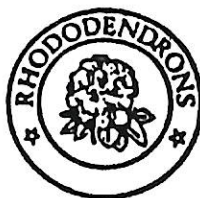


# The Royal Horticultural Society

## *The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group*



Bulletin No. 61 ~ April 1996

### Forthcoming Events

Apr. 16 - 17 Main Camellia Show, Vincent Square.  
 Apr. 25 - 28 Harrogate Show (in conjunction with  
 North of England Hort. Soc.)  
 Valley Gdns Harrogate.  
 Apr. 30 - May 1 Main Rhododendron Show,  
 Apr. 30 Group Committee meeting 2 p.m.  
 Rhododendron Group A.G.M. 4.30p.m.  
 All at Vincent Square.

May 6 - 11 51st Annual Convention American Rho.  
 Soc. Scottish Chapter, Oban.  
 May 10 - 12 Malvern Spring Gardening Show, Malvern  
 May 12 - 17 Group Spring Tour, Ireland  
 May 21 - 24 Chelsea Flower Show  
 June 12 - 16 BBC Gardener's World Live, N.E.C., B'ham.  
 July 9 - 14 Hampton Court Palace Flower Show

### Chairman's Notes

Members will, by now, have received their copy of "The Rhododendron Story" and I am sure that they will agree that The Lady Cynthia Postan is greatly to be congratulated on such a publication in collaboration with the editorial staff of the Royal Horticultural Society. It has come to my notice that some members have expressed disquiet that the usual reports of the Shows and the annual Tour were omitted and I would like to say that this was done only after considerable heart-searching, due to the fact that space was restricted. It should, of course, be mentioned that these reports did, in fact, appear in an extended issue of the Bulletin.

I would like to add my personal support to Brian Wright's appeal for more members to put up exhibits at the Shows. Even if you can manage only one truss you stand just as much chance as the "big boys" of winning a prize and you will find that there is a great companionship amongst both exhibitors and RHS staff. Both of these groups are happy to give such assistance as they may. Entry forms are at present available from the Shows Department at Vincent Square.

Members will see from Tony Weston's report on the seed exchange that it has now been revived and the choice of wild-collected seed is now extensive. There is still room for hand pollinated hybrid seed and anyone who has any to spare is recommended to get in touch with Tony. Of course, seed of related plants is also welcome.

Finally, and with the prospect of a bumper year for flowers, may I wish everyone an enjoyable 1996.

### Editor's Notes

Gardening and living as I do in the very West of Wales, the recent disgraceful and unnecessary destruction of our coast by the Sea Empress oil spill has for once driven gardening into second place in my thoughts. The suffering and distress caused to our wild life of all kinds will be remembered by me forever. Seeking solace from it all in my garden, I have been greatly heartened to see how well most of my rhododendrons - even the large leaved ones - survived their ordeal by drought last summer. Most of the flower buds seem to be "holding" so I am hoping the autumn rains came in time to avoid that distressing condition when all the buds drop off just when the hopeful gardener is beginning to anticipate and gloat.

Just two members answered our queries on the low participation at the Vincent Square Rhododendron Shows! Were you all too busy tending your own plots I wonder? Mrs. Margaret Hall the efficient Hon. Sec. of the Wessex Branch, summed up in a letter to me what many of my local friends have said:- "I must admit that I only considered entering a London show after winning our Wessex Best in Show cup for the second time last year. I think members may be diffident as I was - and still am! There is also the hassle factor: if one owns a small garden with a limited number of plants to choose from, one's choice of show quality blooms is limited by comparison with the "big boys", so it may hardly seem worth the time and effort to take just 2 or 3 entries to London. Even though I hope to enter this year, one sharp frost at the wrong time and all my plans will be thwarted - and I expect to enter only a couple of blooms even if everything goes well!"

Does this ring a bell with you? - Have we all got to be a bit bolder and put our cherished plants up for comparison?

I would like to restart the column where members request seeds or plant material of species or varieties they cannot find commercially. Please send any "wants" to me - before the end of June for inclusion in the August bulletin, apart from finding the plant you seek you may well make an extra very good gardening friend.

