

RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP.
BULLETIN NO. 14. OCTOBER 1980.

CALENDAR FOR NEXT FEW MONTHS.

1980.
NOV 18 RHS Show.
19 - do -
DEC 24 Savill Garden and Plant Centre close (N.B. The
Restaurant has already closed, until 1st March 1981.)
1981.
FEB 17 RHS Show. N.B. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2.30 p.m.
18 - do -
MAR 1 Savill Garden, Plant Centre and Restaurant re-open.
17 RHS Show. CAMELLIA COMPETITION (plants grown in the
18 - do - open or under glass).
21 INTERNATIONAL CAMELLIA SOCIETY. EUROPEAN TOUR BEGINS.
31 - do - - do - CONGRESS BEGINS. SEE NOTE.
31 RHS Show. Flower and Garden Equipment Show, and
APR 1 - do - MAGNOLIA COMPETITION.
14 RHS Show. Spring Flower Show. CAMELLIA SHOW.
15 - do -
28 RHS Show. RHODODENDRON SHOW.
29 - do - - do -
MAY 10 RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP TOUR BEGINS. SEE NOTE.
19 RHS CHELSEA SHOW BEGINS. FELLOWS' DAY TUESDAY 19th.

MATTERS OF IMMEDIATE OR CURRENT INTEREST.

1. RETIREMENT OF THE GROUP'S CHAIRMAN. Major E.W.M. Magor, Chairman of the Group, signified his intention to retire from the Chairmanship in Bulletin No. 7, page 2, (feb.79), and will in fact do so shortly. His successor in this office is the former Vice-Chairman, Mr Alan Hardy. In turn, his office has been filled by the election of the Hon. Edward Boscawen, committee member and Branch Organizer of the South East Branch. Both have been so prominent in rhododendron and camellia matters, since long before the Bulletin Editor came upon the scene, that their election will come as no surprise, and will be heartily welcomed.

We could not let Major Magor go with a mere mention, as readers will discover when they turn the page.

2. CAPTAIN COLLINGWOOD INGRAM'S CENTURY. On a later page are reproduced two notices of Captain Collingwood Ingram's hundredth birthday on 30th October last - one from 'The Times' and one from 'The Telegraph'. I should of course have used the term 'centenary' in the heading, but whereas 'centenary' correctly describes the fact, 'century' describes an achievement. Writing as an old cricketer I prefer to think that he has scored a hundred - not out.

3. SUBSCRIPTIONS. Please read the important notice overleaf, from the Group's Honorary Treasurer, immediately, and if need be complete and return the cut-off slip at the foot of this page.

CUT OFF OR TEAR OFF. To be sent to the HON. TREASURER of the Rhododendron and Camellia Group.

FROM. Name _____
Address _____

D.N.Farnes,
"Corton Lodge",
7, Burntwood Avenue,
Emerson Park,
HORNCHURCH,
Essex RM11 3JD.
Telephone HORNCHURCH 40536.

ANY SPECIAL NOTES _____

- * a) I enclose cheque for £ _____ for my subscription for 1980-81.
* b) Please send me a Bankers Order form for subscription to the Group.

* PLEASE DELETE AS APPROPRIATE.

THANK YOU.

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE GROUP are now due (1st NOV) for year 1980-81.

1. Members already paying by Bankers Order or who have paid in advance need read no further, but accept our thanks for their help and co-operation.

2. Other members of the Group are requested to complete the tear-off slip on page 1 and return it to the Treasurer, as soon as possible please, as the new Year Book should be ready about the end of November. Wherever possible, please complete the request for a Bankers Order form, as this saves the Treasurer much work and saves the member the worry and uncertainty of paying the subscription on time each year.

3. Those members who are in arrears with their 1979-80 subscription have received a personal notice of reminder with the last Bulletin, and are now invited to pay the two years together, whereupon the new Year Book will be despatched to them when it is published.

4. The rates of subscription remain unchanged at £3.00 per annum (or £1.50 for those not requiring the Year Book).

5. Overseas members are asked, wherever possible, to send their cheques or International money orders drawn on Banks with a U.K. (London, usually) branch office. In this way, their cheques can be made out in Sterling, thus saving firstly any conversion charges when the cheques are paid, and secondly problems of equivalent currency in the ever-fluctuating rates of exchange.

It is possible for overseas members to combine their subscription with their R.H.S. membership (due 1st January each year) but it is essential to inform the R.H.S. office how the monies are to be apportioned. In the past, several subscriptions intended for the Group have been long delayed or even never reached us at all.

6. Those members who have queries about their subscriptions, before completing the slip or sending their cheques, should not hesitate to telephone the Treasurer (available most evenings after 6.30 p.m.). With the new index of members now complete, an answer should be possible, in most cases, within ten seconds.

DAVID FARNES.

