The Royal Horticultural Society

The Rhododendron & Camellia Group

BULLETIN No. 26 — July 1984

Forthcoming Events

19/20 September — Great Autumn Show
19/21 October — Wroxton Weekend
30/31 October — Tree & Shrub Competition
20/21 November — RHS Flower Show Ornamental Plant Competition

Group Officers

Chairman: Hon. H. E. Boscawen, The High Beeches, Handcross, Sussex, RH17 6H0.
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Hon. Bulletin Editor: Mr. B. Archibold, "Starveacre", Dalwood, East Devon, EX13 7HH.

Obituary

Following the death of Sandy Gibson of Glenarn last year, Scotland has more recently lost the owners of three more of its finest rhododendron gardens, all members of the Group:

Sylvester Christie of Blackhills, Morayshire, a fine rhododendron garden, containing some splendid plants of *R. lacteum*, perhaps the only *R. nakotiltum* in cultivation, and the rare *R. vialii*, as well as many other fine rhododendrons. It would have given him great pleasure to see his sons win the prestigious Class 1 (for 8 species), at this year's Rhododendron Show, which Blackhills so often won in his lifetime.

Wing Commander F. L. (Peter) Ingall of Corsock House, Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire, who also won this class on a number of occasions; a famous garden created by General MacEwan, with the assistance of his brother-in-law, John Millais of Compton's Brow, Horsham, who was agent at Leonardslee. General MacEwan subscribed to Forrest's last expedition and, in addition to a fine collection of the Loderi hybrids, there is a wealth of good plants of the Lacteum and Taliense series, in particular some fine plants of *R. lacteum*. It is good to know that Peter Ingall's sons will be able to keep this fine garden going also.

Lord Glenkinglas (Michael Noble) of Strone, Cairndow, Argyll, creator of some fine hybrids, notably 'Secretary of State', 'Shadow Secretary' (he was Secretary of State for Scotland) and 'John Bull' (*johnstoneanum* × *bullatum*), about whom it is hoped to publish an appreciation in the next bulletin.

The Group visited both Corsock and Strone on its 1979 tour.

A Message from the President of the RHS

Review Committee

Council has decided to invite a small, independent committee to review various aspects of the Society's affairs.

The Review Committee's terms of reference are "to review the role, responsibilities, management and organisation of the Royal Horticultural Society".

Lord Ridley has accepted an invitation to chair the Committee and invitations to serve on it have been extended to others. Further details of the membership will be given in a subsequent issue of *The Garden*.

It is hoped that Members will welcome this proposal and will take advantage of the opportunity to raise relevant matters with the Committee, in writing, addressed to The Secretary, (Review Committee), Royal Horticultural Society, P.O.Box 313, Vincent Square, London SW1P 3PE.

Retirement of Hon. Treasurer

After much deliberation and careful consideration, it is with deep regret that our Treasurer asks, very reluctantly, that he be relieved of his duties in 1985. Increasing responsibility and pressure of work in his professional life, coupled with his desire to take more interest in his own family, means that he will be unable to devote enough time to Group affairs to do the job properly, as he would wish.

Any member prepared to consider taking over this responsibility is welcome to telephone the Treasurer to discuss details and duties further. The most suitable time for the changeover would be mid-summer 1985 after the annual tour accounts have been completed. The months of July, August and September are very quiet for Group affairs.

Wessex Branch

The following reports about the Branch's activities have been received from Mrs K. J. Beadle, the Branch Secretary.

Rhododendrons and Associated Plants — Lecture by Alfred Evans, of The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh

Mr Evans, who had just returned from North America (and was shortly off to Turkey), started his talk with a slide of *R. lapponicum* growing high up on Mount Washington, kept very dwarf by growing in a spot swept by high winds up to 200mph on one occasion!

Then to Edinburgh and *R. calostrotum* 'Gigha', blue foliage and large flowers — a splendid red form.

Before going on to the plants to associate with the rhododendron we were first shown the rhododendrons in the Peat Garden at Edinburgh, including a very effective shot of a 'mixed border' composed entirely of rhododendrons of such variety of form and colour that it must make a most satisfying composition all through the year.

Whilst on the subject of year-round effect, a very deep yellow *R. campylocarpum* which never fails to appeal — a

fine specimen plant all the time you have it, whether in flower or not.

Then *R. campanulatum* — AM 1964 to RBG Edinburgh for the clone 'Roland Cooper' — species handbook says flowers white, shaded mauve, but here pink. A lovely species, said to be one of the commonest rhododendrons in the forests of the Himalayas, Kashmir to Bhutan.

An abrupt change to the tiny thimble-shaped flowers of *R. campylogynum myrtilloides*, blue and pink like *Symphytum* (although plum purple or magenta rose according to the book, which also fails to mention its very pungent foliage).

Slipping into the woodland to see a lovely pale pink *R. edgeworthii* (H2-3) Apl/May, to 10ft with thick tawny felt. Mr Evans said it needed shelter from the wind . . . an understatement??

Still there for a splendid *R. falconeri*, then out into the open again with *R. hanceanum* var. *nanum*, a most floriferous yellow form with prominent stamens and bronzy leaves.

R. lepidostylum, a more or less evergreen shrub to 3ft with intensely glaucous foliage until the winter. The gem of the Trichocladum series, the young growth is one of the sights of a rhododendron garden, vivid bluish green and quite startling. A shy flowerer but a really outstanding foliage plant, usually a low, mound-like bush.

R. leucaspis, well worth growing in a pot as we were shown it here, covered in lovely cream flowers with chocolate anthers, and the distinctive hairy leaves.

