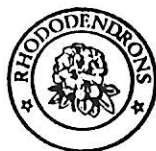


The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group



BULLETIN No. 49 - April 1992

Forthcoming Events

April 7 (11am to 7pm) Daffodil Show; Main Camellia Competition
April 8 (10am to 5pm) Ornamental Plant Competition
April 28 (11am to 7pm) Main Rhododendron Competition; Late
April 29 (10am to 5pm) Daffodil Competition; Tulip Competition
April 28 (4.30pm) Group AGM (Rhododendron Room, Vincent Sq)
May 7-11 Group Spring Tour (See Bulletin 48 - Dec 1991)
May 8-10 Malvern Spring Gardening Show
May 19-22 Chelsea Flower Show

June 16 (11am to 7pm)
June 17 (10am to 5pm)
July 1 (10.30am to 7pm)
July 2 (10am to 5.30pm)
July 14 (11am to 7pm)
July 15 (10am to 5pm)
July 31 - August 2
August 11 (11am to 7pm)
August 12 (10am to 5pm)

Ornamental Plant Competition
Summer Flower Festival
- RHS Garden Wisley
Summer Fruit & Vegetable Competition;
Ornamental Plant Competition
RHS Show - Ebbw Vale Garden Festival
Gladiolus Competition;
Ornamental Plant Competition

Chairman's Notes

I am pleased to be able to tell you that the Group has now a new Bulletin Editor following the resignation of Geoff Taylor to whom we are all most grateful for the way in which he managed to produce well informed and interesting issues during his tenure of office. The Editor is Tony Weston who is an experienced horticulturalist and has a very good garden and nursery in South West Scotland. His address appears elsewhere in this issue and all members are encouraged to use the Bulletin to express news and views.

It is good to be at the start of another flowering year and, indeed, one that promises to be a productive one — in Devon and Cornwall all three of our genera are already in flower due to the mild weather and we can only hope that we are not going to suffer one of those deadly late frosts.

I am pleased to say that the Seed Exchange has now been arranged and details appear elsewhere in this issue.

Finally I would draw the attention of all members to the fact that Dr. George Argent from RBG Edinburgh is giving a lecture at Vincent Square on 28th April next on the subject of Vireyas. This should be a fascinating event and you could even attend the Group's Annual General Meeting following it!

B.A.

Editorial Note

In response to the Chairman's appeal in the December Bulletin for someone to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Geoff Taylor as Editor, I offered my services for what they may be worth. I shall be grateful for any contributions of Branch News or any notes on matters of interest to members on any topic appertaining to the Group which anyone may care to send. Please send your copy to: Mr. Tony Weston, Whitehills, Newton Stewart, DG8 6SL, to arrive by the following dates:

April issue 1st March

August issue 1st July

December issue 1st November

My phone number is 0671 2049 (Ansafone if unattended) and Fax (for those who have it) 0671 3106.

Greetings Cards

If you wish to say "Thank You" simply and help the Group at the same time, why not make use of the very attractive notelets which have been specially printed through the good offices of Robbie Jack using a painting by his mother of *R. indicum*. Your Branch Organiser will be able to supply any quantity to your order at the very modest price of 60p. The cards have been produced to a high quality and are well worth the money.

Photographic Competition

Once again the lists are open for battle. Please look again at last year's photographs and go out purposefully with your cameras to capture this spring's prestigious flowering. Remember that, as

well as rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias and magnolias are eligible, and that the judges do not only look for technical excellence but also for originality and atmosphere. Please send your slides or prints to the Honorary Editor, Lady Cynthia Postan, 84 Barton Road, Cambridge, CB3 9LH, before the middle of June. This should give time for even the late flowerers to be used as models. A stamped addressed envelope would be appreciated.

Garden Festivals and other forthcoming events

Attention is drawn to the following:

1. Floriade. Staged in Holland every 10 years. Travelsphere Ltd, advertising on p.IV of the March issue of the RHS Journal, weekend excursions by coach throughout the season.