RETIREMENT OF THE GROUP'S CHAIRMAN. I wrote on Page 1 "we could not let Major Magor go with a mere mention", and there follows an appreciation by Sir Giles Loder, his colleague in Rhododendron and Camellia matters over many years. Sir Giles serves on the Committee of the Rhododendron and Camellia Group, with Major Magor as his Chairman. In the case of the Rhododendron and Camellia Committee, however, the position has for many years been the reverse, with Major Magor a Committee Member and Sir Giles his Chairman. It is understandable, therefore, that I was delighted that Sir Giles consented to provide, on behalf of the Group, this appreciation.

"It is unfortunate news for all Rhododendron enthusiasts that Walter Magor has asked to retire from the Chairmanship of the Group,

PLEASE ATTEND TO THE SUBSCRIPTIONS SLIP ON PAGE 1

OVERLEAF, IF THERE IS NEED.

due to pressure of his commitments in the West.

Almost 10 years ago, faced with the prospect of the loss of the annual Rhododendron Year Book due to financial reasons, the Group was re-formed with Walter as its Chairman. He set about the task of both continuing the publication of the Year Book, albeit in a soft back form, and, of equal importance, creating a new enthusiasm in the Group, which quickly gathered strength. Tours were planned, many with Walter's own hard work and guidance, and successfully carried out. Regional branches were formed; and exhibits were staged at the R.H.S. shows.

He has been editor of the Year Book since 1974, and members of the Group will be delighted to hear he is continuing this task, and thus keep in touch with all its activities.

G.L.

CAPTAIN COLLINGWOOD INGRAM.

Captain Collingwood Ingram is thought of in connection with many activities, and among gardeners his work for the ornamental cherries probably comes to mind first. However, he has made his mark in the world of the rhododendron too, and enthusiasts have good reason to be grateful for his many and diverse contributions. One activity not specifically mentioned is his work as a member of the Rhododendron and Camellia Committee. His name is so recorded in the earliest listing in my possession, which is the 1953 Year Book's list of the 1952 Committee, and it was still there right up to the 1978 Committee - by itself a notable achievement.

He has shown many plants of outstanding interest or quality at the R.H.S. Halls, and knowing that many rhododendrons of his own raising were among them I did a quick count of those listed in the 1969 Hybrids Handbook. I logged 35 entries and noted among them an F.C.C. and eight A.M.s. This is not, of course, the entire spectrum but it gives an idea of his achievement.

Captain Collingwood Ingram has distinguished himself in so many spheres that it is not surprising that both 'The Times' and 'The Daily Telegraph' drew attention to the centenary.

With the kind permission of Mr Alan Hamilton I am able to reproduce below an extract from the London Diary in 'The Times' for Tuesday 28th October 1980.

" CHERRY RIPE. " " This week sees the centenary of the birth of one of Britain's outstanding contemporary gardeners. What is most remarkable about Collingwood Ingram is that he approaches his hundredth birthday still very much alive and tending his 15 acres at Benenden in Kent with the aid of an electrically-propelled wheel chair.

Known universally in the botanic world as "Cherry" Ingram, this remarkable man holds the Victoria Medal of Honour, the Royal Horticultural Society's highest award. But his achievements range far beyond the garden; in his time he has been an exceptional traveller and ornithologist, and only this year was writing in Country Life on great tits.

Ingram has been credited with the introduction of a considerable number of rare plants into Britain, including a variety of broom which bears his name, Cytisus ingramii, brought from north-west Spain. He really made his name as an expert in Japanese ornamental cherry trees; once, on a visit to Japan, he was told by botanists there that a particular variety had become extinct. Not so, said Ingram; he had examples in his Kent garden and was able to reintroduce the tree to its native land.

Friends report that he remains remarkably alert for his age. Only five years ago he returned after many years to the inhospitable island of Spitzbergen, which at the age of 95 must have broken some regulation or other. Not bad for a man who has never had a conventional job in his life, and who as a child was considered by his father, the newspaper proprietor Sir William Ingram, too sickly to go to school. "

On the birthday, 30th October, Peterborough of 'The Daily Telegraph' had the following passage in his 'London Day by Day', and

I am grateful to him for giving permission to reproduce it here.

"DIGGING IN." "No one could be better suited to receive the first "thank you" award from the National Gardens Scheme than Capt. Collingwood Ingram, known throughout the horticultural world as "Cherry", who today celebrates his 100th birthday at his home in Benenden, Kent.

Now an independent charity raising more than £150,000 a year, the scheme has been able to put aside some funds to have stainless steel trowels made for those owners who have had their gardens open continuously for 21 years or more. Of the 1,450 members, at least 250 already qualify.

Capt. Ingram, whose home "The Grange" boasts a unique array of trees, hybrid rhododendrons and the largest eucalyptus tree in England, began contributing to the scheme in 1933, six years after it started. Single-handed he has raised sums well into four figures, which is the more remarkable when one considers that until quite recently admission was "pegged" on one shilling, or "bob-a-nob." In his first year he managed £9 3s 6d. "

To these notices in distinguished places I most gladly add the congratulations and best wishes of the Rhododendron and Camellia Group.

