

# RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP.

BULLETIN NO. 12. APRIL 1980.

## CALENDAR FOR NEXT FEW MONTHS. N.B. SEE ALSO "BRANCH ACTIVITIES".

APR	19	Wessex Branch - two gardens to visit. See Bulletin No. 11.
	20	Leonardslee - first opening. See Bulletin No. 11.
	25	Cornish Tour begins. See Bulletin No. 11.
	(29	RHS Show. Flower Show. THE RHODODENDRON SHOW.
	(30	-ditto- -ditto- -ditto-
MAY	10	Wessex Branch - visit to Wakehurst. Arrive by 10.30 a.m.
	(18	The High Beeches (open by invitation - includes Group
	(25	-ditto- (members. See Bulletin No. 11.
	20	CHELSEA SHOW - FELLOWS' DAY.
	21	GROUP VISIT TO TWO GARDENS IN KENT - SEE PAGE 3.
	(21	CHELSEA SHOW - open to the public.
	(22	-ditto- -ditto-
	(23	-ditto- -ditto-
JUN	7	Wessex Branch - two gardens to visit. See "Gardens Open".
	17	RHODODENDRON GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SEE BELOW.
	17	RHS Show. Early Summer Show. (RHODODENDRON GROUP EXHIBIT -
	18	-ditto- -ditto- (SEE "BRANCH ACTIVITIES".
JUL	(8	RHS Show. Flower and Fruit Show.
	(9	-ditto- -ditto-

## MATTERS OF IMMEDIATE OR CURRENT INTEREST.

1. SUBSCRIPTIONS - IMPORTANT NOTICE. The Hon. Treasurer reports that there are approximately one hundred members who have not paid their subscriptions for the current year. It would be appreciated if these members would attend to this matter very soon. To save administrative costs and to help efficiency in the payments system, will they please use the slip already provided at the bottom of Page One of Bulletin No. 10? Individual reminders will be sent to those who have still not paid when the AGM notices are sent out.

## 2. IMPORTANT NOTICE FROM HON. SEC. ELECTIONS TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

In terms of the Constitution and Rules of The Rhododendron and Camellia Group, the affairs of the Group are in the hands of the Officers and eight elected members. These are at present:

Chairman: Major E.W.M. Magor. Vice-Chairman: Mr G.A. Hardy.  
Hon. Secretary: Mr J. Waugh Owens. Hon. Treasurer: Mr D.N. Farnes.

### Executive Committee:

Mr J.D. Bond.	Mr A.D. Schilling.	Mr J. Sanders.
Mr A.F. George.	Mr J.T. Gallagher.	The Lady Anne Palmer.
Sir Giles Loder.	Lady Adam Gordon.	

Mr K.J.W. Lowes, Editor of the Bulletin, was co-opted as a member of the Executive Committee at their meeting on 11 July 1978. In addition, the Regional Branch Organisers are ex-officio members of the Executive Committee.

In accordance with Rule 4, Mr J.T. Gallagher and Lady Adam Gordon retire. Mr Gallagher is willing to serve a further term.

In accordance with Rule 10, candidates for election to the Executive Committee shall be proposed and seconded by members of the Group and must sign their nomination papers which must reach the Hon. Secretary not later than 3 June 1980, i.e. 14 days before the Annual General Meeting on 17 June 1980.

## RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP. NOMINATION PAPER for two candidates for election to the Executive Committee.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>SECONDED BY</u>	<u>CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE.</u>
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MEMBER'S SIGNATURE.....DATE.....

MEMBER'S NAME (IN BLOCK LETTERS).....

TO: J. Waugh Owens, Hon. Secretary, The Rhododendron and Camellia Group, Jubilee Lodge, Yarpole, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 0BA.



THE YEAR BOOK. The printers have still not been able to deliver the Year Book in spite of their urgent wishes to oblige. The Society's Editor, Miss Elspeth Napier, has now obtained from them the nearest thing they can give to an undertaking, that the copies will be delivered to the Group's Hon. Secretary, Mr J. Waugh Owens, at the end of the month (i.e. the end of April). Those involved in the struggle to get the book printed and delivered to members seem to have done everything that can be done in this amazing age of "Labour Relations".

