

The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group



BULLETIN No. 46 - April 1991

Forthcoming Events 1991

April 9-10	Spring Show, Camellia and Magnolia Competitions	May 12-17	Group Spring Tour, N.E. England and S.E. Scotland
April 30	Group AGM, 4.30pm Committee Room, New Hall, Vincent Square	May 21-24	Chelsea Flower Show
April 30 - May 1	Main Rhododendron Competition	June 18-19	Early Summer Show
May 10-12	Malvern Spring Gardening Show	July 16-17	Flower Show
	All shows are at Vincent Square unless stated otherwise.	August 13-14	Summer Flower Show

Chairman's Notes

With the beginning of a new year and, hopefully, the end to the hard weather that we have all been suffering we can all look forward to the great pleasure of the first, and subsequent, flowerings, some, with great excitement, for the first time.

The Treasurer, Peter Reynolds, has felt that, due to increased pressure of work, he is no longer able to carry on and his place has been taken by Alastair Stevenson who previously was in charge of recruitment.

Another new Branch has been started in the North West under the guidance of Peter Howarth who is presently dealing with the fine old garden at Muncaster Castle. At present the new Branch has not been named but for those wishing to join, the address is 2, Wanlass, Howe, Borran's Road, Ambleside, Cumbria, LA22 0EN. Tel: 05394 32807.

The issue of the new Membership List is much appreciated and Ray Redford is to be congratulated on a first class job. It is hoped to produce updates at regular intervals.

A sub-committee under the chairmanship of Alan Hardy has been set up to assist with the collection of good, reliable seed for the seed exchange now to be run from Ness Botanic Garden.

Members are reminded that they should, if at all possible, complete and return to Edinburgh Royal Botanic Garden the Powdery Mildew questionnaire sent out with the last Bulletin so that they may have the maximum information available to assist them to find a way to deal with this most pernicious affliction of rhododendrons.

B.A.

Photographers - Read This!

The Hon. Editor of the Year Book is pleased to announce the usual photographic competition with the princely prize of £10. But, the pleasure of seeing your favourite picture in print is surely a just reward! The judges are always seeking new and unusual aspects of our three genera and would be particularly pleased this year to see some pictures of camellias and magnolias. The final date for entries is 30th June 1991 thus allowing for photographs taken during this flowering season to be considered. Send your slides or prints please to: Lady Cynthia Postan, 84, Barton Road, Cambridge, CB3 9LH with a s.a.e. for return of material.

C.P.

Show News

The following letter was received by the Group Chairman regarding the possible staging of an interesting exhibit to which those cultivating clones of recent introduction might lend support.

From A. D. Schilling, Esq., Deputy Curator, Wakehurst Place.

Re: RHS GREAT AUTUMN SHOW EXHIBIT (September 1991)
(Wild plants of horticultural merit introduced by
British collectors since 1950)

An exhibit (entitled as above) is planned for the RHS Great Autumn Show in September 1991 and I am writing to ask if you can supply me with a list of your own post-1950 introductions which fit these criteria. These could be species new to cultivation or an improved clone of an already cultivated plant, but no straight forward *re-introductions* please.

I would also be pleased to know if you can supply (preferably in containers) specimens of the plants you include in your list.

It is planned to build up a stock of plant material here at Wakehurst Place over the next 10 months or so, which will then be transported to

Vincent Square. Any assistance you can give will be much appreciated, either with material or with general suggestions.

The exhibit will be planned, financed, set-up, and manned by Kew and Wakehurst resources but it will, of course, give full credit to the plant collectors and to the actual donors of plant material. Although every care will be taken to safeguard loaned material, the Royal Botanic Gardens cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage caused to plants whilst in their care.

Although it is still only in the early planning stage, the exhibit will be planned as a large wall-backed exhibit and the layout will probably be broken down into various different geographical zones. Plant labels will give genus and species details plus country of origin, the date of introduction plus collector's name and collecting number.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating in what should prove to be a very interesting and thought stimulating exhibit. Recently introduced plants are frequently individually shown in RHS Committees but this will probably be the first time a collective exhibit has been staged. Many plants will not be in flower at the chosen time but this is not considered to be of great importance, the presentation of the living plant is what really matters; but flowers, fruit or other attractive characteristics will, of course, lift the level of interest significantly.

My colleague, Mark Flanagan (Garden Supervisor, Wakehurst Place) will be co-ordinating the exhibit and I would be obliged if all correspondence could be directed to him and not to me.