### Letter from the Tour Organiser

Dear Members, The Spring tour to Ireland is now fully booked. For those members who are attending the Conference at Oban instead, it is possible that another visit to Ireland will be arranged, perhaps next year (as well as another venue on the mainland)

I have been arranging tours now for around twelve years and members seem to have enjoyed them. There has been some criticism of the cost (not by those taking part). We have to choose a large hotel in order to accommodate a party of 35-40 members, and these hotels tend to be dear. Garden entrance, coach, lunches and administration tend to be moderate, so it is the hotel which pushes up the cost. The tours are non-profit making.

I feel now that I would like to give the reins to someone else. If anyone is interested in taking over the tours I would be willing to help with the first one and take part in it if required. **Offers please!**

Yours sincerely, Valerie Archibold. Starveacre, Dalwood,  
 E.Devon EX13 7HH. Tel. 01404 881221



## Peak District Branch

This notice should have appeared in the 1995 December issue - somehow it disappeared between my computer and the printers! It was probably my fault those of you who are already tangling with these useful but infuriating machines will probably have found out that the art of "cutting and pasting" does not always produce the required result. Many apologies David I do hope you will not have lost any members by this omission. Following the notice given in the Membership Secretary's Notes in Bulletin 59, about this proposed new branch, it is pleasing to record that there was sufficient interest, shown by those members who were circularised, for further steps to be taken towards setting up this Branch. David Farnes has agreed to act as convenor for an inaugural meeting planned for early Spring 1996. Several members have contacted David with ideas for the Branch and he would be pleased to receive more. Also if any member did not return the reply slip sent to them last August, it is still not too late to do so now. D. Farnes, 5, Pine View, Ashgate, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 4DN.

## Branch News and Forthcoming Events

**Lakeland Branch.** The season opened with the AGM and a talk by our old friend Mike Swift. He told us, in his inimitable way, of his trials and tribulations, and fun too, as part of an expedition to Yunnan and Tibet, led by Peter Cox. Mike has since left Lingholm Garden, and gone to be Head Gardener at Torosay Castle, Isle of Mull.

The next lecture was by George Smith of Stockport, who showed us wonderful slides of rhododendron gardens in Scotland. Excellent slides from a very knowledgeable speaker kept us all fascinated - and delighted - that he showed almost entirely the species rhododendrons, looking really good in their mild and moist Scottish environment.

Thirdly was Dr. David Kinsman's erudite talk on Drifting Continents, Changing Climates and the Origin and Distribution of Rhododendrons. This talk was really out of the ordinary, and the membership is most fortunate to have someone like David to prepare and research so well, a subject which is, to say the least, thought-provoking.

The fourth talk was by Archie Skinner, formerly of Sheffield Park, on the subject of the Ghent Azaleas. He took us through the early development of these plants, originally bred by a Belgian baker Pierre Mortiere, in 1804 - 1834. The National Collection at Sheffield Park now holds about forty of them. We all left after the lecture, wanting to obtain some of these graceful plants with delicious scent, late flowering and tolerant of heavy wet soil.

Our tour this year was based at Oban, good accommodation at a reasonable price. The visits were mainly to smaller private gardens - mostly in the "Yellow Book". The spring had been cold up 'til then and the first few gardens had virtually no rhododendrons in flower. However by the second day we had tracked down our quarry and found lovely species in the sheltered walled garden at Armally Castle. The next day we saw more in the sheltered woodland garden of Mr. & Mrs. Newman Burberry, and fine old and very floriferous "tree" rhododendrons at the home of Mrs. Glaisher, overlooking Loch Linnhe. The next visit was to Kinlochaich House Gardens and nursery whence our cars departed with many "waving fronds" in the back! The optional extra on the wet and windy Monday was to Torosay Castle, Isle of Mull, to see Mike Swift and the garden at which he is working. The "Swift touch" is already in evidence, but Mike has a huge challenge in front of him. We ought to go back in a year or two to see the results.

