Lionel de Rothschild raised by crossing selected forms of *R. falconeri* and *R.*

sinogrande. Again it added yet another first prize to those that this plant has gained over, at least, the last 50 years. In second place was Mike Robinson's 'Lionel's Triumph' × *R. macabeanum*, an exhibit that was also fourth, as a spray, in Class 34. Such was the merit of this entry that it was later awarded an AM. So there you have it – an exhibit good enough to achieve an RHS award but not good enough to win a first prize; yet a further example of how high the standards really were at this show. A nice postscript to this achievement is that Mike Robinson's plant is to be named after its hybridiser and raiser, Ambrose Bristow, an enthusiastic member of the South East Branch. Third in this class was Windsor's 'Colonel Rogers'. In that unique, smokey mauve colour, this entry displayed a tighter, rounder, larger truss (halfway between a tennis ball and a football) than is usually seen on this plant.

Class 44 for single trusses of Subsection Taliensia parentage. Its hardly surprising that first, second and third prizes in this class went to *R. lacteum* hybrids since this species has been used extensively to produce some fine award-winning garden plants. First prize went to Exbury showing their home-bred 'Jason'. Displaying great poise and colour, an attractive mix of chartreuse green and primrose yellow, it was no wonder that it swerved the judges' eyes to win. Second was Brian Wright with 'John Barr Stevenson' and third was Ann Hooton with the outstanding 'Mariloo'.

Class 47 for single sprays of Subsection Cinnabarina parentage. Although only a first prize was awarded in this class, it deservedly went to Michael Jurgens of Silchester near Reading showing the delightful ochre yellow 'Comely'. This is a 'Lady Chamberlain' x *R. cinnabarinum* hybrid, which is well worth growing if you can keep it free of the powdery mildew that often debilitates cinnabarina types.

Classes 50 and 52 for lepidotes and elepidotes not earlier covered by the schedule produced two interesting exhibits entered by Windsor. One was called 'Vinestar', a *R. keiskei* × *R. racemosum* entry raised by Horticultural Research of Ontario. This was a lovely canary yellow flecked rust brown in the throat and ideal for the small garden; the other, an unnamed bi-generic hybrid between *R. williamsianum* and *Kalmia latifolia*. You may ask if this is a proper rhododendron; perhaps not, but then competitions are not just about winning and losing – they're also about showing exhibits that are normally not seen and getting gardeners interested in growing them.

Classes 57 to 60 were restricted to competitors with gardens under three acres. It was good to see the RHS incorporate such classes as it does encourage those with smaller gardens to take part. One hopes that they will remain, although, as has been proved in the past, smaller plots can admirably succeed against the bigger acreages. As it was, Barry Haseltine won Class 57 (elepidote species) with *R. pseudochrysanthum*, Class 58 (elepidote hybrids) with 'Taurus' and Class 60 (lepidote sprays) with Barnaby Sunset. In the same classes, John Rawling was among the runners-up prizes respectively with *R. morii*, 'Oporto' and *R. racemosum*. Class 59, for large leaf plants, was awarded to Windsor with *R. basilicum*. Surely somewhat of an error here; The Great Park, Windsor, under three acres? Well, it's nice to see that someone has a sense of humour.

In conclusion it should be said that in spite of atrociously wet weather, the whole

event was stoically supported by the trade. Stands, outside the main marquee, such as Rotherview, Ian Fitzroy and Rapkyns Nuseries took a rare soaking and their discomfort on this occasion should prompt the organisers into considering cover at future events.

Brian Wright

Early Camellia Competition
9–10 March 2004

Chatsworth is to camellias what Exbury is to rhododendrons. Year after year, this garden has come to Vincent Square and regularly delighted us with some truly outstanding blooms. This year was no exception. They won 28 of the 61 prizes awarded and provided us with some exquisite examples of colour and form, particularly in the competition's Japonica Section. So all credit to The Chatsworth House Trust and to their Mr Webster who selected and staged their entries.