OLDER YEAR BOOKS. Here the position is the very reverse. The Hon. Secretary reports that he still has a few copies of back numbers of certain Year Books. Those available, and prices including postage and packing in the UK and by surface mail abroad, are as follows:-

1948	£0. 93	13 copies
1970	2. 25	14 "
1973	1. 20	29 "
1974	1. 20	42 "
1977	1. 75	5 "
1978	1. 75	3 "

The Bulletin Editor is a keen student of these Year Books, and in that capacity wishes to draw special attention to the years 1948, 1970, 1973 and 1974, which are becoming more valuable in both senses year by year; they are bargains.

BOOKS AGAIN. When I appealed for help in obtaining copies of early bulletins for editorial use I had the perfect response; that is, the right number of replies and the right number of bulletins. I am very grateful for this, and make regular use of the file.

As I have just mentioned, I use the older Year Books a lot; I also use the various reference books on Rhododendrons a great deal, chiefly for personal interest but quite regularly in doing bulletin work. I have a useful personal collection, but it has a few holes in it which I am constantly trying to plug. I know that some of my colleagues who are Officers of the Group have similar wishes, in particular Mr John Sanders who runs the Conservation of Rare Plants bureau. There are eight blanks in my collection of Year Books, as follows:- 1950, 1955, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1964 and 1965. I also badly need a copy of the 1967 Species Handbook. I should be glad to learn of any of these being available for sale; if advised that other years are also available I can arrange to put offerers in touch with enquirers. A word on condition and price asked would be helpful.

GARDENS OPEN. Unlike the majority of the "Gardens Open" which are given a mention in the Bulletin Calendar from time to time, the two Wessex Branch gardens which can be visited (N.B. by any member of the Group) on 7th June are not of the Outstanding Historical Interest type; a note about each may therefore be of help.

Mr Millais' nursery is probably at least known about, because of his regular advertisements in The Garden. These give an indication of what may be looked for there - a stock of uncommon species and hybrids which extends well beyond the Garden Centre range and into the region of rarities. Many are dwarf, small or compact growers,



but there are very interesting big ones too. The range of 'varieties' is considerable - some hundreds. The garden is open from 3.15 p.m. The other Wessex Branch garden open on that day is that of the Branch Organiser, Mr Robert Dudley-Cooke. He has kindly supplied me with the following note.

He took over the gardens, which extend to some 5 or 6 acres, four years ago in a totally derelict state, save for the two lawns immediately adjacent to the house. The garden was planted out about 70 years ago and therefore a good many of the conifers have reached mature proportions, and the garden abounds in early hardy hybrids and ponticum.

Mr Dudley-Cooke has created a water/rock garden and totally re-designed the whole layout of the formal part of the garden; he is now in the process of constructing a Japanese garden in the edge of the woodland. He has also planted out certain areas of the woodland, and is slowly but surely reclaiming areas of woodland and replanting. He has introduced into the garden a very large collection of evergreen azaleas and about 200 rhododendrons, many of which are of the more modern hybrids as well as the large-flowering hybrids which unfortunately are not as yet matured.

In addition there is a fairly extensive dwarf conifer collection, a fair number of mature Magnolia trees, and specialist shrubs.

The garden will be open from 2 p.m. onwards, and a cup of tea will be available - outdoors on the lawn if the weather is favourable, or indoors if it is not.

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BRANCH ACTIVITIES.

RHODODENDRON GROUP DISPLAY.

The Wessex Branch will be staging a Rhododendron Exhibit at the RHS Show at Vincent Square on 17th and 18th of June; this exhibit will be on behalf of the Group. Anyone who would be interested in helping with the prior work, and particularly the staging, on the night before - i.e. Monday 16th June - would be more than welcome. Staging operations will commence at about 5 p.m. Please get in touch with Mr Dudley-Cooke at Montclare House, Greenhill Road, Farnham GU9 8TN; telephone Farnham 26789.