Then *R. orbiculare*, showing here really pleasing colour, and to end the rhododendron slides on a really colourful note we saw a fine hedge of R. 'Praecox' winding away into the distance. This is 6ft high and 8ft through, and was totally covered in bloom and although it only performs in this manner about once in five years it is impressive enough to see in the mind's eye in the intervening years.

Now to the Associated Plants of the title:

A for *Andromeda polifolia* 'Grandiflora' — a very 'Grandiflora' indeed, unless the camera lens played a part, or the skill in growing it? The white-flowered *Cassiope fastigiata*, given a FCC in 1863, and *C. wardii* hybrid, an erect shrublet with white urn-shaped flowers in spring. These were all photographed in R. B. Cooke's garden 20 years ago.

For planting around the base of rhododendrons, *Epigea repens*, a creeping evergreen only a few cms high with fragrant white flowers in April (although called the "May Flower"), growing through *Linnaea borealis*, a charming shrublet carpeting the ground, and in a moist acid soil, forming extensive colonies. Only snag — who can supply these? *Linnaea* is a British native, but oddly enough the American form is the easier to grow.

Two Gaultherias which looked most promising were *G. adenothrix* — a 6" high carpet of zig-zag red-brown hairy stems with white, pink flushed flowers from May to July; and *G. hispida*, with larger leaves and white flowers in terminal panicles, plus white autumn fruits. The first comes from Japan, the second from Australia & Tasmania. Both look beautiful in the shade of the rhododendron branches.

The dainty, heath-like *Phyllodoce empetriformis* and *P.* × *intermedia* "Fred Stoker" thrive in cool, moist conditions, the former with bell-shaped and the latter with pitcher-shaped flowers from April to July, and the very desirable *Menziesia ciliicalyx*, with clusters of nodding, pitcher-shaped flowers in May, the only deciduous shrub amongst those listed.

Turning to herbaceous material, "to fill in the gaps", Mr Evans first showed an unusual plant which I wrote down as *Calanthe tricarmata*, with very distinctive leaves which remain an asset to the plant until December or January and should never be cut off prematurely in the interest of tidiness. (In about the fifteenth book consulted, a reference is finally found — it is a terrestrial orchid with pleated leaves, actually *C. tricarinata*, but not suggested for outdoors, although E. B. Anderson grew a number of other Japanese Calanthes in a shaded, slightly-raised bed of leafmould, at Porlock). At Edinburgh the stepping-stones placed for working among the plants also serve to protect plants whose crowns may be invisible at the time from damage by a wayward boot!

Progressing through *Clintonia umbellata* and *Cornus canadensis* to *Disporum smithii* — a thick clump of thin, wiry stems growing into one another to form a carpet, with leaves clasping the stems and the yellow tubular flowers in early June; it makes a delicate contrast among groups of bolder plants). *Gentiana sino-ornata, Lilium canadense, Lilium japonicum* — orange, red or buff, and Mr Evans' favourite, a lovely airy pink hybrid "Magic Pink". *Lilium monadelphum*, and so to Meconopsis: a mouth-watering selection including *M. aculeata*, a lovely blue biennial with scalloped leaves; *M. nepaulensis* (cerise), and the yellow *integrifolia.*

Nemocharis pardii (?) and *saluenensis*; a paeony of especial quality, *P. obovata alba;* primulas in great variety including *P. edgeworthii*, one of the loveliest, but rather susceptible to winter wet; *P. bhutanica*, a little taller at 4-5 inches, in the same section; *P. maddarensis* with pink spikes; *P. gracilipes.* Easier than the above is *Primula polyneura*, presenting a view of drifts of varying shades of pink among the rhododendrons.

Ranzania japonica, a member of the herbaceous Berberidaceae, a beautiful plant which is very rare, both in the wild and in cultivation, was one of the last Mr Evans had to show us: the nodding flowers open before the leaves expand and consist of six pale purple sepals, with small petals surrounding the stamens. If you do manage to obtain it never try to divide it, seed is the only recourse. And from a very rare plant to a divide it, seed is the only recourse. And from a very rare plant to a much more familiar one, *Smilacina racemosa* — as the flowers open white the heads assume a feathery appearance, both conspicuous and subtle, contributing much to a shade planting. If you plant this in groups, you may be rewarded with red fruits.

A look at the *Trilliums*, a suggestion to grow *Tropaeolum speciosum*, the Flame Nasturtium, clambering through suitable rhododendrons, and then a last look at the Rhododendron Heath at Edinburgh, set on gently undulating ground and exhibiting the very high standard of care and cultivation that is so obviously maintained.

Lecture on The Rhododendron Species Foundation, by Mr Kendal Cambrill, at the Savill Garden Restaurant on April 14th 1984

Mr Cambrill's talk was a most interesting one, describing the history of the Foundation and the development of its garden near Seattle, in Washington State. The site is quite a favourable one, being situated between the Pacific Ocean and the mountains; the whole area covering about twenty acres, including the propagation facilities and the administration buildings.

His slides showed the site in its original condition of second growth Douglas Fir: then, before our very eyes, the trees were thinned, stumps removed, and the site mulched with eighteen inches of sawdust over the entire twenty acres! Lastly the roads and irrigation were installed. It really was most impressive to see the speed with which the development of the original idea took place. The Garden now contains 90 per cent of all the species in cultivation which can be expected to thrive in that area.