Although one should not expect a huge display at this time of year, the event's nine exhibitors did produce 100 entries, which amounted to over 180 blooms to enjoy. Among the best were:

Class 10 for any three *C. japonica* singles. This was won by Chatsworth showing 'Alba Simplex', 'Jupiter' var. and 'Siebold', a synonym for 'Tricolor'. Perhaps even nicer was the runner-up: K.T. Powell's entry of 'Burcoose' (sic), 'Apple Blossom', 'Francis Hanger' and 'Muskoka'; except they were all *C.* × *williamsii* and 'Muskoka' not even a single. So what were × williamsiis doing in a class that clearly called for japonicas, and what were the judges doing in awarding this N.A.S. entry second prize? A pity because this trio would have done just as well, if not better, in the *C.* × *williamsii* section and Jill Totty's good entry, that was denied a prize, would probably have won something. This was a fundamental error that judges really should not make.

Class 13 for any semi-double *C. japonica* attracted more entries (11) than any other class. It was tightly contested but in the end it was the most spectacular blooms that won the prizes. Chatsworth achieved second and third with their excellent 'Drama Girl' (the reticulata-sized japonica) and 'Bob Hope' while David Davis, well-known for his Leonardslee Bowl triumphs, came fourth with the flamboyant 'Guilio Nuccio'. Top of the heap, however, was Peter Betteley's 'San Dimas', a glorious rich red with deep green leaves. If Bizet's *Carmen* ever needs a logo, this flower, all very Latin, should be it, even though the San Dimas it is named after is in California.

Classes 16, 17 and 18 came close to showing us absolute perfection in flower and foliage. Class 16 for any three formal double japonicas gave us as faultless an exhibit as one is ever likely to see on a camellia show bench. It comprised 'Lavinia Maggi' – a large, tricoloured bloom in white and two shades of pink, 'Mathotiana Rubra', a gorgeous, full-flowered cerise red, and 'Nuccio's Pearl', absolutely pearl white and stunningly elegant. There was no doubt whatsoever about the first prize it gained, nor the credit it brought to its exhibitor, Chatsworth. In the following class, Chatsworth again treated us to their superb 'Lavinia Maggi' and 'Mathotiana Rubra', but this time achieved only third and fourth prizes. However, there was no resisting their amazing 'Sea Foam' – white, of course, but in this instance pristine white, which dazzled the judges into

deservedly awarding it first prize. In second place came David Davis with his beautifully unblemished 'Twilight' – a fine white with dusky pink outer petals. In Class 18, which called for any six japonicas, Chatsworth continued to have things their own way and thereby demonstrate, to the public at large, how immaculately lovely camellias can be when grown under glass. They won with a top-notch display that for size and condition would be difficult to better. Their six were 'Drama Girl', 'Elegans', 'Guilio Nuccio', 'Latifolia', 'R.L. Wheeler' and 'Wildfire'. Second was Mrs H. Keates with 'Betty Foy Sanders', 'Debutante', 'Margaret Davis', 'Miss Charleston', 'San Dimas' and 'Yours Truly'. Third was Jill Totty with 'Betty Foy Sanders', 'Blaze of Glory', 'Brozzoni', 'Cecille', 'Hagoromo' and 'Kimberley'; a scarlet so vivid that I immediately purchased the plant from one of the trade stands.

Class 22 for any *C. reticulata* (hybrid or species) attracted nine entries and as always, with these plants, inclined us into the realms of the exotic. Outstanding in this regard was Peter Betteley's winning bloom of 'Lasca Beauty', a 6-in, semi-double, soft pink with heavily textured petals. One can be forgiven for thinking the obvious here, that *Lasca* romantically refers to the East Asian race. It doesn't; it's an acronym for the Los Angeles State & County Arboretum where the plant was first cultivated – altogether logical but somehow I shall never think of the plant in the same passionate way again. Chatsworth, in this class, managed only third place notwithstanding that their 'Harold L. Paige' was highly impressive. In second and fourth spots was Andy Simons with 'Pavlova', a frilly red semi-double some 9in across, and the voluptuous scarlet 'Bravo'. So immense were both these blooms that I suggested that they might have been 'gibbed'. The entrant assured me, however, that nothing more untoward than a bicycle pump had been used to enhance their size. So that's alright then.

