

RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP.

BULLETIN NO. 6. NOVEMBER 1978.

INITIAL EDITORIAL - BULLETIN LAYOUT.

So far as spacing and volume of material permit, the front page will in future contain all calendar information, urgent notices and requests, and any tear-off slips needed.

The purpose of this arrangement is to help those who have limited time to spare at the moment of arrival of the Bulletin, and who are consequently obliged to defer a leisurely and perhaps full perusal until some days later. Many of the articles and contributions do not require any response or diary action, but those which do should henceforth be seen immediately, on the front page. If members know that this is so, they can at least have a quick glance down the page to see whether there is anything requiring early action.

For similar reasons it seems likely that editorial matter will be divided, the more urgent on the front page and the more discursive later on, as in this issue.

CALENDAR FOR NEXT FEW MONTHS.

- DECEMBER. Friday 8th, 7.30 p.m. S.E.Branch meeting at Borde Hill. Anyone requiring more information should kindly contact the S.E. Branch Secretary, Mr. Logan A. Edgar, O.B.E., at Wedderlie House, St. Helen's Avenue, Hastings. His telephone number is 0424 - 425371.
- FEBRUARY. 20-21. R.H.S. Opening Flower Show. Ornamental Plant Competition and Annual General Meeting.
- MARCH. 13-14. R.H.S. Early Spring Show and British Growers' Show. Camellia Competition and Rhododendron Competition.
Friday 23rd. PROVISIONAL DATE. S.E.Branch Group Meeting.
29-30. Cornwall Garden Society. Annual Spring Show. Truro.
- APRIL. 3-4. R.H.S. Flower and Garden Equipment Show. Camellia and Daffodil Show.
- MAY. 1-2. R.H.S. Flower and Rhododendron Show.
- 5-9 ~~31~~ 7. Rhododendron and Camellia Group Argyll Tour.
Saturday 19th. S.E.Branch Group visit to Old Woldringfold.
22-25. R.H.S. Chelsea Show.
Thursday 24th. Rhododendron and Camellia Group visit to Exbury. Arrangements by Wessex Group. Further details when available - Mr. R.Dudley-Cooke is kindly conducting negotiations.

The existing Executive Committee was declared re-elected, with the addition of Lady Anne Palmer to fill the vacancy. Under the terms of the Constitution, two of the eight elected members of the committee retire annually, but are eligible to stand for re-election. At the meeting of the committee held on the 11th July, a ballot was held to decide which members should retire each year, and the results were as follows:

Mr Bond and Mr George	31st October 1978
Lady Adam Gordon and Mr Gallagher	31st October 1979
Sir Giles Loder and Mr Schilling	31st October 1980
Lady Anne Palmer and Mr Sanders	31st October 1981.

MEMBERSHIP.

With great regret, the deaths since the list of members was circulated in March must be recorded of Dr. T.S. Dewey of Tonbridge, Dr. T. Scott Forsyth of the Northern Group, who lived near Keighley, and Dr. Harold Fletcher, lately Regius Keeper of the Edinburgh Botanic Garden. Appreciations of Dr. Scott Forsyth and Dr. Fletcher appear in the Annual. There have been four resignations, three members have rejoined, 37 new members have joined; the Secretary reports that he expects to need 450 copies of the Annual, since none of the members whose subscriptions for 1977-8 are still due have given notice of their intention to resign. This year the Annuals are to be sent direct from the printers in Dumfries to the Secretary in Herefordshire, and so it is hoped that they will reach members rather earlier than they did last year. Any members wishing to resign are asked therefore to notify the Secretary as soon as possible, and in any case not later than the 1st January 1979 if they do not wish to be liable for the subscription for 1979-80, due on 1st November 1979.

SEASON 1978.

The four regional branches were active in 1978, with a variety of undertakings, garden visits, social gatherings and competitions. A number of members of the Group from other areas came to Cornwall at the end of March, and were at the Truro Flower Show. After an exceptionally severe February, the rhododendron classes, which were judged by Mr. Davidian and Mr. Robert Stephenson Clarke of Borde Hill, were less good than usual. The magnolias had suffered badly from blizzards in February, but the camellia classes were exceptionally good, demonstrating how much more quickly camellias recover from a spell of bad weather than rhododendrons. On the evening of the first day, Mr. Davidian gave a most interesting and entertaining lecture on 'Rhododendrons in Cultivation' to a full hall, made up of members of the Group and of the Cornwall Garden Society.

The London shows were up to their usual high standard; detailed accounts are in the Annual. Several members of the Group exhibited for the first time, notably the Honorary Treasurer who had considerable success at the Indoor Camellia Competition. General Eric Harrison, recently retired from the garden that he made famous at Tremear, was in demand as a judge, both in London and in Cornwall and Sussex. It was very heartening too to see the Tremear plants still holding their own at the London and Truro shows, but now shown in the name of their new owner, Mrs Catherine Hopwood. This garden is in very good order, and will open for charity on four dates in April and May next year.