The Foundation has a membership of 700 and can offer a library solely devoted to rhododendron literature, a pollen bank for those wishing to cross-pollinate species growing in their own gardens, and a plant distribution list. This is a most informative list of plants propagated in the Garden, giving details of habit, colour and place of origin of each particular plant.

The next section of Mr Cambrill's talk was concerned with their propagation department, yet again very impressive. To see row upon row of rhododendron species, some of

which were very rare and very difficult, made the mouth water (as if Mrs Neuman's delicious food hadn't been enough). One of the few plants which they graft is, of course, *R. lacteum*. Not because they can't root it (they can!) but because it is considered to "do" better on the roots of something else.

When Mr Cambrill came to ask if anyone had any questions he was soon to find that they certainly did, and would have been answering them into the small hours of the morning had he not been rescued.

The Wessex Branch would like to extend their sincere thanks to Mr John Bond for letting us use the Restaurant, and to Mrs Neuman for such a super buffet.

South West Branch

On Saturday 26th May a successful visit was made to Lukesland at Ivybridge and Lower Coombe Royal near Kingsbridge.

In the morning, which started damp and cold, Brian Howell showed us around his 15 acre garden laid out along the stream below the house. Here fine forest trees have been planted to give shelter to a splendid collection of Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Magnolias. A group of *R. griersonianum* had reached a great size, as had *Magnolia campbellii*, whilst the most spectacular tree was a giant *Davidia involucrata*, covered in white handkerchief-like bracts. Most of the recent plantings are Exbury hybrids, and there were some fine plants of the unusual R. 'Iviza Philomene' giving a very colourful display.

Our hosts had very kindly provided beer and soft drinks and invited us all in to eat our picnic lunch by the dining room fire. Afterwards we presented them with a plant of R. 'Peace'.

The afternoon was sunny and we were greeted at Lower Coombe Royal by Harry and Peggy Sharp, the new owners. A conducted tour of the garden followed, *R. arboreum* of great size and variety formed the main flowering scene in many colours. One fine specimen with white flowers and rusty woolly indumentum was judged to be ssp. *cinnamomeum*. Among the hybrids, a fine plant of R. 'Igtham Yellow' was in full flower in a sunny glade, and was quite outstanding.

At the end of the visit, after an opportunity to buy some plants, Frank Adams, one of our new members, presented Harry Sharp with a plant of R. 'Review Order'.

Powdery Mildew

The following updated report has been received from ADAS. If members feel that they need urgent consultation, Dr. E. J. Evans who is stationed at Reading (Tel: Reading 58122) has agreed to help. With regard to the product 'Fungaflor', this is produced by Midox Ltd., and local horticultural suppliers should be able to obtain it. Benlate is readily available from most retail outlets. Research is continuing and further developments will be published when they become available.

Rhododendron Powdery Mildew

Dr John Evans, ADAS Regional Plant Pathologist, Reading.
Mr David Hutchinson, ADAS Horticultural Advisory Officer, Winchester

The first case of severe powdery mildew of outdoor rhododendrons in the UK was seen in 1980. Since that date further outbreaks have been confirmed in gardens and nurseries in southern and eastern England. The disease has been found on *Rhododendron ponticum* and related hybrids and on some species, including the dwarf R. 'Seta'. Rhododendron powdery mildew is reported from Australia, India and the USA. The precise identity of the causal fungus involved in the UK outbreaks is in some doubt but, both *Sphaerotheca pannosa* and *Erysiphe cruciferarum* have been implicated.

Symptoms are usually most obvious from June onwards. Look for faint yellow blotches on the upper surfaces of leaves. As leaves age these blotches may develop a purple margin. With some rhododendrons e.g. R. 'Seta', the purple margin appears early and the lesions turn brown or purple to resemble a leaf spot. Some of the more resistant types merely develop small reddish spots. Occasionally, in very shaded situations, a white powdery fungal growth develops on upper surfaces. Usually, however, this sparse growth is more common on the lower surfaces of leaves and underlying the blotched areas. Affected parts soon discolour variously, a yellowish-brown on *R. ponticum*, on other types a bright yellow or even purple. Severe infection can lead to a premature shedding of leaves and in the worst attacks almost complete defoliation of affected shrubs.

The powdery mildew fungus over-winters on infected plants in sheltered locations. As temperatures rise during spring and early summer spores are produced on the surfaces of infected leaves. These are dislodged and spread long distances by wind. The spores germinate if they alight on rhododendron leaves if relative humidity is high.

Most rapid development of the disease occurs when mild, humid weather coincides with a flush of growth during June and early July.

How can you avoid problems from rhododendron powdery mildew? Firstly don't buy in infected stock. Examine plants for signs of mildew and purchase only those which show no symptoms of the disease.

Where the disease is suspected on rhododendrons in your garden contact your local education authority horticultural officer who might be able to arrange for confirmatory diagnosis.

Where the disease is confirmed, the following measures should be considered:

a. If only a few plants are affected the removal of these and their destruction.
b. If, as is more likely, infection is well established in the garden, the cutting back of as many large plants as is practical prior to bud burst; this measure should substantially reduce carry-over of infection on leaves or in buds and increase the prospects of effective fungicide treatment.
c. Application of routine fungicide sprays during the growing season; these should be timed in relation to the rate of plant growth and weather conditions (at 7-10 day intervals when growth is rapid and/or weather is warm and settled, 14-21 day intervals when growth is slower and/or weather cool and unsettled).