(BRANCH ACTIVITIES continues on Page 4 under CONSERVATION).  
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RHODODENDRON GROUP ONE-DAY VISIT ON CHELSEA WEDNESDAY, 21ST MAY.  
TWO GARDENS IN SOUTH EAST BRANCH AREA.

The Group's Vice-Chairman, Mr G. Alan Hardy, has kindly made arrangements for visits to two gardens in Kent, as follows:-

10.30 a.m. LADHAM HOUSE, Goudhurst. (Lady Jessel).

2.30 p.m. SANDLING PARK, near Hythe. (Major Hardy).

Some information about these two gardens and their locations can be found in the 1980 issue of the National Gardens Scheme "Yellow Book", on pages 74 and 76 respectively.

Will those who wish to take part please let Mr Alan Hardy know by 7th May; a tear-off slip is provided below. No fixed arrangements have been made for lunch, as there are several pubs of the "good pub food" type in the area between the two gardens, as well as hotels and restaurants.



BRANCH ACTIVITIES - CONSERVATION.

Wessex Branch meeting, 12th March.

In the bulletins of the last two years there have been several notes on this subject from Mr John Sanders, who co-ordinates the flow of requests and offers for what may loosely be called "rare plants". Progress so far has not been spectacular, and in a further effort to improve the position the Wessex Branch convened a meeting to discuss their future plans. This was held at Mr Sanders' home on 12th March 1980, under the chairmanship of the Wessex Branch Organiser, Mr Robert Dudley-Cooke. Sitting-in with the several Wessex Branch members were the Rhododendron Group Chairman, Major Magor, and the Bulletin Editor.

Proposals and actual offers for obtaining and supplying propagation material were made, discussed and accepted, as were plans for the work, growing space and facilities for propagation itself. The general aim might be expressed as a self-help unit operating within the Branch. As an interested observer, my own view is that real progress has now been made and a proper workable plan is now being launched.

Should any other Branch make progress in this direction, both the Group Chairman and I would be glad to have the information if possible in order that, preferably, it may be disseminated.

CONSERVATION.

At the present time steps are being taken by the Group, under the leadership of the Chairman, to secure the preservation and continuance in cultivation of many of the most esteemed rhododendrons, those honoured by RHS awards. Already a great deal of research has been carried out by a volunteer Group Member, Mrs Betty Jackson, and now efforts are being made to run to earth the maximum number of the original plants. Of course, some of the finest forms of species may never have been submitted for award, and there is a very complex situation here, which is a separate matter. At various times some of the most influential and thoughtful rhododendron enthusiasts have lent their minds to the pursuit of clarity in determining the future of the finest examples of introduced species. One very important contribution to this small but significant body of our rhododendron literature is an article by the late Frank Kingdon-Ward, under the heading "Collectors' Numbers", on pages 48-51 of the 1956 Year Book. A very recent re-examination of the subject occurs in Mr Peter Cox's new book "The larger species of Rhododendron" (Batsford, 1979), and with the permission of author and publisher I am gratified to be allowed to reproduce below the section on this subject which begins on page 84.

" CONSERVATION AND THE FUTURE OF SPECIES IN GARDENS.

It is sad to consider that every year there are fewer and fewer authentic plants from wild collected seed of the Forrest, Wilson, Kingdon Ward, Rock and Ludlow and Sherriff expeditions left alive in gardens, the great majority of which have never been propagated vegetatively. With virtually no material now coming out of China, Burma, Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh (NEFA, northern Assam) due to political troubles, these plants are at present irreplaceable. "

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" Much of this loss is due to the neglected or unkept state that many large collections of species have reached through the appalling taxes people with anything of value have to pay these days. Many species do take a long time to flower and show off their real beauty. Dr C.H. Phetteplace gives an example of what happened in America and has also frequently happened in Britain (AMRS - QB, April 1967, p.74): 'For several years most of the plants grown from the Rock (1949) seed appeared quite uninteresting, and yet even after 18 years half of those I have remaining (50 plants) have yet to set a bud. This of course establishes them as of no value to the commercial nurseryman and perhaps accounts in part why more of them are not grown. Each year however, there are more and more of these plants that excite the interest of those who pass through my garden, and quite a number would well deserve a place in the garden even if they never flowered. Also, each year there are more and more visitors who ask if they might be permitted to take cuttings from certain plants.'