Local garden visits did not fare quite so well this year. Saturday, 20 May to Mr. Clive Collins's garden at Millback, nr. Keswick, unfortunately had only a small party, but those who did make it really enjoyed the very varied

and lush planting on a steep hillside. Prior commitments made it impossible to visit Graythwaite Hall as planned, but there was a general invitation from Mr. Sandys to feel free to visit individually. Hope some of you made it!

Branch visit to Wales will be either 26-28 April or 10 - 12 May 1996

## South East Branch Show

This event, announced in the last issue of the Bulletin, will take place on Saturday, April 20th at Handcross Park School. There will be 15 competitive classes comprising 9 for rhododendrons, 4 for camellias and 2 for magnolias.

Starborough, Leonardslee and Coghurst Nurseries will have small display stands with plants for sale and Mr. Archie Skinner, MBE will give an encouraging talk on 'Showing at Vincent Square'

The programme for the day is:

Staging-11.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Judging and talk by Archie Skinner-2.30 p.m. to 3.15 p.m.

Prize-giving, public viewing and tea-3.15 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

Whether entering the competitive classes or simply viewing, the South East Branch Show is open not only to its own members but to those of neighbouring branches. If you intend to compete and are not a S.E. Branch member, already in possession of an entry form, you must obtain an entry form from either your own Branch Organiser or the S.E. Branch Organiser, John Hilliard on 01293 522859. Handcross Park School, which holds the National Collection of Cherries, is 1½ miles off the M23, just outside the village of Handcross and close to the gardens of Nymans, The High Beeches and Leonardslee.

Although the planned visit to Sandling Park is now being re-arranged for next year, there will be a visit to Hascombe Court on Saturday May 11th by kind invitation of the owners Mr. & Mrs. Paulsen. We meet at the garden at 10.30 a.m. and will be shown round by head gardener Graham Rankin, who many will remember from his time at Tilgates. Hascombe is off the B2130, 2½ miles from Godalming in Surrey.

The Autumn garden visit will be to Nymans where we will be conducted round by David Masters.

## Wessex Branch

On Sunday, 12th November, a Members' Afternoon was held at Hethersett, by kind invitation of Lady Adam Gordon. The members were able to walk round the garden and view the autumn colours. After tea, several members showed colour slides. The afternoon ended with a Plant Tombola.

Forthcoming events:

Friday 1 Mar. 7.30pm. the Lecture Room, Wisley, Dr. Alfred Evans, VMH will give an illustrated talk on Plants of Japan.

Friday, 29 Mar. 7.30pm. Ramster, nr. Chiddingfold, Mr. Graham Rankin will give an illustrated talk on Magnolias, also the Gardens at Hascombe Court.

Saturday, 27 Apr. 2.30pm. a visit to the gardens of Hascombe Court by kind permission of Mr. & Mrs. O. Poulson.

Sunday 5 May Annual Competition The Savill Garden, Windsor Great Park, by kind invitation of the Crown Estate Commissioners.

For information about these events or to join the Wessex Branch mailing list, please contact the Hon. Secretary: Mrs. Margaret Hall, Rivendell House, Monks' Well, Moor Park, Farnham, Surrey GU10 1RH (Tel & Fax: 01252 783222) or the Hon Treasurer, Mr. Neil Usher, Applegarth, Effingham Common Road, Effingham, Leathershead, Surrey KT24 5JH. (Tel. 01372 52652)



## The Photographic Competition

The 1997 Year Book will resume its traditional format now that its fiftieth anniversary has been celebrated in "The Rhododendron Story". The Honorary Editor and the Judges once again invite members of the Group to submit photographs of rhododendrons, camellias or magnolias, or the gardens in which they grow. There will be the usual modest prize and the opportunity to see your photograph published. A short description of the species or cultivar and the circumstances and location in which it was photographed is desirable. Both prints and slides are acceptable. Closing date: the end of June.

Send to Cynthia Postan, 84 Barton Road, Cambridge, CB3 9LH  
C.P.

