

RHODODENDRON & CAMELLIA GROUP

Bulletin No. 2 February 1977

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Since my appeal for help in the first edition of the Bulletin, I am pleased to report a generous response. Mr John Gallagher has taken over the editorship of the Bulletin and contributions may be sent to him in the future. Mr John Owens has become Secretary and has taken over the responsibility for the distribution to our members of the Rhododendron & Camellia Year Book. In addition, Lady Adam Gordon, Sir Giles Loder and Mr John Saunders have joined the Group's committee.

Three regional sub-groups are in the process of being formed, based respectively on Sussex, East Anglia and Cornwall and a Greater London sub-group is also contemplated. Members living outside these areas are in no way excluded from the sub-group activities.

188 members completed proforma B at the end of the first Bulletin and have paid a subscription for the year ending 31st October. In all but 20 cases, they have paid the full £3 subscription rate and have received a copy of 'Rhododendron 1976, with Magnolias and Camellias'. Eleven former members have resigned or died, but 22 new members have joined and another 15 are in the process of doing so.

134, who indicated at different times last year that they were still interested in the Group, have not so far returned proforma B. They are being sent this Bulletin, but those who still do not return proforma B or their £3 subscription will be presumed to wish to resign and will be struck off our mailing list.

May I thank you for all your letters and helpful suggestions and look forward to meeting and enjoying with you the many events your committee have arranged for 1977.

LAMELLEN. CORNWALL

WALTER MAGOR

RHODODENDRON & CAMELLIA GROUP ANNUAL TOUR 1977. SUSSEX

Members of the Group are invited to a tour visiting five major gardens in Sussex, at the end of April

Thursday 28th April 2 p.m. LORIEN, Wadhurst, Sussex, by kind permission of Mr D.E. Mayers.

Friday 29th April 10 a.m. WAKEHURST PLACE, Ardingly, Sussex, by kind permission of the Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.

2 p.m. SOUTH LODGE, Lower Beeding, Horsham, Sussex by kind permission of Miss E. Godman.

Saturday 30th April 10 a.m. HEASELAND, Haywards Heath, Sussex by kind permission of Mr and Mrs E.G. Kleinwort.

2 p.m. BORDE HILL, Haywards Heath, Sussex, by kind permission of Mr R.N. Stephenson Clarke.

Members wishing to join the tour are asked to notify the Hon. Secretary,

Mr J. Waugh Owens, Cherrydown, Forest Drive, Kingswood, Tadworth, Surrey before the 31st March 1977. A list of possible places to stay in the area which has been obtained from the English Tourist Board, is available from Mr Owen on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope. Members who can offer or require transport are asked to communicate with Mr Owen. Members of the I.C.S. are of course aware that their Eastbourne Conference is taking place from the 22nd to 25th April and they are visiting gardens in the area, Leonardslee, The High Beeches, Nyman. and Slaugham Park together with four other gardens of note in Kent. It may well be worthwhile considering spending the intervening two days in the area, making private visits to some of the other very fine gardens which are listed in the National Gardens Scheme booklet 'Gardens of England & Wales Open to the Public'.

#### REGIONAL SUB-GROUPS News and Views

CORNWALL :- Mr C.J. Page, Derrow, Kellimeth, Feock, Truro (Tel. Devoran 863786) has agreed to form this sub-group and members in the South West should contact him, if they are interested.

EAST ANGLIA :- Mr C. Grainger has been active in forming the nucleus of a sub-group in East Anglia and any members who are interested and have not heard from him are recommended to make contact (Tel. Stowmarket 5138)

MIDDLESEX & GREATER LONDON :- Any member who is willing to organise a metropolitan region sub-group, if members in that region desire one, is asked to contact Major Magor at Lamellen.

SUSSEX & SOUTH EASTERN :- To launch this sub-group a gathering is being arranged at The High Beeches, Handcross on B 2110 on Saturday, 28th May 1977. All members of the Royal Horticultural Society who are also members of the Group, and all who are interested in joining are welcome. A Ploughman's lunch will be provided from 12.30 p.m., followed by a short discussion about future plans, and a visit to the gardens by kind permission of the Hon. Mr and Mrs Edward Boscawen. Mr and Mrs Boscawen exhibit their plants regularly with great success at Vincent Square and a short description of The High Beeches may be found in the 1974 Rhododendron Year Book. As facilities at The High Beeches are somewhat limited we are limiting the numbers to two tickets per person at the cost of £1.25 per head to cover the cost of the meal. Tickets can be obtained from :- Logan A. Edgar Esq. O.B.E. Wedderlie House, St. Helens Avenue, Hastings. Sussex.