At the Rhododendron Show, the Wessex Branch were awarded a medal for an excellent exhibit of rhododendrons, and in the afternoon a most interesting lecture was given by Mr. Schilling, the Deputy Curator of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew in charge of Wakehurst, and a member of the Committee of the Group, on the flowers and forests of Nepal. A notable feature of this show was the success of the Messrs Wright, who are doing such a splendid job restoring Arduaine, the famous old Campbell garden at the head of Loch Melfort in Argyll, which the Group hope to visit in May.

TOUR OF SOUTH WALES.

Immediately after the Rhododendron Show, the Group tour of rhododendron gardens in South Wales began; about seventy members of the Group took part in this four-day tour, though the actual composition of the party fluctuated from day to day. The first visit was to Lydney Park, just over the border in Gloucestershire close to the River Severn. This is a large and beautiful garden made by Lord and Lady Bledisloe on dolomitic limestone on the southernmost spur of the Forest of Dean. After a delicious lunch very generously provided by Lady Bledisloe, the party drove up the Wye Valley, past Tintern Abbey, to Monmouth and Commander Anthony Collett's beautifully situated small garden, the Yew Tree at Lydart, full of rare and interesting shrubs, where we were entertained to a delicious tea of home made Welsh cakes. From there, the Group went on to Cardiff, and spent a comfortable night at the Post House. Mr Nelmes, the Director of Cardiff City Parks Department and his father came to dinner there, and gave us a very interesting talk on the fine rhododendron park at Cefn On, now so well maintained by his department, and round which they took us next morning. Mr. Nelmes Senior had preceded his son as Parks Superintendent at Cardiff, and was looking forward to a visit that he was about to make to Russia.

After a fascinating morning at Cefn On, and lunch at the Post House, we went on to Penllyn Castle near Cowbridge, the sea of Mr. Christopher Cory, who had done so much to help us with the arrangements for the tour. This beautifully sited garden contains some rare and interesting young rhododendrons, thriving in deep leafmould over limestone, and a fine collection of cyclamen. Mr. Cory had driven back from a meeting in London to receive us, and he and Mrs Cory entertained us to madeira before we went on our way to stay the night at Carmarthen.

On our third day, we visited Major Hanning Philipps's and Lady Marion Philipps's large and beautiful garden at Picton Castle in Pembrokeshire. Lady Marion is a sister of Lord Stair; and we saw some of the fine hybrids raised by her father at Lochinch. From there we turned east again, and had a delicious buffet lunch at Robeston House, found for us by Mr. and Mrs Streater, who have a very interesting collection of rhododendrons nearby in Haverfordwest, and then went on to Blackaldern, near Narberth, the lovely garden of Mrs Anne de Quincey, the well-known breeder of Hereford cattle, who kindly gave us tea in the garden. From there, we had a long drive back to Hereford, where we spent a comfortable night, before going next day to Hergest Croft, a famous garden which belongs to the Banks family and is described in this year's Annual. Here we spent the whole day; an excellent lunch was provided for us, and we had the opportunity to buy some interesting plants.

The Hydon Nurseries had very kindly selected some rather choice young rhododendrons for us to take with us to give to our various hosts, and we hoped that in each case we managed to choose a plant appropriate for the particular garden. At the final session, the Chairman felt somewhat foolish to discover that unbeknownst he had been carting round Wales in the back of his car a plant intended for himself, a very special hybrid indeed, impossible to refuse, but made easier for him by the tact of the Treasurer, who presented it to him for his grandson, a keen plantsman, on the strength of which that young man became at the age of six the youngest member of the Rhododendron and Camellia Group.

Unfortunately, Mrs Isobyl la Croix, who has written accounts of our last two years' tours, had left for Malawi where she now lives, and it had not been possible to find a volunteer to write up this tour. A few weeks earlier, she had been in Cornwall, and an account of her visit there is in the Annual. Her description in an earlier Bulletin of raising rhododendrons "by the kitchen sink method" will be remembered, and in a recent letter she has mentioned all the tender rhododendron seedlings which she is now raising in an African cooking-pot in her new house. She says that evergreen azaleas seem to do reasonably well where she now lives.

At Chelsea, a welcome visitor was Mr. Ralph Sangster, President of the Australian Rhododendron Society, who had come on from the International Rhododendron Conference in New York. Before going on to Iceland, he was able to spare the time to visit two gardens in Sussex with an International Dendrology Society tour, Wakehurst Place and Mr. Geoffrey Gorer's exquisite garden at Sante House.

The Group again put up an exhibit at the R.H.S. June Show, and received a medal. This was again organised by Alan Hardy and John Bond, but after doing this for two years they have suggested that it is someone else's turn in 1979, and the South East Branch have been asked to suggest a theme and stage an exhibit for the Group; contributions from members of the Group not belonging to this Branch will nevertheless be acceptable.

