

RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP.  
BULLETIN NO. 16.      APRIL 1981.

CALENDAR FOR NEXT FEW MONTHS.

1981.

MAY 1 NESS (University of Liverpool) 'RHODODENDRON MONTH' begins.  
4 (Bank Holiday). Leonardslee open. See "Gardens Open".  
12 GROUP TOUR BEGINS.  
N.B. 9 GROUP VISIT TO TWO GARDENS - SEE BELOW.  
16 NESS. Meeting day for two lectures. See Bulletin No. 14.  
17 Group Tour ends.  
19 RHS CHELSEA SHOW BEGINS - FELLOWS' DAY.  
20 - 22 - do - - Open to public.  
23 South East Branch visit to Heaselands - see "Branch Activit-  
24 The High Beeches - private view. See Bulletin No. 15./ies."  
25 (Bank Holiday). Leonardslee open.  
31 The High Beeches - private view.  
JUN 16 RHS Show. Early Summer Show.  
17 - do - - do -  
JUL 14 RHS Show.  
15 - do -

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MATTERS OF IMMEDIATE OR CURRENT INTEREST.

GROUP DAY OUTING ON 9TH MAY.

In recent years it has usually been possible to arrange a one-day Group outing on one of the days of Chelsea Show week, as noted in Bulletin No. 14, and it was hoped that such an outing could be a regular annual event. The sequence has had to be broken this year because it has not proved possible to make arrangements with garden owners for the week of the Show. Arrangements have, however, been made for visits to two gardens on Saturday 9th May, as follows. The brevity of notice is regretted, and is due to these difficulties.

In the morning, assembling for 10 a.m. in the Car Park, the party will visit the Royal Horticultural Society's garden at Wisley, by courtesy of the Director, Mr C.D.Brickell. The Restaurant will be open, so lunch can be taken there if desired. In the afternoon, (2.30 p.m.), the garden at Hethersett will be visited, by courtesy of Lord and Lady Adam Gordon. The location is Littleworth Cross, Seale, Farnham, Surrey. A cup of tea will be available.

It will be necessary for the various organizers concerned to know the scale of numbers of members attending, and the tear-off slip below is provided for this purpose. Will members wishing to attend please complete the slip and send it to the Chairman as soon as possible ?

P.T.O. FOR NOTE ON LOCATIONS.

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PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED SLIP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO:-

Mr Alan Hardy,  
Hillhurst Farm,  
Hythe, Kent.

I/We wish to take part in the one-day gardens visit on Saturday 9th May.

FROM:-      NAME \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

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It is assumed that members attending will know, or be able to ascertain, their route to Wisley. The entrance to the garden is alongside the shop, and both face on to the main area of the Car Park, which is a large one. The route from Wisley to Hethersett will be best ascertained mutually, at Wisley before leaving.

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#### BRANCH ACTIVITIES.

SOUTH EAST BRANCH.      Talk by Roy Lancaster on 20th March. This meeting was an outstanding success. The attendance was so good that the Village Hall at Chelwood Gate was filled to just short of overflowing. Mr Lancaster was in good form, and his slides were of that high quality that gives to the non-photographer the impression that it is all very easy. But even without the generous lacing of slides his enthusiasm and wide knowledge would have sufficed to keep us all enthralled for the hour and a half, which seemed to slip by in what might have been about ten minutes had the clock not been there to give the real time.

Branch visit to Heaselands on Saturday 23rd May. For their next meeting the South East Branch will foregather at Heaselands, by kind permission of Mrs Ernest Kleinwort. After a picnic lunch in the tearoom, beginning at 1 p.m., there will be a tour of the garden. Heaselands is one mile south of Haywards Heath Hospital on the A273 to Burgess Hill, and is a garden of about 20 acres, with many interesting features apart from rhododendrons.

ARGYLL BRANCH. A little misleading as a heading, for as yet there is no Argyll Branch. However I recently had a letter from member Mr Mervyn S. Kessell of Tigh A Chnoic, Glengilp Farm, Ardrishaig, Argyll, in which he cogently sets out his views on the need for the formation of such a Branch. The relevant part of his letter reads as follows: "As a keen Rhododendron grower I must admit that I am rather surprised that there is no existing branch of the Group in the Argyll area. Since as you are aware we have probably one of the finest collections of gardens which specialise in the genus anywhere in the world, I feel that the lack of a branch in this area is something which really ought to be corrected. Having had a fairly long conversation with Ed Wright on this matter, we believe that there would be no difficulty in attracting at least twelve members. Therefore I would be very much obliged if through the pages of the bulletin it could be made known that there is interest in the formation of a local branch, and that anyone so interested could contact me, at the above address. "

The co-operation of the Bulletin and its Honorary Editor may be taken for granted.