## The Magnolia Society, U.S.A.

The Magnolia Society has recently published the *Check List of the Cultivated Magnolias*, Revised 1994, a bibliographical listing of over 1000 cultivars of magnolias with descriptions and classification. The 97 page paperback book includes an index of cultivar names and a separate index of species and hybrids with published grex names. The *Check List of the Cultivated Magnolias*, Revised 1994 is available from The Magnolia Society, Hazel Tarpley, Treasurer, 5637 S Ryan St., Seattle, WA 98178 at \$15.00 plus postage (\$3.50 US, \$5.00 Canada and \$7.00 all other). Orders may be placed by cheque in US funds or by VISA/Mastercard. (If paying by Credit Card one may specify the dollar price - this can also be used to order books advertised by the Timber Press, sometimes cheaper than buying over here! Ed.)

## Awards to Group Members 1996

Swansea City Council (Ivor Stokes) The Crosfield Cup for best exhibit of six Rhododendron Hybrids

The Roza Stevenson Cup for best exhibit one spray Rhododendron species

Mrs. C. Petherick The Leonardslee Bowl for best exhibit one bloom each of twelve Camellias

Mr. E. de Rothschild Lionel de Rothschild Cup for best exhibit one truss of each of eight species of rhododendron

Reginald Cory Memorial Cup for the encouragement of production of new hardy hybrids for Rhododendron "Hermione Knight"

Mr. Brian Wright The Loder Cup for best exhibit one truss Rhododendron hybrid

High Beeches Conservation Trust (Hon. Edward & Mrs. Anne Boscawen) The McLaren Cup for best exhibit one truss Rhododendron species

The Lady Adam Gordon The Loder Rhododendron Cup for floral display and value to horticulture of the work of the recipient.

G. Reuthe Ltd. (Mr. C. Tomlin) The Rothschild Challenge Cup for the best exhibit in which Rhododendron predominate.

## Gardens to Visit

Randi and Bent Riberholt run Stengarden at Fakse about 30 miles S.W. of Copenhagen "a farm producing Norway Spruce for Christmas trees and a garden with 400-500 different sorts of rhododendron, in all 10,000 plants which are sold at very reasonable prices" They wonder whether any garden societies would care to visit them during the period end of April until the middle of June, when their rhododendrons are in flower. Contact Stengarden, Nordgardsvej, 1-4640 Fakse, Denmark.

Nearer to home, Lydney Park Gardens and Roman Camp offer a rhododendron valley with magnolias and camellias, a deer park and impressive Roman ruins. Also a small museum containing artefacts dug from the site, including the famous Lydney dog. It is to be found

20 miles from Gloucester on the A48 Gloucester to Chepstow road, 8 miles from Chepstow and 12 miles from the Severn Bridge. Contact Mrs. Butcher at The Estate Office, Old Park, Lydney, Glos. GL15 6BU Tel. 01594 842844

## Virtues of Vireyas

### Issue 21 Winter 1995/6 The Botanics

Nearly 300 species of rhododendron occur in montane tropical regions of south-east Asia. The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is a major centre for the study of these Malesian or vireya rhododendrons and holds the world's largest living collection of species in cultivation at Inverleith. These plants not only support vital botanical and horticultural research programmes, but are also in great demand for international public display. In the next six months the Garden will be presenting elements of these fabulous collections to audiences from opposite corners of the globe. In January vireyas will feature in the Garden's first ever adventure in Japan, and in May they will be admired by delegates at the American Rhododendron Society Convention in Oban.

## On Show in Japan

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh has been invited by the prestigious TOBU Department Store to take part in their annual "Precious Plants" exhibition in Tokyo in January 1996. Over 100,000 visitors are expected to visit this renowned show, whose theme relates this year to the flora of New Guinea.

The Garden's extensive display will include a 22-panel exhibit about the history and work of the institution and the character of its four gardens. In addition it will highlight our invaluable contribution to research and plant conservation over the past 30 years in both Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya. It will reflect studies undertaken by the Garden on the delicate dendrobium orchids and members of the family Gesneriaceae, including *Aeschynanthus*, but above all it will focus on the Garden's world-famous interests in vireya rhododendrons, which will feature strongly in the accompanying living plant display.

