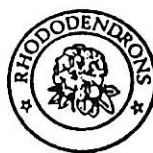


# The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group



BULLETIN No. 59 - August 1995

## Forthcoming Events

Aug 12-13	Wisley Flower Show - RHS Garden, Wisley.	Oct 31 - Nov 1	Ornamental Plant Competition
Sept 12-13	Great Autumn Show		Botanical Paintings
Sept 15-17	Harrogate Great Autumn Show (in conjunction with North of England Horticultural Society) - NEHS Yorkshire Showground	Nov 21-22	Ornamental Plant and Late Apple & Pear Competitions
Sept 30	Malvern Autumn Show - TCAS Showground		Botanical Paintings
Oct 27-29	Group Autumn Weekend (see text)	Dec 12-13	RHS Christmas Show

*All shows at RHS New Hall, unless otherwise stated.*

## Chairman's Notes.

As I write in the heat and drought of July, it is pleasant to look back on what, here in Devon, has been a wonderful flowering year. We had no late frosts although I gather that some gardens in Scotland were not so lucky and there have been reports of bark split which so often follows after new growth has started.

As the Membership Secretary says in his notes it has been found necessary, in the forthcoming year, to increase the subscription. The Committee has however taken note of the feed-back obtained from the questionnaire circulated with the last Bulletin and it is hoped to respond positively to some of the suggestions made.

The Yearbook Editor announces later in the Bulletin the production of the Jubilee Yearbook which is being published to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first appearance of **Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias** at the beginning of 1946 and which will have a cover price of £12.95 but, as always, will be sent to members free, thus accounting, this year, for a substantial proportion of your increased subscription. I have seen most of the proposed contents and I can assure you that it is a very fine presentation of the history of rhododendrons produced by a number of the top experts in this field. Some of the articles are so good that, rather than shorten them, they may have to be continued in the next issue. Some of the regular contents such as reports on the Shows will be carried in the bulletin instead on this occasion.

## Editor's Notes

I have been pleased to edit the Bulletin for the last 4 years and the time has arrived for me to hand over to my successor. Eileen Wheeler, who lives in South Wales, has nobly assumed the mantle and I am sure that she will cope with the task admirably. Her address is: Mrs Eileen Wheeler, Llwyngoras, Velindre, CRYMYCH, Dyfed, SA41 3XW. I am grateful to her for relieving me of the appointment which I must admit, when combined with the work involved in my other position as Hon. Membership Secretary, I have found somewhat too demanding. I have enjoyed receiving your letters and I hope you will continue to write in to me as Membership Secretary with your suggestions and comments.

## Membership Secretary's Notes

The Membership Survey sent out with the April Bulletin produced some interesting and, in some cases, predictable comments and suggestions many of which I can assure you will, in time, be taken on board by the Executive Committee. The immediate problem which the Committee has had to address is that of finance. The last increase in subscription was made in 1990 and like all other Societies must be reviewed periodically. Any increase must be made with a view to a further change being unnecessary for a similar period and with this in mind the Committee has decided to pitch the revised rates as follows: Europe (including UK) £15.00; Outside Europe £17.50 (Airmail); £15.00 (Surface mail).

Following the formation of the New Forest Branch I am further pursuing the possibility of creating more active branches in those areas where there is at present no Branch Organiser. David Farnes, who lives at Ashgate, near Chesterfield in Derbyshire has gallantly indicated that if there should be sufficient interest shown he will gladly organise a Branch centred on the Peak District. He has identified 23 members who reside within an area roughly 40 miles from the centre, this being about the limit of the range which would be acceptable to anyone wishing to participate in garden visits and other functions and a letter has been sent to all these members to test their reaction. Again, I would emphasise that there is nothing to prevent those whose addresses border on other branches being dual-branch members. The Midlands branch poses a problem on account of the size of the area and the comparatively sparse membership. There might be some merit in aiming to divide the area into two, or even three, as undoubtedly one of the major attractions to be derived from membership of the Group is the opportunity to meet with others having a common interest and to be able to exchange ideas and learn about the propagation and cultivation of the genera from those with the knowledge to impart. I should be very pleased to hear from any member who would be prepared to take even a small part in the organisation of a branch covering a section of the Midlands area - particularly Worcestershire, Warwickshire, and Gloucestershire, or Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. The main reason why there are so few members in this part of the country is because we have no local organisation. Once that is in place