Powdery Mildew

From The Scottish Rhododendron Society's Newsletter No. 21 dated November 1990, there is a hint that this trouble is on the wane. Let us hope this is the case and take some comfort from the fact that no predator, mould or otherwise, is interested in seeing the extermination of its host!

Year Books Sought

Mr. Steven Fox, 4 Park Lane, Little Hayfield, Stockport, SK12 5NW would like to hear from anyone wishing to dispose of old Year Books, particularly those from the early '50s. On offer is cash or a set of The Rhododendron Society Notes (15 parts, 1916-31), as reprinted by The Pacific Rhododendron Society in 1976.

Dr. Reid Bahnson, 2725 Windsor Road, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27104 is searching for the following Year Books, 1967, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1976 and 1977. Maybe as part exchange or sale Dr. Bahnson offers spare copies of 1962, 1963 and 1970.

Book Review

'A Plantsman's Guide to Rhododendrons' by Kenneth Cox, Ward Lock 1989, with good colour photographs of 40 rhododendrons and azaleas and descriptions of nearly 250. This follows the same pattern as 'Cox's Guide to Choosing Rhododendrons', briefly reviewed in Bulletin No. 45.

The Autumn Weekend 1990

The Group's Autumn Meeting was held in Sussex on the third weekend of October. Traditionally, this weekend is the best for viewing autumn colour in this part of the country and so it proved to be.

Members gathered for dinner on the Friday evening at the Roebuck Hotel, Wych Cross and there followed the usual chatter as friendships were renewed and acquaintanceships made in the convivial atmosphere of a happy occasion.

On the Saturday morning, we visited Wakehurst Place Garden where we saw and admired the now completely redesigned and rebuilt top part of the garden around the lake in front of the house. The whole of this area was devastated by the great hurricane of 1987. Our 'crocodile' was led down the valley by our Chairman, Bruce and there was the usual argument and discussion over the identification of many of the species rhododendrons. The absence of flowers made the naming more of a test and added interest to the debate, as other characteristics had to be discovered. The genus *Rhododendron* is so fascinating because of these other features, much as we do admire the flowers. We noted several *Sorbus* with brilliant autumn fruits and two shrubs in flower caught our attention during our return up the far side of the valley. These were *Osmanthus heterophyllus* with holly-like leaves and sweetly scented flowers and to our great joy, *Rhododendron cerasinum*, probably var. 'Cherry Brandy'. This latter was much photographed of course. Although normally a spring flower, it is apparently common for this species to flower again in the autumn and those of us who visited Nymans Garden at Handcross in the afternoon did find another plant of the same species, again in flower.

On the Saturday evening, we were the guests of Mrs. Anne Holland, a member of the Group, in her magnificent home, Lullings at Balcombe, where we enjoyed a slide show and commentary by Mrs. Anne Boscawen on her expedition with others from the Group to Bhutan in the spring of 1987. A full report of this is to be found in the 1988-89 Year Book. After a vote of thanks by David Farnes to both the 'Annes', we returned to our hotel for dinner and another convivial evening.

On the Sunday morning we visited Sheffield Park and were met by Mr. Archie Skinner who was in a much happier frame of mind than when we visited his garden exactly three years earlier and only one week after the great hurricane. Then, he was distraught at the scenes of terrible devastation and the loss of so many rare and valuable trees. Now, he was his usual cheerful self, full of enthusiasm for his pride and joy and keen to show us how he had rebuilt and replanted the garden. We greatly admired his efforts, which showed much skill and imagination. It was difficult for us to find much evidence of the destruction and a tribute to Archie whose wisdom and foresight have ensured that Sheffield Park will be visited and enjoyed by generations to come. The autumn colours for which the park is so famous, were as always, splendid.

We returned to our hotel for lunch, when we congratulated our 90-year-old, Mrs. Sutcliffe, on her continued support for the Group and regular attendance at many of our activities, including the annual tour of gardens, (younger members please note!)

After expressing our thanks to Valerie Archibold for having organised yet another happy and memorable event, we said fond farewells and the party was over; to be re-convened in the north-east of England in spring 1991 for the annual tour, where incidentally exactly ten years earlier and on a similar tour, the idea of an autumn re-union was consummated.

David Farnes

BRANCH NEWS

South East

A meeting was arranged for 15th March when Mr. Alan Clark was scheduled to give a lecture on his recent visit to Bhutan.