The exhibit will also include a fascinating range of ethnic New Guinea artefacts, from the collections of Dr. George Argent, one of the Garden's tropical botanists, and a world-renowned vireya expert. Both George Argent and Alan Bennell, Head of External Affairs, will accompany the exhibit to Japan where they will be lecturing on vireya rhododendrons and the history and work of the Garden respectively. In addition to funding the Garden's involvement in this important exhibition, TOBU has also generously donated £10,000 to the Garden.

## Environmental Studies

As part of a continuing research programme to improve culture of tropical plants under glass, especially vireya rhododendrons, David Mitchell and Paul Smith returned to the Garden in October having spent a month on Mount Kinabalu in Sabah, Malaysia. The main aim of the expedition was to gather micro-climatic information for particular plant groups cultivated within the Research Collections at the Garden. To this end, the team collected daily records of air temperature, relative humidity, soil temperature and, most importantly, light intensity patterns.

At 4101m, the summit of Mount Kinabalu is the highest point between the Himalayas and New Guinea. The mountain is one of the most bio-diverse areas in the world in terms of both flora and fauna, and hence is an ideal location for all kinds of environmental study. A varied geology combined with the effects of altitude results in the presence of several distinct vegetational zones on the slopes.



For the Garden's research team, the main interest on Kinabalu was the vireyas which are well represented on the mountain - 26 species are found at various altitudes. During the expedition fourteen species were studied in detail in plots at three different altitudes.

Information on climatic and soil requirements has now been linked with data from earlier studies to form a comprehensive databank. This has revealed the importance, for cultivation, of understanding the differences in winter light conditions between Edinburgh and the group's native tropical montane habitat. As a result of this new information, it is clear that light deficit is probably the main reason for failure of several high-altitude species to grow and flower as well as expected. This is reinforced by the fact that other environmental factors in cultivation - temperature, relative humidity and soil conditions - are broadly similar to those encountered in the field.

To investigate the light deficit further, and to improve the cultivation of the species in question, growth room experiments with supplementary lighting are now underway. It is hoped that these will improve the frequency of flowering as well as inducing flowering in much younger plants, thus speeding up the production of new research material and generating more attractive plants for display.

### Investigating Composts

Since April 1995 David Mitchell and Paul Smith have worked with Melcourt Industries Ltd. to develop the ideal vireya compost. Altogether ten composts are currently under investigation in the Garden, including both peat and non-peat based mediums. The new materials being used include various barks as well as Sylva fibre™. Whilst the Garden has been responsible for carrying out the field work, and for providing the plant material and cultivation expertise on this plant group, Melcourt Industries Ltd. have provided the expertise in air-porosity testing and pH and conductivity measurements. The initial results are very encouraging, and by spring 1996 it is hoped that a new, purely bark-based compost will be ready for testing on a much wider range of vireyas - an investment in the great horticultural potential of these plants.

(The above extract from *The Botanics*, the Newsletter of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh is reproduced by kind permission of their Press Office.)

### Suppliers of Vireyas

Our member John Bodenham has sent me a short list of suppliers of vireyas, they are:-

1. P. Cox, Glendoick Gardens Ltd., Glencarse, Perth, Scotland, PH2 7NS (just a few listed on their Short Supply List annually)

2. Reads Nursery, Hales Hall, Loddon, Norfolk. (15 or so species/varieties listed in their more usual stock of citrus, grapes, etc.)

3. Equatorial Plant Company, Blair & Jackie Sibun, The White Cottage, Three Gates, Leigh, nr. Sherborne, Dorset DT9 6JQ (16 species and 21 hybrids listed as possible complimentary plants to their normal orchid business, "requiring similar growing conditions").

Should there be other suppliers in the UK not listed above please advise John Bodenham, Hunters Lodge, Wembury, Plymouth PL9 0DL by post or telephone 01752 862584 in the evenings.

### The London Shows

#### A Beginner's Guide

It's showtime again! True, the Early Camellia and Rhododendron Competition will have already taken place by the time you read this but the main events at the RHS Halls, Westminster are still to come. The main events are the Camellia Competition on April 16th & 17th and the Rhododendron Competition on April 30th & May 1st.