the membership would grow, so please, please may I hear from you! Scottish members, I know, feel that the Scottish Rhododendron Society gives better value for money than we do, but they are not very active in the Lowlands or the Borders and here again there is a need for a branch to cover these regions to incorporate North East England. I shall shortly be writing to a number of members living in these parts also.

### **Subscriptions - Important - please read carefully**

The Treasurer will be grateful if subscriptions, due on Nov 1st are paid promptly; the last of the current year's subscriptions was not received until 31st March 1995! A Remittance Advice form will be found enclosed herewith for those members not paying by Bankers Order and you are requested to fill in your name, address and telephone number and complete either Section A or B, and D and send with your cheque to the Hon. Treasurer, Mr Alastair Stevenson, 24 Bolton Rd., Grove Park, London W4 3TB. It will further simplify matters if members who pay by Bankers Order will make out a fresh order using the enclosed form rather than instruct their Bank verbally to alter the amount of an existing order.

Please return the mandate to the Treasurer as soon as possible, and in any event before 1st October 1995 if you want your instructions to take effect from 1st November. If you feel that you are unable to continue paying your subscription by Bankers Order please instruct your bank to cancel the current order and let the Treasurer know that you have done so by writing 'CANCELLED' across the new mandate and returning it to him.

Members who joined on or after 1st April 1995 are not asked to renew their membership until 1st November 1996 and if paying by Bankers Order should make their order out accordingly. (A note to that effect is sent herewith to those members concerned.)

### **Seeds**

There will be limited quantities of wild-collected seed available for sowing in the Spring. I have secured some from a recent visit to China and I will gladly send a list of the species available to anyone on receipt of a s.a.e. 9"x4". One point to be born in mind in connection with wild-collected seed is the fact that when it is collected the plant is not in flower and one only has the foliage, bark, form and habitat by which to identify the species. There is, therefore, always the chance, unless it has been collected by someone of exceptional knowledge and experience, that the seed may not turn out to be what you expect. In other words, neither the supplier nor the Group can give any guarantee of identity, nor of viability, and you accept the seed on that clear understanding.

Further, do not expect as much seed as you get in a packet of herbaceous seed from a garden centre as all you will get for £1 will be enough to produce about 20-25 seedlings of which you may well lose 10% in the course of pricking out and potting-on.

Please write to: Tony Weston, Whitehills, Newton Stewart, DG8 6SL. Orders will not be despatched until later in the year but will be dealt with strictly in the order in which they are received.

### **Main Rhododendron Show 1994.**

The report in the 1995 issue of "Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias" made certain misattributions and omissions with regard to the entries from Isabella Plantation,

Richmond Park. The corrections, which were to have appeared in the April Bulletin were accidentally omitted. We would like to take this opportunity of putting the record straight. Plants from the Isabella Plantation were entered in four classes and won three first prizes: Class 51, for three hybrid rhododendrons; Class 53, any hybrid, where their R.'Luscombei' was awarded the Loder Cup; and Class 91 for three sprays of evergreen hybrid azaleas.

### **"Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias"**

The Chairman has made reference to the 1996 Jubilee Yearbook which will be larger, longer and fatter than usual. Although the literature, both didactic and descriptive, has been plentiful and, dare I say it, mostly somewhat repetitive, the genus rhododendron has so far waited in vain for the historian's cool and unbiased eye to assess its treatment as an ornamental plant since its introduction more than 200 years ago.