2. Ebbw Vale. The Hon. Sec. has received a circular from The Wyndham Hotel, Dunraven Place, Bridgend (Tel. No. 0656 657431) offering special terms for Groups of 20-50 persons. Apply direct to the Hotel for further particulars.

3. Cornwall Garden Festival. Organised by the Cornwall Garden Society from 1st April to 31st May. Further information can be obtained from Cornwall Tourist Board, 59 Lemon Street, Truro, TR1 2SY. (Tel: 0872 41313).

Seed Availability List

Seed of some 50 plant species, almost exclusively rhododendron is being offered, a significant proportion of which is of known wild origin. This will be distributed (subject to satisfactory germination tests) on a first come, first served basis at a modest charge. Anyone interested should apply for a list of species to: Dr H. A. McAllister, Deputy Director, University of Liverpool Botanic Garden, Ness, S. Wirral L64 4AY.

Lecture

As advertised on p.102 of the current issue of The Garden there will be a lecture in the Lecture Hall at Vincent Square at 2.15pm on April 28th by George Argent. The lecture is entitled "Hot Blooded Beauties: the Vireya rhododendrons of Java, Sumatra and Malaysia".

Group Annual General Meeting

The AGM will take place in the Rhododendron Room, Vincent Square (NOT Committee Room as notified in Bulletin 48 — December 1991) at 4.30pm. A Nomination Form for Candidates for election to the Executive Committee will be found later in the Bulletin.

New Zealand Flat Worm (*Artoposthia triangulata*)

Have you noticed that you do not have so many earthworms as you used to have? HAVE YOU SEEN FLAT WORMS

INSTEAD?

If so, researchers from the Scottish Office (Agricultural Scientific Services) Scottish Crop Research Institute, Biological Recording in Scotland Campaign (BRISC) and the National Museum of Scotland would like to hear from you.

Little is known about the life history or origin of this species, although it was probably introduced accidentally into Scotland and N. Ireland on imported plants.

Easily recognised by its smooth, flat appearance, and habit of coiling under large stones, pots, boxes or polythene during the day, it becomes active by night to hunt its chief prey of earthworms. It exudes digestive juices and sucks the resulting slime.

Without research into the distribution and biology of the flatworm it is possible that a reduction in the earthworm population could in time affect not only soil quality, but also plant growth as well as the presence of other wildlife (birds in particular) in our fields and gardens.

The New Zealand Flatworm has a purple/brown upper surface, buff coloured margin and under-surface and can extend to about 170cms (7 inches). Round, black, shiny egg capsules may be found near the adults in spring and the 3-7 emerging young are pink.

Sightings should be reported to the BRISC co-ordinator, Jeni Frew, between 1000 and 1600 hrs on 031 557 9877, Monday to Friday.

BRANCH NEWS

South West Branch (*The following arrived too late for inclusion in the December Bulletin — Ed.*)

Autumn Meeting — 1991

On Friday 22 November, 65 members and their guests assembled at The Riverside Inn, Bovey Tracey for our Autumn Meeting.

The evening opened with a minute's silence to remember all the good work that the late Major Dick Reynolds did to build up the South West Branch, acting as its Branch Organiser for seven years, and to encourage Rhododendron growing in the South West.

Once again, the generous contribution of plants for the Sales Stall produced another record contribution of £256 to Branch funds. Thanks are due to the many donors and purchasers as well as to the hard working Sales Team — Philip Cull, Andrew Henderson, Mary Reynolds and June Wright. Also to Joey Warren, Peter Reynolds and Michael Latham for their kind help on the night.

John and Margaret Boddendam organised the two separate quizzes to their usual high standard. Ten prizes were on offer. The first four winners of the Senior Quiz were Barry Starling, Wilf. Cosham, Richard Scrivener and Peter Reynolds — in that order. The three members of the Mort family excelled themselves by all winning prizes in the Junior Quiz. A large plant of *R. Fortunei* "Lu Shan" was presented to John and Mary to mark our appreciation of their efforts.

A Seasonal Buffet Supper was then enjoyed by all.