None of the fungicides currently marketed have a specific recommendation for the control of rhododendron powdery mildew. Imazalil ("Fungaflor" — Midox) or certain products based on Dinocap have general recommendations for treatment of mildew on ornamentals.* Benomyl ("Benlate") has given good control of powdery mildew of closely related azaleas in USA trials. "Fungaflor" gave useful control of the disease in a trial on a Surrey holding in 1982 when used as a protectant. We are currently investigating the efficacy of a wider range of fungicides by spraying heavily infected plants under glasshouse conditions.

*Because of the wide range of varieties/hybrids grown, test the chosen fungicide on a few plants to determine crop safety before application on a wider scale.

A Gardener's Prayer

O LORD, grant that in some way it may rain every day, say from about midnight till three o'clock in the morning; but YOU see, it must be gentle and warm so that it can soak in; Grant at the same time that it wouldn't rain on Edelweiss, Yucca, Helianthemum, Lavender and others that YOU know, in Your infinite wisdom,a re drought loving plants — I will write their names on a slip of paper if YOU like.

And grant that the sun shine all day long — but not everywhere (not, for instance on Clematis, Hostas, Gentians and Rhododendrons) and not too much: that there may be plenty of dew and little wind, enough worms, no plant lice

and snails, no mildew, and that once a week thin liquid manure may fall from Heaven. *AMEN*
Gerd Krüssman after Karel Clapek I.D.S. Yearbook — 1978.

Plant Wants
A member wishes to obtain a plant of Azaleodendron "Lilian Harvey". Trade sources seem unable to help so if anyone knows where this plant can be obtained please write to the Hon. Gen. Secretary. (see page 1).

Weevil Attack
Without in any way wishing to put members off growing rhododendrons for life following the "Mildew" report, the following has been received from Dr. H. E. Salley from Ohio, USA. The Hon. Editor had the pleasure of meeting Dr. & Mrs. Salley on the recent tour of Cheshire & N. Wales and had been warned then about this pest (the weevil of course!). Any good systemic insecticides such as Tumblebug etc. seems to provide adequate protection.

For the last three years, while touring gardens with the Rhododendron Group, I frequently observed the notched edges of rhododendron leaves, which is certain evidence the black vine weevil has been feeding. This notch cutting not only makes the foliage unsightly but it is a sign to the gardener that he has a pest which can also girdle the stems below the soil level and may be destructive to the root system as well.

None of the gardeners I talked to seemed concerned about the pest. I feel you neglect it to your peril! Recent research has shown certain varieties of rhododendrons to be resistant to it. Lepidotes are more resistant than elepidotes. But I have never seen *williamsianum* or 'Exbury Naomi' with notched leaves. The weevils feed at night and are seldom seen during the day. You may find them with a flashlight. They are all females but entirely capable of rapid reproduction! More information is in Leach, *Rhododendrons of the World.*

Nurserymen in the U.S. are required to control this pest with the use of insecticides or other means, or they may lose their licence to sell if the inspector finds heavy infestation. A commonly used product for home gardeners is made by Ortho and the trade name is Orthene. I use it twice in the spring and once in the fall and now seldom see evidence of weevils, whereas once they were a problem. Your garden centre must have some brand of systemic insecticide that is comparable.

The following extract from "American Nurseryman" shows how seriously the matter is taken.

Extracts from rhododendron leaves inhibit root weevil feeding by Robert P. Doss

Root weevils are one of the few serious pests of rhododendrons in the US.[10] Feeding on roots by grubs (larvae) can weaken or even kill plants; those growing in containers are particularly susceptible. Adult feeding (leaf notching) is unsightly and can reduce the value of a plant.

There are several types of root weevils that feed on rhododendrons. In the Northeast, the black vine weevil *Otiorhynchus sulcatus* is most important. This insect was introduced from Europe many years ago and is continuing to increase its range.[9] The black vine weevil is found in the Pacific Northwest, but is usually less of a problem there than the obscure root weevil *Sciopithes obscurus*, an endemic species.[1] In the Pacific Northwest there are several other root weevils of lesser importance.[1]

Some rhododendron plants show resistance to adult root weevil feeding. It is noteworthy that plants resistant to feeding by adults may not possess any resistance to larval feeding. Our laboratory has tried to find out why certain plants are resistant to adult feeding while others are not. We now have a fairly good idea of what confers resistance on some plants.

Rhododendrons resistant to root weevils

Lepidotes	*Elepidotes*
R. chryseum	*R. williamsianum*
R. edgeworthii	'Jack'
R. megeratum	'Lucky Strike'
R. trichostomum	'Exbury Naomi'
R. xanthocodon	'Virginia Richards'
R. cinnabarinum	'Cowslip'
R. hippophaeoides	'Luscombei'
R. ferrugineum	'Vanessa'
R. heliolepis	'Oceanlake'
R. impeditum	
R. scintillans	
R. burmanicum	
R. dauricum	
R. intricatum	
R. minus	
'P. J. Mezzitt'	
'Sapphire'	
'Cilpinense'	
'Rose Elf'	
'Oceanlake'	

The work began in response to reports by rhododendron growers that some rhododendron species and cultivars suffered less than others from leaf notching. Workers at Oregon State University and at Washington State University's Western Washington Research and Extension Center demonstrated, using both laboratory tests and field observations, that some rhododendron species and cultivars did, indeed, possess resistance to root weevil feeding.[1,2]

Chemical factors

Our lab. entered the picture to look at the chemical factors in rhododendron that influence obscure root weevil feeding. We found that several compounds present in leaves could cause weevils to feed on membrane filters.[6] Membrane filters, made from cellulose nitrate and cellulose acetate, are a substrate upon which weevils ordinarily will not feed unless treated with feeding stimulants.