Class 29 for one bloom of any species. In this class, Andy Simmons showed us that small is beautiful. Having shown us the massive (his reticulatas) he now showed us the minute, which were something of an education. First was the red-flowered, leathery leaved *C. glabriperulata,* native to Quizhou Province, China. Second was the Yunnan white pseudocamellia, *C. henryana.* Third was *C. lutchuenensis,* a fragrant white from Liu Kiu Islands. The downside of exhibiting these tiny flowers is that they are sadly too small for the show bench beakers provided and therefore float on the water rather than rest on the rim of the beakers as do the other larger flowers. This, of course, does not show them to best effect. On the other hand, no camellia flowers are shown to best effect in cheap plastic beakers, so perhaps it's time for the RHS to consider changing them for something a little more complimentary to the beautiful blooms that grace the camellia shows. Indeed, the RHS Shows Department already possess small and attractive, long-necked vases, which would ideally suit camellias, so the task should not be insurmountable.

Brian Wright

Main Camellia Show
6–7 April 2004

This competitive display served to underline what a good year it was for flower. The dozen or so entrants provided much that was to be admired across the 24 classes and in many instances blooms of supreme quality.

Outstanding among these were faultless entries from Mr David Davis from Wootton near Coventry and Mr Andy Simons from Ampthill, Bedfordshire, which challenged for The Leonardslee Bowl in Class 10. This class calls for twelve blooms from different plants, a difficult enough task, yet one to which ten contestants admirably rallied to provide us with a total of 120 blooms to eulogise over – indeed, a show in itself.

The outcome was that D. Davis, by a whisker or is it a stamen, just shaded it from A. Simons and thereby won The Leonardslee Bowl for the third year in a row. This is a remarkable feat, which I doubt has been previously accomplished since the trophy was first presented in 1965. In fact, it makes one think that if any contestant, in any RHS competition achieves such a hat-trick of wins, should they get to keep the trophy? Hardly, since RHS competition silverware, possessing much that is intrinsically and historically valuable, could never be replaced; but at least a small replica or a tangible acknowledgement of the achievement should be awarded as this would recognise such a consistently high standard of growing and showing.

For the record and for those considering enhancing their camellia collections with some top-drawer plants, Mr Davis showed 'Tiffany', 'Nuccio's Gem', 'Powder Puff', 'Kitty Berry', 'Annie Wylam', 'Nuccio's Pearl', 'Guilio Nuccio', 'Onetia Holland', 'Margaret Davis', 'Owen Henry', 'Shiro Chan' and 'Swan Lake' – all japonicas, possibly apart from the last named. Andy Simons showed a rather more spectacular dozen comprising the reticulatas 'Bravo', 'Lila Naff' (fine plant, pity about the name), 'Jean Pursel', 'Interval' and 'Mayeyinhung' – a rare and ancient temple-grown Kunming reticulata that may well go back 1,000 years – the japonicas 'Moonlight Bay', 'Kick Off', 'Easter Morn' and 'Nuccio's Carousel', a dusky, tonal pink of immense quality; the × williamsiis 'Ballet Queen' var. plus two unknown to me: 'Peggy Burton' and 'Halyn Smith'.

Behind the Davis/Simons' entries came those from Exbury and Mr Nick Creek from Ardingly, West Sussex who were third and fourth respectively. The famous Hampshire garden showed the japonicas 'Pink Extravaganza' (a sport of the white-and-pink-striped 'Extravaganza') 'Desire', 'San Dimas', 'Lady Vansittart', 'R.L. Wheeler', 'Margaret Davis', 'Adolphe Audusson', 'Nuccio's Pearl', 'Jupiter' and 'Drama Girl', the wild form *C. reticulata* × *C. saluenensis* hybrid 'Inspiration' and 'Sea Gull', a David Feathers raised hybrid of unknown parentage. Nick Creek showed the × williamsiis 'Water Lily', 'Mirage', 'Muskoka', 'Anticipation' and 'Red Dahlia'; the japonicas 'Midnight' (a deep, deep red) 'Emperor of Russia', 'Rubescens Major' and 'Tricolor' plus 'Sea Gull', the *C. reticulata* hybrid 'Innovation' and the unfamiliar 'Briga'. These were both top-class entries and it is a pity that the difference between first and second and third and fourth was glass. Initially, this situation (where blooms grown in the open are judged side by side with those grown under glass) prompted the question, 'When was the Leonardslee Bowl last won by an entry grown in the open?' Then the wider question, 'Should glasshouse blooms and open-grown blooms really compete against each other?' I think not; properly cared-for greenhouse blooms, for size and condition, will always have the edge on their unprotected counterparts grown outside. I'm sure that the judges make compensatory allowances where necessary for those entries