An excellent, illustrated talk by Peter Howarth, Gardens Supervisor at Muncaster Castle and also Branch Organiser of the newly-formed Lakeland Branch provided the highlight of the evening. Inspired by his tremendous drive and enthusiasm we were transported by the glories and challenge of this important but overgrown garden, with its wonderful views of Eskdale in Cumbria. Peter touched on many aspects of his work and experience and, listening to him, one felt that he could have given a very interesting separate talk on each topic eg Propagation, Owl Breeding, Pruning with a Chainsaw. How to make a Stately Home pay its way, etc. Thank you again Peter for coming a long way to give us such a lively and entertaining talk.

NIGEL WRIGHT

Garden Visits 1992

Sat. 25th April — Trebah and Penjerrick, Cornwall. Meet 11am at Trebah (4 miles SW of Falmouth) for a conducted tour by the owner, Major Tony Hibbert. Trebah is a glorious 25 acre ravine garden leading down to the Helford River created by Charles Fox in the 1840's. The rhododendron valley is dominated by three magnificent examples of Rhod. Trebah Gem (*R. griffithianum* × *R. arboreum*) planted in 1900. Azaleas, Camellias and Magnolias flourish along with many tender Australian and

Asiatic plants. 2.30pm Meet at Penjerrick (3 miles SW of Falmouth) for a conducted tour of the 15 acre garden, the home of the Barclayi and Penjerrick hybrids.

Members of other branches wishing to join in these visits will be welcome. Please send £3 per person to Nigel Wright, The Old Glebe, Eggesford, Chulmleigh, Devon, EX18 7QU.

Sat. 9th May. Meet at Pencarrow (half-way between Bodmin and Wadebridge) at 10.30 am. Tremeer in the afternoon. Meet at 3pm. Again members from other branches will be welcome.

Wessex Branch

Mon. 20th April—2pm Garden visit to Sheffield Park Gardens, Uckfield — 5 miles NW of Uckfield. National Trust and RHS members admitted free, so bring your membership cards with you.

South East Branch

Mon. 25th May—10am-5pm. Important Sale of Plantsman's plants at High Beeches, Handcross, West Sussex. (1 mile E. of Handcross on the B.2110).

More than 200 varieties of Camellia Japonica, many uncommon Camellia hybrids, and many named varieties of deciduous Azaleas, including a number of Exbury clones will be available. Choose from more than 50 varieties of evergreen Azaleas, including a selection of Nakahari hybrids. There will be some choice Rhododendron species and a selection of the best Rhododendron hybrids for the smaller garden, including 30 of the best Yakushimanum hybrids. Also a number of Hydrangea cultivars and many other choice plants. All plants are flowering size.

For catalogue send s.a.e. to Coghurst Nursery, Ivy House Lane, Nr. Three Oaks Hastings, East Sussex, TN35 4NP.

Admission to Plant Sale: £2.00 includes the 20 acres of High Beeches landscaped woodland and water gardens then at their best. Accompanied children free. Lunch and homemade refreshments served all day in the Barn Tea Room. Ample car parking. Toilets. No dogs, please.

CONTACT: Anne Boscawen, The High Beeches, Handcross, W. Sussex, RH17 6HQ. Tel: 0444 400589.

Lakeland Branch

Sat. 25th or Sun. 26th April. Seminar at Muncaster Castle, Ravenglass, Cumbria.

SPEAKERS

ALAN CLARKE - Plant Collector & Rhododendron Grower
Expeditions to Nepal, Bhutan and Vietnam

PETER HOWARTH - Horticulturist, Muncaster Castle

PROGRAMME

10.30am Arrive at Castle, Coffee in Great Hall

11.00am "RHODODENDRONS IN THE REGIONS" illustrated talk by Alan Clarke in the Drawing Room.

12.00pm Questions

12.30pm Lunch

2.00pm In Groups —

"PROPAGATION & CULTURE OF RHODODENDRONS" Practical demonstrations by Peter Howarth

"RHODODENDRONS OF MUNCASTER" Guided Garden Tours.