It is quite evident from the interest shown in the above sub-groups, that there is a genuine desire on the part of a number of members of the Group to get to know each other and compare experiences of growing camellias, magnolias and rhododendrons on their home ground. It is interesting to note that although there are many fine collections of rhododendrons in Scotland there is no move from members north of The Wash. What about a Scottish Rhododendron Show, after all you have some of the finest plants in the world !!

MAGNOLIAS IN CORNWALL :- Prospects for Asiatic magnolias in Cornwall this



year are exceptionally good, always providing we are spared severe frosts during March. Members of the Cornwall Sub-group are invited to visit two notable gardens near Truro, famous for their magnolia collections and also their rhododendrons and camellias on Saturday, 26th March 1977 :-

Trewithen, Grampound Rd, at 10 a.m. (by kind permission of Mrs Johnstone).

Chyverton, Zelah, at 2 p.m. (by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Nigel Holman).

At Trewithen, a lunch consisting of hot soup, hot pasties, McEwan's Export Beer, or fruit squash, coffee and chocolate biscuit will be available at a cost of £1.75 per head, which includes the admission charge to the garden. Members of the Group who would like to take part are welcome to do so, providing they can let the Organiser for Cornwall know, not later than 12th March 1977 - Mr C.J. Page, Derrow, Kellineth, Feock, Truro (tel. Devoran 862786).

#### MEMBERSHIP & SUBSCRIPTIONS

We are all delighted to welcome Mr John Waugh Owens as the new Honorary Secretary of the Group. The proforma and annual subscriptions should in future be sent to him at Cherrydown, Forest Drive, Kingswood, Tadworth, Surrey. Cheques should be drawn in favour of the Rhododendron & Camellia Group. A few members have asked for a banker's order form and a suitable form will be attached to a future Bulletin before subscriptions become due again on the 1st November 1977. Members who wish to pay their subscriptions for the current year by Banker's order, will find that their own bank will be able to provide a blank form. Payment should be made to the account of the Rhododendron & Camellia Group with Barclay's Bank Ltd., Grey Friars Branch, Ipswich, Suffolk. It does help if members let Mr Owen know, that they wish to pay in this way, for his records.

#### RHODODENDRON SEED

Mr G.A. Judson of 58, Springfield Rd, Exmouth, Devon, has seed to offer members of the Group, Rh. ciliicalyx and Rh. edgeworthii (selfed). Also Rh. inaequale X ciliicalyx; Rh. inaequale edgeworthii; and probably Rh. megacalyx X inaequale. Supplies are very limited, but members should apply to Mr Judson, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

An inquiry has been received from the American Rhododendron Society for seed of Rh. sargentianum, roxieanum ssp. chrysanthemum, Rh. sheriffii, Rh. lowndesii and Rh. ludlowii. Any member expecting to be able to supply self seed next season, should communicate with Mr J. Sanders, Badger Cottage, 101, Guildford Rd, Bagshot, Surrey.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF PLANT MATERIAL

The conservation of rare and particularly good forms of rhododendrons, magnolias and camellias is a matter of great concern to your committee and some interesting contributions have been received from members, which seems to support the committee's own thinking. There have also been offers of help, of which the first was from Mr John Sanders, who is associated with the Alpine Garden Society and has knowledge of a similar scheme which that Society operates.

Mr Sanders will build up a register of the choicer and less common plants, from which members will be able to ask for propagating material.

This will take some time to organise; but for a start members of the Group including nurserymen, are invited to let Mr Sanders have particulars of uncommon or particularly good forms of rhododendrons, magnolias and camellias that they may have, and which they are willing to supply material for propagation such as cuttings, layers, selfed-seed or small complete plants. Members wanting material should communicate their wants to Mr Sanders and he will try to match them, informing them, whether plant material or plants are available from a nurseryman, and if not, from a private source. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope when writing to Mr J. Sanders, Badger Cottage, 101, Guildford Rd, Bagshot, Surrey with your requests.

#### SYMPOSIUM. 'RHODODENDRONS 1977. with MAGNOLIAS & CAMELLIAS'.

May we remind you of the subject matter for this item in the next Annual.

"You are moving to a garden with ideal growing conditions for rhododendrons, but you have only room for six plants - species or hybrids. Which six would you choose and why? "

After a slow start, a number of very interesting contributions to the symposium have been received, including some from as far afield as the U.S.A., Australia and West Germany, and also from a Master Mariner in the South Atlantic with a garden in Argyll. It is hoped to feature the Symposium in the 1977 edition and some contributions may possibly also be included in future Bulletins.