Sucrose, which is regular table sugar; sitosterol, a plant sterol; and quercetin 3-galactoside, a phenolic material found in a number of plants, all stimulated obscure root weevil feeding. These materials were much more effective in combination than separately.[5] Similarly, with the black vine weevil, sucrose and sitosterol stimulated feeding on filters and were most effective when applied together.[8]

The obscure root weevil and the black vine weevil feed on a variety of plant species. Hence, it is not surprising that the chemical materials that stimulate feeding are common to most plants. It was reasonable to assume that if resistance to weevil feeding had a chemical basis, it would be caused by the presence of feeding inhibitors rather than by the absence of feeding stimulants.

Learning which chemicals stimulated feeding was valuable because it allowed us to apply these materials to membrane filters to make them attractive to root weevils for feeding. Applying extracts from resistant plants made possible the search for inhibitory chemicals.

Results

Examination of the WSU results published by workers from OSU suggested that the lepidote rhododendrons were more often resistant than the elepidote types. The lepidote rhododendrons are characterized by scales on their leaves. Scales are small disc-like structures that are usually attached to the leaf surface by a stalk.

It was found that hexane extracts from resistant lepidote rhododendron leaves could often inhibit obscure root weevils' eating of stimulant-treated membrane filters.[4] Steam distillation, a technique used to obtain volatile components, could also be used to extract obscure root weevil feeding inhibitors from lepidote rhododendron leaves.[7]

Recently we have shown that the leaf scales on the lepidote rhododendrons are the primary source of essential

oils, which are mixtures of volatile materials, primarily sesquiterpenes. These can inhibit both obscure root weevil and black vine weevil feeding (Doss, unpublished). These essential oils are complex, and several of the components found in the oils can inhibit feeding.

We now believe that, despite what others contend about the function of rhododendron scales in controlling water loss,[3] the only function of scales for which there is good evidence is their defense against insects. Scales confer resistance because they contain volatile compounds that inhibit insect feeding.

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Greetings Cards

A stock of Mrs Joyce Jack's beautiful *R. thomsonii* Greetings Cards is still available at 12½p per card in packets of 5 including envelopes. Applications should be sent to Major E. W. M. Magor, Lamellen, St. Tudy, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL30 3NR, with a cheque in favour of the R.H.S. Rhododendron and Camellia Group, to include 2nd class inland postage at the following rates:

10 cards for 27p
20 cards for 39p
50 cards for 95p
100 cards for £1.62 (1st Cl).

Report from Trelean

George Witherwick who has a large and lovely plot of land on the other side of the Helford River from the National Trust garden at Glendurgan writes:

Here in the deep South West by the Helford River, this has been a poor Rhododendron year due to last summer's dryness, and now, this June, we are drier than ever — almost complete prohibition! Two plants that have done well here are the 'Logan Damaris' and 'Exbury Calstocker' A.M. This latter is vigorous with a clear large white truss having a maroon blotch. Informing Walter Magor that for me Damaris is the finest yellow rhodie, he replied: "That is also Julian Williams's opinion". It was his father, E. J. P. Magor, who made the hybrid (*campylocarpum* × Dr. Stocker) and named it after his younger daughter. The same cross was made again twenty years later by Kenneth McDouall at Logan in Wigtownshire, and is the 'Logan Damaris'.

As usual R. *yakusimanum* has been a sight for sore eyes, it is a Chelsea plant de luxe, since it always flowers on or about the twenty-first of May, come hell or high water. The finest specimen so far seen is by the top pool at Wakehurst, unless Kew have shifted the pool! The indispensible Azalea, *R. luteum* has excelled itself this spring, as did the Azaleas *R. reticulatum* and *calendulaceum*, and the *occidentale* hybrid 'Superba' with its lush perfume, which all these *occidentale* hybrids possess. Amongst the small fry 'Curlew' and 'Princess Anne' have out-flowered 'Elizabeth', and the arresting chocolate-coloured new growth of 'Elizabeth Lockhart' rivals the copper of the new growth of 'Bow Bells'. The new growth of Rhododendrons is a bonus so few seem to appreciate, both as a spectacle and colour contrast, in the landscaping juxtapositioning of plants within one's garden. Amongst the large leaved chaps *fictolacteum* has performed well, so it should, since I grew it from seed, then *rex* with its lovely cream bell flowers having a deep red blotch and superb indumentum on its new leaves, but wait! best of all, after seventeen long years — 'Elsae' A.M. with a large light yellow truss, this is a magnificent cross between *grande* and *hodgsonii*, with leaves as big as elephant's ears, some girl this! a fair maid of Kent perhaps? Loderi 'Pink Diamond' and 'Venus' have also bloomed profusely, especially the beauty over at Bosahan, which had so much flower as to perfume the entire estate, as well as the home farm! The best of the mid-season lot was 'Jalisco Janet', a nice name, having a soft shade of apricot yellow enhanced by its new growth, the texture of 'Old Port'. Next 'Medusa', its subtle orange colour the more striking if placed in partial wooded shade. My favourite Azalea is the mid-season 'Knaphill Annabell', a deep glowing orange, set off to perfection by its lustrous bronzed foliage, which a discerning and sprightly lady noticed as she skipped down the valley with her ninety two years behind her. There is a most attractive dwarf named 'Woodchat', with lovely petite lime-yellow bell flowers, and the new growth of another dwarf *tsariense* is almost as good as that of *pachysanthum*, both having attractive indumentum as well as tomentose beneath.