Now a truly unrivalled group of experts has been persuaded to tell of the vicissitudes of the rhododendron. What were the first attempts to cultivate these exotic and vivid shrubs in an alien environment? How did the gradual acquisition of the skills needed to acclimatise them to their second home come about? And by whom was it done? Who were the learned men who sought to identify and distinguish the growing flood of similar but different species? And by what rules did they impose their order? Finally, who made the intoxicating discovery that many species could and would willingly marry to produce ever more glamorous and obedient children? The story is an absorbing one, full of unexpected twists of fortune involving some of the bravest explorers, the most gifted cultivators and the most brilliant scientific minds. Indeed, the future may not yet have fully revealed itself; breeders, geneticists and plant collectors may still have more secrets to reveal.

Be sure that you can read about it in your FREE 1996 Yearbook by continuing to subscribe to The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group.

Cynthia Postan

The following back numbers of our Yearbooks are available at the prices shown which include postage at the 2nd Class rate (inland). Orders from outside the UK should add 40 pence per book and the books will be sent by surface mail.

1979/80 — £2.00	1985/86 — £3.70	1991 — £5.20
1981/82 — £3.20	1986/87 — £4.00	1992 — £5.40
1982/83 — £3.70	1987/88 — £4.00	1993 — £5.40
1983/84 — £3.70	1988/89 — £4.50	1994 — £5.50
<del>1984/85 — £3.70</del>	1990 — £5.00	

Cheques and Money Orders should be made payable to "The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group" and sent with the order to: Mr David N Farnes, 5, Pine View, Deerlands Rd., Ashgate, CHESTERFIELD, Derbyshire, S40 4DN. (Payment may also be made by VISA/Mastercard using the Remittance Advice form supplied for your subscription) The books will normally be despatched by return of post. Some numbers are now in short supply; to confirm availability, if you wish, David Farnes can be contacted on 01246 272105 (0044 1246 272105 if phoning from abroad).

### **American Rhododendron Society - Annual Convention 1996 - Oban.**

A number of our Group members are also members of the Scottish Chapter of the ARS. If any such member is contemplating attending the Oban Convention in May 1996 they are

invited to assist on our Stand which is designed

- (a) to publicise the Group,
- (b) to promote and sell our Jubilee Yearbook and
- (c) to sell back numbers of our Yearbooks.

Would any member willing to spare even a short time to help in this way please contact David Farnes, whose address is given in the previous paragraph.

### Branch Autumn Week-end

Members will meet at Leigh Park Hotel, Bradford-on-Avon, 7 miles from Bath. During the week-end we hope to visit Prior Park (National Trust), a beautiful landscaped garden created by Bath entrepreneur Ralph Allen (1693-1764) with advice from the poet Alexander Pope and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. There are splendid views of Bath, a Palladian bridge and lakes. The garden is being restored and although not officially open to the public until 1996 special arrangements are being made for a guided walk. Time will be set aside for members to visit Bath on their own and there will be a talk with slides by a member of the party on a very recent expedition to China.

The cost will be around £130 for the two days, inclusive of hotel, two lunches and entry to Prior Park. To reserve a place (depending on availability as the hotel has a limited number of rooms) write to me, Mrs V Archibold, Starveacre, Dalwood, AXMINSTER, E Devon EX13 7HH, Tel:01404 881221.

### Plants etc. Wanted.

Any member able to supply the under-mentioned species or hybrids as scions, rooted cuttings or young plants is requested to contact the advertiser direct:

Herr Walter Schmalscheidt, Wittfeld 75, 26127 Oldenburg, W.Germany.

R.'Prince of Wales'

Herr Schmalscheidt has a collection of old and extinct Hardy Hybrids in his garden at Bad Friesland but R.'Prince of Wales' was destroyed in a severe winter and he has been unable to find any material in Germany.

Miss Jeni Kubba, a research worker at Horticulture Research International, East Malling, Kent ME19 6BJ wishes to buy two or three plants of each of the under-mentioned species and hybrids. As the plants are to be used for breeding purposes they must (a) have flower buds on them and (b) be clonally propagated from a single genetic source. The plants should be labelled with a code number or clone name in case they need to return to that source again for cutting material as they will be running container trials of some of the species over the next few years. They do not want species from a seedling source.

Plant List.

*hirsutum*. As well as flowering plants she would like to buy 100 cuttings or material to produce same.