To whet the appetite and encourage members to contribute, we are including an excellent article from Mr Arthur George. (One of the perks of being an editor is that you can get your order in first ! Ed.)

#### SLIDES

Mr A.W. Headlam, Editor of the Australian Rhododendron Society Quarterly, which regularly publishes his beautiful rhododendron photographs, has intimated that he presented the Royal Horticultural Society two years ago, with the following collection of colour slides with appropriate supporting commentaries:

The Australian National Rhododendron Garden at Olinda	- 94 slides
Magnolias in Melbourne	- 58 slides
Camellias in Melbourne	- 64 slides

These are available for the use of members of the Group on application to The Secretary, The Royal Horticultural Society, Vincent Square, London.

#### SOCIAL GATHERING

The Committee had hoped to arrange a late afternoon meeting of the Group on the first day of the Rhododendron & Camellia Competition on the 15th March or the 19th April with a lecture or discussion followed by a Buffet Supper. It has not proved possible to arrange a suitable venue in London this Spring but we have not given up hope yet. If any member of the Group is able to arrange a suitable meeting place at his Club or elsewhere, to coincide with the Early Summer Show at Vincent Square on the 14th June 1977, the Hon. Secretary will



be very glad to know. From our experience this year, we will make sure of an earlier date in 1978 !

#### EDITOR'S DESK

Looking through the original Rhododendron Society Notes, I take the point that the editor usually remained silent ! The members more than spoke for themselves. The 'Notes from Lamellen' 1977 could almost have been from the same hand as his illustrious father E.J.P. Magor Esq in 1922. I do think that we all join in thanking Walter Magor for all the hard work and enthusiasm he put into reviving one of the most important specialist groups in the horticultural world. Last year we celebrated the centenary of the birth of Ernest Henry Wilson who contributed to Volume 11 of the Notes in 1922. He was later to send another five contributions, before his death in 1930. "Chinese Wilson" as he came to be called, brought to our gardens such a quantity and quality of wonderful woody plants, that even by 1916 one hundred of his plants had received Awards of Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.

Addressing a meeting of the old Society was not without its dangers ! In 1925 Captain Kingdon Ward was subjected to a devastating barrage of questions from members. Odd quotes out of context make amusing reading:

A Member: Did you take any water-colours ?

Capt. Ward: No.

A Member: Is the seed very like the bracteatum seed ?

Capt. Ward: I do not know the bracteatum seed.

A Member: For the ordinary layman it is very like glaucum seed.

Capt. Ward: Yes, this was very like glaucum seed. It was slightly aromatic but not very strong and not unpleasant.

The late J.C. Williams, as Chairman, summed up the meeting well. "Perhaps we are not all quite sane on the subject of rhododendrons, so it would hardly be possible for us to have a pleasanter evening" From such enthusiastic beginnings has the Rhododendron & Camellia Group grown. Please continue to support the Annual and Bulletin with your contributions for future issues.

VERWOOD. DORSET February 1977

JOHN GALLAGHER

#### HINTS ON EXHIBITING CAMELLIAS

Showing Camellias can be fascinating,, even for those with only a few small plants to cut from, and it can be very rewarding to discover that the flowers they produce may be as good, or even better, than other peoples. It is with the idea of encouraging new competitors to exhibit their Camellias that I have been asked to write these few hints. Pruning Camellias does then no harm and it is often the case that a flower or spray removed from the bush may well improve its shape for the future.

The Royal Horticultural Society has two Shows at Vincent Square where there are classes for Camellias which anyone may enter, amateur or professional. For the first of these competitions, usually in early March, flowers may have been grown under glass or in the open. For the second Show in April the flowers must be cut from plants growing exclusively in the open. The dates

vary a little each year and details of the classes etc. can be found in the schedules available from the Secretary. The International Camellia Society sometimes exhibits a co-operative stand at these shows. The Cornwall Garden Society has classes devoted to Camellias at their Spring Show held annually at Truro.

In the competitive classes, one section is devoted to individual blooms, another to sprays, which is best described as a single stem bearing several blooms. These sections are subdivided into classes for the various forms of flower, species or hybrids, all clearly set out in the schedules. Vases are usually provided.

For the individual bloom section the flower only, with perhaps a leaf or two, is called for and a stalk of only an inch or two is sufficient. This enables the exhibitor to enter a flower from the smallest bush if he so desires. Great care must be taken to ensure the entry is placed in the correct class otherwise disqualification can result; read every word of the rules ! When selecting the bloom take infinite trouble. Remember each flower must be as perfect as possible at the time of judging, so do not cut one which is already past its prime. The stamens should be a clear yellow, denoting freshness, especially important in the single and semi-double varieties. The petals must show no signs of bruising, frost damage or other blemish, and the leaves free from discolouration or other defect.

