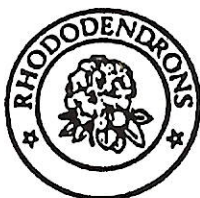


The Royal Horticultural Society

The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group



Bulletin No. 60 ~ December 1995

Forthcoming Events

Mar. 12 - 13	Early Camellia & Rhododendron Show
Mar. 16 - 17	Mount Edgcombe Camellia Show
Apr. 16 - 17	Main Camellia Show
Apr. 25 - 28	Harrogate Show (in conjunction with North of England Horticultural Soc.) Valley Gdns. Harrogate
Apr. 30 - May 1	Main Rhododendron Show
Apr. 30	Group AGM Committee Room Vincent Square

May 6 - 11	51st Annual Convention American Rhododendron Soc., Scottish Chapter Oban, Scotland
May 10 - 12	Malvern Spring Show
May 12 - 17	Group Spring Tour, Ireland
May 21 - 24	Chelsea Flower Show
June 12 - 16	B.B.C. Gardeners' World live, NEC, B'ham (date to be confirmed)

Chairman's Notes

When I last wrote in the August Bulletin, I said that the next Yearbook would be a Jubilee issue to celebrate its 50th anniversary and that due to a much enhanced content and presentation, it would bear a cover price of £12.95. In fact the price set by the RHS is to be £15 and the title is "The Rhododendron Story". This last in view of the theme of the history of Rhododendrons in this country and elsewhere. As I said, members of the Group will receive their copies free as usual.

Since Tony Weston wrote about the Seed Exchange, further supplies have become available, including Magnolia seed. I have seen the original list, the contents of which are very interesting. If anyone has any spare seed then please send it to Tony so that members may have the opportunity to share in your good fortune!

At long last the question of the Groups's Constitution has come to the point where it has been discussed in Committee and the RHS draft has been returned to them to consider several amendments. We hope it will not be too long before we receive a reply.

Recently I have had the fortune to hear three very good talks by people who have been to China. Kenneth Cox, Christopher Fairweather and David Farnes all "got snow on their boots" and recorded to great effect all that they had seen.

So we come to the end of another year which has shown some very odd results of the prolonged drought. At one time it seemed that there would be no autumn colour since all the leaves were shrivelling and dropping, but the rain of September altered all that with the result that we now have, in Devon, one of the most colourful autumns that I can remember with leaf fall only now in early November, starting to take place. There is much tender growth still happening and, luckily, we have had no frost (although the valley below us had some yesterday) so perhaps the colder weather will slow everything down before we do get anything nasty. *B.A.*

Editor's Notes

In taking over the editorship from Tony Weston, I am very conscious of what a hard act I have to follow, Tony has produced such good Bulletins and how he has charmed so many interesting articles out of contributors I have yet to learn! The real interest of a Bulletin depends largely on your input, so whether it is a beginner's frustrations (or successes!) or a long time grower's hard won wisdom, please let me hear from you. I would like to know what you would hope for from the Group, and I would particularly like more observations on Camellias and Magnolias which seem to take rather a back seat at the moment. On the question of our latest imported pest, what precautions do you take when you bear home your latest acquisition? Are you sure you are not bringing in a New Zealand or Australian flatworm? "Gardening from Which" suggest plunging the pot up to the rim in a bath of water for 24 hours, which may not do a lot of plants much good. I tend to isolate newcomers for three weeks or so on a mat of black plastic with

another small piece placed on the compost, these are inspected every two days to see what is underneath. This is of course a very "hit and miss" method. Ground and Rove beetles apparently will eat the beasties, but not in sufficient numbers to control them. Has anyone any better ideas?

Further on you will see a fervent plea from Brian Wright for more competitors at the Vincent Square Shows. Even if you hate writing, take time to send me a postcard - just list the reasons (a to f), or a brief note for any other - why you do not enter. Perhaps if we get enough postcards we can get things altered and the tables will once again be brimming with entries!
E.W.

Honours and Awards

Our heartiest congratulations go to our member Dr. Homer Salley on his award, by the American Society of their highest recognition, the Gold Medal. Many members will be aware that Homer, together with Harold Greer, produced two editions of the excellent book *Rhododendron Hybrids* without which no rhododendron enthusiast's library is complete. The award is in recognition of this and the long and distinguished service that Homer has rendered to the Society.

Members of the Group who attended the Show at Vincent Square on 31 October last will, no doubt, have seen the remarkable exhibition of water colour paintings of Rhododendrons by Mrs Joyce Jack, mother of our Committee member Robbie Jack who staged the exhibit.

In view of the undoubted excellence of the painting not to mention the intricate botanical accuracy, it will come as no surprise to learn that the display was awarded a Silver Gilt Grenfell Medal which is awarded by the R.H.S. for exhibits of pictures, photographs or objects of a similar nature of horticultural or botanical interest. Our heartiest congratulations go out to Mrs Jack for this prestigious award.