1981 GROUP TOUR:-NORTH-EAST ENGLAND AND SOUTH-EAST SCOTLAND. It is now possible to give some news of the progress made so far with arrangements for the 1981 Tour. The dates within which the Tour will take place are Sunday May 10th to Saturday May 16th. In broad terms, this is the full week before Chelsea Show, making it possible to "do" both without overlap.

The area chosen extends from just north of Leeds to the Scottish Border Country well south of Edinburgh. This is an area unfamiliar to many, and one where rhododendron gardens do not cluster so closely as in, say, Argyll, Cornwall or the South-East. Consequently the road-route from the first garden visited to the last may well turn out to be about 200 miles, according to the final arrangements; and according to individual tastes it might be thought worth it for the scenery alone. Until arrangements have been finalized with all owners of the gardens which the Group's organizers hope to include, it is not possible to name them with certainty. Those being considered and investigated comprise Castle Howard, Harewood, Harlow Car and Pickering, in Yorkshire; Beaufront Castle, Craggside, Eglington Hall and Howick, in Northumberland; and The Hirsell and Dawyck, in South-East Scotland.

At the moment I can supply no other information, but expect that by the time of the next bulletin matters will have gone a stage further. The Tour Organizer is:-

T.N.N.Glass, Esq., (Group member),
"Evensong", 8, Nun's Walk,
Virginia Water, Surrey GU25 4RT.

INTERNATIONAL CAMELLIA SOCIETY - CONFERENCE AND TOUR, 1981.

Sir Giles Loder has kindly provided me with information about the forthcoming Conference and Tour, in Western Europe on this occasion. It is conveniently split into three parts, which are, briefly, as follows. (a) Approximately 21st to 25th March. Meeting in Northern Spain (Santiago de Compostela), including Vigo Show and visits to Camellia gardens nearby. (b) 31st March to 4th April. Jersey, C.I. Conference, functions and visits. (c) 5th to 7th April. Guernsey and Sark. Visits. I understand from Sir Giles that numbers are expected to reach 200 at certain places, with 40 from Australia and New Zealand, U.S.A. and Japan.

It looks like a full and interesting schedule and I hope I have not over-simplified. Fuller information with details of hotel arrangements and place-names can be obtained from the Membership Representative of the U.K. and W.European Region, who is:-

H.J.Tooby, Esq.,
"Acorns", Chapel Lane,
Bransford, Worcester, WR6 5JG, England.

DAY TOUR DURING CHELSEA WEEK. A tradition has grown up that a Group visit should be arranged for one of the days of Chelsea week, and at a recent Committee Meeting it was decided that a visit should again be attempted on the lines of those of the last two years. As yet the arrangements are not concluded, but the owners of one or two gardens in the Home Counties are being contacted and consulted, and with luck there should be an announcement in the next bulletin including the choice of day. In principle, at least, the outing is "on".

RHODODENDRON HANDBOOK 1980 - "The Species Handbook". Just a reminder that this is now on sale and should be thought about by all rhododendron enthusiasts. A note about the price including postage appears under the Hon. Secretary's section, and a review by the Hon. Bulletin Editor comes later on.

YEAR BOOK 1980. The last news of the new Year Book is the good news that this year excellent progress has been maintained throughout, the new printer having been co-operative. It is still hoped all round that the target of "by December" can be met.

THE NEW JOURNAL OF GARDEN HISTORY. I can now add to the information about this new Journal, and do so on a later page.

BOTANIC GARDENS, NESS (UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL). I have received a letter from Mr J.K.Hulme, Director of the Botanic Gardens, Ness, giving information about events arranged there for May 1981 which are sure to be of interest to members. The month of May is being designated as a Rhododendron Month and the main event will be a meeting on Saturday 16th, which will be addressed by Dr. James Cullen, Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, on 'A survey of Rhododendron Species', and by Mr. M.C.Pratt on 'Hybridisation of the Azalea Section of Rhododendron'. Both speakers have contributed to the Year Books, Dr. Cullen has lectured to the Group at Vincent Square, and Mr. Pratt recently contributed to the "Northern Garden" correspondence in the bulletin. I should add that the day chosen happens to be the "return" day of the North Eastern Tour, and if you have ever wanted to prove that a good way home from Dawyck or Hawick might be via Cheshire, you could try it next year; or, of course, simply go to Ness for a few days about then.

CAMELLIA STAMPS FROM CHINA. Sir Giles Loder has been most helpful to the Editor, and therefore to the Group, this issue. He has also supplied this interesting information about a new issue of postage stamps in China, which were shown to him by friends who have recently returned from there. It is a set of ten stamps bearing ten different 'portraits' of camellias. One of them is the yellow camellia, news of which is beginning to spread in this country. Having had the opportunity of examining examples Sir Giles states that they are extremely attractive and well carried out - certainly worth further investigation by anyone interested. As to where they might be seen or obtained in this country I have no particular knowledge; an obvious gambit for an initial approach would be to contact one of the Stanley Gibbons type of stamp dealer.