Camellia blooms do not relish being moved about once they are picked and must be treated with care. Freshness being vital, try to cut and place directly into the box in which they are to travel to the show. A useful tip if showing several varieties, is to write the name with a ball-point pen on the underside of the leaf. This may save a lot of head scratching when labelling the exhibit on the show bench. We use cardboard boxes with a layer of paper shavings which have been very slightly moistened by a fine misting. Place each flower firmly on to the shavings, keeping the box level at all times to prevent bruising. Immediately a box is full, put the lid on and keep in the shade until loading. On arrival at the show, probably the afternoon or evening prior to the competition, the blooms can be carefully removed, the stem shortened if necessary and directly placed in the small vases provided. Do check that the vases are full of water before staging.

The classes calling for sprays need different treatment. If necessary the sprays may be picked a day or two before the show. Have ready, in a cool shed or garage, a quantity of jars filled to the top with fresh water. We often use old wine bottles, champagne ones for preference since they have a heavier base and are more stable ! Before cutting a spray from the bush, try to visualise how the spray will stand up in a vase on the show bench, and check that the appearance of the plant will not be ruined as a result. The shape of the spray is important since only one stem per vase may be allowed in a spray class. Check the height and width allowed in the schedule to avoid cutting unnecessarily large pieces; a little spray can win the class if the quality is good. Again to save movement and reduce possible damage, try to cut and carry the sprays straight to the bottles in preference to laying them down. This may entail many trips to and fro but is worth the labour. To



facilitate packing a light tying-in may be needed and this should be done now, together with labelling, having cut out any damaged leaf or unwanted twig. When ready for packing the sprays will need a deeper box than the single blooms. They may be packed with plenty of tissue paper, not shavings as these get caught amongst the leaves. Several sprays will probably go into one box if carefully arranged. Damage can easily be caused by a leaf rubbing against a bloom, the whites are particularly vulnerable, and again firm packing is required, with finally, a lid to the box.

On arrival at the show, try to get the sprays arranged in water as soon as possible, and placed straight into their specific class, thus enabling the buds to develop. This is the moment to get out your measuring tape and check their height and width. Moss may be jammed in if required, to help steady the spray and keep it upright. If the exhibit has been completed overnight, on the morning of the show, before the judging do see that the vases have water and look again at the height in case a bud has opened up. Also remove any fallen flowers.

If the exhibitor decides to stage a group or stand of our Camellias, much of the foregoing paragraphs apply, especially with regard to the individual flowers. On a stand, sprays can be of any size or width, and several stems may be placed in the vases if required. In the case of the larger sprays which have had to be tied in, be careful when removing them from the packing cases; the slightest jerk can cause the flowers to fly off; if possible ask another person to cut the tie while the stem is being lightly held.

The exhibitor usually takes his own containers for a group, but this may vary in different circumstances; he is responsible for filling them with water, so don't forget the watering can ! Prior to the show it is wise to have all the labels uniformly written on cards for a neat effect. The ink used should be waterproof in case the stand is going to be sprayed ! A final check just before the judging commences is especially important if the flowers have been arranged overnight. A stem may have fallen forward and necessitate careful manoeuvring into position without disturbing the whole arrangement, quite a difficult job if it happens at the back or almost out of reach. A dirty leaf or damaged flower can detract from the general appearance, and it is well worthwhile keeping a watch for imperfections of any kind which may have developed since arranging.

Camellias drink a quantity of water, so, if there is time, top up the vases again.

I fear the above suggestions will appear very obvious to many readers, but perhaps they may encourage some to try their hand and enjoy the camaraderie that exists amongst exhibitors.

LEONARDSLEA, HORSHAM.

LADY LODER

#### TWELVE RHODODENDRONS I WOULD GROW

Asking me to choose just twelve rhododendrons I would grow is an exceedingly difficult task, akin to selecting eight records for a spell on a desert island ! Where do you begin ? Species or Hybrids, woodland plants