*insigne*

*decorum* e.g. C&K 338, C5003 or other named clones

*yakushimanum* e.g. Koichiro Wada FCC or other clone.

*sanguineum* ssp *didymum*

*minus* Carolianum

*trillianum* e.g. R59256 or other clone

*wardii* e.g. L&S 5679, R25391, KW4410A or other clone.

*argyrophyllum* e.g. C3905 or other clone

*griffithianum*

*microgynum* e.g. F142423 or other clone

*bureavii* e.g. F15609, R25439, AM1972 or other clone

*souliei* e.g. Windsor Park FCC1951 clone

x *intermedium*

'Flava' or 'Volka' hybrid.

### BRANCH NEWS

North West Branch

A meeting of the Branch took place on 25th February in the Lecture Theatre at Ness Botanic Garden when Mr J K Hulme gave a slide presentation of the more usual *Magnolia* species grown in British gardens as well as the commoner hybrids.

Dr H A McAllister spoke on "Breeding *Rhododendrons* - Why Don't I Always Get What I Want?" Self compatibility is almost universal in the genus and almost any species in Section *Hymananthes* will breed with any other - all have a standard chromosome number  $2n=26$ . Crosses between this Section and members of Section *Rhododendron* are almost unheard of. R.'Grierdal' is the exception which proves the rule. Any proper hybridising programme should involve destaminating and 'bagging' the seed parent until the stigma withers. Some supposed hybrids could be selfed and simply reveal the genetic diversity within the species.

Chromosome numbers in Section *Rhododendron* vary from  $2n=26$  to  $2n=152$ , though the latter figure is unusual; tetraploids  $2n=54$  and hexaploids  $2n=78$  occur more frequently. Crossing a diploid with a species with high ploidy is likely to subdue the characteristics of the diploid. *R.yunnanense* x *R.cinnabarinum* was a happy marriage for the distribution of characters as both parents are hexaploids. Collecting seed of even 'open-pollinated' *Rhododendrons* can give a high proportion of plants essentially like the mother plant. The way to get such results is to prick out large numbers of seedlings, putting on one side the largest 5% of the sample - these are likely to be the 'rogues' with hybrid blood.

### Gardening in North West Worcestershire - six years uncertain progress by Patrick Haworth.

This is a sequel, requested by the Honorary Editor, to **Gardening in Essex and Worcestershire: a short review of fifteen years' progression and regression** which appeared in the Bulletin in April 1989 during our first spring at 'Afon Wen'. The Editor's request is timely as the house and its garden of a fifth of an acre or thereby are for sale and we plan another move, this time to Scotland. The estate agent has noted in his particulars of the house the existence of my newly revised list of plants in the garden, so we hope that the buyers will be garden-minded and, ideally, dendrologists, too. A small selection of plants, chosen for their hardiness, has not been listed because we want to take them with us to form the nucleus of our new garden in Caledonia where several of them were bought!

My late father-in-law bought the bungalow in 1978. When, a little more than a decade later, my in-laws departed within a short time for the farther bank of the Bourn, the property became available to us just as I was about to take up a new post in the Midlands. The post no longer exists so our sojourn here will end shortly; naturally we have reservations about leaving so many plants *in situ* but, although we plan to move to the coldest part of the British Isles, we also have a seemingly perverse wish to escape from the frost pocket of 'Afon Wen'. The depth of winter cold here has been immaterial because

its duration has been short and the plants are dormant, but most hurt has been caused by those nights in the latter half of March, in April, and even in early May when, as the late James Cameron wrote, "The temperature was so low that one would have required to go down on hands and knees to see it". These deleterious late frosts have been the principal reason for our losses in the first three years or so and have tried the resilience of the survivors to the utmost. The rhododendrons have, as a group, suffered less than shrubs and trees of other genera such as *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, *Pieris* spp., *Salix fargesii*, *S. magnifica* and *Phellodendron chinense* var. *omeiense*, this last quite the prettiest in leaf of all our deciduous trees, once it has taken its second chance to make its annual increment.