MOXLEY TOURS - RAOUL MOXLEY TRAVEL. The leaflets enclosed with this issue of the bulletin draw attention to the kind of tour in which the firm specializes. The two tours in China have quite specific horticultural bias, and may be thought of as forerunners of what may well develop into a regular feature. I know of one other venture in China, at present being worked out, which it seems to me is going to be very exciting for a certain number of people. When I know more about it I will try to sound rather less mysterious. Meanwhile, anyone interested in this type of plant-oriented or garden-oriented type of tour can obtain much more detailed information by contacting Raoul Moxley Travel direct and mentioning the bulletin.

BRANCH ACTIVITIES.

SOUTH-EAST BRANCH. There is always some kind of winter event during the season of dark evenings. Last year there was a get-together with a rhododendron slide-talk; this year camellias brought members

together on Friday 7th November at The High Beeches, by kind permission of Edward and Anne Boscawen with whose co-operation the ladies were able to organize a buffet. As might be guessed, thirsts did not go unattended. Miss Cicely Perring gave a talk illustrated with slides on "Camellias from their introduction into the United Kingdom until today". This covered a lot of ground and proved to be more than usually interesting for a variety of reasons. Not only did we see some of Mr David Trehane's slides of modern garden and greenhouse types, including some of the newest, not yet introduced into commerce; there were also a few colour prints of a or the 'new' yellow camellia, and Miss Perring's own oral news of a red camellia capable of strongly scenting a whole courtyard. This seems to presage a hectic time ahead for committed breeders - or the rest of us hope so. Miss Perring is a very busy person and we were lucky to get her to give up her evening to us; however, I have asked her to try to find another hour or two for an article or notes on these intriguing developments in Japan. I love her story about the red camellia, which we really must get into print somehow.

WESSEX BRANCH. Mr Philip Urlwin-Smith has come forward with a most friendly offer. Not so long ago he was in the throes of a mighty move of house and garden - I seem to remember tales of large magnolias and a eucryphia of fifteen or twenty feet. The worst now seems to be over, for he tells me he will be pleased to receive any member of the Group, at any time (I assume this means during hours of daylight) only provided they check by telephone first to ensure that he can look after them. Tea or coffee or something similar can be taken for granted. TELEPHONE: - ASCOT 20931.
It was a pleasure to type that.

EDITORIAL.

SPARE COPIES OF RECENT BULLETINS. In response to the recent note about spares of back numbers 6-11 inclusive, a few members have asked for copies and will be receiving them along with this issue. There are still some copies available of all these numbers.

MAGNOLIA 'SUNDEW'. I have heard a number of people discuss the identity of the magnolia so attractively reproduced on the front cover of the 1978 Year Book. From a fortunate chance remark in a letter from Sir Peter Smithers I learn that it is his picture of 'Sundew', which receives very favourable mention in his article in the same Year Book.

'CAMELLIA CHOICE' CONTRIBUTIONS. For this issue we have an interesting note from Mr Nigel Holman of Chyverton, whose choice is C. reticulata 'Captain Rawes'. As I hope to keep this feature going for a good few more bulletins I again exhort possible contributors to sit down with a pen or typewriter and let me hear about their choice. Lots of members have mentioned their interest in the feature, so their trouble would be appreciated.

RHODODENDRON 'PENGAEER,' A.M.1911. ('CORNISH CROSS' GREX.)
I should like further information, if available, about this rhododendron and hope one or more members will be able to provide it, most particularly news of where one can be seen. What I know at the moment is practically all contained in the 1969 Handbook Part II, page 325, where the raiser's name is given simply as 'Llewelyn'. I also know that the colour should be blood-red, unlike other clones of 'Cornish Cross'.

My reason for enquiring is that I suspect I have a young plant of it, which has flowered twice so far and is now well prepared to flower next year, with eight trusses. I purchased it from one of our most reputable and highly-respected specialist nurserymen as, simply, 'Cornish Cross', and it certainly has all the look of it, A.M. and all. However, the flower-colour is a rich blood-red, give or take a little personal bias; already, at two feet high, the bark is promising to be right, and the foliage is so like that of my 'Exbury Cornish Cross' that the temptation to say it is a 'Cornish Cross' is irresistible. To find that it is 'Pengaer' would solve the mystery, so what seems to be needed is a 'sur le vif' comparison. An enquiry to the nurserymen as to their source for my plant led nowhere. A

first step might be the knowledge of where Mr Llewelyn gardened, or raised the plant, and one day I may find this. Best, though, would be information as to the whereabouts of an authenticated plant, which I would hope to be able to see eventually.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR. In a recent conversation with the Group Treasurer, Mr David Farnes, he commented on the fact that the bulletin does not provide a "Letters to the Editor" facility, and offered to supply the first contribution. As it happened, I already had on hand two communications which were well suited to this form of reproduction, and my answer was "Yes". So we are off to a good start. Thank you, Mr Farnes.

The main purpose of this note is to encourage readers to keep the feature going (I can't) and to signify where a contribution they send is intended for use in this way.

SECRETARY'S NOTICES. A copy of the new Constitution is enclosed for each member. Now a note about the new 1980 Rhododendron Handbook (Species in Cultivation).