or dwarfs, the choice is enormous, but much would have to depend on the locality of the garden. In my case I have to select varieties which do well on the very light acid soil of West Surrey and in a situation around 500 ft upon the tip of the North Downs, which is normally fairly dry and cold in winter and frequently hot and extremely dry in summer. So, for me the big leaved species are out. Instead my first choice of a truly fine foliage rhododendron with a beautiful habit and ability to flower freely would be *Rh. fulvum* - the form which came to us from Tower Court. That superb large hybrid "Robert Keir" is a must for almost any garden big enough; and for a good white, I find my own "Caroline de Zoete" does incredibly well in our conditions, the beautiful glossy foliage complements the purest white shaply flowers. Not yet fully tried here but a certain winner is the glorious Barclayi hybrid "Red Rum", and for a very distinctive colour and lovely flower texture I would want Hydon Salmon. Two species which thrive on our sandy soil and always give a good account of themselves are *Rh. carolinianum* and *Rh. racemosum* "Rock Rose". I am torn between *Rh. yakushimanum* and *Rh. pseudochrysanthum* but would settle for the latter and take my hybrid of the former "Morning Magic". The finest of dwarf blues is in my opinion "Saint Merryn" and to complement it I would have to have the good yellow "Chikor". Twelfth man is the most difficult but in the absence of a taller growing blue variety, I would settle for our own new and free flowering intensely blue hybrid of *russatum* "Blue Chip".

Hydon Nurseries, Surrey. 1977

Arthur George.

#### NOTES FROM LAMELLEN

Referring to the account in Bulletin No. 1 of the effects of the drought on a Cornish garden, Mr Edmond de Rothschild has commented that it would be of interest if other members of the Group would give a considered report on the effect in their gardens. It is the long-term effect which is significant, and if a sufficient number of reports come, the editorial staff will be glad to include something in this year's Annual.

At Lamellen, while a number of plants have succumbed, the recovery of others has been remarkable. *Rh. Elizabeth*, which seemed to have suffered severely in a number of other gardens, is still leafless, but when we came to dig up the original plant, we found that the wood was still green, so there is still hope for it. It always used to be said in Cornwall, that one should never give up hope for a shrub for at least a year after it appeared to be dead, *Rh. Polar Bear* which normally flowers in July, was unable to open its flower buds at that time, for lack of water, but after the September rains it was in full flower all during October and November, which seems to have been the case right across the South of England. Then of course, the young growth was caught by the December frosts.

Most of the older large leaved species seem to be in a poor way. After two dry summers, they over flowered last year and now have made practically no new growth for two years.

Lamellen is vulnerable to north-west gales and on the whole, the drought



caused less damage than the gale on the 14th October. This brought down a 70ft cherry, the original A.M. plant of *Rh. Hermoine*, old plants of the true *Rh. fortunei* and *Rh. galactinum* - all at least 30ft high - as well as the big *Rh. ramsdenianum*. All available scions were sent for propagation to the Savill Gardens and to Hydon Nurseries. With any luck, plants may be available in due course for members of the Group.

The big cherry brought down a big hybrid of *Rh. Soulkink*, on top of a young plant of *Magnolia wilsonii*. Not realising it was there, the gardener stacked all the 'lop and top' over it. Now three months later, this has been removed for burning and the young magnolia has sprung up apparently unscathed !

Lamellen, Cornwall 1977

Walter Magor

#### THE ASCOT DESERT OF 1976

My wife, who is an addicted sun worshipper, simply revelled in the summer of 1976 in our garden. As for myself, an enthusiastic shrub and tree gardener, I would not like to put in print, for my fellow lady gardeners to read, my thoughts on the effect of last summer's drought on my plants, and in particular on my Rhododendrons !!!!!

With regard to the rhododendrons, the dwarfs, as would be expected, suffered far more from the drought than the larger species and hybrids, and of these dwarfs *Rh. radicans* and *Rh. scintillans* were far and away the worst affected. Of several plants of each of these, all of the former have died and only one of the latter has survived, and even this lone survivor is not in particularly good condition. To go to the opposite side of the picture the dwarfs that came through completely unscathed were *Rh. racemosum* F 19404 - in my opinion a superb garden plant, *russatum* and *moupinense*, whilst, perhaps surprisingly, *Rh. spiciferum* has come through well with only very slight damage. Of several plants of *Rh. hippophaeoides* about half are in reasonable condition, two others have died, and the remainder are damaged but will probably recover in time. *Rh. calostrotum* is a bad casualty, as every one of them is either dead or badly damaged. Three plants of *Rh. campylogynum* are in quite good condition, as are two plants of *Rh. chameunum*, but of two plants of *Rh. gymnocarpum* growing within a few feet of each other, one is dead whilst the other has survived reasonably well; strange indeed are the ways of plants sometimes. All four plants of *Rh. trichostomum* are in good condition, but the condition of several plants of *Rh. saluenense* varies, as some are satisfactory, some are damaged and some are dead. All my old plants of *Rh. impeditum* have suffered some damage, but all will probably recover given time, and, to me very surprisingly, most of the *Rh. williamsianum* are in fairly good condition, and the only plant that I have of *Rh. anthopogon* appears to have weathered the storm. Of the hybrids, Golden Oriole Talavera and Princess Anne have both managed quite well, and of nine plants of the Glenarn hybrid *didymum* X *chamae-thomsonii* - five are quite well, two are damaged and the remaining two are dead. I am sorry to have to say that those two fine Glendoik hybrids *Rh. Chikor* and *Rh. Ptarmigan* have taken a very poor view of the adverse conditions.