R.H.S. RHODODENDRON AWARDS.

Every year, the R.H.S. Council, after a poll of members of its Rhododendron and Camellia Committee, awards the Loder Rhododendron Cup, presented by Lord Wakehurst in 1921 in memory of his brother Sir Edmund Loder, and the A.J.Waley Medal, instituted in 1937 by the late Mr. Alfred J.Waley to provide an annual award to a working gardener who has helped the cultivation of rhododendrons. This year the Loder Cup is being awarded to our Vice-Chairman, Mr. Alan Hardy, and the Waley Medal to Mr. J.A.R.Moffat, gardener for many years to Colonel, and now to Mrs. Norman Colville at Penheale Manor in Cornwall. In presenting the Loder Cup to Mr. Hardy's father thirteen years ago, the President bracketed the hybrids which Major Hardy had produced at Sandling Park with those made so famous at Knap Hill and later Exbury. His son, Mr. Alan Hardy, who has done so much to re-establish this Group, has specialised in the tender rhododendrons, and has a profound, and until recently unrivalled, knowledge of Collectors' numbers.

Mr. Moffat has established at Penheale probably the finest planting of *R. forrestii repens* in existence, and has raised a cultivar of *R. thomsonii* which seldom fails to win its class at the Rhododendron Show, as well as a very fine pink *R. racemosum*, *R. 'Diana Colville'*, F.C.C., a yunnanense seedling, *R. 'Penheale Blue'*, A.M., a very blue *lapponicum-triflorum* hybrid, some fine new camellias and a very good *Magnolia dawsoniana*. His outdoor *Lapagerias* are probably some of the finest in the country. This relatively new and very fine garden will be opened under the National Gardens Scheme for the first time in 1979.

RHODODENDRONS, 1978, WITH MAGNOLIAS AND CAMELLIAS.

The Annual is now with the printer, and members should soon be receiving their copies. Apart from the usual features, a new contributor, Sir Peter Smithers, a former Secretary-General to the Council of Europe, has written a fascinating account of his Magnolia garden in Southern Switzerland, on the strength of which he was also asked to review Neil Treseder's fine, and long-awaited, monograph on Magnolias. There are descriptions of new rhododendron species from the Royal Botanic Garden at Edinburgh, and Mr. Peter Cox has contributed a short but very valuable account of some of the species which have been introduced into cultivation in Britain since the publication of the last edition of Part One of the Rhododendron Handbook in 1967. 'Hybrids and Hybridizers', the New England production briefly mentioned in Bulletin No.4, is reviewed by Mrs Molly Grothaus, who has recently handed over the editorship of the American Rhododendron Society Quarterly Bulletin to Mr. Ed Egan, who is also on the Board of Directors for 1979.

INTERNATIONAL RHODODENDRON CONFERENCE.

Apart from Dr. Cullen and Dr. Chamberlain, who are carrying out the revision of the genus *Rhododendron* at the Edinburgh Botanical Garden, and read papers, the New York Conference was also attended by Mr. C.D.Brickell, the Director of the R.H.S. Garden at Wisley, who also read a paper, and by Mr. J.D.Bond, Keeper of the Gardens, Windsor Great Park, and by Mr. R.Stephenson Clarke of Borde Hill.

Mr. Bond has written an account of the conference for the Bulletin, and the text of Mr. Brickell's talk is included in the Annual. In addition, the R.H.S. is very kindly circulating to members of this Group copies of Mr. Brickell's report to the Council.

R.H.S. CONSERVATION CONFERENCE.

Plant Conservation is now the 'In' subject. The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources has its headquarters in Switzerland, under which is the Survival Service Commission, an off-shoot of which is the Threatened Plants Committee, with headquarters at Kew, where a Conservation Conference was held recently. The International Dendrology Society paid a Conservation Visit to Kew early in October, and at the end of the month the Royal Horticultural Society held a two day conference on the Practical Role of Gardens in the Conservation of Rare and Threatened Plants. On the first day there were three Working Groups, one under the Director General of the National Trust on the Preservation of Gardens and their Role in Plant Conservation; one, under the Chairman of the Alpine Garden Society, on the Identification and Listing of Rare and Threatened Plants in Gardens; and one, under the Director of Kew, on the Propagation and Distribution of Rare and Threatened Plants. On the second day, the reports of the three Working Groups were discussed under the chairmanship of Sir George Taylor, late Director of Kew, and now Director of the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust. The aim of the conference is to bring together all the organisations in Britain interested in the conservation and preservation of our gardens and the plants they contain. Associations concerned with Horticulture are listed at pages 33-5 of the R.H.S. Gardeners Diary, and among others the National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies of Great Britain, and the National Gardens Scheme (Queen's Institute of Nursing) were represented on the Working Groups. In view of its plans for the earmarking, preservation and propagation of rare and outstanding rhododendrons, this Group made early application for representation on the Working Groups, but the Steering Committee decided against the representation on the Working Groups of Specialist Plant Societies actually engaged in tackling the problems under discussion. The Group sent a small delegation to the second day, and a report will be circulated in due course.