Kingdon Ward looked at the nurseryman from another angle. In the 1956 RHS - RCYB (p. 48) he wrote: 'Some nurserymen dislike collectors' numbers, claiming that the public wants names, even if they are the wrong names.'

The late Dr Harold Fletcher reckoned that in 1961, 98 per cent of rhododendrons sold in north-west USA were hybrids.

What, the reader may ask, is the future for species and why am I so keen to preserve as many as possible in gardens? One important reason for conserving so many forms of species in cultivation is to have a pool for breeding purposes. Who knows what fine results may emerge from many species as yet never used in hybridizing? As Dr Phetteplace says, many species take years to show their full potential. Nowadays, people are so impatient for quick results. Surely, for sheer interest, delicate beauty and charm, there is nothing among the vast majority of hybrids to equal the species. I would go as far as to say that few species lack some degree of merit and nearly all are worthy of space in large collections. The less-attractive species will always be rare because few people want them, but none the less, for posterity's sake, these should not be allowed to die out in cultivation.

What is being done to conserve species in gardens? The Species Foundation in the USA now seems firmly established in its new home near Tacoma, Washington, after various difficult periods in its history. Let's hope it goes from strength to strength and increases its collection year by year.

Should we have a species project in Britain? Fletcher broached the idea before he retired from the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, and he even asked for lists of authentic material with collectors' numbers. Personally, I feel that the RBG, Edinburgh could carry out just such a scheme (in fact a start has been made), making full use of their gardens at Edinburgh and Benmore. This work should be carried out by a botanist and horticulturist in close association. All major collections of species should be systematically visited and the desirable propagating material selected. Obviously some rare species may not now exist under collectors' numbers but provided they pass as average for the species, they should be propagated. Only with this type of project will the year by year drain on the total species resources in this country be halted. At present, no other country has more than a small percentage of the species material that we still cultivate here.

The newly regenerated Rhododendron Group is making a valiant effort to have rare rhododendrons more widely propagated and distributed. The idea is to gain co-operation between the owners of the best collections and any nurseryman willing to propagate and sell these plants. In theory, this plan looks promising and I wish it luck, but I am afraid that with the less popular items, it is doomed to failure because people would not pay the extremely high prices the nurserymen would have to charge.

Fine collections do still exist and some of these are still expanding. No individual or nursery can now possibly do more than scratch the surface and any hope of a voluntary body like the American Species Foundation is out of the question here considering



"the American scheme nearly foundered. Only a government-financed organization could be capable of fulfilling the many years' travelling and the study needed for the completion of the task. A new site, complete with the necessary botanical and horticultural facilities would be ideal, but with our country in the state it is at present, this may have to remain a pipe dream. To make a really worthwhile job of this, I cannot overemphasize the need for a botanical-horticultural team to work hand-in-hand in the proximity of the best herbarium collection, which happens to be in Edinburgh.

The best way to make people aware of the beauty of species is to have as many collections as possible open to the public. These should be clearly and correctly labelled and the individual plants should be grown where they can develop into fine specimens and not be overcrowded. It is regretted that owing to human error, most collections have many wrongly named species, even sometimes where they have collectors' numbers attached. Muddles can take place at all stages, from the gathering of the seed onwards. It would be a mammoth but worthwhile task to check numbered plants with the corresponding herbarium specimens. Some collectors were guilty of mixing seed or collecting specimens that were different from the seed. While natural hybrids are commonplace in many batches of seedlings, most mix-ups occur later.