Now on to the larger rhododendrons, and I will first refer to the large

leaf species, and of these my four plants of *Rh. macabeanum* were easily the worst sufferers, as one, an old plant, is dead and has been consigned to the bonfire, two others are badly damaged and the fourth has managed to cope fairly well. I am not really surprised that this latter plant has coped, because in November 1962 late one afternoon I dug up this rhododendron and left it on the grass next to the border from which it had been dug up, intending to replant it somewhere else in the garden the next morning. However, for some unknown reason I completely forgot about the poor fellow lying out of the ground until the following March. I know everyone will remember that winter of 1962/63. Who says that *Rh. macabeanum* is not particularly hardy? Of four plants of *Rh. Mollyanum* three are in quite good condition, whilst the fourth is damaged but looks as though it will recover in time. *Rh. arizelum*, *basilicum*, *fictolacteum* *hodgsonii* and *rex* are all quite well, that is bearing in mind that the Ascot area is not really the most ideal place in which to grow them, and my one *Rh. falconeri* is surviving.

I will now refer to the other species, and three *Rh. auriculatum* have managed to cope, whilst a fourth plant is in good condition. Two *Rh. arboreum* are alright, and, very surprisingly, my one fair-sized *Rh. barbatum* took no notice whatsoever of the drought. All my plants of the *cinnabarinum* series have managed reasonably well, although they did look rather unhappy, and their hybrids, the Ladies Chamberlain and Rosebery have managed likewise. I feel that I must mention two, to me, very remarkable plants of the *maddenii* series, namely *crassum cubittii*, both of which are growing under heavy oak tree coverage on the west side of my garden shed, as both these plants took not the slightest notice of the drought. Furthermore, as I now write in January they have just been through a night with the temperature down to 8 degrees fahrenheit - that is a frost of 24 degrees fahrenheit! and they still appear to be quite undamaged. The other member of the *maddenii* series, which is perfectly well, is *Rh. lindleyi* on the west wall of our house, but I must add that, as it is only a few feet away from one of our bathrooms, it naturally received fairly good quantities of our bath water!!!! Of the *neriiflorum* series I have one plant of *Rh. euchaetes* and one plant of *Rh. haematodes*, and both of these are in perfectly good condition. However, all my plants of *Rh. dichroanthum* have suffered badly, and only one plant is in fair condition, and I am not too hopeful of recovery. I have six fair-sized plants of *Rh. thomsonii* and all these have suffered from the drought, but I feel that they will all have recovered in a few years, whilst *Rh. callimorphum*, *campylocarpum*, *augustinii*, *trichanthum* and *yunnanense* have managed to come through the drought, as have all the *Rh. rubiginosum*.

Nearly all my hybrids have managed somehow. The various Exbury hybrids are reasonably well, and most of the so-called hardy hybrids have not worried about the dry conditions, the one exception being *Rh. Sappho*, as two plants of this hybrid have actually died.

One effect that the drought has had on all my rhododendrons, and I feel sure that this will have happened in all southern parts of Britain, is to have reduced the size of their leaves quite considerably, but this will doubtless be put right, say by 1978, provided that we do not get another drought next summer.



And the other effect is that I am not expecting much flower power this coming spring.

My other shrubs and trees in the garden have managed to cope with the drought quite well, and this especially applies to my larger Camellias, as the drought had absolutely no adverse effect on them, and they are all covered in flower buds for next spring. Naturally all the Australians were not bothered with the drought, such as *Acacia dealbata*, *Callistemons*, *Sophora tetraptera*, various *Eucalyptus*, and *Telopea truncata*. Magnolias did not like the conditions but by and large have come through their ordeal, whilst the Catalpas and Paulonias appear to have coped. My five plants of *Eucryphia glutinosa* are quite well, and my embotriums have just about managed.

I am afraid this article is somewhat like a catalogue of some of the plants in my garden, but I could not see any other way in which to write about the 1976 drought, which I trust will not be repeated for many years to come.