GENERAL EDITORIAL.

Apologies are again needed for delay in the provision of the latest Bulletin. Some of the responsibility has already been gallantly shouldered by the Chairman, who was last Editor (see "Group Affairs" above), but the new one must acknowledge his own guilt. Briefly, a ninety per cent takeover of material in the first week of August seemed to promise well; the remaining ten per cent depended on the outcome of decisions as to the contents of the Year Book, then nearing press. However, before the month was out the new Editor had had his car rammed from behind, (violently enough for it to be written off). Subsequent hospital visits, X-rays and some pain, combined with the time needed for finding a replacement car, put thoughts of the Bulletin aside for the time being. However, since the arrival of the last batch of material, only a little time has, he thinks, been wasted.

The new Editor expresses his gratitude to his predecessor the Chairman for the unstinted help he has provided, and hopes to be able to offer continuity of service to the Group for some time to come. If contributions are forthcoming in sufficient quantity, the next two Bulletins will be issued at intervals of about nine to ten weeks, rather than the statutory thirteen. With the advent of a new season this information may help to promote the flow of the sap of anticipation.

Before the customary retirement behind the thin screen of editorial anonymity, may I, please, indulge in a fairly compressed expression of my aspirations for future issues, for once using the first person singular for simplicity ?

I hope to keep the Bulletin up to the standard set by my predecessors, and am grateful for their example. I hope that those who already provide articles and notes will continue to do so - a few contributions before the end of December would be especially welcome. So that the existing corpus of willing co-operators does not feel obliged to take all the weight of feeding the Editor, I should also like to secure some new contributors, particularly from the ranks of the newer members, whom we welcome to the Group. The efforts of the faithful and experienced few, supplemented by those of some new writers, ought to provide discussion platforms of interest to many, and stimulate yet more members to express their views.

At this point I am going to seize the opportunity provided by my first editorial of outlining ways by which potential contributors may be encouraged to break the ice. I am conscious that as a relatively recent recruit to the Group I am not well known to many other members; this situation will of course gradually change - to our mutual benefit. So, to begin with, I appeal to any older members who have material in their minds which might be turned into articles suitable for the Bulletin, to get in touch with me as soon as they feel ready to commit themselves to paper. If no initial discussion seems needed I shall be glad to have the finished article at once.

Newly-joined members may not feel so confident. Yet there must be many who have something of value to tell us. There are, equally obviously, those who would like to see some matter of interest or importance to themselves being illuminated by the many extremely knowledgeable and experienced members who have been growing the plants in which we are interested for years. I therefore wish to encourage members to write to me to ask for articles on such matters; this would enable me to approach our experts, some of whom, with a clear request about a specific topic, may be persuaded to find the time to help. In many cases the finding of sufficient time will no doubt be the real difficulty.

I daresay there are some who are perfectly willing to produce useful and interesting matter, if only they can have guidance as to subject. Well, members' requests will help here. As soon as I have one or two, I will try to locate and cajole a suitable authority; I am sure co-operation will be forthcoming.

I append a few notes intended to stimulate this sort of interest. All I hope for is to start the ball rolling; I will give a welcome to either completed contributions or suggestions as to how the topics may be dealt with.

1. Bark-split. We have often read accounts of the occurrence of the phenomenon, and, less often, of how it has been dealt with in certain cases. Could we now, after the difficult hot drought period of 1976, assemble through the Bulletin some information as to which treatments work and which fail? Some of our experienced members ought to have useful observations to make.

2. Drainage problems. These are easy to discuss, but I feel that there are many beginners who would like a succinct guide to practical solutions. Some of the things we read are difficult of application. As an example, I myself am on the receiving end of a five-degree slope, two hundred yards long, on Sussex clay over a sub-soil which is completely impervious except for the very occasional flaw which permits a localized escape of excessive rain to lower regions. Such mound-planting as I had done before 1976 has now proved to be one of the two main killers among my six to eight per cent losses. Someone, somewhere, must have done some thorough research on this problem. Is there a need for the exercise of far more ingenuity than has been employed so far? After another two or three years I may be able to say something useful myself, but it will not be anything comprehensive. Clearly, my plants are going to undergo further trials and tribulations each winter before their problems are alleviated. Briefly, I have begun the digging of a network of shallow ditches, with the intention of leading surplus surface water into the lower end of my little copse; there, a sudden increase in slope should solve my worst problems. The trouble about this rather facile explanation of one man's solution to one garden's problem is that it provides no help

to the majority of others with the same original problem. Many people have a smallish flat site, hemmed in by other properties over which they have no control, and probably with no fortunately-placed slope at the lowest end. More information, particularly about really effective procedures based on factual experience, is needed. Can the Bulletin help here, by providing the launching pad?