grown in the open, but no official can fail to be influenced by the perfection of a bloom grown under glass, which suggests that this onus should be removed from them by, in effect, running two competitions – one for those entries grown under glass and another for those grown in the open. This would mean having two clearly divided sections using separate and prominently marked show benches: 'Grown under Glass' and 'Grown in the Open'. To do this would also rid us of the 'red spot', which placed on the exhibitor's class card is meant to denote an entry grown under glass. Well, it may do for the judges but not usually for the viewing public. I would be very happy to have a pound for each time I have been asked, 'What does the red spot mean?' True, the RHS Shows Department does display a card that explains the red spot but this, being so small, is largely missed.

For the Shows Department, two distinct competitions does not raise the spectre of having to double-up on every single competition class. For instance, there need be no 'under glass' classes for *C.* × *williamsii* entries as, for the most part, these blooms perform to a high standard outside. The same applies to the spray classes, since most exhibits come from plants grown in the open.

Two separate competitions would also afford the opportunity of introducing additional trophies, which the camellia competitions are woefully short of at the moment. Surely there must be a place for a David Trehane Cup or a Jimmy Smart Vase or even an I.C.S. Plate.

In Class 11, for one bloom of any six cultivars, David Davis was again awarded first prize for another pristine entry. The trouble was, he broke the rules. These plainly state that a cultivar exhibited in Class 10 may not again be exhibited in Class 11 or *vice versa*. In fact, David showed not merely one bloom twice but all six – the whole entry being previously shown in Class 10 – a bad error but not nearly as bad as that made by the judges. Their lack of attention in not spotting this contravention denied the runner-up, Andy Simons, of a deserved win. His outstanding sextet consisted of the japonicas 'Ave Maria', 'Wildfire', 'William Honey', 'Augusto Pinto' and 'Mercury' plus the *C. reticulata* hybrid 'Pavlova'. In third place came Mr Alan Smith of Swanage. His was an interesting address: Flat 2. With such good camellias on view one assumes that his is a garden flat. Anyhow, he showed the japonicas 'Joe Nuccio', 'Betty Sheffield', 'Tiffany', 'Jupiter', 'Grand Prix' and the *C.* × *williamsii* 'Anticipation'. Fourth was Mrs Jill Totty from Fordingbridge, Hanmpshire. She showed the japonicas 'Red Rogue', 'Nagasaki' and 'Lavinia Maggi Rosea' along with the × williamsiis 'Anticipation', the eponymous 'Jill Totty' and an unknown.

Mrs Griffiths from Thames Ditton kept the flag flying for the Spray Classes by being the only exhibitor. She won all five classes with 'Doctor Clifford Parks' (a superb anemone form, red/orange *C. reticulata* hybrid) 'Lavinia Maggi' and 'C.M. Hovey' being among her more eye-catching entries.

It should be said that being a single exhibitor in any one class does not automatically guarantee first prize, which makes Mrs Griffiths' success quite commendable.

In the Japonica Classes, David Davis was rather hard done by when he produced stunning blooms of 'Onetia Holland',

'Tiffany' and 'Swan Lake' in the three bloom Peony Class and came only third. And again in the three bloom Formal Double Class when he showed an absolutely immaculate trio of 'Matterhorn', 'Nuccio's Pearl' and 'Nuccio's Gem' to come second when he should have been first

In the three bloom Single Class, Andy Simons won with 'Tricolor', 'Happy Higo' and 'Grape Soda'. This last named is well-worth seeking out. It's a beguiling red with bright yellow stamens. Such was its charm that it also awarded second prize in the following class for solo singles. Worth recommending too is 'Happy Higo' – a magnificent pillar-box red with a huge coronet of yellow stamens. But perhaps the star of the Simons' entries and, indeed, the whole show was 'Nuccio's Carousel'. Already described in Andy's dozen in Class 10, this was also far and away the best in the class for any semi-double japonica.