South West Wales

Forthcoming events include:

Gelli Deg Gardens	27th April
Bryn Ingh & Picton Castle	11th May
Pant-yr-Holiad Garden	18th May
Plas Glanrhyd	25th May

Wessex

On 19th October 1990, Jim Gardener gave an extremely informative lecture, accompanied by superb slides on the subject of Magnolias, while a very good attendance greeted Roy Lancaster when he lectured on 16th November 1990. A further meeting was arranged for 22nd February 1991, when John Bond VMH was to lecture on the subject, 'National Collections'. 'Wakehurst Place' was to be the subject of Tony Schilling's lecture scheduled for 22nd March.

Forthcoming events:

Visits to Wakehurst Place and David Clulow's garden Bletchingly	28th April
Members' Competition and Plant Sale	12th May

Editorial Note

Branch Organisers and all members may care to note that contributions for the August issue should be received by the end of June. Sometimes a small amount of space remains at the end of a Bulletin, insufficient for a letter, but adequate for advertising a few surplus plants of a rare species,

searching for that elusive member of Group genera or maybe tracing an out of print book. The space is at your disposal!

Geoff H. Taylor, Hon. Editor

Pant-yr-Holiad Garden, Rhydlewis, Llandysul, DYFED, SA44 5ST

Open Forum Notes from members on Group genera

A communication from Sir Peter Smithers

'The Magnolia Society' is planning its Annual convention for 1992 here in Switzerland, when they will be spending a good deal of time in Eisenhut's arboretum.

We have just been devastated by an early (autumn 1990) snowstorm, before any new wood is properly hardened and prior to leaf fall of deciduous trees. There was serious damage to our *Magnolia grandiflora* trees, of which we grow thirteen forms, while large camellias snapped off at the base after growing to tree size. As my Grandmother used to say, "My dear boy, these things are sent to try us". If that is so, they are indeed a great success!

After Two Seasons of Drought

Thanks are due to those members who kindly furnished details of drought experiences, but firstly we might consider the following observations.

A Communication from Graham Ferguson, Esq., Malt House, Hants.

Last winter I felt convinced we would have another drought this summer (1990). Consequently, I used seep hose all winter so that by March all the five acre garden was soaked. I then put a six inch mulch everywhere I could reach (we are on a steep south-facing sandy hill). I used anything - wood shavings, bark, unrotted manure, in fact anything that would make a blanket to seal in the moisture.

We had a frost on 11th November 1989, but no further perceptible frost until 4th April 1990. For three successive nights we then endured 10°C of frost. When plants started to die back in July I blamed the drought. However, when I examined the victims, the frost had obviously ring barked the vast majority of several hundred rhododendrons.

In most cases I lost major parts of the plant and in some instances where damage was near ground level, the whole plant was destroyed, although certain species may shoot again. While the drought claimed very few plants, those late frosts occurring when the sap was so far advanced, proved disastrous.

Regarding drought, I found that rhododendrons of the subsection Triflora showed evidence of wilt more readily than those of other subsections, but real casualties were confined to ericas and plants of *R. kaempferi* and I am sure that the mulch prevented more losses. Camellias and magnolias were quite unaffected.

Despite the opinions expressed in the following letter, there are several reports of *R. bureavii* succumbing to drought (See Bulletin No. 45).

A letter received from Lt. Col. Sir Arscott Molesworth-St. Aubyn, Bart., M.B.E., Pencarrow House Gardens, Cornwall

During the past 15 years I have planted specimens of over 600 different species and hybrids in these large partially exposed and partially woodland gardens. I have had no problems with either *R. bureavii* or *R. neriiflorum*.

However, single specimens, except where shown, of the following established rhododendrons died during 1989/90 for no reason other than drought that I can establish, and certainly not the other obvious possibilities of powdery mildew (from which I have had a dozen losses, nearly all *R. cinnabarinum* or *R. campylocarpum* and their hybrids), honey fungus or frost.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| a. Species | b. hybrids |
| <i>R. yunnanense</i> | <i>R. Penheale Blue</i> |
| <i>R. arboreum</i> | <i>R. Dante</i> |
| <i>R. chrysomanticum</i> | <i>R. Hydon Glow</i> |
| <i>R. adenophorum</i> | <i>R. Busaco (2)</i> |
| <i>R. anthopogon*</i> | <i>R. rex</i> × <i>macabeum</i> |
| <i>R. lepidostylum*</i> | <i>R. Golden Fleece</i> |
| <i>R. luteiflorum*</i> | <i>R. Purple Splendour</i> |
| <i>R. impeditum*</i> | <i>R. Rubina (2)</i> |
| <i>R. pseudochrysanthum</i> | <i>R. Chikor (2)</i> |
| <i>R. phaeochrysum</i> | <i>R. Flava</i> |
| | <i>R. Review Order</i> |
| | <i>R. lacteum</i> × <i>sutchuenense</i> |
| | <i>R. Pink Drift</i> |
| | <i>R. Fulgarb</i> |
| | <i>R. Sapphire</i> |
| | <i>R. Kittiwake</i> |
| | <i>R. Matador</i> |

25 plants from a total of 600 is not a large percentage but is nevertheless worrying and I can draw few deductions from this list. The best that I can do is as follows:

1. *R. pseudochrysanthum*, *phaeochrysum*, 'Review Order' and 'Rubina' are, in my experience, difficult anyway, and I suspect particularly susceptible to drought.