3. Bud tenderness. This is another subject of the same kind; by this I mean that it sounds only too familiar, that it is frequently referred to, that it is a thorn in the flesh, and that there seems to be a need for clear expression and collation of our several experiences. Collation, organization and presentation are only possible after the material information has been made available. It is a vast and unencouraging subject, but the Bulletin might well be the initial assembly point from which subsequent researches may draw.

4. Magnolias. A quite different matter. I have been impressed by the degree of interest in magnolias shown by "new" gardeners. It may serve my purpose better to divide "new" gardeners into those who are new simply because they are young, and those who are not young but are new to gardening or to possessing their own garden. I am delighted to find that some of the former are planting magnolias which are not going to be very rewarding for many years to come; yet they are conscious that by then they may well have left the garden and be planting or altering a fresh one. In the latter category, there seem to be equal numbers of older people who are planting slow-to-flower magnolias which they may never see reach any kind of maturity. When I joined their ranks a few years ago I did not realize how numerous they are. The purpose of this preamble is to encourage those who are having success and satisfaction to let us know through the Bulletin what they recommend others to try. A point that seems worthy of expansion is the readiness of some magnolias to form a clean stem above ground-planting. Moderate-sized gardens might thus be able to accommodate one or two of the big magnolias without too much sacrifice of space. Mr. Findlay's article in the 1972 Year Book is relevant. It should serve as encouragement to the hesitant, and gives advice both on varieties and on culture. There have since been detailed and interesting contributions on magnolias from several other growers, and newcomers to the subject would gain from consulting them.

5. Camellias. I am afraid this issue is not notable for contributions on the camellia. I hope enthusiasts will soon rally round to remedy the deficiency. At the moment my own plants are very encouraging. None is older than about seven or eight years from striking. However, the bud-set is heavy, notably on J.C. Williams, Francie L., Charles Colbert and Mary Larcom. I hope the real enthusiasts, with their extensive collections, can say the same and that there is not too much frost-damage to blossom in the spring, or for that matter to buds before then.

Finally, a call for help. I do not possess a copy of Bulletin No. 1, and have never seen one. For editorial purposes I ought to have one by me if it can be managed; I would also find one or two spares of Nos. 2, 3 and 4 very useful. I imagine that not all members will intend to keep a complete sequence from the first issue, so if I am right I shall be very glad indeed to have copies that are no longer needed and are in fact destined to be thrown away. I shall, of course, refund costs.

THE INTERNATIONAL RHODODENDRON CONFERENCE - NEW YORK. 15th-17th May.
by J. D. BOND.

Having had the good fortune to spend three weeks in the north western United States and nearby Canada during late April and early May 1978, looking at horticulture in general and rhododendrons in particular, it appeared to be sensible to take advantage of being in America to attend the International Rhododendron Conference, which was being held in New York from May 15 - May 17, 1978. On the evening of Sunday May 14 I found myself at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York, many hours later than

the timetable had suggested due to congestion in the various airports in the east and incredibly bad weather; three inches of rain fell in New York on that day !

The Conference was held at the New York Botanical Garden and was extremely well organised by the American Rhododendron Society and staff of the Botanical Garden.

Although numerous papers were given on anatomical, chemical and morphological matters, the prime aim of the Conference was to discuss the recent changes in rhododendron nomenclature proposed by members of the staff of the Royal Botanic Garden at Edinburgh. I intend to limit this brief note to some comment on these changes.

Dr Chamberlain and Dr Cullen from the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, both gave forceful lectures on the changes they had made and those they intended to make in the near future. In their minds at least, these changes are here to stay, and I think the majority of those attending the Conference were of the same opinion. Whilst we shall all regret certain changes, for some old friends (species) will disappear and others will appear in different places, the end result will be a much tidier and more sensible arrangement of the great genus Rhododendron.

One of the main changes to be made is the removal of the well used and familiar term "Series". It seems that this term is botanically unacceptable and will be replaced by Sections and Subsections.

Most of the work on the lepidote species has been completed, but there is still a considerable amount of work to be carried out on the elepidote species, an estimated two years' work in fact. We have already seen Professor Phillipson's work on the Subsection Lapponica which will be included in the new work, as will Dr Sleumer's work on the Section Vireya: Professor Phillipson is also revising the old "Azalea series".