3.00pm Groups change over

4.00pm Close

Admission Tickets available in advance by sending a SAE and a cheque for £8.00 per ticket to: Muncaster Castle, Ravenglass, Cumbria CA18 1RQ. Please make cheques payable to Muncaster Castle and indicate on which day you wish to attend. Please apply early to avoid disappointment, and wear warm clothes on the day!

Admission price includes coffee on arrival, a lecture, practical demonstration and Garden Tour, but lunch is not provided. The Stable Buttery provides light snacks or a full three course meal at reasonable prices. Set meals for groups are available if booked in advance, by contacting the Buttery between 11am and 5pm on 0229 717432.

ALSO — 27th April to 1st May Guided Garden Tours each day at 2.00pm. Admission adults £2.80 children £1.50, tour included in price. No need to purchase tickets in advance.

Bark Split in Rhododendrons By Dr. Mavis Paton

One of the most annoying ways to lose rhododendrons is by splitting of the bark. The worst losses here in Galloway are not experienced in cold winters with uniformly low temperatures but follow spring frosts after mild winters. There was an instance of this in 1989 when there were three consecutive nights of seven degrees of frost on April 24th, 25th and 26th causing terrible damage to certain species, namely *R. campanulatum* White form, *R. floccigerum*, *R. eriogynum*, *R. cerasinum* and less severe damage to some of the Triflorums as well as damage to the hybrid Elizabeth: the latter seems to be particularly vulnerable.

The age of the plant is significant; if the rhododendrons are young with a single slender stem they will most likely die as a result of bark split as there will be insufficient live bark to feed water and nutrients up the plant. In an older plant the main stem becomes tougher and the splitting is often confined to the smaller branches. If the plant is well furnished with branches then there is a good chance that some of them with only small splits in the bark will recover and badly damaged branches can be removed; this will concentrate more sap to the less affected branches. Healing does then take place although this is a slow process.

As two growing seasons have taken place since 1989, a report on the badly damaged rhododendrons can be made.

The two following winters were mild and no further damage to bark occurred; however the dry summer of 1990 did not help recovery.

To date, the only plant to die was *R. campanulatum*. *R. cerasinum* lives on with leaves drooping as though suffering from drought which, I think, is the case, the damaged branches not getting sufficient water from the roots. *R. floccigerum* and *R. eriogynum* are losing a few more branches but those that are left look well enough. The Triflorums are fine.

The edges of the split bark are now healing forming new tissue from the cambium but this is very slow. If only the healing process was fast as in willow or cherry, or the exposed wood itself would callus over as in some kinds of trees instead of drying out from exposure to the air.

Unfortunately, the occurrence of bark split most often goes undetected at the time it happens and remedial treatment such as binding the wound with waxed cloth, is too late to be effective.

For all the disappointments, one continues to struggle with these beautiful species because to have them even for a few years is a bonus.

M.R.PATON

Our Shelter from the Stormy Blast by Isobyl La Croix

Following the reference in the August 1989 Bulletin to Isobyl's return to this country from Milawi, where she and her husband had been working at the Bvumbwe Research Station, and their acquisition of 8 acres of peat bog in Western Ross, I thought members might like to hear how they were getting on with the job of creating a garden to rival nearby Inverewe. Hence the following article (Ed.).

In August 1988 we moved to N. W. Scotland taking with us a very few plants which were of transportable size from our previous garden in Surrey. We were planning to renovate and extend an old croft house which had been empty for 16 years, standing in the S.W. corner of an 8-9 acre croft. It once had a small and attractive garden; I can remember apple trees, blackcurrant bushes and hydrangeas, but sheep and cattle had broken down the fences and all that remained were a Worcesterberry bush, a few Rugosa roses and another anonymous rose, all too prickly for even the hungriest sheep, and a few 30-foot tall Spruce trees. Below the house the ground was wet and rushy; over on the east side, occupying about three-quarters of the area, is what we call the Desolation — peat bog and rock.

We were able to borrow a cottage nearby to live in while work was in progress, which was most fortunate as we did not move into our own house until July 1990 and the builders did not finish until February 1991 — having told us the work would take 3-4 months.