The *C.* × *williamsii* Classes produced some competition as close as any seen in the whole show, but high on the list must come Nick Creek's 'Julia Hamiter', 'Red Dahlia' and 'Water Lily', which won the 'Any Three' class.

The only *C. reticulata* class in the show saw Brian Wright win first and second prizes with the deep pink semi-double 'Arbutus Gum' and the wine red peony form 'Arch of Triumph'. This was particularly gratifying since both plants providing the blooms are grown in the open in East Sussex at a height of well over 800ft above sea level. In third place was Mrs B. Griffiths showing the ever-impressive and multi-award-winning 'Doctor Clifford Parks'.

To move away from blooms and sprays, the final class called for 'an arrangement of camellias for effect'. This was won by Mrs Keates from Kingston-on-Thames who did well to out-do Andy Simons, a competition veteran with a substantial collection of fine plants. She showed a medley of japonicas: 'Miss Charleston', 'Lavinia Maggi', 'Debutante' and 'Margaret Davis'.

Brian Wright

ICS Camellia Festival, Borde Hill
18 April 2004.

One of the most satisfying aspects of this now well-established Spring Show, is the way the International Camellia Society, the RHS Shows Department and the RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group join together to celebrate their blooms. It's a trend that was marked by the joint efforts to organise regional meetings in the early 1990s, continued with joint autumn and spring weekends and last made its mark at the 2003 Vincent Square London Show with a Silver-Gilt-Medal-winning exhibit of *C.* × *williamsii* hybrids.

Despite the mood of co-operation, the camellia classes at Borde Hill were not without rivalry and provided the usual conflicts for judges Malcolm Pharoah, Herb Short and Jennifer Trehane. How does one judge glasshouse-raised blooms against blooms cut from the garden? How to compare a gorgeous, unmarked, large bloom and a perfect miniature or small one? What criteria are there for judging in the UK anyway?

This problem raised its ugly head in the first class, for twelve different blooms, which was splendidly supported by eleven entries, and, after much discussion and some disagreement, the beautiful crystal glass Borde Hill ICS Trophy was awarded to Rosie

A general view of the exhibits at the International Camellia Society's Camellia Festival at Borde Hill on 17 April 2004

Foster's very varied collection, all grown outside (*C. japonica* hyrbids 'Adolphe Audusson', 'Bob Hope', 'Elegans Splendor', 'Lady Vansittart', 'Lily Pons', 'Wildfire'; *C.* × williamsii hybrids 'Brigadoon', 'China Clay', 'Mary Phoebe Taylor', 'Ole'; and *C. reticulata* hybrids 'Royalty' and 'Satans Robe'). Andy Simons collection of huge blooms grown under protection came a very close second and included some very interesting and less well-known cultivars like 'Bravo', 'Hulyn Smith', 'Meye Yin Hung' and the aristocratic old Portuguese variety 'Augusto Leal de Gouveia Pinto'. Jill Totty produced an excellent collection to come third, while Brian Wright and Nick Creek gained well-earned Highly Commended Certificates.

Andy Simons has gained a reputation as a collector of interesting and striking camellias and the glorious, flaring stamens of his 'Happy Higo' scored over Ann Hooton's 'Mattie Cole' with Nick Creek's seedling third in the class for one single-flowered *C. japonica,* while Nick Creek's three glasses, each of one bloom of a different single *C. japonica* ('Adelina Patti Red', 'Evelyn', and 'Tear Drops') came second.

The classes for semi-double blooms produced the usual problem for some competitors. What exactly is a semi-double? There were some very obvious peony form blooms on the show bench here (which were on this occasion moved to their correct class, and did not suffer the humiliation of being marked NAS), with the winners being those that came closest to the internationally accepted definition of a semi-double bloom 'with in excess of eight petals in two or more rows, with a conspicuous stamen centre, with no petaloids'. This applies to the blooms actually on the bench and not as described in literature, by the way. Andy Simons' 'Guilio Nuccio', 'Hana Fuki' and 'Yours Truly' came out ahead of Alan Smith's collection of very different red japonicas: 'Bob Hope', 'Dr Burnside' and 'Holly Bright'.