2. Those dwarf rhododendrons marked * were planted in a rockery exposed to full sun and almost certainly dried out.

3. Although I only lost two *R. yakushmanum* hybrids out of a total of 30 planted, as usually recommended, in the open, several others have been seriously damaged.

4. Most young large-leaved species and hybrids from subsections Falconera and Grandia showed early signs of distress, whether in full or only partial shade, (i.e. total collapse of leaves) except in one case and without swift and immediate action I am sure most would have been lost.

None of my camellias or magnolias was affected. That great gardener J. C. Williams of Caerhayes Castle, once told my father that the hazard he feared most, far more than disease, fungi, mildews, frost, etc, was drought.

Points in a letter received from Randolph Beard, Esq., Fyning Twitten, Hants.

I garden on pure sand with an area of 1.25 acres (0.5 h.a.), of which 0.25 acre is woodland with a thick overlying layer of leafmould. The garden was planted 27 years ago, so some of the species are quite big and mature. In both 1989 and 1990 I experienced severe and sudden wilting in the following rhododendrons, but all were saved, (twice in each year) by running a hose on the rootball for 24 hours.

<i>R. campanulatum</i> 'Knap Hill'	<i>R. hemsleyanum</i>
<i>R. fictolacteum</i>	<i>R. bureavii</i>
<i>R. fictolacteum</i> 'rex'	<i>R. wilsonii</i>

Of all large-leaved rhododendrons, *R. fictolacteum*, named forms and hybrids from this species seem to have suffered in many parts of the U.K.

While many members have recounted deaths of azaleas, these would appear to be due to excessive exposure to sun and heat rather than dryness at the roots and it will be interesting to see if affected azaleas break from the base, although of course grafted plants will probably throw *R. luteum*.

Regarding camellias and magnolias, there are no reports of losses due to drought, but it may be of significance that some magnolias flowered profusely in 1990 with the occasional second burst of flowers. From personal past experiences, I would view these occurrences with trepidation; following the drought of 1976, *M. kobus* in my own garden covered itself with flowers in 1977 and promptly died.

Several communications on this subject are held over for publication in the future.

G.H.T.

'Confusing Names'

The addendum to the new 2nd edition of Peter Cox's book 'The Larger Rhododendron Species' contains descriptions of two new species from Bhutan, and one from Szechwan. The two from Bhutan, *R. bhutanense* and *kesangiae* were described by Dr. D. G. Long at pp. 29-33 of Rhododendrons, 1990 where there is an illustration of *R. kesangiae*, subsect Grandia (fig. 1). *R. bhutanense* Long & Bowes-Lyon belonging to subsect Taliensia is not to be confused with *R. bhotanicum*, C. B. Clarke, a synonym of *R. lindleyi*, subsect. Maddenia, of which there is an illustration at fig. 61 of Peter Cox's 'The Larger Species of Rhododendron'.

Rather more confusing is the new species from Szechwan, which is not yet in cultivation in this country, *R. balangense* Fang, Taliensia subsect. from the Balang mountain in the Wolong Panda Reserve in Wenchuan County. Mr. Cox's photograph of this at fig. 3 in 'Rhododendrons, 1991' looks very different to Mr. W. E. Berg's fig. 62 in Mr. Cox's book. There are however 7 illustrations of it from different aspects at pp. 130-133 of Prof. Fang Wenpei's book 'Sichuan Rhododendrons of China', one of them a charming picture of a giant panda alongside a plant of *R. balangense*.

When I come across an unfamiliar rhododendron species name, my first resort is to The Rhododendron Handbook 1980, Rhododendron Species in Cultivation, where I found at p. 241 *R. batangense* Balf.f., a synonym of *R. stictophyllum* Balf.f. from the Principality of Batang, Yarangong in Szechwan, itself a synonym of *R. nivale* Hooker subsp. *boreale* Philipson, subsect Laponica.

It is confusing when new species are given names so close to those of established species, even if these may be obsolete.

W.M.