This meant that we could not do much about making a garden until almost 3 years after we had moved, as there seemed to be heavy machinery crashing around almost till the last. We did, however, have some drains and ditches put in and had the whole area fenced with rabbit-wire. We also planted out future windbreaks — about 3000 trees — Sitka spruce, Lodgepole pine in the boggy areas, sessile oak, sycamore, birch, rowans, alder, bird cherry and gean, whitebeam and willows and anything else that anyone gave us. Trees grew here once; in the bogs there are recognisable remains of silver birch and Scots pine. The latter, so far, is absent from our planting; we have tried to get seedlings of local provenance, so far without success.

No trees, except some apple trees, have been planted between the house and the sea; there, the soil is quite good, a mixture of peat and sand which local people tell us is "Irish soil". They say that in the last century, fishing boats returning from Ireland brought back soil as ballast; Inverewe garden is said to be made largely with Irish soil.

Windbreaks are absolutely vital here, as we are on a small peninsula with the sea about 300 yards away to the North, less than half a mile to the West and less than a mile to the South. The ground rises gradually to the South West and must temper the force of the gales to some extent, although this is not very noticeable; however the fact that the old spruces were able to grow straight, to their present height shows there must be some

Continued overleaf

Election of Officer to the Executive Committee

In accordance with Rule 4 of the Constitution the under-mentioned members of the Executive Committee, having served for three years, are due to retire but are willing to stand for re-election. However, it is open to any member to put forward an alternative nomination if they so wish provided they first obtain that person's willingness to stand for election. Proposers should make use of the Nomination Form below, which must be returned to the Hon. Group Secretary, Mrs. J. Warren at least 14 days before the date of the Annual General Meeting.

Dr. Florence H. Auckland; Mr. Clive D. Collins

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY RHODODENDRON, CAMELLIA AND MAGNOLIA GROUP
Nomination Paper for Candidates for election to the Executive Committee on 28th April 1992

Name of Candidate

Signature

Proposed by

Signature

Seconded by

Signature

To: Mrs. J. Warren, Hon. Group Secretary, The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group,
Netherton, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon, PL20 7NL

shelter. We get little in the way of frost and snow, but plenty of rain and I suspect that is under-recorded as so much goes past horizontally and does not enter the rain-gauge.

The few plants we brought with us — *R. brachyanthum*, *A. schlippenbachii*, *R. hanceanum* var. *nanum* and Camellias "Donation" and "Anticipation" — were in pots and looking increasingly unhappy, so we dug a bed below the house and planted them there. The lower end of this promptly filled with water after the first rain, in spite of the drains, so most had to be moved again. It is tempting to make a pond there, as the old map we have of the croft shows "issues" in that area, but any pond would soon be turned into a muddy slum by the ducks, and the ducks are needed to eat the slugs.

Last year was the year of the scree and the rock walls. There was so much rock lying around, the simplest way to get rid of it was to build with it. The smaller pieces went on the scree, and the larger bits went into dry-stone retaining walls forming terraced beds on the south side of the house. At last we had somewhere to plant rhododendrons, and an excuse to buy some, even if we had to stick to dwarfs. An order to Glendoick resulted in *R. campylogynum* 'Beryl Taylor', *R. calostrotum* 'Gigha', *R. fastigiatum*, *R. pemakoense*, *R. forrestii* var. *repens*, *R. russatum*, *R. chamae-thomsonii*, *R. williamsianum*, 'Arctic Tern', 'Elizabeth', 'Curlew' and 'Ptarmigan'. A few others, such as *R. impeditum*, were acquired locally. These have all just come through their first winter with varying degrees of success. All are alive and most are well budded up for the coming season, but some, eg 'Elizabeth' and *R. chamae-thomsonii*, have lost their leaves; *R. williamsianum*, which I had thought was the most doubtfully hardy, looks freshest of all. Their companions in the terraced beds are mostly alpine and bulbs, with some hardy orchids. We have planted a line of Camellias, mostly Williamsii varieties, to the North of the house - near enough to get shelter, we hope, from the southerly and south-westerly gales, but far enough away to get some early and late sun in summer. It is too early to say how successful they will be.