Hardiness of Rhododendrons & Camellias

Firstly the Hon. Editor would like to thank all those members who obviously went to a deal of trouble to compile and send in reports. The "catchment area" extended from Cheshire to Cornwall and also one report from Vicomte Philippe de Spoelberch in Belgium, which is being treated separately, since the temperatures reached are unlikely (we hope) to be reached in this country. Unfortunately, no records were received from Scotland or Ireland.

It is generally accepted that plants are of mature years and grown in reasonable conditions as regards shelter from excessive winds and with high cover.

One thing became abundantly clear that it was not so much the severity of frosts (although of course very low temperatures caused damage) but the time when the frosts occurred. As an example, at the very end of October 1983, a sharp frost described by the Met. Office as between −3°C and −6°C did untold damage to growth which was still relatively soft. This was followed in many places by storm force winds which caused considerable wind damage and even defoliation. Most of this, however seems to have been put right by the new season's growth.

In the report, the term "hardy" has been taken to refer to temperatures of −8°C to −10°C.

R. crassum	Probably hardy in the South West but liable to be cut back in winter. Elsewhere requires to be given shelter in winter even if this consists of a covering of bracken.

R. lindleyi	Would appear to be more hardy than *R. crassum* but still suffers cut back in a bad winter. Even in more favoured areas would stand a better chance grown against a sheltered wall.
R. grande	Described in reports from Sussex and Cornwall as above marginally hardy, although well established plants in Cornwall were lost in the winter of 1978/79.
R. elliottii	Does not appear to be widely grown, but is reported from Sussex to vary from marginal to above marginal. The related *R. facetum* is reported to be hardy in Cornwall.
R. falconeri	Reported from Middlesex to be hardy and regarded as such in the South East and further West. From Cheshire reported as doubtfully hardy.
R. williamsianum	Would appear to be completely hardy although the new growth is susceptible to frost damage.
R. cinnabarinum	This also is reported as hardy from as far North as Cheshire, and is undoubtedly so further South. It is, however, very susceptible to drought conditions.
R. 'Fragrantissimum'	Needs wall protection in the South East and is almost certainly not hardy North of the Thames. In Devon and Cornwall it survives and flowers well in the open in the latter. In the former a late or early frost can play havoc with new growth.
R. 'Polar Bear'	Seems to be hardy from Cheshire southwards.
R. 'Saffron Queen'	Is more widely grown in the South West where it seems to be quite hardy. In Middlesex it is cut to the ground in winter but survives under a bracken cover.
R. 'Loderi'	Considered entirely hardy from Cheshire to Lands End!
R. 'Bric-a-Brac'	There was very little comment on this plant, but when the Hon. Editor was gardening in Sussex at about 800 feet it was certainly hardy there, although flowers were very susceptible to frost damage.
Camellias	
C. japonica	Generally reported as hardy but loses flower buds in heavy frost.
C. reticulata	To give of its best would appear to require the shelter of a wall and even then may lose flower buds in frost.
C. williamsii	Regarded as perfectly hardy from all locations covered.
C. sasanqua	Reported as hardy only from the more favoured parts of the South West.

Hardiness Report from Belgium

As stated above the following report has been submitted by Vicomte Philippe de Spoelberch from Herkenrode. During the course of correspondence the Vicomte very kindly offered to welcome to Herkenrode any member of the Group travelling in Belgium. The garden, which is reported elsewhere in this Bulletin, is situated at Wespelaar north of Brussels about 20 minutes from the airport. A telephone call to the Vicomte either at his home (016/60.23.11) or office (016/24.72.03) will ensure that a mutually convenient time can be agreed.

1. R. Loderi

I had 5 plants of Loderi in 1978. The 1978/79 winter killed one of two Loderi 'King George', the other recovered and survived the 1981/82 winter but is damaged. A Loderi 'Venus' died (summer of 1982) of previous winter cold. A large Loderi 'Pink Diamond' is in good shape, was defoliated (⅔) in 1978/79 and 1981/82, but recovered. Loderi 'Sir Edmund' was defoliated (partial) in 1978/79, came through in 1981/82 in relatively good shape and seems to be the hardiest of this lot.

2. R. cinnabarinum

cinnabarinum ssp. *contatenans* and ssp. *xanthocodon* survived both winters; so did *cinnabarinum* var. *blandfordiiflorum*; others died; also several clones of 'Lady Chamberlain' and 'Lady Roseberry' were destroyed. 'Biskra' (*ambiguum* × *cinnabarinum*) is very hardy and most recommended substitution for cinnabarinums; *cinnabarinum* 'Mount Everest' was lost.

3. R. 'Polar Bear'

Small plants are definitely not hardy here; lost one in1978/79 and had one damaged by the 1981/82 winter but they were of weak constitution. Have tried some more.

4. R. williamsianum

Does not appreciate our late spring frosts. Otherwise seems to survive cold winters.

For comparison, it might be worth looking at the performance of the other plants during the same two winters. The list hereafter gives an indication of the impact of these two winters on some of the 500 species or hybrids planted at Herkenrode since 1970. The list is far from complete. This could be completed if of interest to anyone.