Members will have noticed that the price of the Handbook (including postage and packing) shown in the RHS list "Books for Gardeners" has increased to £6-75. Our original supply has now been sold, and from the date you receive this Bulletin the new price of £6-75 will apply. A further increase may be necessary when postal charges go up in the New Year. J.W.O.

CAMELLIA CHOICE. For this issue Mr Nigel Holman has sent us his choice from Chyverton, Cornwall.

"One of the advantages of gardening in Cornwall is that its climate is near enough the best in the United Kingdom for the growing of camellias. This makes the choice of just one variety all the more difficult, especially as camellias, (or their raisers ?), seem to breed like rabbits. At every show, some new introduction appears that puts in the shade that much-loved specimen that has been your pride and joy for many years past. Taste being so personal, I am always hesitant to recommend; my father would not allow C.'Donation' past the garden gate, and in my imagination, C.'Drama Girl' would be more likely found performing in some cheap bordello rather than at the Old Vic. Despite these reservations, the flowers of C.reticulata 'Captain Rawes', (introduced from China in 1824), have a refinement of quality that is to me unmatched by its modern rivals, and it is this variety that would be my choice.

I recognise that my choice is on the borderline of hardiness. However, it has been growing here in a sheltered corner of the house, well protected from the North and East, since 1935. During the intervening years it has survived some horrendous winters, and I am confident that, given a sheltered wall, it is worth a try anywhere in the South of England, or on the Western coasts of the British Isles".

Nigel Holman.

CAMELLIAS - AN INEXPENSIVE BOOKLET ON CULTIVATION. Mr. H.J.Tooby (mentioned earlier in connection with the 1981 Camellia Conference) has sent me a copy of a booklet which the British and West European region of the I.C.S. publish on cultivation - "A Beginner's Guide". Up to now the price has been 20p, but as it is due for revision and reprinting it is doubtful whether this price can be held. For those who wish to learn what might be called the rudiments of camellia growing, perhaps to expand their reading later, this concise little eight-page compendium will be an ideal primer. Further information as to availability from Mr Tooby, whose address is given on page 4.

Rhododendron succothii (Davidian).

By Cyril Barnes.

In 1957, I was making a modest order to Jack Drake when I noticed that he was offering R.eclectum at, I think, 7/6d. As I had never seen this species I ordered it and in due course it arrived and was planted. For some years it grew well, and having no doubt about its provenance, particularly checking the shortness of the petiole, I had no question in labelling it accordingly. Some eight years later Mr. Davidian paid me a visit. After feeling his way down the severe declivity, which is the garden, he turned a corner and at twelve yards range stopped in his tracks saying "Cyril,

you have got something special there". No wheedling or cajoling would elicit more than that he intended to name it a new species.

As it was, I had to wait until the 1966 Year Book until I found it was to become R.succothii. As soon as possible, I rang Jack Drake who told me that there had been little or no demand for his plant and so apart from one he kept for himself the rest had been thrown away.

I have not seen Jack Drake's plant but I have seen the one (or perhaps one of them) at Crarae, which, planted on a 45° slope was obviously not thriving as it should.

My own plant thrives, being somewhat over 6 feet tall and as much across: there is little doubt it would have been a good deal larger except for the fact that for three or four years I have regularly taken cuttings, some twenty or so each time, with the result that flowering shoots tend to get given away, but timed aright new growth, i.e. three to four shoots appear instead of one. These cuttings have been sent to a green-fingered friend, who admits that they are very tricky to root.

R.succothii is a neat plant at six feet but it seems to me to have the potentiality of R.fulgens which I know can make 20 feet. The flowers, which usually appear in late January are small but of a dark penetrating red, indeed the very thing for bringing warmth into the house when all else is snow-laden.

Perhaps I have not done sufficient research to prove my point, but I am satisfied, because of the dates, that this is a Ludlow, Sherriff and Hicks collection of 1949 under the title of aff.fulgens. Davidian in R.&C. Year Book 1966 seems to support this.

F.C.B.

HONEY FUNGUS.

by Dan E. Mayers.

I began to plant rhododendrons some twenty years ago, and within a few years, Honey Fungus began to attack the plants sporadically. I attributed this to the presence of dead roots and stumps in the woodland, and made strenuous efforts to clean up the soil, but the attacks continued.

No cure being known, when next I visited Africa I asked my good friend, M'bongo, the witch doctor - a Cambridge graduate, Oxford graduates being esteemed overly theoretical - if he had any suggestions. He immediately gave me a complicated ritual, involving dancing maidens in the moonlight. "But, M'bongo, will it work?" I asked. "Dan, what have you got to lose?" was his reply, thereby demonstrating the superior pragmatic qualities of the Cambridge graduate. On my return home I tried to put his prescription into practice but, due to the permissive society of the 60's, it appeared that Britain was fresh out of maidens. My friends who were prepared to take part in the ceremony and do the manly thing were saddened by the prospect of having to bring their own maidens. I have no doubt, however, that when a dozen suitable maidens are found, the Honey Fungus will vanish overnight.