The botanists gave me, as a gardener, considerable cause for concern over the matter of clonal selections. Rhododendron enthusiasts over the years have selected, shown, named, and received numerous awards for, the best clones of Rhododendron species; our botanist friends made it very clear that they were in no way concerned with this (in my opinion) valuable work, and that the gardeners should tackle this problem for themselves. Fellow enthusiasts will understand therefore how relieved I was to hear Mr Brickell unfold his plan to deal with these problems in his excellent lecture on the matter of registration of clonal names. I can illustrate his suggestions by dealing with the changes in the old Cinnabarinum Series, which will read as follows:

Subsection CINNABARINA

R. cinnabarinum

subsp. cinnabarinum (will include
R. blandfordiae and R. roylei)

subsp. xanthocodon (will include
R. cinnabarinum var. pallidum,
R. cinnabarinum var. purpurellum,
R. concatenans and R. xanthocodon)

subsp. tamaense

R. keysii

I use the following fictitious clones to illustrate Mr Brickell's suggestions:

R. cinnabarinum subsp. xanthocodon 'Golden Jubilee'
KW 9999 F.C.C. 1980

R. cinnabarinum subsp. xanthocodon (concatenans group)
'Copper Jubilee' KW 7777 F.C.C. 1980

R. cinnabarinum (roylei group) 'Crimson Jubilee'
KW 8888 F.C.C. 1980

In my opinion these suggestions are acceptable and will ensure that our best forms will continue in cultivation. One point does arise from the above suggestion; a greater number of clonal names will be required in future, with which I am firmly in agreement. In fact I believe that all awarded species should be given clonal names.

The Conference ended with a discussion, most members being in agreement with the previous three days' lectures. A suggestion was made that a follow-up Conference should be held in Edinburgh in two or three years' time.

THE CONSERVATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF RARE SPECIES AND CHOICE HYBRIDS.

Following the insertion in Bulletin No. 5 of the list of plants that members are anxious to obtain, I have had only two replies. (Editor's note:- This was written in July 1978; of course the position will change from time to time.) In both instances material has been offered for two of the plants requested. If you are able and willing to offer plants or propagating material from either list in Bulletins Nos. 5 and 6, then I would be pleased to hear from you in order that I may pass the information on to the appropriate member. Or maybe there is a rhododendron, camellia or magnolia that you are searching for - likewise I would like to hear from you. Maybe one of our members can help you!

With this in mind, if you are willing to supply any scions or rooted cuttings or plants from your collection, please advise me accordingly. I am endeavouring to compile a register of members' wants, and of plants from which material may be requested, so would appreciate your reply.

I am only able to help you in the conservation and distribution of rare species and choice hybrids if you participate.

Since the publication of the last Bulletin, No. 5, the following items are being sought by members:-

Rhododendrons: 'Englemere'; falconeri - good yellow form; globigerum; 'Grosclaude' x griersonianum; 'Jalisco Eclipse'; Koster 231; 'Oregonia'; 'Royal Windsor'; tsariense 'Yum Yum'.

I look forward to hearing from you at: - Badger Cottage, 101, Guildford Road, Bagshot, Surrey GU19 5NS. I propose to include details of plants that are being sought by members in each issue of the Bulletin.

There must be several members who are interested in the increasing number of Malesian rhododendrons that are becoming available. With this in mind I have recently purchased a copy of 'An account of Rhododendron in Malesia' by H. Sleumer. This is partly a reprint from 'Flora Malesiana' ser. 1, vol. 6, part 4, published and supplied by Sijthoff & Noordhoff, P.O. Box 66, Groningen, The Netherlands. If you are interested in purchasing a copy, may I suggest that you direct your enquiry to Holland?

John Sanders.

CAMELLIAS, MAGNOLIAS AND RHODODENDRONS - SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM AN UNFAVOURABLE SITE. By Colin Grainger.

Many of us wish to grow these beautiful plants, but upon enquiry we are informed that it is not recommended for one reason or another: limy soil, no shade, insufficient rainfall, and so on. However, some of us still try regardless, to the despair of the experts, and only too often embark upon an adventure of trial and error. From these experiences we can learn so much. By sharing these experiences we can all benefit considerably, as will our beloved plants, and the chances of success should be enhanced.

The site. The site is a valley bottom in Stowmarket, Suffolk, about twenty-three miles north-west of Felixstowe. The altitude is a hundred feet above sea-level, sloping down to the south-west. There is very little overhead shade, among it a mature Ceanothus dentatus (one of a genus highly recommended for providing protection, whilst desirable in its own right for both foliage and floral effect). There is limited wind shelter in the way of hedges, six-foot fences and buildings. The site is in a frost-pocket.

The natural soil is chalky, with lumps as big as golf balls in places, but generally in the form of veins and marble-sized lumps in a cold clay soil. This has been broken up and mixed with sharp sand and peat, straw, tea leaves and garden compost. It has been treated with iron sulphate and flowers of sulphur. Originally the pH was above 7, but in many places in the top spit it is now down to 5.5 to 6.0. Acquisitions are planted with a generous allocation of peat to encourage an extensive root system. Some are staked to aid their establishment.