Many of the finest species gardenwise are still very scarce, largely due to difficulty of propagation or their qualities being little known. Others are too delicate for most of the country and it is unfortunate that those people living in favoured localities or with suitable micro-climates, are often reluctant to experiment with the less hardy species. For authentic species collections, rare species should be propagated vegetatively but for general garden use they can be produced much more cheaply and in greater quantities by using hand-pollinated or wild collected seed. Provided good parents are selected, these seedlings should prove to be well up to the average quality for each given species. For comments on self-sown seedlings, see Selection of Plants, p.69.

Do please retain collectors' numbers wherever possible as these are the only way of referring back to where they were collected and by whom. Seedlings off cultivated numbered plants should not keep that number, but can of course be referred to as having come from such a number. So much interest can be inspired by looking into the history of a plant and often quite a little story can be found.

A few enthusiasts have endeavoured to improve certain species by growing generations of hand-pollinated seedlings and selecting clones for hardiness, size and colour of flower and habit. This can only be a long-term project, which requires much space and patience, so that few people have carried out a very worthwhile undertaking. G.G.Nearing of New Jersey, USA has worked on several species including fortunei, while Powell Glass worked on making a pure white catawbiense. In Britain, Mrs Stevenson (later Mrs Harrison) of Tower Court, bred selections of concinnum Pseudoyanthinum Group, augustinii, and diaprepes. Many generations may be needed to reach a required goal but it would not be too difficult for a few enthusiasts to try one or two species each. Increasing hardiness is perhaps the most useful aim. Seedlings should be grown in substantial quantities and subjected to cold at an early stage. To save room, these seedlings can be closely planted and left for the weather to take its toll. Select the hardiest known forms to start with. Worthwhile species to try in Britain might be many of the Triflorums and some of the hardier scented lepidotes such as lindleyi, crassum and edgeworthii. Most of these flower relatively quickly from seed and one person, provided he or she starts young enough, should be able to grow sufficient generations of seedlings to produce tangible results. " PETER COX. (End of extract).

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Bulletin Editor's additional observation.

When the new Year Book finally does arrive, members will find an article there which had gone off to the printer before Mr Cox's book was published. It is on the subject of R. lacteum, the future of which has been concerning me for some time. Read in conjunction with the last three paragraphs of the extract set out above, some



of the views I expressed about lacteam are seen to coincide with some of Mr Cox's. I strongly support him in encouragement he gives to smaller growers in the last paragraph; a few sympathizers may care to turn their special attention to the challenge of first preserving, and then improving, the species which has so often been called the best yellow, but which does not co-operate with mankind in securing its own future.

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#### AMERICAN CORNER AND HYBRIDIZING.

The Group's Hon. Treasurer, Mr David Farnes, has received a communication from member Mr Howard Kuhn of USA, which contains matter which will be of interest to other members. Mr Kuhn himself has a special interest in breeding for indumentum qualities.

His information is that the New York Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society has produced a report on the Hybridizers' meeting of September 1979. This is said to be a lengthy document running to about fifty pages. Copies are available to members of this Group at a cost of five dollars (U.S.); cheques, made out to "A.R.S. NEW YORK CHAPTER", should be sent to Mr Kuhn direct, at this address:-

55 Cecilia Dr.,

Mutton Town,

NY11791, U.S.A.

When we have had time to digest this report, further details will be given, probably in the next bulletin.

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#### CAMELLIAS.

The Chairman has received the following note, dated 20th February 1980, from Group member Mr R.P. Wakeford of Wimbledon.

"I thought that you would be interested to have news of the first flowers on my camellias here at Wimbledon - they are all in the ground in the open:-

Jan 12	Lady Clare
Feb 1	Optima
8	St. Ewe
10	Yoibijin
14	Saccho Vera
18	Barbara Hillier.

St. Ewe now has over 30 flowers out with many more to come. Saccho Vera is as beautiful as any rose but is affected by frost."

The Editor imagines that there will be quite a few members who envy Mr Wakeford his encouraging start to the Camellia Year.

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#### CAMELLIA CHOICE. A new proposition by the Editor.