Meanwhile, I approached Mrs. Victoria Bray, discoverer of Armillatox, and she visited us and demonstrated the proper use of her discovery in attacking Honey Fungus. It works. Providing the disease is caught in time, one can definitely kill the fungus where it attacks the roots and bark and in the surrounding soil. We have saved a substantial number of plants under attack by the fungus through prompt action, and definitely commend the treatment as highly useful.

Sometimes the fungus completely girdles the trunk of the plant at ground level, suggesting that there is no hope for the plant even if the fungus is killed. This is not invariably true. I tend to look on such a plant as a potential giant-sized rooted cutting. One cleans away the dead bark, then heaps up earth so that the still living bark is covered to a depth of six inches or more. Trim off most of the foliage to conserve evaporation, water well, and sit back and hope. A useful percentage of plants so treated manage to send out fresh roots and survive. Much depends on their degree of dehydration at the time that an effort is made to save them. It is worth trying; as M'bongo would say, what have you got to lose?

Incidentally, the above-ground fruit of Honey Fungus is a

delicious sort-of Mushroom; it goes particularly well with Squirrel Pie - breaking two stones with one mosquito, so to speak.

WHO SAYS WE'VE HAD A ROTTEN SUMMER ?

By David N. Farnes, Essex.

Whilst a great many people resident in Great Britain have been complaining about the rotten summer of 1980, we in Essex have enjoyed a very good summer, both for the growing of rhododendrons and from the viewpoint of fine holiday weather.

After a comparatively mild winter with less rainfall than in the two previous years we had a dry spring in April and May, especially the latter month with slightly less than half an inch of rain. This allowed of a splendid flowering season with few blooms being spoilt by wet conditions, and just when it seemed that we would have to bring out the hoses there followed two very wet months (very wet, that is, for Essex) with 3 inches of rain in June and an even better July with just over 5 inches. The average rainfall for both these months is about 2 inches each. Needless to say, the rhododendrons responded in grand style and made splendid new growth, and the leaves on many plants are the largest I have yet seen in the garden in 8 years.

For the traditional holiday months of August and September, we returned to dry conditions with some long spells of dry, warm weather but not too hot. Whilst the rhododendrons ripened their new growth and produced masses of flower buds for 1981, we basked on deck chairs in the sunshine. By the end of August hosepipes were essential, in this garden at least, to support the plants, and much hand watering continued throughout September, in which less than an inch of rain was recorded, and most of this in a short period of a few days in the middle of the month.

A great disappointment since we moved to this garden 8 years ago has been the non-flowering of the evergreen azaleas. With our dry sandy gravel as subsoil, it has been impossible to achieve any worthwhile new growth even with intense watering by hose, but these plants have produced several inches of growth this year and we have high hopes of some flowers, at long last, next year - providing of course the winter is not too severe.

For reasons best known to themselves, many people of Essex go elsewhere for their annual holidays, and our friends and neighbours all returned this year in gloom, complaining of poor weather in the West and North and South and were astonished at our bronzed faces. With glee we told them they should have "gone East young man", and our rhododendrons nodded in agreement.

TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY YEARS OF RHODODENDRONS IN BRITAIN - A brief background history of rhododendron hybrids in Britain.

By Anne Boscawen.

The first large-flowered rhododendron to be grown in Britain was Rhododendron maximum, imported from the South Eastern United States about 1736. The name means very large, and the big pink flower trusses with their characteristic dark blotch appeared very exotic at that date, and made a great impression. The plant also proved hardy and easily pleased on suitably acid soil. An Asiatic cousin Rhododendron ponticum (from Pontus) arrived about 1763, from Asia Minor. This is the shrub now commonly known here as the 'wild rhododendron', and it has become a pestilential weed in some areas, although the mauve flowers shot with pink are attractive. In 1803 came Rhododendron caucasicum, with pale yellow or white flowers, from the Caucasus. The early nurserymen crossed and re-crossed these three available species, and produced the first hybrid rhododendrons, among them 'The Bride', white with green spotting, 'Joseph Whitworth', a dark plum colour, 'Old Port', a dark wine red, and 'Fastuosum Flore Pleno', a double-flowered lavender. They are all notably hardy, and many are still worthy garden plants today.

Early in the 19th century, explorers in the Eastern Himalaya, among them the great botanist Sir Joseph Hooker, sent home seed of many exciting new species of rhododendron found growing there. These plants started to flower in this country about 1850, and among them

were the great blood red Rhododendron arboreum, (the name means tree-like), unfortunately tender in its best forms, R.campanulatum, (bell-shaped), mauve, but with strong bluish undertones, R.thomsonii, red, with silvered oval-shaped leaves, and R.campylocarpum, (with bent fruits), similar but with bright yellow flowers.

The competition to produce the most sensational new rhododendron hybrid now became intense. The pedigrees were kept in absolute secrecy, new varieties were closely guarded, and dishonesty was not unknown. Rhododendrons were now big business, and unfortunately, in order to reproduce the new varieties in quantity, it became the practice to graft them on to root stocks of the very vigorous Rhododendron ponticum. This is the reason why so many early hybrids revert to mauve; but nowadays grafting techniques are much improved, and this is much less likely to happen.