Spring Tour, May 12 - 17 1995

A visit to some of Ireland's gardens is on the agenda for next year's tour. This country was visited last in 1983 and some of the gardens visited then will be on the programme. Included will be Mount Stewart, Rowallane, Castletwelan and further south, Fernhill, Mount Usher and Kilbogget. It is hoped that one or two more private gardens will be added.

The tour will start at a hotel, probably just outside Dublin and finish there, unless some members wish to leave from Belfast after visiting the gardens in the North.

There will be a coach, but members should make their own arrangements to reach Dublin. The cost will be around £375.00 for the five days but this will cover coach, lunches, garden entry charges as well as hotel accommodation.

By the time this newsletter reaches you the programme will be nearer completion, so those that want details please write to me (s.a.e. please) Mrs. V Archibold, Tour Organiser, Starveacre, Dalwood, E.Devon EX13 7HH.

Autumn Weekend 1995

On the 27 October, members gathered at Leigh Court Hotel, Bradford-on-Avon to renew friendships and relate the summer drought horror stories.

On Saturday we went our separate ways to enjoy the many museums, exhibitions and historic buildings in and around Bath. Some of us were lucky enough to find the splendid nursery run by the Hannays, practically in the centre of the city. They are seed collectors who grow on their own plants and can always be relied on to show something rare and beautiful.

After tea, David and Eileen Farnes talked to us about their very recent trip to Yunnan, richly illustrated with slides. As well as showing us alpine and shrubs in flower, (and some rhododendrons), they had fascinating glimpses of the everyday domestic lives of the people and even more fascinating pictures of the trials and tribulations (mud slides, vehicles at 45 degrees angle in a ditch) as well as the joys that go to make up such an expedition. Terrific entertainment - more please David and Eileen!

The next morning we drove in five cars to Prior Park on the edge of Bath (a privileged preview, one will not be able to drive there when it opens later this year, it must be public transport or walk)

Two years ago the National Trust were given this lovely thirty-five acre landscape garden by Prior Park College, a Catholic school who still occupy the Palladian House. The aim is to restore it to its 1760 prime and much engineering work on water courses and the two lakes and restoration of the beautiful Palladian Bridge has already taken place.

We were met by Richard Higgs who explained what had been done and what still waited to be done. One of the most ambitious plans is to re-excavate a long serpentine lake that had originally been cut out of the steep sloping side at the top of the valley, just below the house! We walked down the valley path across the dam dividing the two lower lakes and up to and on to the Palladian Bridge, to examine the careful but not too excessive restoration work. On the way down and back up again we were able to see how much clearing of scrub and over mature trees had been accomplished. Already the park is a beautiful sight and in the years to come it will certainly grow even better. Bruce Archibold voiced all our thanks to Mr Higgs for making us so welcome and answering all our questions so clearly and fully.

We returned to Leigh Park Hotel for a final delicious lunch (their food was terrific) and Raymond Baldwin, on behalf of us all, said a heartfelt thank you to Valerie Archibold for once again conjuring up such an enjoyable weekend.

Branch News

South West Branch. On April 8 some eighty members and guests visited two gardens in Cornwall. First to Tregehan, St. Austell where Tom Hudson showed us around the large garden and conservatory. He is clearing much old plantings and opening up woodland. Those who had visited several years ago commented on how much work had been done. Suggestions were received that we visit again in five years! The second garden visited was Nigel Holman's Chyverton, Truro. A good number of plants were in bloom especially magnolia - *Magnolia dawsoniana* "Chyverton" was especially worth the visit.

On May 20 we met in North Devon with seventy-six members and guests. We visited Marwood Hill where Dr. J. Smart, V.M.H. showed us around assisted by his Head Gardener, Malcolm Pharoah. Then to New Mill near South Molton where Veronica and Bob Spooner have carved out an extensive garden from marshland and an adjoining wood. The last visit of a full day was to The Old Glebe, Eggesford, where Nigel Wright, our recent Branch Organiser, showed us how he is building up his rhododendron garden and nursery. June Wright kindly provided light refreshments.

Last but not least, on November 3, at Exeter, Kenneth Cox of Glendoick spoke to a packed audience of ninety about his trip in May to South East Tibet. The lecture was profusely illustrated with slides of scenery, rhododendrons and alpine. The lecture was preceded by plant sales, a Rhododendron quiz (won by Kenneth Cox) and a Gardeners' quiz (won by Mrs. Betty Porterfield) and a dinner.

Wessex Branch. The Branch was fortunate to enjoy fine weather for all three of our Spring Meetings. Each event was attended by over twenty members. Some unusual flowering rhododendrons and camellias were brought for display at the Members' Afternoon at Rivendell House on 2 April. Despite devastating frosts, the number and quality of blooms entered

for our Annual Competition and Show on 7 May at Ramster was as high as ever. A bloom of "The Queen Mother", entered by Mrs. Margaret Hall, was awarded the Cup for Best in Show and Mr. Graham Rankin received the Kathleen Beadle Memorial Shield for the highest number of points. Our thanks go to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Gunn for kindly inviting us to their superb garden that day. Further thanks also to Mr. and Mrs. J.K. Oldale for inviting us to visit their woodland garden at Little Coopers on 14 May. The view of their banks of deciduous azaleas glowing in the dappled sunshine lingers in the memory.