Jennifer Trehane

Southeast Branch Magnolia Competition

As an experiment, it was decided to invite entries into nine classes instead of the usual two at Vincent Square, Classes 8 and 9 being restricted to gardens less than three acres. The result was a very pleasing display of 61 entries from ten exhibitors, even in a year when many of the big magnolias had been totally frosted after the high temperatures in February had brought on their flower buds.

Magnolias entered for the Southeast Branch Magnolia Competition, Borde Hill 17 April 2004

Class 1 (hybrid or species subspecies or form of *M. campbellii, M. dawsoniana, M. sprengeri,* or *M. sargentiana* – one bloom), 7 entries: Mike Robinson for *M.* 'Apollo'

Class 2 (hybrid or species subspecies or form of *M. campbellii, M. dawsoniana, M. sprengeri,* or *M. sargentiana* – one spray), 7 entries: Maurice Foster for *M.* 'Caerhays Belle'

Class 3 (hybrid or species, subspecies or form of *M. acuminata* – one spray), 5 entries: Maurice Foster for *M.* 'Elizabeth'

Class 4 (hybrid or species, subspecies or form of *M. liliiflora, M. denudata,* but excluding plants eligible for classes 1, 2 or 3) – one spray), 11 entries: Exbury for *M.* × *soulangeana*

Class 5 (hybrid or species, subspecies or form of *M. kobus* or *M. stellata*), 12 entries: Maurice Foster for *M. stellata* 'Rosea' f.v. (form from Sir Peter Smithers)

Class 6 (any hybrid or species not covered above – one bloom), 3 entries: Brian Wright for *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra' (which should have been NAS!)

Class 7 (any hybrid or species not covered above – one spray), 4 entries: Maurice Foster for *M. dianica* (*Michelia yunnanensis*)

Class 8 (Restricted entry: any hybrid or species – one bloom), 5 entries: John Rawling for *M.* 'Charles Coates'

Class 9 (Restricted entry: any hybrid or species – one spray), 5 entries: Brian Wright for *M.* 'Heaven Scent'

Maurice Foster took both the cup for the highest cumulative score and the trophy for 'Best in Show' for his spray of the wonderful 'Caerhays Surprise'.

In addition to the competition there was a very interesting and high-quality display of sprays of a dozen different hybrids

'Best in Show' winner for Maurice Foster at the Borde Hill Competition was *Magnolia* 'Caerhays Surprise'

of the newer yellow magnolias from Colin Crosbie of RHS Wisley.

The separation of taxa derived from the Chinese tree magnolias, those derived from *M. acuminata,* and the rest, seems to have worked well; with this quantity and quality of entries it must be time for more magnolia classes to be introduced at the Vincent Square Shows.

Michael Robinson

Final thoughts on the Borde Hill Show

Rhododendron denudatum is a species relatively new to cultivation with good foliage and flower well worth a place in every garden, and a compact-growing form of *R. ciliatum* is well worth seeking out. It looks as though *R. barbatum* CH 2086 has bigger trusses than normal, and gardeners planning to buy this species may well choose this clone. *R. wardii* KW 5736 is a winner, and anyone not growing *R. roxieanum* and *R. piercei* is missing two treats. Though not for everyone, Exbury's pink tinged *R. semnoides* is a very beautiful clone, which we hope will be made available for propagation.

The Jury hybrid magnolias should be seriously considered by anyone living in a climate where the big species are often frosted; they flower that few weeks later, which makes all the difference, and the flowers seem more weatherproof. *M.* 'Apollo' is slow-growing, and *M.* 'Milky Way' has superbly elegant white flowers. M. 'Caerhays Surprise' is an outstanding cultivar worthy of being far more widely grown and is suitable for most gardens. The *M. stellata* 'Rosea' shown by Maurice Foster seems to be an excellent and reliably pink cultivar.

This experiment of moving this show out of London has been a resounding success. What of the future?