In 1849 Rhododendron griffithianum came to this country from Sikkin. It is named in honour of W.Griffith, Superintendent of Calcutta Botanic Garden. This plant is only hardy in the British Isles in a very few favoured localities, but it had much larger flowers than anything introduced so far, and a very sweet scent. The buds are often flushed pink and open to a dazzling white. The hybridisers seized upon it with renewed excitement, and from this time two distinct lines of breeding developed, the professional nurserymen concentrating upon hardiness and vigour, looking for size and symmetry in the flower trusses, and the deep-coloured blotch inherited with the cast iron constitution of Rhododendron maximum, while the amateurs, the owners of the great private estates, following their own individual tastes and able to provide ideal growing conditions, produced some very lovely if sometimes difficult plants, by crossing the new species.

Among the professional introductions at that time are such famous names as 'Britannia', 'Pink Pearl', 'Goner Waterer', 'Boddaertianum', 'Corona', 'Bagshot Ruby' and 'Coombe Royal', while the amateurs' more fastidious beauties include the fabulous Loderi, with flowers even bigger than Rhododendron griffithianum, Luscombei, 'Penjerick' and 'Cornubia'.

By this time, about 1917, the great ambition was to produce a really clear, vivid red or orange rhododendron, free from the persistent trace of mauve inherited from the old hardy R.ponticum, so that when George Forrest sent back R.griersonianum, among many other treasures, from Western China, it seemed almost too good to be true. The flower, borne on a somewhat lanky shrub of moderate size, is a flaming geranium-scarlet, without a trace of blue, and the plant has proved quite reasonably hardy in our climate. The distinctive colour can be plainly seen influencing its descendants, 'Tally Ho', 'Romany Chai', 'Arthur Osborn', 'Sarita Loder', 'May Day', 'Elizabeth', 'Vanessa' and many others.

In the thirties, vast numbers of new hybrid rhododendrons were registered, including some of the new yellows and oranges, such as 'Souvenir of W.C.Sloccock', 'Unique', 'Lady Bessborough' and 'Fabia'. After the Second World War, these were used as parents in their turn, producing such lovely plants as 'Hawk', 'Jalisco' and 'John Barr Stevenson' among the yellows. But an enormous range of parent plants was now available, and hybrids were registered in hundreds, in a range of colours and types.

However, among all these, only a handful have in fact so far received the Award of Garden Merit, indicating 'a plant of proved and outstanding excellence for garden use'. Among these few are the following twelve hybrids.

Loder's White	Elizabeth	Blue Diamond
Albatross	May Day	Gilpinense
Letty Edwards	Britannia	Seta
Susan	Goner Waterer	Tessa

In 1947 there appeared at Chelsea Show a new star in the rhododendron world, Rhododendron yakushianum, from the Island of Yakushima in Japan, where it is a native. Dwarf, compact, with firm glossy leaves with a thick indumentum, the flowers are white, flushed pink in bud, and large for the size of the plant. It is also hardy in our climate, and displays that perfect balance of foliage and flower that commands instant homage. Having received an unanimous First

Class Certificate at Chelsea Show, it has since been crossed, some say, with everything except a toothbrush! These new hybrids are now starting to appear at the shows and in the nurserymen's catalogues.

This is only a very brief account of the origins of some of the better-known hybrids. Rhododendrons can have leaves two feet long, and others less than half an inch. Some nurseries now specialise in dwarfs a few inches high, and it is possible to have a collection of miniature rhododendrons in a space a few yards square. The best place to see them all is at the Rhododendron Show, held in early May at the Royal Horticultural Society's Hall in Vincent Square, Westminster, a magnificent annual spectacle of colour and interest.

----- Anne Boscawen. -----

ALKALINE WATER SUPPLY PROBLEM - see Bulletin No. 13.

I have received a further note on this subject from Sir Peter Smithers, and quote from his letter of 27th August.

"My inquiries about acidifying alkaline water produced a very good simple device for injecting a liquid into the waterline, but no clear indication of a particular acid that should be used in this way other than hydrochloric acid, and certainly no good experience of its use in that manner. On the other hand Macpenny's came up with a device with the unpromising name of 'Waterwitch', which seems designed to do just what I want. However, it is expensive (£515 ex works), bulky, and by no means simple. In fact I found it too difficult to understand the implications, and before embarking upon such an outlay thought I had better discuss the performance of the machine on a sample of my water supply, next time I am in England. The question is whether it would handle the amounts of water involved when we have four waterlines running simultaneously for some considerable time."

(By now there may have been further developments although it has not, presumably, been a suitable time of the year for carrying out any prolonged tests. A good breakthrough here would be of practical importance to a number of people. I am grateful to Sir Peter for his helpful information and will report anything further which comes to my notice, from whatever source. Editor.)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR SECTION.