We had thought of planting some hardy hybrid rhododendrons as windbreaks but they were so expensive that we bought only one, 'Purple Splendour', which we have always liked. That is probably fortunate as it, too, is completely defoliated. We hope that the available shelter will increase fairly quickly, since as well as the trees, we have planted shrubs such as *Griselinia littoralis*, *Escallonia* ssp. *Cotoneaster* spp. and more Rugosa roses. Other pines, such as *P. nigra* and *P. radiata*, have been grown from seed and will be planted out this year. There are also pots of rhododendron seedlings grown from the Group seed exchange; these are parked in the most sheltered spot we could find in the hope that the windbreaks will have grown faster than they have done when the time comes for planting them out. Still, our cypress hedge, after shrinking for the first year or more, actually threatened to start growing by the end of last summer, so we live in hope.

Rhododendron Powdery Mildew Update by Dr. Stephan Helfer
Powdery mildew has now been haunting the British Rhododendron collections for a number of years, and probably most readers will by now have had first hand experience of the disease. The bad news is that there does not seem to be an end to its spread, and virtually daily I receive records of new infections as the pathogen establishes itself in new areas and on new varieties. Whilst it was hoped that a number of cold winters would check the establishment of the disease — and we have good reasons to believe that this is the case — the last two winters

were just not cold enough or not for long enough to really have an impact on the disease spread, let alone in reducing its occurrence. The good news is that the research into the casual organisms of Rhododendron powdery mildew is gaining momentum with many people showing interest in the scientific challenges these pathogens present:

Since the start of this project I have become aware that the problems caused by powdery mildews on rhododendron are much more serious and wide-spread than I had previously thought. They also seem to be confined to a relatively narrow geographical range with large parts of the European Continent apparently free of the disease although climatically not dissimilar to areas where the mildews have had devastating effects.

Professor G. R. Dixon of the University of Strathclyde, an active researcher into the growing conditions of rhododendrons became interested in the present research activities, and together we have been able to obtain a CASE award (for three years post-graduate work) from the British Ministry of Agriculture to study the biology, epidemiology and taxonomy of the rhododendron mildews. The student took up his appointment in October 1991, and has made good progress in a number of areas. Susceptible rhododendrons have been micropropagated in sterile environments and artificially infected with mildew isolates. It is hoped that a comprehensive collection of isolates from all over Britain can be established in this way. This in turn will allow us to compare isolates and conduct differential experiments with them: Are they selective on specific rhododendrons? Do they show genetic diversity (DNA fingerprinting)? Do they display climatic preferences or resistance to control measures? Is there a pattern in their spread?

A subject that interests me in particular is the study of the initial development of mildew colonies on rhododendron leaves under controlled conditions, a prerequisite for the understanding of the way in which the mildew causes damage, and how it could possibly be controlled.

There is no conclusion about new control measures as yet, but I understand that within the limitations of fungicidal plant protection there is considerable merit in spraying programs. At the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh fortnightly sprays have certainly proved successful, with most rhododendron varieties responding well; yet these control measures are rather expensive, and are undesirable from an environmental point of view. The fungicides used are bupirimate, troforine, fenarimol, imazalil or sulphur.

Conclusions to date:

1. There are a number (probably three) of fungal organisms causing powdery mildew on rhododendrons. They all belong to the same fungal family but most certainly are members of different genera.
2. A number of differing species of *Rhododendron* are affected by mildews, and a total of around 200 taxa (species, varieties and hybrids) have been found infected to date but indumented species seem to be immune.
3. The disease severity ranges from immune to fully susceptible, and the plant reaction from tolerant to fatally sensitive (causing defoliation and plant death).
4. The mildews seem to be unrelated to the cabbage or rose mildews but may be related to mildews on other *Ericaceae*.
5. In most cases the disease is readily controlled by the regular application of fungicide sprays.