Our soil is neutral and is derived from the red sandstone which outcrops dramatically here and there in the vicinity to form such local landmarks as Kinver Edge and the Pekket Rock in Habberley, north west of Kidderminster. The soil is very light and sandy, deficient in humus, and lacking in cohesion and retentiveness. It has so little substance that it cannot be turned over like a heavier soil. In Essex I had been used to a water-retentive soil derived from the London Clay and made amenable by the early addition of an effective flocculant; when we came here I instinctively began to turn the soil over and made the discovery that the process resembled the drinking of consommé with a cake-fork. The sandy stuff is easily flattened by rain or snow; a pan or skin then forms on the surface which then attracts moss unless I aerate it and break it up by tillage with the tines of a border fork used to a quarter of its depth, or by a chopping action with the rake. This is all that is required to give the now limited spaces of soil between the plants an appearance of conscientious cultivation. The soil in the Aralia Border is damper, darker and heavier than that in other parts of the garden, so we resolved to augment the deficient soil by buying seven tons of topsoil; the judicious disposal about the garden of this amount of soil by ordinary wheelbarrow was a Sisyphean and character-forming labour for such a denizen of lounge and dining room as I.

My simple aim in the garden has been to house as many as possible of my favourite plants within the fifth of an acre and the constraints of aspect, site and climate. In season you cannot see the garden for plants. The garden must be the apogee of the late Michael Haworth-Booth's planting in 'close boscaje'; those who thought him disingenuous would have said that that was a euphemism for 'grossly over-crowded', but I could not gladly make any other kind of garden. I have seized upon what one writer called 'the natural gregariousness of plants'; if his comment is accurate, as I am sure it is, then mine must exist in a year-round garden party, at which all present are waving their arms about and shouting at the tops of their voices. Vigilance is necessary to-day to ensure that each shrub has sufficient *lebensraum* and that covert stiflings and suppressions are prevented. Recently I have had to high-prune our *Eucalyptus dalrympleana* because the laterals from the lower branches were chafing the crowns of its lower neighbours. Within the curve of the paved path in the South Garden, at a spot called Pooh Corner, we have a *Eucalyptus debeuzevillei*, in Australia called a Jounama snow-gum; I think this is because it gently accosts those passers-by able to commune with plants with the *sotto voce* query "Do you know I'm a snow gum?" Perhaps the fairest of the three, and by all accounts lovely, is *E. pauciflora* subsp. *niphophila* in the Spring Border. This species, too, produces many cream flowers which attract hosts of beneficial insects, and has

proved utterly hardy even on those gelid vernal mornings when it has been cold enough to freeze the whiskers off a tin cat.

The diversity of plants in the garden has been its salvation, and the reason why it never disappoints. When some are cut by frost and fail to flower, others show compensatory promise or offer their attractions unharmed; every round of the garden springs largely agreeable surprises, and is an occasion to note changes and make the reassessments of worth based upon them.

We have only six camellias because that is the number of suitable sites reserved for them when most of the planting had been done. For consistent excellence and big-hearted reliability, *C.x williamsii* 'Debbie' has no rival here for floriferousness with the exception of the *Rhododendron yakushmanum* hybrids; the paeony-form flowers open shortly after those of *C.x williamsii* 'St.Ewe which fills a joyous vista from another of our windows. C.'E.T.R.Caryon' is also floriferous but we find that the effect of the many flowers tends to be lost because they cast their gaze demurely downwards and hide amidst the leaves.

The rhododendrons, taking hybrids and species together, comprise our largest group of plants. The hybrids have given best value for their amenability, their apparent acceptance of the constraints under which we garden in this cold but sheltered place, and for flowering sooner in their lives than the species. We would probably see more of our species in flower if we were destined to stay in Worcestershire; so far *RR.cinnabarinum*, *glaucophyllum*, *griersonianum*, *oreodoxa* var. *fargesii* and *strigillosum* have obliged and, of these *R.oreodoxa* has been the most dependable and generous; when in flower it is the focal point of the Spring Border; it is a standard with a good length of clear stem and scone-shaped crown. The clear stem was one of the reasons why I chose it at Abbotsbury Tropical Garden; it would lend itself admirably to the Boothian 'close boscaje' policy that I wished to perpetrate at 'Afon Wen'. *R.strigillosum* flowers too early and is 'whistled' annually, even by a light frost. Our solution is to cut two or three flowering shoots before this happens and place them in a vase on the dining room table.