Annual rainfall is only about 20 inches. The climate is almost continental. Sunshine totals are equal to those of Southern England. The July temperatures are among the highest in the British Isles, while those of January are among the lowest. Winter (late November - February) is cold with a published average temperature of 4°C., falling to -12½°C. in January 1976 (I have only recorded temperatures since February 1975), while July and August are hot, apparently averaging 17°C., with some maximum temperatures exceeding 30°C. in the shade. The first frost can be expected by early November, while the last can be as late as the end of May. The greatest danger period is April when frosts are often vicious; down to -8½°C. in April 1977, and -7½°C. in April 1976. Bark split can then be experienced because the sap is flowing, and vigilance is required. Any sort of split in the bark is encircled and held firm against the inner bark to prevent it from peeling away (which it most certainly will do if left - probably resulting in wilting and eventual death by late summer or autumn, particularly if growth has been vigorous); raffia, soft string, twist ties, plant ties, etc., are all used and left in place for several months, but checked periodically to ensure that the restriction is not too tight, pinching the stem. The griersonianum hybrids (even Fabia) can be the most severely affected (Fusilier always seems to send out secondary growth, which is then at high risk). The griffithianum hybrids, however, seem to be very much hardier, especially the Angelo grex. Loderi is rarely affected, but 'Unique' can be difficult. Hybrids of auriculatum, fortunei and discolor are very resistant. Protection is sometimes given by erecting 'wigwams' around the plants at risk, using bamboo canes draped with hessian, sacking or rags, secured to the canes with clothes pegs. Any apertures face downhill where possible.

Regrettably, a greenhouse does not feature among my possessions, but the car shares the garage with a host of tender plants during bad weather, thermostatically heated to +5°C., and lit artificially during daytime hours to supplement the poor natural light from the windows.

Natural rainfall is insufficient and has to be supplemented by hose or can watering. The tap water is pumped up from chalk and is, therefore, limy (not to be recommended, but better than nothing). Fertilizer is applied as a foliar feed of diluted liquid seaweed, fortified with additional iron, magnesium and manganese, and applied twice a week from April until October. Mulching is undertaken twice yearly, in May and October with moss peat, and periodically with tea leaves. (A bucketful of tea bags is brought home each weekday from the office canteen - the casings are composted, the leaves applied direct). Chlorosis is rarely encountered and is easily rectified by a few additional foliar feeds. The only plant to be a recurring problem is rhododendron Diane, but then this plant causes concern almost anywhere.

The garden is scheduled to be transferred to a more attractive site within the next two or three years.

The plants. Camellias are almost exclusively grown in pots, from 5-inch to 14-inch, and vary in height from 6 inches to 6 feet. Only the reticulatas receive frost protection, but all plants receive shelter from the early morning sun.

Over one hundred different varieties are grown; the hybrids, and varieties of reticulata and saluenensis appear to bud up most readily, even as small plants. 'Bow Bells' is exceptionally profuse, closely followed by 'Debbie' and 'E.G. Waterhouse'. Of the reticulatas 'Mary Williams', 'Noble Pearl' and 'Trewithen Pink' set the most buds.

Magnolias are cultivated in tubs or half-barrels, mainly because of the intended move. Twenty-seven kinds are grown. They vary in height from eighteen inches ('Caerhays Belle') to seven feet (M. kobus), and all enjoy a southern exposure. M. campbellii (pink and alba), campbellii mollicomata (including Lanarth), and the hybrids 'Charles Raffil' and 'Kew's Surprise' are given frost protection, because they are all under four feet in height.

Unfortunately, the severity of the April frosts of the last two years has had an extremely damaging effect on them, particularly M. sieboldii, which 2½ years ago had attained 6 feet, but was cut to 4 feet in April 1976 by -7½°C., and to 2 feet in April 1977 by -8½°C. Its exposure to the east and therefore the early morning sun was presumably a contributory factor. M. grandiflora 'Goliath' has not been harmed.

The general damage to the magnolias has tended to inhibit flower bud formation, but M. denudata 'Purple Eye', x soulangiana and stellata should flower next season. The M. x soulangiana is an 18-inch high layer (now growing in a 5-inch pot) that was pegged down in November 1976. The branch had snapped during the layering process, but did not break away completely, and has rooted excellently in 10 months and set 2 flower buds. Other layers treated with more respect have been less obliging. Most forms of M. grandiflora have been found to root fairly easily from cuttings taken in October, inserted in a 4-inch pot of peat and sand, enclosed by a polythene bag, stood on top of the television set, and misted once a week.