Sir;

I was most interested to read the article, entitled "The Rhody and the Ivy", by F.C.Barnes, in Bulletin No. 13. I too have found ivy to be averse to climbing rhododendrons and an excellent ground cover for the area between the plants, but it is a nuisance when allowed to grow over the root area in close proximity to the main stems of the rhododendrons. The ivy layers and roots itself into the leaf-mould mulch intended as a food for the rhododendrons which are thus starved, or would be so, if I did not remove the ivy from a circle around the stem of the plant. The ivy shoots or runners are cut with secateurs (not pulled) so as not to disturb the remaining ground cover, and thus a neat barrier is formed as a retainer for the leaf-mould. This acts just as satisfactorily as a circle of rabbit wire used for the same purpose by many growers of rhododendrons, but looks infinitely more pleasing and natural. It does not corrode or rust but is self-regenerating and costs nothing.

I have not yet, myself, got around to introducing other varieties of ivy to break up the monotony of the uniform dull green ground cover, but obviously this could be done, thereby adding further interest to the woodland part of the garden.

Yours etc., David N. Farnes.

(An extract from a letter from Mr Nigel Holman of Chyverton:-

"- - - 1981 looks like being an exceptional year; all the genera in the garden are covered in flower bud - very much better than 1980. The Rhododendron Group chose the wrong year for their invasion of the Duchy." - - - "The garden gate is always open here for any member of the Group or their friends."

Yours sincerely, Nigel Holman.

Dear Mr Lowes,

I was interested in the article in the 1979/80 Year Book by Dan Mayers, about Leslie Slinger's 'Summer Flame'. It is not a rhododendron which I know but from what Dan Mayers says should be well worth propagating.

I entirely agree with his views on some of the other R. didymum hybrids, of which 'Redcap' is a typical example. To me the flowers are far too dark a red and although they light up most beautifully if the sun shines through them, with a dwarf plant of this nature this is not too easy to achieve.

As it happens I also have one of my favourites among the didymum hybrids, namely 'Lava Flow'. In the Handbook this is listed as ?didymum x griersonianum and raised by Sunningdale in 1955. I remember that in one of Sunningdale's old catalogues they stated that it was a particularly bright red form of didymum x griersonianum produced in their nurseries by their Chief Propagator and Hybridist, who I believe from memory was a Mr White. In their own catalogue they certainly omitted the ? before didymum.

This is a rhododendron of extremely low compact spreading habit with good leaves and large trusses of handsome bells of vivid scarlet and darker spots in the throat. Provided it is in an open position it rarely grows higher than about 9 inches, and I have four or five plants down a bank which in the latter part of July are a mass of flower and wholly justify their name. Fortunately it is a plant which comes easily from cuttings in the mist frame.

My reason for writing this little note is because this rhododendron does not appear to be very widely known and is certainly about the best I have come across for planting on a bank or slope.

Yours sincerely, Logan A. Edgar.

(An extract from a letter from Mr Edmund Wright of Arduaine):-

'Flowering prospects in Argyll during 1981. Group members, contemplating a visit to the West of Scotland next spring may well enjoy one of the best seasons for blossom in recent years. The area, well known for its magnificent large-leaf series (Sorry, sub-sections, what a mouthful that is, series slips easily off the tongue, sub-section sounds like something out of 1984) promises an above-average display. Our largest plant of R. sinogrande must be carrying well over 200 buds, and most other species are similarly laden. I have observed the same degree of bud set in other gardens, and 1981 should amply make up for the failure in the two series concerned, last spring. One can never see all of these fine rhododendrons in flower at the same time; you would have to come in late February or early March to see R. giganteum in flower, perhaps as late as the second or third week in May for R. falconeri. April is possibly the best month in a normal season, for then the majority of the two series should be out in one or other of the gardens visited. But even in early May there will still be trusses to be seen, although they may not be at their best at that time. But never mind, in May there will be a great variety of other rhododendrons in flower and whether your interest is in species or hybrids, 1981 should not be disappointing. " E.A.T.W.

DAVID HANNAH OF STONEFIELD CASTLE. (Editor's note). I had almost finished assembling this Bulletin when I heard the sad news of the death of David Hannah, one of the rhododendron world's distinguished head gardeners. I had several hours with him in May, going round the famous garden and plants to which he was absolutely devoted; he was in top form and there was no hint of the terminal illness so near. He was well liked and a real character; he will be sadly missed. KJWL.

IN BRIEF. (1) OLDER YEAR BOOKS. Demand has grown and all years 1949 to 69 incl. are requested. (2) Members interested in Ingwersen's "Manual of Alpine Plants" at reduced price for groups of five copies, please write to me. (3) Similarly for details of the new Quarterly Journal of Garden History. (4) There are still some copies of the book "Rothschild Rhododendrons" available to members at £20-00, inc. post. See Bulletin No. 11; write to Mr Peter Barber direct. (5) A review of the new 1980 Species Handbook (N.B. Price £6-75 inc) appears in the 1980-81 Year Book. Further observations and notes in Bulletin No. 15.