Perhaps as the late, and great, Sir James Horlick did about 35 years ago, I ought to migrate from Ascot to somewhere in the west or south-west of Scotland. However, I do not expect that I shall do this but will continue with the struggle in this garden.

I wish a happy gardening 1977 to all my fellow gardeners.

ASCOT. JANUARY 1977

PHILIP URLWIN-SMITH

#### TWO NEW CAMELLIAS

Camellia japonica MATTERHORN. There is a shortage of good formal double white camellias, but anyone familiar with the leadership of the raiser of this seedling, David L. Feathers of California, in research and judging will know that scarcity will not tempt him to lower his standards.

This japonica seedling was labelled 'Fishtail 60' and only after years of trial in California and in my garden in Cornwall, has it been named MATTERHORN. It has in fact no split fishtail leaves. My trial plant has a vigorous leading shoot with radiating main branches, each with a sweeping lateral curve. The foliage is a nice mixture of quite bold elliptic leaves, 13 x 5½ cms., and tapering lanceolate leaves, 10 x 3.3 cms., all shallowly toothed, serrulate, and mid-green in colour. The flowers outdoors, are mid-season to late, missing most of the frosts, 11 cms. across, full formal double.

The name MATTERHORN has been chosen because the petals recurve from the high peaked centre, more pronounced in California and under glass here, than out of doors. It stands up like a white scroll, an attractive feature of a fine flower which is as weatherproof as any white japonica camellia.

Camellia williamsii LADY CUTLER. This is a typical small leafed hybrid raised by Les Jury in New Zealand from *saluenensis* X *Ville de Nantes*, and very prolific and hardy. The leaves on our trial plant are dark green with a brilliant gloss, all 8 cms. long and on the flowering shoots, narrowly elliptic, acuminate and obtuse, 3 cms. wide, but on the main growths, ovate and truncate, 4 cms. wide. Growth is upright and it may be wise to shorten the leading shoots on young plants to get a bushy habit.

The flowers are brilliant in colour effect, semi-double with dark stamens or

with two rows of broad wavy petals around two or three twirling petals in the centre, the whole - a picture of elegance.

The colour is bright carmine rose, darker towards the centre. Each flower is  $9\frac{1}{2}$  - 10 cms. across.

PROBUS, TRURO 1977

DAVID TREHANE

These two new Camellias are due to be released in Britain in autumn 1977. Ed.

#### UNUSUAL BEHAVIOUR OF SEEDLING AZALEAS.

Some eight or nine years ago, I crossed a rather indifferent pale yellow small flowered form of *Rh. austrinum* with an orange coloured Mollis hybrid. I chose that plant as a potential seed parent because I had at the time no better material available to foster my hobby of hybridising. I did not expect any spectacular results from that alliance, nor did I get any, but I obtained some interesting seedlings which have behaved in rather an unusual manner.

For instance, instead of being deciduous, as *Rh. austrinum* is stated to be in all the text books, they have retained their foliage throughout the year. Whether they would have done so had we experienced during our last few winters any prolonged spells of really cold weather is perhaps questionable.

And they have proved singular in another respect. All displayed a truly remarkable tolerance of the drought conditions which prevailed during four virtually rainless months we had last summer; and although some of them were growing in a south-facing bed, unlike many of my other rhododendrons, their foliage did not suffer in the slightest degree from sun scorch.

Most of them produce clusters of pleasing honeysuckle-like flowers of a butter yellow colour, but so far not in sufficient quantities to make much of a show.

KENT 1976

COLLINGWOOD INGRAM

#### DRAMA GIRL IN WIMBLEDON !

From my records, the earliest camellia I have had in flower, in the open in a container or in the ground, has been C. YOIBIJIN, which had several flowers on 22nd December 1973.

On 10th November 1976, one bud amongst quite a number on my plant of *Camellia japonica* DRAMA GIRL was showing red and by the 25th November it had produced a superb flower about 5 inches across.

Around the 29th November it was still in flower, but none of the other buds were showing any sign of flowering.

WIMBLEDON 29TH NOVEMBER 1976

R.P. WAKEFORD.