Michael Robinson

Awards

***Rhododendron* 'Airy Fairy'**
AM 4 March 2003, as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition. Raised by F Maloney (USA) and exhibited by the Director, RHS Garden, Wisley, Woking Surrey GU23 6QB. Loose truss 80mm diameter of 3–8 flowers. Corolla openly funnel-shaped, 30×40mm, with 5 wavy-edged lobes, *c.*18×18mm, corolla pink (62A–B) inside and out, fading to white in throat and at base of corolla externally; dorsal part of tube and lobes spotted internally with orange-brown (163A-B). Stamens 10, 15–35mm long, filaments flushed pink, densely white pubescent at base. Style 40mm long, flushed pink; ovary green, glabrous, with colourless scales. Calyx green, insignificant, *c.*1mm. Leaves elliptic, 40–80×15–25mm, semi-evergreen, with several present at anthesis subtending truss; scattered pale brown scales beneath; mid-green above, pale green beneath. Specimen and transparency in *Herb. Hort. Wisley.* [AM after trial, 27 March 1984]

***Rhododendron* 'Ambrose Bristow'**
('Lionel's Triumph' (f) × *R. macabeanum* (m)) Award of Merit 18 April 2004 as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition. Raised and exhibited by Dr M. L. A. Robinson, East Sussex. Truss *c.*180mm diameter of *c.*15 flowers. Corolla ventricose-campanulate, 60′40mm, yellowish-white (155A-154D), dorsal nectaries maroon red (59A) giving impression of small eye inside base of corolla; tube 30–35mm; lobes 7–8, 15 × 20mm. Stamens 11–16, included, 20–45mm; filaments white, slightly white pubescent at base; anthers dark brown. Style *c.*45mm long; stigma red; ovary green with dense white pubescence. Calyx insignificant. Pedicel 25–40mm. Leaves elliptic, blade *c.*170 × 80mm, matt green above, compacted thin silvery indumentum beneath. Specimen in RHS Herbarium, Wisley (WSY).

***Rhododendron* 'Brian Howell'**
FCC 12 March 2002, as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition. Exhibited by E de Rothschild, Hampshire. (*R. macabeanum* × *R. praestans)* Hemispherical truss, 120mm high × 170mm wide; *c.*30 flowers. Corolla campanulate, 50 × 60mm, creamy white (157B); lobes 8, spreading, deep red (53A) blotch extending to 15mm at base of 2 upper corolla segments. Calyx insignificant. Bracts pink. Stamens *c.*16, 30–40mm, extending to mouth of corolla; filaments white; anthers dark brown. Style greenish white; stigma broad 5 × 3mm, pale pink. Ovary densely white tomentose. Leaves broadly elliptic, to 220 × 110mm on exhibited sample, underside with pinkish brown indumentum overlying silvery indumentum. Specimen and transparency in *Herb.Hort.Wisley.*

***Rhododendron* 'Fantastica'**
AM 24 May 2004 as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition. Raised by H Hachmann and exhibited by Mr Edmund de Rothschild, Exbury Gardens, Southampton, Hampshire. Truss 150mm diameter of *c.*18 flowers. Corolla campanulate, 40 × 50mm, white

with deep pink (63B) flushing on external surface and internally at lobe margins, giving a picotee appearance, scattered greenish–brown spots on inside of upper lobe; tube 20mm; lobes 5, *c.*24 × 27mm. Stamens 10, 10–20mm, included; filaments pale pink, white pubescent at base; anthers pale brown. Style *c.*30mm, pink, stigma red; ovary densely white tomentose. Calyx insignificant. Pedicel 40–50mm with scurfy pubescence. Leaves elliptic 90–140 × 35–50mm, underside with loose fawn indumentum. Specimen and transparency in RHS Herbarium, Wisley (WSY).

***Rhododendron* 'Penny Tomlin'**

AM 29 May 2003, as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition. Exhibited by C Tomlin, G Reuthe Ltd, Crown Point Nursery, Sevenoaks Road, Ightam, Kent TN15 0HB. Truss 180mm diameter of *c.*15 flowers. Corolla funnel-shaped, 50 × 80mm, with 6 wavy-edged lobes. Corolla inside and out heavily flushed pink (73B–C) on a white ground; upper lobe of corolla with yellow-green (153D) flare *c.*20mm long at base of upper lobe. Stamens 12–14, 20–40mm, included; filaments white, glandular pubescent at base. Style *c.*50mm long, greenish white, glandular pubescent at base, stigma green; ovary green, glandular pubescent. Calyx insignificant, irregular lobes 1–4mm long. Pedicel *c.*30mm, green, glandular. Leaves elliptic, to 120×50mm, glabrous, matt mid-green above, pale green beneath.