Over the years we have bought more plants from the nursery at Bodnant than any other. The garden is not far from the place where I was brought up in North Wales, and it gives the best general view, from the paved terraces adjacent to the house, of the lordly Carneddau which were the best-loved and neighbourly hills of my early days. One of the 'blood red' hybrids for which Bodnant is renowned was a must; this is R.'Gretia', planted in the bog garden in the 'isthmus' between two small ponds. When 'Gretia' flowers loveliness sees her own reflection in the water, and smiles. Each pond also has its attendant roseaceous shrub, namely the gracile and modestly winsome *Rhodotypos scandens*, which displays single white flowers intermittently over a long period, followed by persistent ovoid black fruits. I first came across this species in Somerset, in the Culverwells' spectacularly presented garden which reclines gracefully, eyes half-closed in plentitude and repletion, against the warm breast of Exmoor.

The four 'yak' hybrids do us well: R.'Schneekrone' is, of course, white; R.'Sparkler' is in my view the best and richest of the red ones; R.'Venetian Chimes', turkey red, was a gift from my late father, and R.'Vintage Rose', a gloriously munificent mingling of pink and white, first impressed me on an independent visit to Heaslands which had the largest array

of select hybrids I had seen at any port on the enchanted voyage that led to familiarity with the genus *Rhododendron*. A desirable hybrid with a festival air is R. 'Sonata' whose light orange-amber flowers have petals with wine-red margins; she kicks up her skirts in the Aralia Border in the middle of May and associates well with the 'yaks' described. *Rhododendron* hybrids need not conform to the popular view of a general mass of homogeneous plants, similar, at least, in leaf and habit. In illustration of their diversity we have a scarce hybrid with all the nobility of a large-leaved species. It is, I believe, hard and slow to propagate but one Scottish nursery has the requisite perseverance. This hybrid is R. 'Europa' (*ungernii* x *kyawii*), and while we must wait patiently for its pink flowers, which we shall probably not see until it has been established in our new garden, we are rewarded meanwhile by the leaves which recall a young *R. rex* ssp. *fictolacteum* without the indumentum.

I shall not exceed my brief or my allotted space by writing of genera other than those in the Group's name, so I shall conclude by saying that since our early reverses the garden has become a leafy place of many and diverse rewards.  
Patrick Haworth : March 1995

### The New Zealand Flatworm (*Artioposthia triangulata*)

Concern is rising over the spread of this species of worm. It is now found in many parts of Scotland and Ireland and there have been localised sightings in England and Wales.

#### Why the alarm?

As mentioned in Bulletin No.49 (April 1992), the flatworm feeds, as far as is known, only on earthworms. In the long term, if the spread is uncurtailed, there may be serious consequences for the natural recycling process in which earthworms play a vital roll. In the main these are nutrient recycling and maintaining soil structure and drainage. The eradication or depletion of earthworms may also have serious financial and ecological implications, not least of which is the threat to wildlife as earthworms constitute a major part of their diet.

#### How does it feed?

Once it comes across an earthworm it would seem, first, to anaesthetise it, then secrete enzymes which digest the worm externally and finally suck in the resulting "soup". (Ugh!)

#### What does it look like?

Adults have a purple/brown upper surface, buff coloured edges and under-side, up to 17cms (7") in length. It is flat and has a smooth skin covered with a sticky mucus, unlike the earthworm which tends to be round and segmented. Very little is known of its life cycle except that it produces eggs by a form of spontaneous caesarean birth. Each egg capsule hatches to produce 6-10 young, which are small creamy-white coloured worms.