78/79 and 81/82 down to −20°C

lost within 6 months

'Laura Aberconway'
'Tally Ho'
'Shilsonii'
'Kilimanjaro'
'Montreal'
'Penjerrick P.G.'
montroseanum
praestans
'Grosclaude'
beanianum
callimorphum
'Loderi King George'
'Cinnkeys'
venator
'Brocade'
morii
'Fabia Waterer'
'Bibiani'
'Leda'
'Fabia'
lutei florum
fulvum
'Moonstone' (weak plant)
ungernii
eximium

(20 to 100%) defoliated

'Letty Edwards'
'Mrs W. C. Slocock'
'Hermes'
'Cynthia'
'Loders White'
campylocarpum
'Fabia'
Loderi (all clones)
cinnabarinum blandfordiiflorum
meddianum
crinigerum
spinuliferum
'Brookside'
shweliense
'Arthur Osborn'
'Vanessa Pastel'
'Mrs G. W. Leak'
niveum
'Grenadier'
'Repose'
souliei
'Langley Park'
'Coral Reef'
caesium
'Rosybell'
'May Day'
aberconwayi
'Pinkerton'
desquamatum

(less than 20% foliage) undamaged

'Hawk'
'Biskra'
sanguineum
'Romany Chal'
concatenans
xanthocodon
Diaprepes v 'Gargantua'
'Ibex'
caloxanthum

'Oreocinn'
'Beau Brummel'
microgynum
'Beefeater' etc. etc.
phaeochrysum *other 300 spec. or hybrids undamaged.*

Herkenrode

Herkenrode was started twenty years ago in 1964, on the site of a small park that must have been planted in the eighteen eighties, a few grand trees having survived a century of oblivion. Among these, one must mention a *Pinus cembra,* a *Chamaecyparis pisifera,* a *Chamaecyparis obtusa,* a *Liquidamber styraciflua* and a group of Rhododendron ponticum hybrids which have reached 4m high, a good size for this part of Europe.

Dropping a recently purchased Rhododendron 'Pink Pearl' into a sticky, wet clay hole, was probably our first experience with growing Rhododendrons... We soon learned that it was more important to prepare the soil than to purchase a plant. Today, we prepare the soil before we even know what will go into it; this makes gardening rather pleasant. Heavy clay can be made ideal by the addition of relatively little humus. The Azalea industry in Ghent will dispose of big amounts of nearly pure spruce and fine needle compost after one growth cycle. We have purchased truck loads of these every Spring and incorporated these with what is otherwise a neutral to acid clay. The result is an easy-to-drain garden soil. Further out, in the woodland area, we found natural humus from the decayed oak and larch tree leaves and no preparation of the soil was required. This is where most of our Rhododendrons have gone.

Herkenrode is located 15 miles north-east of Brussels on the great plain of northern Europe; it is flat from here to the tip of Denmark. We are 14 metres above sea level, but too far from the sea to benefit from its influence, and far enough inland to suffer every now and then from the desiccating, cold easterly winds.

Three times in the last fifteen years, the winter temperatures have dropped as low as −20°C and the damage was severe.

Yet, here we are today with too many Rhododendrons and not enough space for them to grow; in 1983, 480 different hybrids and species flowered with us. In 1982, the area was increased from approximately 5 to 8 hectares, all enclosed in a rabbit-proof fence. (Rabbits love Triflorums, Cinnabarinums, azaleas, maples, etc... and will try anything new, specially before it gets a chance to establish itself). There is more space for expansion into woodland areas (under oaks) but for the time being, this must be enough for my wife and me and one full time gardener.

Our Rhododendrons grow among "luxuriant" brambles. These are kept at respectable distance by spraying with weed killers, twice in the summer. Brambles have the great quality of providing windbreak for young Rhododendrons and preventing fallen leaves from blowing away; eventually, as they grow, the Rhododendrons will close in. In the meantime, the brambles are great ground cover and provide delicious jams and look natural.

Altogether, we must have approximately 1,500 species or cultivars of shrubs and trees on file with up to half a dozen of each planted in the garden and woodland area. All are really very young as it was only in 1975 that we started to plant on a big scale. Most plants are labelled but I am afraid that too many may be mislabelled as our friends from the Nurseries take many liberties with the completion of our purchase orders... I do wish they were a little more conscientious; on the other hand, what would we have done without them. Hilliers, Reuthes, Glendoick, Spinners have provided the base for our plants. On the continent, Van Pelt (Belgium), Dietrich Hobbie (Germany) and Esveld (Holland) have contributed their lot of (slightly) more hardy plants.

Seeds have also contributed to the collections. Unfortunately, many of the organised sources are disappointing and I have stopped growing Rhododendrons from these organisations. On the other hand, I do wish to point out the excellent job done by the American Rhododendron Society. We have purchased some of their seeds for several years and the result is very satisfactory, both with regards to species collected in the wild and hand pollinated hybrids. (We will probably have thousands of seedlings to place or to give away in the near future). Most have come to flower in four to six years and the excitement is always tremendous... Shall we finally produce the "compact, hardy, deep yellow Rhododendron...?"

Most of our Rhododendrons are growing under the canopy of high oaks, larches and beech trees. Beech trees are obviously no good as they compete with the Rhododendron roots. But it is amazing what strong hybrids will stand once established even among beech and birch!

Early and late frosts are one of our main problems, they probably cause more damage than hard winter frosts. Many plants at Herkenrode come from seed taken in parks and gardens in the New York area where we lived in 1967 and 1968. To my great surprise, trees that withstood the cold New York winters would freeze in Belgium every other year (*Albizzia julibrissin, Koelroetheria paniculata, Ulmus parviflora, Maclura aurantiaca,* all of which were grown from seed collected in New York's Central Park, have been lost or repeatedly cut to the ground.

In winter, the worst damage to evergreen shrubs occurs when the February sun shines after a cold night of frost and the temperature rises in a few hours from −10°C to + 10°C. With the added impact of snow, the dessicating effect is tremendous. Rhododendron shrubs are "burnt" on the south east-exposure and many have to be protected with burlap.