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DO YOU INTEND TO COMPLETE AND RETURN THE REPLY SLIP  
ON THE REVERSE ?      IF SO, PLEASE DO IT IMMEDIATELY  
AS A MATTER OF CO-OPERATION WITH THE ORGANIZERS.



GARDENS OPEN.

1. THE HIGH BEECHES. For details of these two openings please see p. 5 of Bulletin No. 15.

2. LEONARDSLEE. Leonardslee is open this year from April 26th to June 7th on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. In addition there are two Bank Holiday Monday openings, on May 4th and 25th. Coffee and tea are available; dogs are not allowed.

Most members are already aware of Leonardslee's eminence as a Rhododendron and Camellia garden. May I also remind them that during the month of May they ought to look out for the collection of R. yakushimanum and its hybrids which has recently been assembled. "This is now one of the most sought-after of all rhododendrons, having near-perfect habit, foliage and flowers". (Peter A. Cox, in "Dwarf Rhododendrons", p. 154; Batsford and RHS.)

3. WINDSOR. Rhododendron kiusianum at the Valley Garden. This is a rhododendron which arouses strong enthusiasms, and some of its admirers would say that it should be in every garden in which rhododendrons can succeed. Certainly it is not too big; it is "tidy", hardy and co-operative; and it has wide appeal. The specific name indicates its origins in Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four major islands, just across the Strait from Korea. Quoting from the 1980 Species Handbook, this member of the Obtusum sub-series of Azalea is of hardiness H4, flowers May to June, and is an evergreen or semi-evergreen up to 4 feet. The leaves are dimorphic, with a difference in size and shape between the spring leaves and the summer leaves. The colour range is given as "pink, purple or rarely white", and a white form called 'Chidori' from Capt. Collingwood Ingram was awarded the A.M. in 1977.

The purpose of this note is to draw attention to an outstanding planting of colour-forms of the species, made about three years ago in the Valley Garden at Windsor. Mr J.D. Bond, the Keeper of the Gardens, is very fond of R. kiusianum, and some years ago decided on a site in which two opposite sides of a long shallow valley could be densely planted so as to obtain a carpet or tapestry effect on maturity. These banks may be comfortably and enjoyably viewed from a broad grass walk up the middle, separating the two beds. Compact-growing clones of good pink and mauve-purple forms were selected for propagating, along with a smaller number of the relatively recent white form, and about 600 strong bushy plants were spaced out with a view to future growth. Heavy leafy top-dressings to the existing soil were applied in order to provide an open root-run and encourage good growth. It is already possible to visualize the ultimate effect aimed at, for the majority of the plants are now big enough to have individual impact. It will be interesting to observe what effect the white plants have over the next few years, and this will be watched carefully in case it is felt that some modification to the layout might improve it.

Meanwhile, there is the promise of a splendid display this year, and at the time of writing, a few days from the end of April, it looks as though the main flowering might begin during the first week of May and go through to somewhere round the end of the month. This estimate is, of course, based on favourable, but possible, weather conditions; extremely adverse weather over the next few days could alter things, but the species is not particularly touchy about the English climate, and hopes are high at the moment. A visit after a few days of favourable weather, sometime after the beginning of May, ought to be a rewarding experience of a novel and successful enterprise.

For those unfamiliar with the site, there is an easy route from the Savill Garden Car Park. Take the path which begins at the end of the Car Park furthest from the Savill Garden entrance, and proceed in the direction of the Obelisk Pond. Having passed the pond, continue on the main footpath through the grove of "Tulip Trees" (Liriodendron tulipifera), and past the amelanchiers, making towards the Punch Bowl. The kiusianum planting is on the right hand, close to this main footpath, and searching for it will be unnecessary if you have not deviated from this route.

While you are there, a visit to the Savill Garden itself is bound to be rewarding in several different ways; of course there is always the Rhododendron Species Collection; then the cherries and the later magnolias not too far from the kiusianum planting; nor have I forgotten the Punch Bowl and its Japanese or Kurume Azaleas !



#### GROUP TOUR OF NORTH-EAST, MAY 1981.

By now the arrangements for transport, hotel accommodation and other reservations have all been completed. In case any member wishes to make a late decision to join the group at some point on the itinerary, or even to visit one or two individual gardens, there are certain possibilities. The member would have to make personal arrangements for hotel accommodation, and it should be borne in mind that for the visits to the gardens members make a small contribution per capita. Mr Nigel Glass, the Tour Secretary, will be pleased to advise on what is possible, and at this late date the safest thing to do is to telephone him at 099 04 2333.

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#### CAMELLIA CHOICE.