Rhododendrons grown here number about two hundred. About two dozen receive frost protection, and these are mainly plants from the series Edgeworthii and Maddenii, plus their hybrids. Some have budded well every year and give a first-class display, but have as a result nearly flowered themselves to death - most notably 'Blancmange', 'Bonito', 'Gardis' ('Garnet' x discolor), 'Gene's Favourite' ('Jalisco' x 'Albatross'), 'Halcyon', 'Loderi Julie', 'Paris', 'Pink Pearl' and 'Purple Splendour'. Others have flowered magnificently one year and then missed out the next, but as a result have continued in better health, e.g. Albatross, Avalanche, Carita, Loderi and Naomi. Some have grown well but refused to bud until over 3 feet tall, e.g. 'Angelo', 'Crest', 'Kilimanjaro' and 'Lodauric Iceberg'. A solitary specimen, the lacteum hybrid 'Galactic', has not grown well nor budded up, but time will tell.

Only five plants have died: 'Carita Golden Dream', 'Lodauric Ivor Stanger', 'Tensing', 'Townhill Albatross' and 'Tyermannii'. These were all young plants, in their first year, and in each instance had meagre root balls. 'Carita Golden Dream' has been re-introduced, and 'Exbury Albatross' grows and flowers superbly. The griersonianum hybrid 'Tensing' should have been as hardy as 'Tally Ho', and the latter grows well. The 'Tyermannii' was almost dead on arrival, but a 'postal' cutting is rooting well. The lesson to be learnt is to insist on well-rooted plants.

The following from my collection seem to flower well, while those asterisked are especially recommended:-
Alicia, Alpine Glow*, Antonio*, April Glow, Azor, Betty Wormald, Blancmange*, Bonito*, Bric-a-brac, Britannia, calophytum + x Pink Pearl, Carita*, Carita Inchmery*, China*, ciliatum, Crest*, Cynthia, Day Dream, Doc, Dragonfly, Elisabeth Hobbie, Elisabeth*,

Elizabeth Jenny*, Exbury Albatross*, Fabia, formosum, Fragrantissimum, Fred Wynniatt*, Gardis, Gene's Favourite*, Halcyone*, Harry Tagg, iteophyllum, Iviza*, James Burchett*, johnstoneanum, Kilimanjaro, Lady Alice Fitzwilliam, Ladybird*, Lavender Girl, Lodaure Iceberg*, Loderi Foam, Loderi Julie*, Loderi King George*, Loderi Pink Diamond*, Loderi Sir Edmund*, Luscombei Splendens*, May Day*, mezerium, Moonshine Supreme*, Mount Everest, moupinense, Naomi Astarte*, Naomi Early Dawn, Naomi Nautilus, Naomi Stella Maris*, New Comet*, New Moon, oreodoxa, Paris, Pink Pearl, Praecox*, Prawn, Princess Alice, Purple Splendour, Ripe Corn*, Roberte*, rhododotum*, Saffron Queen, Scarlet Wonder, Seta*, smithii, Susan, Souvenir de Dr. Endtz, The Master*, Torch, Vanessa F.C.C., Wonderland, yakushimanum F.C.C., Yvonne Opaline*. Insufficient experience has been gained of the tender varieties.

The following rhododendrons can be recommended for foliage effect, from the varieties grown in the garden:-

Alpine Glow, Angelo, arizelum, auriculatum, Babylon, bullatum, Colonel Rogers, Conroy, Cornish Cross, coryphaeum, Europa, exineum, falconeri, Fortune, grande x macabeanum, haematodes, Luscombei Splendens, macabeanum, macabeanum x falconeri?, mallotum, May Day, Pilgrim, Polar Bear, rex, sinogrande, Sir Charles Lemon, yakushimanum.

It should be mentioned that the Angelo grex (50% griffithianum) is among the hardiest and most vigorous rhododendrons in the garden.

Flowers probably only last for about 2 - 4 weeks per plant, whereas the foliage is a consideration for the whole year. While many of the species may be slow to flower, they do, however, usually have more to offer in terms of foliage effect, most notably the Falconeri and Grande series, both of which are fairly well represented in the garden. 'Fortune', however, is equally attractive here, as are some seedlings of grande x macabeanum and falconeri x macabeanum. These seedlings are now nearly 4 feet tall and are looking very attractive with leaves up to 19 x 8½ inches, clad beneath with indumentum.

The Azalea series is less well represented, but the evergreen hybrids 'Hino Crinson', 'Mother's Day', 'Vuyk's Rosy Red' and 'Vuyk's Scarlet' perform very well, while the deciduous hybrids 'Berryrose', 'Cecile' and 'Seville' flower beautifully and have a delightful, spicy fragrance.

CONSERVATION - STOP PRESS.

The National Trust has asked for help in obtaining propagating material of the following rhododendrons:

inaequale	KW 7717	trichocladum	KW 8259
tanastylum	KW 8044	patulum	KW 8260
vaccinioides	KW8081	stewartianum	
nishmiense	KW 8113	forma	KW 8294
concinoides	KW 8227	kasoense	KW 8221
fulvum	KW 8300		KW 8522
phaedropum	KW 8521	micromeres	KW 8326
	'Marchioness of Londonderry'.		

Will any member willing to make scions available kindly inform Mr John Sanders ?