***Rhododenron* 'Wisley Pearl'**

(*R. yakushimanum* × ?*R. smirnowii*)

Award of Merit 4 May 2004 as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition. Raised by Francis Hanger, RHS Garden Wisley and exhibited by the Director, RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. Truss 120mm diameter of 8–10 flowers. Corolla broadly campanulate, 35 × 70mm, white, flushed pink (55B), especially on both surfaces of lobes and externally on mid veins, flare of diffuse green spots; tube 25mm; lobes 5, 20 × 30mm, deeply notched; buds deep pink (67A). Stamens 9–10, included, 15–30mm; filaments white, pubescent at base; anthers pale brown. Style 40mm, white, stigma and style apex flushed deep pink; ovary green with dense white pubescence. Calyx insignificant. Pedicel 25–40mm with glandular white pubescence. Leaves elliptic, blade *c.*120 × 30mm, undersurface with dense fawn indumentum. Specimen in RHS Herbarium, Wisley (WSY).

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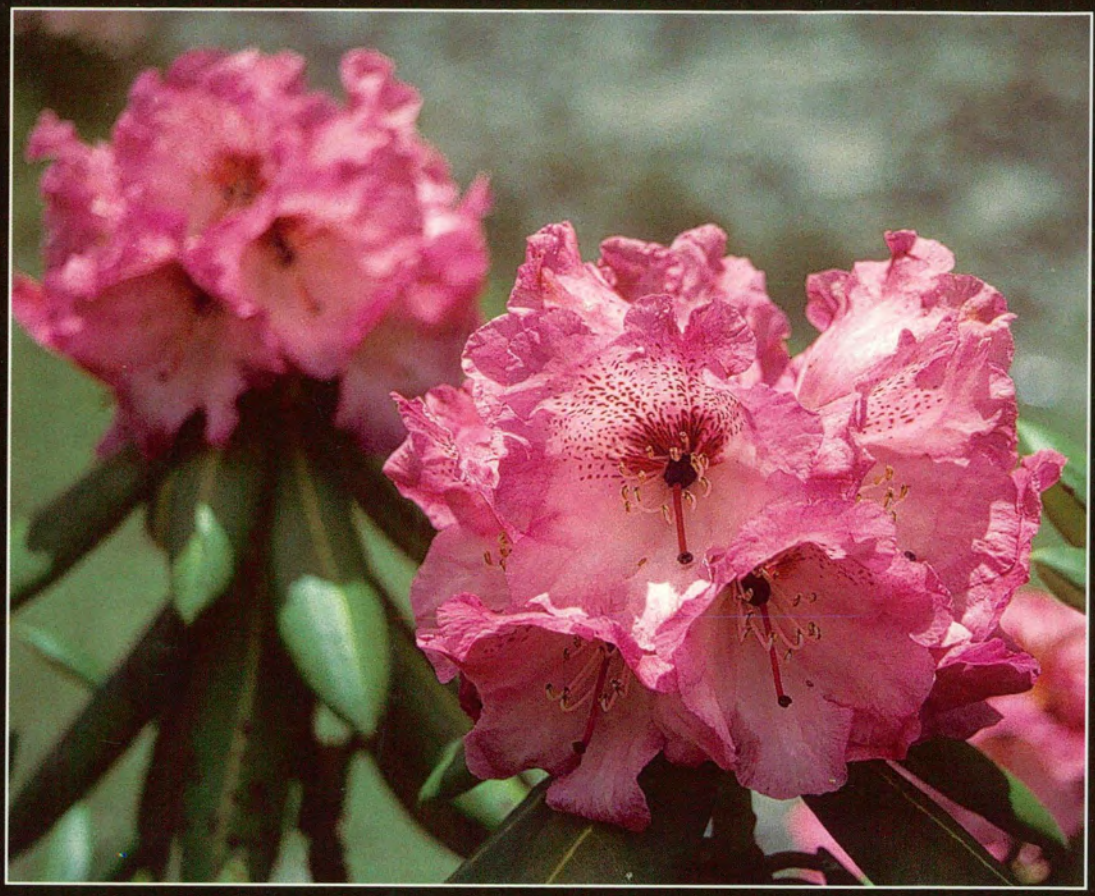

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