The supply of "Camellia Choice" articles has now dried up, at any rate for the moment; so we will have to wait to see if there are any more contributors who will assure the continuance of the series. By cheating in the time-honoured Panel Game fashion I think we could get a second contribution from a member who has two favourites, and I could do the same myself without strain, and thus bring the total to eight. But I did originally stipulate one per member, and I really would prefer to stick to that; so I am again asking for co-operation. If the feature does not appeal sufficiently then it must die, yet I remain surprised that only one japonica has received support - so far. When I think of some of the enormous old plants I know in the great gardens, many of them seeming never to fail to provide hundreds of flowers every year, I have to conclude that "blame" does not lie with the camellias themselves. I prefer to accept that their owners and admirers are extremely busy people who, like Barkis, are willing, and who hope to get round to it one day soon.

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#### THE EDINBURGH REVISION.

The revision of Rhododendron by Dr Cullen and Dr Chamberlain, and the subsequent R.H.S. Horticultural Revision, call for study and explanation if they are to be understood and brought into regular use. The 1980 Species Handbook takes the first essential steps, and to take the process of personal assimilation a stage further Wisley has a comparative table and checklist ready now, for consideration, approval and subsequent dissemination. There will be more information about this in the near future.

Meanwhile there is news of further help and illustration to be provided by the Wisley authorities, at this year's Chelsea Show. A display layout will give information which is aimed at helping the interested gardening public, using as a central example the much-affected Cinnabarinum series or subsection Cinnabarina. Some of the species involved in the Cinnabarina revision will be illustrated by colour photographs, and I would like to suggest that members visiting the Show with friends may care to draw attention to the less usual flower shapes and colours of this subsection, as a means of stimulating wider interest in the genus.

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#### A VERY FAVOURABLE WINTER.

During the last five or six months there have been various reports, from different parts of the country, of unusual and most pleasing bursts of flowering in gardens. By the beginning of March it was being put about that there were people who were considering actually praising the British climate. I am not aware that this ever came about, although when, at the end of March, my plant of the blood-red 'Cornish Cross' (which might prove to be 'Pengaer', Bulletin No. 14), opened unscathed, I thought about doing so myself and almost did.

In the event I decided that actual overt praise was far too dangerous, and Mr Bernard Culverwell of 'Beatlands', Middlecombe, Minehead, Somerset, was good enough to agree to provide an account of his personal satisfaction with the remarkable flowering that took place in his garden from November to March; here it is.

"Although very wet and windy, Autumn 1980 was marvellous for Rhododendrons and Camellias here in West Somerset.



On 23rd October R. 'Nobleanum Album' started to flower, and 'Elizabeth' was covered with flowers. Nov. 1st, Camellia 'Narumi Gata' flowered. Nov. 10th, Mimosa out along with R. 'Yellow Hammer', 'Christmas Cheer' (superb) and 'Lady Chamberlain'. Nov. 12th Desfontainea spinosa. Nov. 21st, Camellia 'Nobilissima' beautiful and C. 'Narumi Gata' still very good. Dec. 1st, heavy frost, but Camellias and Rhododendrons still out, with C. 'Gloire de Nantes' and 'Shiro Wabisiki' both very good. Dec. 8th, very severe frost night and day. Dec. 20th, R. dauricum lovely. Dec. 28th, 54 different species of plants in flower, excluding variegated-leaf shrubs and grey shrubs.

1981. Jan. 10th, R. 'Praecox' and a red Camellia with a fine leaf, name unknown, in flower. Hamamelis mollis (various) have been grand, and Hellebores have never been better. Jan. 25th, C. 'rubescens major', 'Magnoliiflora' and R. mucronulatum all out and good. Feb. 4th, R. 'Ptarmigan' (Judson) and C. 'C.J. Williams' flowering. Feb. 10th, our tortoise appeared. Feb. 12th, C. 'Cornish Snow'. Feb. 19th, probably the coldest day of winter. Feb. 22nd, R. macabeanum superb, also R. 'Bric-a-Brac' and a yellow rhododendron, name unknown; also Edgeworthia papyrifera. March has been marvellous. C. 'Donation', C. 'Tricolor', C. 'Trewithen Red', R. 'Cilpinense', R. 'Chink', 'Chikor', R. racemosum and R. barbatum. Our saddest plant is R. bureavii. For several years we have tried to grow, outside, the tall blue Echium calytheasum; at last some have come through the winter and will, we hope, flower.

We have a number of species we cannot identify, if any Group member is in our area and would like to help; but please telephone first - 0643 - 2642.

B.J. Culverwell.

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JAM FROM RHODODENDRONS - another letter to the Editor.