#### Where is it found?

It prefers moist, cool conditions and during the day it is usually found coiled up under stones, pots, pieces of wood or polythene which lie on bare earth

#### How can it be controlled?

There are no known natural predators and no chemicals which have approval and can be recommended. To reduce the chances of hosting it, you could inspect any containerised

plants you may have and immerse them in water overnight as this may flush out young/adult worms, but not their eggs. If you suspect the presence of flat worms you can try catching them by putting down traps, e.g. polythene bags, wood, stones etc. on bare earth. Inspect the traps every 2-3 days and kill them by putting them in a tightly sealed container in a saline solution. **AVOID HANDLING THEM AS THEY CAN CAUSE A SKIN IRRITATION.**

Sightings should be reported and suspect flatworms sent (in a stout container and wrapped in damp tissue paper) with details of when and where found to: Dr B Boag, Scottish Crop Research Institute, Invergowrie, DUNDEE DD2 5DA.

### Two New Videos. (Branch Organisers please note)

The Group has acquired a copy of "The Realm of the Rhododendron", a 90-minute video released by TVNZ Natural History Unit. It is directed by Max Quinn, the winner of numerous prestigious international awards including Best Director at the New Zealand Film and Television Awards. The production explores some of the great rhododendron gardens of New Zealand, such as Pukeiti, Ilam and Larnach Castle and meets many foremost experts on the plant. Viewers also get an array of hints on the cultivation and propagation of rhododendrons as well as advice on combating diseases and pests. Garden planning and design are also covered. The video is supplied together with an accompanying booklet by Russell Garbutt of Wild South Enterprises whose uncle Tom Garbutt of Oamaru, where he has been breeding rhododendrons for the last 25 years and is a well-known broadcaster on Radio Waitaki, provided much of the expertise for the project.

This video may be hired for a period not exceeding 28 days from the Membership Secretary for showing at Branch functions or, indeed, on any other occasions by members in the home, for £10 including postage.

A second video is available from the Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society on free loan on application to Julia Watts at GRBS, Bridge House, 139 Kingston Road, Leatherhead KT22 7NT Tel. 01372 362575. This is a 10-minute video to promote the GRBS for fund-raising purposes and to publicise the Society's activities around the country. Narrated by writer and broadcaster, Professor Stefan Buczacki the video presents a most interesting insight into the work of the Society through a series of inter-views with beneficiaries.

### Group Spring Tour - May 1995.

This year for the first time, certainly in 30 years, the Spring Tour visited eight gardens in the Midlands and was based at The New Bath Hotel in Matlock Bath. Several of the gardens were quite small compared to many that we have visited and half belonged to members of the Group. This made for a very friendly and relaxed atmosphere. The weather throughout the four days was fine, warm and dry and the area had not suffered the severe frosts that had hit southern Britain a few days before the Rhododendron Show on May 2nd/3rd.

We first visited the garden of Lt Col and Mrs R C Glanville at Belper. Their garden was full of colour and interest provided, not only by the wide assortment of hybrid rhododendrons and shrubs including some unusual ones such as *Corokia cotoneaster* covered with tiny yellow star-like flowers, but by herbaceous and ground covering plants blending in perfect harmony and spread throughout the garden which has been planned and planted by the owners in the past 30 years and

maintained with the minimum of help. Bob and Rosa are no 'spring chickens' and were congratulated and thanked for providing such a good curtain raiser to the Tour.

We then travelled a mere two miles to visit 'Highgates', the garden and alpine nursery of Bob and Dorothy Straughan which is full of many fine and rare plants some of which were seized upon by members as souvenirs. The afternoon was spent at Lea Rhododendron Gardens near Matlock which were a blaze of colour provided by all manner of azaleas and rhododendrons - both species and hybrids - in a garden created in and around a disused stone quarry with many fine mature trees; a truly wonderful woodland garden now owned by the Tye family. Mrs Tye senior, now in her 93rd year still works in the garden and may be remembered for the exhibits which she and her former colleague, Miss Colyer used to bring to the RHS Shows in the sixties, including their famous *R.campanulatum* with its deep indumentum, still very much in evidence. Jonathan Tye and his son, Peter are the principal work-horses in the garden where, on account of the steepness of the site and the closeness of the plantings, most of the maintenance has to be done manually. There were few who did not partake of the delicious home-made cakes on offer in the pleasant tea-room run by Jonathan's wife, Jenny. In the evening David Farnes gave a talk, with colour slides, on last year's expedition led by Ted Millais to Yunnan, China on the Mekong-Salween divide, a region visited in their great days by George Forrest and Frank Kingdon-Ward.