Most of us express our personal preferences from time to time, perhaps in shops such as clothing shops or the butcher's, or during deliberations about the next car. Hobbyists do it quite a lot, and gardeners are no exception. Within our Group world there is a lot of scope for this, and many members have gone into print in the Year Books, beginning as long ago as the fifties. Usually the subject has been rhododendrons - sometimes species, sometimes hybrids, sometimes hybrids-which-might-have-been (if only someone had got round to making them). Camellias have featured less often (i.e. in 'our' Year Books) and magnolias have not, in my too-limited experience, been featured in anything approaching a 'Symposium'. The Concise Oxford Dictionary begins its explanation of this word with:- "Ancient-Greek after-dinner drinking-party, with music, dancers or conversation"; but it concludes with "set of contributions on one subject from various authors and points of view in magazine etc.", and I am sure that our Bulletins would qualify under the "etc."



In the Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book for 1956 the distinguished panel who gave their choice had each been asked by Mr Synge for a selection of five favourite rhododendrons. They were people distinguished for, among other things, great experience among rhododendrons, and they could all, presumably, choose with confidence. Many smaller-scale growers would fight shy of exposing limitations on the width of their experience imposed on them by modern conditions or other causes. This would be perfectly understandable. So, in proposing a symposium which may appeal to a wide range of our membership, I am going to ask for contributions under different rules. First, the subject is to be camellias, any type. Second, only one 'kind' or 'variety' - only one, with no alternatives or expanding of the choice. Third, explicit reasons for the choice are more important than the choice itself, although this will, of course, prove interesting over the whole event. Such matters as geographical location of the member's garden, climate (and perhaps degree of sun-ripening), freedom, frequency and time of flowering, growth and proportions all seem to me to have an interest for certain members. Length of contribution is not critical; from 60 to 200 words seems to be a range which gives scope for both critical explanation and eulogy. Contributions from Brig o' Doon ( or Brigadoon ) country would be especially welcome. You can do the choosing BEFORE dinner - with the sherry if you wish - and you don't have to have dancers.

I am taking Editor's privilege and doing the first one, below.

Camellia 'Charles Colbert'. Named in Australia in 1959.

I bought my plant from Mr David Trehane's nursery in December 1976; it was a good bushy specimen just over three feet high, and bore a few buds. Now, April 1980, it is six feet high and bears just over a hundred flower-buds. Even without flowers it is probably the most handsome plant in my garden, although I have to confess that I do not grow other camellias well - as yet.

When I chose it I wanted an upright evergreen of some distinction to place beside the east-facing front door in the new extension to this Victorian-looking lodge or cottage in Mid-Sussex. To quote the 'Trehane Camellias' catalogue of the time, " The semi-double flowers have no blue; they are 4-in. bowls of creamy pink. Ideal for small gardens, as a dot-plant among other evergreens, and for a labour-saving hedge or screen." This is now shown to be an excellent description; in his current catalogue Mr Trehane is saying " A strikingly beautiful feature plant growing upright and narrow, to perhaps five or six feet wide"; I should think this dimension will be reached in two or three years from now. The colour is my favourite camellia colour, and I am seldom attracted to heavy petalage in camellias - this one usually has ten to fifteen petals, opening in April, and they are beautifully formed. When over, they shatter and leave the plant quite clean. The leaves are a rich dark green and unfailingly glossy; about three inches long by one and a quarter wide, pointed, and neatly serrated. 'Charles Colbert' may have some fault or other, but so far there is no sign of one.

I usually pronounce the name as though it were English, but I imagine it was probably named by Professor Waterhouse after the younger brother of France's brilliant seventeenth-century Minister of Finance, Jean-Baptiste Colbert; Charles too was quite a notable individual. I consider the camellia 'Charles Colbert' to be, in its own way, equally distinguished. Like a corner of the Gibson rhododendron garden at Glenarn, it is ' worth a look '.

KENNETH LOWES.

#### BULLETIN NO. 13.

This will be dated July and has a good chance, as things presently appear, of being issued then. However, it depends on contributions, and I hope they will be forthcoming in generous quantity by 30th June.

EDITOR.