A Beginner's Notes on The Vireya Rhododendrons

My interest in vireyas was raised when I visited Edinburgh R.B.G. several years ago, but I formed the impression that to acquire a collection one had to have their resources. Literature on the subject was almost non-existent and the only way of propagating seemed to be by very fresh seed, of which there is, to say the least, a shortage in the U.K.

Then around Christmas time 1988 we visited our daughter near Los Angeles. Without having any particular plants in mind, I checked with the nearest office of the Ministry of Ag. & Fish as to what plants, if any, I could bring back. I was told each person could bring in five. Months later I learnt that this information was erroneous - it only applies to plants brought in from other E.E.C. countries.

Whilst in California we spent two days with friends who prior to moving to the U.S. had been members of the Wessex Branch. They had a fine collection of vireyas in their small garden and were also in touch with a small nursery in Florida from whence they received lots of cuttings which they rooted and supplied to the local A.R.S. Chapter, U.C.L.A. and Huntington Gardens. So I came away with the apparently authorised number of plants, helpful cultural advice and an introduction to a useful friend in Florida.

Soon after returning home I received a parcel of 20 cuttings. They arrived

Election of Officers to the Executive Committee

In accordance with Rule 4 the following members of the Executive Committee retire, having served for three years, but they are willing to stand for re-election. Nomination Papers for the use of members appear below. These should be returned to the Hon. General Secretary, Mrs. J. Warren at least 14 days before the date of the Annual General Meeting:

David Farnes, Esq., Major T. Le M. Spring-Smyth

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY RHODODENDRON, CAMELLIA AND MAGNOLIA GROUP

Nomination Paper for Candidates for election to the Executive Committee on 30th April 1991

Name of Candidate

Candidate's Signature

Seconded by

Signature

Proposer's Signature

Date

To: Mrs. J. Warren, Hon. General Secretary,
The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group, 43 St. Michael's Terrace, Stoke, Plymouth, PL1 4QG.

mid-January after 17 days in transit. My immediate reaction was "Not a cat in Hell's chance". However, I trimmed the ends and leaves and put them in the propagator in a 50/50 moss peat and Cornish grit mix at a soil temperature of 65°F.

By mid-April, 9 had rooted. The next batch of 20 arrived in April and of these 13 rooted fairly quickly and another 2 took 6 months. In each case they arrived dry in plastic bags just as they had been taken from the parent plants. Several of the plants have put on about 3 ft of growth and I have already had flowers on 'Narnia' (*zoelleri* × *aurigeranum*) *Rr. macgregoriae*, *loranthiflorum* and 'Red Prince' × *lochae*.

I have not tried seed as yet - partly because at my age "the quicker the better" - and also because of the difficulty of obtaining fresh seed in this country, though I am sure there must be growers who could make seed available.

I did however purchase 6 hybrid plants from a well known U.S. nursery, and that turned out to be an expensive disaster. They arrived bare root of course and from the amount of root still adhering to the plants, the soil must have been removed by sand blasting. Two-thirds of the tops had to be removed, to maintain some sort of balance with the miserable amount of roots, and thrown away as they were too soft for use as cuttings, but none survived, and one of them before expiring developed a heavy infestation of rust, (so much for the phytosanitary certificate).

My greenhouse is a timber framed lean-to on an east-facing wall, and for most of the year the plants get only morning sun - this seems to suit them. In summer I will now shade the glass, having had the new growth on several plants scorched last summer. Minimum winter temperature is a little over 40°.

Cultivation

Experience with desert cacti is a help. A good draining compost is essential. I use 3 parts moss peat to one of a fairly coarse grade of Cornish grit, and add 4 oz of Vitax Q4 to 4 gallons, though whether the fertilizer provides any benefit in a compost of such low pH, I don't know. I also put a 1" layer of Fullasorb standard grade (see Ted Allan's article in 'The Garden', May '88) in the bottom of the pots which, incidentally, are clay rather than plastic, one reason being that some of the plants can grow quite large in small pots and as I only water when they are quite dry there is a tendency for them to fall over if in plastic. In the absence of Cornish grit, I would use a finer grade of Fullasorb. I foliar feed every three weeks all the year round and the plants seem to appreciate it.

Growth

Unlike the hardy rhododendrons, vireyas tend to grow when they feel like it, but mostly in the spring:

Flowers

Like the growth pattern, these can be produced at any time of the year and unlike the hardy rhododendrons, where all flower buds open more or less together, the vireyas can produce a succession of flower buds over several weeks or months. I find it difficult to distinguish growth buds from flower buds in many cases, until colour shows and what looked like a bundle of emerging leaves turns out to be flowers.

Reg Pohlmann