Thirty members and guests of the Branch met in the Saunders Room, Charterhouse School, Godalming to hear Mrs. Arthur George give an illustrated talk on "The Hydon Hybrids" on Friday, 20 October. She gave a witty and informative talk accompanied by slides of rhododendrons hybridized at Hydon Nurseries; many of those shown were like old friends to members of the audience but some were newcomers and several rhododendrons shown are yet to be named. Both Mr. and Mrs. George answered questions from the floor.

Forthcoming Events:

Friday, 1 March 1996: Illustrated talk by Dr. Alf Evans on "Japanese Plants" to be held in the Lecture Room, RHS Garden, Wisley, 7.30 pm

Friday, March, 1966 : Illustrated talk by Mr. Graham Rankin on "Magnolias and the Gardens at Hascombe Court" to be held at Ramster, Chiddingfold, Surrey, 7.30pm.

South East Branch. In addition to their usual Spring talk (date and time to be arranged) the South East Branch are planning a May visit to Sandling Park, the Hythe, Kent garden of Mr. & Mrs. Alan Hardy. The Branch is also hoping to run a small Show sometime in April. Although the idea is to have competitive classes, the Show is not seen as being an over-serious event. It is anticipated that there will be rhododendron, camellia and magnolia sections and that, by showing, participants will be encouraged to be more adventurous and exhibit at the Vincent Square shows. The Show will probably take up the best part of a day with staging taking place in the morning and judging and prize-giving after lunch. It is also hoped that there will be a talk given by a RHS show judge entitled "Showing at Vincent Square". Entry will be open to members from other branches and possibly an inter-branch challenge can be arranged. Fuller details in the New Year.

Salicylic Acid and Powdery Mildew

In the New Scientist of 15 July 1995, page 22, a note was published on the experimental use of a derivative of salicylic acid to prevent attacks of powdery mildew on wheat. The chemical works as an activator of the plants own defence mechanism. A SW Branch member asked if this would be of any use against the fungus species that affect rhododendrons.

The advice from Wisley was that this is still highly experimental and only applicable to grain crops. However this could lead to horticultural uses in the distant future. We can rest assured that we would be informed by an article in "The Garden". Meanwhile perhaps members may like to experiment with planting *Salix* amongst their rhododendrons, or what about "an aspirin a day"!

A.W.

The Early Rhododendron Show

The support from exhibitors for the Early Rhododendron Competition was very poor indeed with only twenty vases in total, entered in only eleven of the possible twenty-two classes. In only one of these was there any sort of competition and if it had not been for the exhibits from the City of Swansea (Mr. Ivor Stokes - Group committee member) there would have been no Show at all. The weather during the week before the Show, with several nights of widespread severe frost had undoubtedly taken its toll of anticipated exhibits but in the past, intending exhibitors had ways of preventing such damage: obviously not this time though!

Class 1 for three species, had but one entry but this showed three very neat compact trusses of *arboreum* var *roseum*, *macbeanum*, and *ramsdenianum* for the City of Swansea - awarded First Prize.

Class 2 for a spray of a species had only one entry - this from Nigel T. Holman of *spinuliferum* clone "Jack Hext" with deep orange flowers. This was awarded a First Prize.

Class 3, for a species, one truss had four entries giving the judges the task of placing those from the City of Swansea in prize order, thus:- 1st *arboreum* var. *roseum*. 2nd *argioplum* - a neat truss and 3rd *barbatum*

Stop Press !

Members' Secretary Note

The R.H.S. would like all members of the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group, who are not already members of the Society, to join. To encourage them to do so, they are offering membership at £5 for 1996 and in addition are prepared to waive the enrolment fee which is normally £7 on top of the usual first year subscription of £24. This concession will also be offered to future members of the group on joining.

**Group Annual General Meeting
Tuesday 30th April 1996**

The Group AGM will be held in the Rhododendron Room, Vincent Square at 4.30 pm. on Tuesday, 30th April, 1996. A nomination form for candidates for election will be found below. Please note the closing date for nominations.

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THE R.H.S. RHODODENDRON, CAMELLIA & MAGNOLIA GROUP

Election of Officers 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, if any member wishes to make an alternative nomination, they may do so provided that they first obtain the candidate's agreement 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, by 6 April, 1996.

Mr. Clive Collins

Mr. Tom Le Spring-Smyth

Nomination Paper for Candidates for election to the Executive Committee on the 30th April 1996

Name of Candidate..... Signature.....

Proposed by..... Signature.....

Seconded by Signature.....

To: Mrs. J Warren, Netherton, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon. PL20 7NL