The following morning we travelled to the Cheshire borders to visit Dunge Farm where members David and Elizabeth Ketley have created an entirely new garden within only the last 12 years in a steep-sided ravine, which when viewed from the top was likened by one member to the ravine at Crarae in Argyll. The climate here must at times be harsh and we admired their vision, enterprise and skill in the planting of this garden in which many of the plants derive from David's travels in the Himalayas. Lunch was provided in the Kettleshulme Village Hall by members of the local branch of the W.I. We rounded off the day with a short visit to Chatsworth, the famous home of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire.

The morning of the third day, after a long drive, was spent at the Dorothy Clive Garden at Willoughbridge. Here we were met by the Curator, Mr Ballard who, over a cup of coffee, introduced us to the Head Gardener, George Lovatt. The latter escorted us around the rhododendron collection which contains many fine old hybrids and a wealth of mature conifers and broad-leaved trees. After lunch at Bridgemere Garden World we had an eight-mile drive to Hales Hall, the home of Mr and Mrs R. Hall where Mrs Hall gave us a brief resume of the history of the garden before we wandered freely around the well-maintained grounds containing many interesting rhododendrons and shrubs in a most peaceful setting with magnificent views over the surrounding countryside.

Another of our members, Derek Rogers, is the Head Gardener at Wentworth Castle, the garden of Northern College,

near Barnsley in Yorkshire and the venue for our visit on the last morning of our tour. He has spent the last eighteen years restoring these extensive gardens of several hundred acres and which, unlike many that we visit, contain great quantities of all three genera. There are over 300 species of rhododendrons as well as many hybrids, in addition to which Derek lists 150 magnolias and 270 camellias. After lunch at the local hostelry at which our thanks were expressed to Valerie Archibold for yet another successful and enjoyable tour, the party dispersed.

D.N.F.

## An up-date on Phytophthora

I am continuing to receive letters from members on this subject. According to Geoffrey Wakefield of Conroe, Texas the soils there, fine silts with clay and gravel underlaying them, of low pH and high water table, combined with the high temperatures and humidity, provide conditions which are just about ideal for the disease. He appears to be trying to tackle the problem by searching for disease-resistant varieties and then using these as understocks for grafting on susceptible scions. Apparently the Southern Indica Azaleas grow with careless abandon throughout the Gulf Coast even down into New Orleans without any sign of disease; 'Formosa', 'Judge Solomon', 'Geo Tabor' etc. all do well, as do 'Fashion', 'Macrantha', the Kurumes, Pericats and Satsukis. Ted Van Veen in Portland, Oregon sent him a few liners of 'County of Cork' which he said was particularly disease-resistant and which he hopes to use in due course. The University of North Carolina have sent him some material of a Southern Indica azalea named 'Fred Cochran', which they say is also highly disease-resistant. These he has rooted and is growing on for use as understocks this winter. Should any member wish to exchange notes with Geoffrey Wakefield his address is: Rt.21 Box 1176, Conroe, Texas 77301, USA. Tel. 409 756 5138.

Another member, this time in Australia, Cecil Blumenthal, is working with 'Rootguard' alias *Trichoderma hermatum* which was fully reported in Bulletin No.57 - December 1994. I was hoping for an up-date from him in time for this Bulletin but it has not arrived. I will keep you informed of any future developments in this field which come to my notice.

C.A.W.

## Registration Certificates for cultivar names

The Senior Registrar of the Royal Horticultural Society has notified us that as from 1 January 1995 the Society has ceased to charge for issuing certificates of international registration for new cultivar names. This now means that no charge of any sort is requested for the provision of the whole registration service.

Registrants will still be able to obtain certificates if they so wish, but this must be clearly indicated on the registration form when the original application is made.