A follow-up note on this subject comes, as it happens, from the same great rhododendron region of Scotland. It is part of the letter from Mr. Mervyn S. Kessell already mentioned, and runs:-

"I read with interest Ed. Wright's article on the making of jam from rhododendrons, but I feel obliged to warn anyone who is not aware of it that many species are very poisonous. Some research was carried out at the West of Scotland Agricultural College some years ago which showed that nectar from many species, for example R. thomsonii, was highly toxic - especially to bees. I would therefore suggest that before anyone dashes out and collects masses of flowers for the manufacture of a delicious jam they obtain and study this article.

Also read David Leach's article in the 1968 Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book, p.99, entitled "The Ancient Curse of the Rhododendron".

I trust that the above information will be of interest.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Mervyn S. Kessell. "

Editor's note. Even if the name of the species mentioned in Mr Wright's note is learned, it would be wise to proceed with great caution, in case of an unknown allergy. There is that old saying - "One man's meat is another man's poison".

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RHODODENDRON PROTISTUM VAR. PROTISTUM.

Following the report in Bulletin No. 15 on this Arduaine plant, there was an interesting development when the two trusses mentioned were both seen, in competition, at Vincent Square. I think I am speaking for many people when I report that they were magnificent. However, as more information comes to hand it is clear that it will be worth waiting for the next issue of the bulletin to have more details and perhaps a summing-up of the new situation. One matter that now becomes interesting is the fresh range of comparisons that may be made between the three (possible) species that have at one time or other been called giganteum, magnificum and protistum. There may also need to be a reviewing of labels or who-calls-which-what.

Another possible first flowering is also in the offing, but



this too will have to wait while its owner is doing another bit of plant-hunting, 1981 variety. Not to keep everyone in suspense, this time it is R. subansiriense. I hope the bulletin will be able to elucidate a little in the next issue.

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## BOOKS.

### RHODODENDRONS OF CHINA.

Mr Dan E. Mayers advises that the book 'Rhododendrons of China' published by the American Rhododendron Society and the Species Foundation has been shipped to him in adequate quantity. For the benefit of members, some of whom will undoubtedly be interested, he has kindly furnished the note which follows.

"Rhododendrons of China" is a translation with the original illustrations of a major section of a comprehensive five volume work on Chinese native plants by the Beijing Botanical Research Institute of Academia Sinica; it is included in Vol. III, 1974. The translation is sponsored jointly by the Rhododendron Species Foundation and the American Rhododendron Society.

The volume includes a botanical description of 283 species, integrating the recent observations of Chinese botanists with earlier work done by Western and Asian plant hunters and taxonomists; it includes newly-found species and others not fully described in available literature. There are botanical drawings made from living plants of all species described, and a botanical key.

The price in America is \$ 18.00 but as a service to members of the Group it may be obtained for £6.00 plus £1.00 postage and packing from:

Dan E. Mayers,  
Loth Lorien Arboretum,  
Wadhurst,  
Sussex TN5 6PN.

### RECENT YEAR BOOKS - SOFTBACK, FROM 1972.

The Secretary's supply of back numbers has now dwindled to the two years 1973 and 1974, the other years mentioned in previous notes being exhausted. There are, of course, supplies of the current edition, 1980-81.

A reminder of the Hon. Secretary's address:-

J. Waugh Owens,  
Jubilee Lodge,  
Yarpole,  
Leominster,  
Herefordshire HR6 OBA.

### OLDER YEAR BOOKS - 1946 to 1971.

The demand for these continues and is, in fact, increasing steadily. The plain fact is that although there are many enquiries for second-hand copies - and for all years - the supplies coming forward are very meagre. I can summarise the position by saying that if any member is willing to offer a copy of any year, I can put him in touch with a buyer. There is also the occasional possibility of an exchange if certain specific years are offered. My own function is simply to correlate enquiries and put members in touch; this saves postage and packing duplication. The most urgent demand, to single out a couple of years, is for 1955 and 1961.

The collection offered some months ago by Mr Mico was purchased by Dr Dingle, who has now done some sorting out of his own to round up his collection. He is now able to offer the following:-

Rhododendron Society Notes. Vol. III in 5 separate parts (1925-1931) £20. Vol. III No. 3 (1927) 3 copies, and Vol. III No. 4 (1928) one copy, at £4 each.

Year Books. 1946, in dust-wrapper, 1947, 2 copies, one in d/w, and 1948, with no d/w, all at £3 each; 1949, 2 copies, one in d/w, at £4 each. Postage extra at cost.

He would also like to obtain a copy of the Year Book of the Rhododendron Association for 1934 (he has the Supplement).

Please get in touch direct, with Dr Hugh Dingle, "L'Écluse", Vallée des Vaux, Trinity, Jersey, G.I. Telephone (0534) 63198.