#### GROWING RHODODENDRONS FROM SEED

Why bother to grow rhododendrons from seed ? Of course, if someone wants to raise new hybrids, this is the only way of doing so, but it is also an inexpensive method of increasing one's stock, and I find it much easier than striking cuttings. There is a body of opinion that considers it is not worth



growing rhododendrons from seed ( unless they are deliberately self-pollinated ) as they hybridise so readily that seedlings are unlikely to come true. However, most of our garden stock came originally from seed collected in the wild where, to judge from collector's descriptions and photographs, different species often grow in close proximity. I think one has to use common-sense - if the seed collected is from a plant growing close to other related species that flower at the same time, then the seeds are likely to give rise to hybrids. If, on the other hand, seed is collected, say, from a lepidote species growing among elepidotes, or growing with species that do not flower at the same time, then the seed will probably come true. If one is getting seed from a seed exchange, such as those run by the Alpine Garden Society and the Scottish Rock Garden Club, one just has to hope for the best. I raised a batch of plants from seed labelled Rh. sargentianum, a species I wanted very much to have. They flowered red about three years after sowing - all with pink funnel-shaped flowers. They look as if they might be a hybrid with Rh. penakoense, but whatever they are, they are hardy, attractive and free-flowering little plants. Rh. hanceanum var. nanum, obtained at the same time, was just what it was said to be.

Do not be in too much of a hurry to condemn a plant as an unwanted hybrid because it does not look right - foliage characteristics may take time to develop. A seedling may have hairy leaves while the adult is glabrous, and indumentum often takes several years to develop.

Seed obtained from an exchange tends to be less satisfactory than that collected personally, as it is inevitably less fresh. I find that the best time to collect seed is usually in May, when the capsules formed the previous year are starting to open. Even if the pods have fully opened and have apparently shed all their seed they are worth collecting, as if these capsules are broken into pieces over a sheet of paper, there is almost always an adequate quantity of seed still left, that has been caught at the bottom of the pod.

Any seed collected should be sown as soon as possible. I have no propagating frame, and usually keep the pots on the kitchen windowsill. I have used a number of media for sowing seed in; as long as it is moisture retentive and of course not alkaline, it does not seem to matter too much. I have had very good results with sphagnum moss. It is collected in the summer and allowed to dry in the sun, being turned over from time to time, and then stored in a polythene bag until required. I crumble it with my fingers into the pot and soak it thoroughly - I dare say it would be better sieved, but I never seem to get round to that. Sometimes I mix Sphagnum with garden soil. I do not use peat alone, as it is too difficult to keep moist, but I have used peat/loam/leaf-mould mixtures. I avoid John Innes compost because of the lime content - I believe you can get it lime-free - but I have never seen it. I do not like the soil-less composts. One successful medium was rotted pine needles. I used this for quite some time until I found that instead of the desired Rh. insignne, I had raised a crop of ponticum

seedlings. If I could find a stand of pines without any ponticums near, it would be worth trying again.

Rhododendron seed is very fine, and I scatter it on the surface of the compost and water it in. I do not cover it at all, although silver sand or coal dust have been recommended for the purpose. I then put the pot or pots on a saucer or tray and enclose the whole thing in a polythene bag, sealed at the top. It is vital that the seeds and seedlings should not be allowed to dry out. Germination usually takes place in about a fortnight, and once the true leaves have developed, the pot can be taken out of the bag.

Recently I used 'Cling-film' stretched over the top of the pot. This was much neater than a polythene bag, and germination was excellent. However, one morning I found that all the seedlings but one had damped off, while still at the cotyledon stage - obviously it is necessary to remove the cling-film then, rather than wait until the true leaves have appeared, presumably because of the smaller amount of air trapped between the film and the soil.

Once the leaves have developed, it is largely a question of patience. The seedlings can be potted on when they become too crowded or when they seem to have exhausted the nourishment in the compost. It is best to keep them growing on as fast as possible - I keep them indoors over the first winter at least, if I can spare the room.

The time taken for different species to flower varies considerably. Members of the Lapponicum series almost always start to flower in the third year after sowing, occasionally in the second. Others that have flowered within 5 years include Rh. hanceanum var. nanum, Rh. atlanticum, Rh. Calostrotum, Rh. tephropeplum, Rh. uniflorum, Rh. viscosum, Rh. glaucophyllum, Rh. mucronulatum, Rh. racemosum F. 19404; Rh. wardii, Rh. yunnanense took 7 or 8 years; others I am still waiting for.

DORKING, SURREY

MRS I.F. LaCROIX

#### Late News - EAST ANGLIA SUB GROUP

An Inaugural meeting of this Sub Group is to be held on Saturday, 16th April at 3 p.m. at 54, Woodlands Road, Hoxley, Essex by kind permission of Mr. D. Fox.

#### Magnolias in Cornwall

Members attending the visit to the Magnolia Gardens may wish to know that on the 25th March at 7 p.m. Mr. David Trehane is giving a lecture on Camellias at the County Museum, River Street, Truro, which is organised by the Cornwall Garden Society. Admission 30p, to cover the cost of refreshments. Members of the Group will be most welcome if they wish to attend.