We have tried camellias in the open woodland and have lost nearly all of them. Many camellias, cut to the ground, would sprout back from the base but they would remain small and never have time to reach flowering size. One exception out of two dozen supposedly hardy cultivars tried is a shrub, today of two metres high, called Virgin's Blush. It took many years to flower but survived all of our bad winters without losing much more than a few flower buds. I would love to try other "hardy" camellia cultivars and would appreciate any suggestions that readers of this article could make.

Would it be useful to list a short selection of our favourite Rhododendrons? I would like to mention some that are not too well known, flower every year or nearly, are hardy with us and make a nice looking shrub:

- 'Biskra' (*ambiguum* × *cinnabarinum*), my favourite, the only cinnabarinum-like shrub to grow and flower with us
- 'Calrose' (*griersonianum* × *calophytum*), spectacular, early, reliable (a little too flashy maybe)
- 'Helene Schiffner', really white, with dark leaves, hardy
- *annae*, the only plant of the Irrorata subsection to be hardy and flower regularly at Herkenrode
- *glomeratum*, a healthy, early and neat subsection Lapponica Rhododendron
- *concinnum pseudoyanthinum,* spectacular show of flowers provided the shrub is isolated (must be dead headed)
- 'Lodauric' and *auriculatum*, for their late flowering and grand size
- *rex* ssp. *fictolacteum*, for its superb foliage and hardiness (two specimens from Hilliers are the only big-leaf Rhododendrons to have survived out of doors)
- a *yakushimanum* × Brittania hybrid raised by Robert and Jelena de Belder which, in addition to all the *yakushimanum* qualities, has great vigour and is rapidly reaching a significant size.

— 'Oldenburg' (Dr. Hobbie), for its perfect shape and foliage
— *schlippenbachii*, the most charming and elegant azalea.

Many more Rhododendrons are really "under observation" and one will only be able to draw a conclusion in ten years' time at the earliest, specially with regard to the hundreds of new American hybrids which look so promising.

To complement our Rhododendrons (half of which should be thrown away in due course), we have planted a great number of Japanese and Chinese maples, *Stewartias, Styrax, Halesias, Cornus, Prunus, Magnolias* and good Autumn colouring shrubs and trees. A beauty with us is *Liquidambar formosana* 'Monticola'. So are *Oxydendron arboreum, Enkianthus* species, *Cornus kousa, Cornus alba, Cornus bayleyi, Stewartia monodelpha, Euonymus* species, *Aronias Amelanchier, Acer capillipes, Acer japonicum* and *palmatum, Rhus glabra, Prunus sargentii* etc. etc.

Philippe de Spoelberch
May 1984

Urgent Notice from Hon. Treasurer

There are still some 135 overdue subscriptions for the current year 1983/4. Year Books for these members are ready and waiting for immediate despatch upon receipt of their £5 subscription.

Individual reminders are being sent with this Bulletin inviting payment of two years subscriptions now to save further reminder in a few months time. BUT if any member has doubts or a query about the state of their subscription they are most welcome to telephone the Hon. Treasurer, Hornchurch (04024) 40536 (available most evenings after 6.30pm) when an answer can usually be had within 10 seconds! Forms of Bankers Order are available if required and do assist members with the problem of overlooked subscriptions.

Year Books Wanted

If anyone has a copy of the 1972 Yearbook that they no longer require, Major E. W. M. Magor of Lamellen, St. Tudy, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL30 3NR, would like to hear from you.

Accounts for the Year 1982/83, ending 31st October 1983

Expenditure			Income		
Cost of R.H.S. Yearbooks		1218.75	Subscriptions		1543.50
Bulletins		461.59	Donations		38.70
Administration:			Tours 1983		
telephone	10.72		receipts	7672.72	
postages	299.03		payments	7564.39	
print/staty	63.58				108.33
		373.33	Sale of Yearbooks		78.02
Greetings/Christmas cards:			Bank account interest		146.60
print costs	434.34		Excess expenditure over income		533.73
sale of cards	113.34				
		321.00			
Sundry		74.21			
		2448.88			2448.88

Balance Sheet at 31st October, 1983

Liabilities			Assets	
General Fund:			At Bank	1204.79
Balance at 1st November '82	1454.52		Stock of Yearbooks	25.00
loss for year 1982-83 to 31st October 1983	533.73		Subscriptions arrears	60.00
	920.79			
Subscriptions in advance	369.00			
	1289.79			1289.79

Chairman's Report 1983

After the exceptional flowering year in 1983, we have experienced in the South a near drought in the late summer, virtually no frost but cold spring winds, and the problems of Powdery Mildew have caused worries in some gardens.

The Group, which as a whole has prospered with a steady increase of Members, and a new Branch in the Midlands, is still expanding. There are now Members from 15 different countries outside the United Kingdom. The biggest group outside Europe comes from the United States, followed closely by New Zealand and Australia, while we now have Members from Africa and Japan as well.

The Treasurer's Report shows that our finances are sound. Every year he has a problem, that of collecting in the subscriptions, so please help by paying yours on time. The Treasurer is a very busy man, and it is unfair to add to his other commitments with the burden of collecting overdue subscriptions.

The Tour of Ireland, despite the rain, was a success and very well attended. We must thank Nigel Glass for all the detailed work he has put into the organisation of these Tours. Valerie Archibold has taken on this task, and is organising the North Wales Tour. As for the future, tours in