Although these competitions may hold little interest for those disinclined to cut and trundle their blooms to London, there are others among us who have, from time to time, fancied the challenge - were it not for the fact that to take it up would be something of an unknown quantity. For the latter then, here is a sort of stage by stage beginner's guide. It is not an RHS guide, or even a Group guide. It is merely a few pointers compiled on the basis of the compared notes of one or two show and competition 'veterans'. I hope it is both helpful and encouraging:

#### 1—Don't be daunted by the prospect of competing in London.

For many, the capital is not the most enticing or accessible place to visit, but having said this it is worth noting that the Camellia and Rhododendron Competitions attract entrants from as far away as Scotland, Wales and Cornwall. The competition from your fellow competitors can be very keen but far from impossible to succeed against.

#### 2—Apply for a competition schedule and entry forms now!

If you are seriously interested in taking part, even if you intend to enter only one or two exhibits, you must apply for the above items without delay. This is because all completed competition entry forms should reach the RHS Shows Dept. one week before the start of each competition; although the Shows Dept. may allow a day or two's grace on this. The schedule and entry forms are obtainable from the RHS Show Dept. (tel. 0171 630 7422) and outline classes, prizes, staging times plus all the necessary regulations regarding entry.

#### 3—Cutting your exhibits.

In an ideal world, one could leave all one's entered blooms to open naturally on the bush and cut them on the eve or morning of the show. Some competitors are lucky enough to be able to do this but by and large life's not like that. Very often the blooms that you thought would open in time, don't. And those that do, sometimes 'go-over' before they reach the showbench.

There is also the weather factor - frost, wind and heavy rain which can easily put paid to uncut blooms - hands up those who've said "if only you had seen it yesterday or last week".

A week or so before a show, I hardly miss a weather report and, anyway, tend to cut early. This means that I not only protect my exhibits by bringing them inside (greenhouse, garage, shed or unheated room) but also get the opportunity to force or hold them back.

When to cut. Nobody can tell you exactly when to cut but if you are forcing, you must wait until the bud/s are bursting and clearly showing colour. Some buds can take a week or more to open, depending on the plant and state of advancement when cut but all flowers should be open on the day.

How to cut. Cut stems reasonably long, split them at the base and place in water-filled bottles which should be frequently topped-up.

What to cut. Although you will always be required to cut either a bloom, truss or spray, exactly what you cut depends on the competition and classes you have entered, so do read the competition schedule carefully. It helps to look through previous year books. The schedule will also define the meaning of bloom, truss and spray.

#### 4—Transporting your exhibits.

There are various ways of transporting your exhibits or entries but the trick is to keep them as still, as well protected and as wet as possible during transit. To this extent some competitors use tissue or moss-padded flower boxes, shoe boxes or water filled containers e.g. crated milk or wine bottles. If you do opt for boxes, it's advisable to work out a method of keeping the stems of your exhibits wet.



## 5—Staging.

Try to stage your exhibits on the day before the opening day. You can do this between 2 p.m. and 10 p.m. and find that there will be not only more time for staging but that your parking fees can be kept to a minimum.

If you are entering only a few exhibits, you can stage on the morning of the first day between 7 a.m. and 9.45 a.m. Staging itself is fairly straightforward. Stewards are on hand to help you with any queries you may have and to provide you with your class cards.

Vases, water and preparation tables are also provided. It will be helpful to have a pair of secateurs, a pull-out rule or tape measure, a pen, a reference book and some sphagnum moss. These 'tools' are useful in helping you to display your exhibits:

- a) within regulations
- b) to the best advantage.

Once your exhibit has been prepared for staging you can place it in its respective class, but check that it is the respective class and that your entry is correctly named - name labels are issued for this purpose.

## 6—What the judges are looking for.

First and foremost, the judges should be looking to see that each exhibit has been properly placed in its class. If the exhibit has not been placed according to the schedule, then it will be marked N. A. S. (Not According to Schedule) and disqualified.

All entries which are staged correctly will be judged on the basis of their overall quality, meaning that condition, size, colour, symmetry and foliage will be among the features taken into consideration.

## 7—Prizes.

All classes carry cash prizes for those exhibits placed 1st, 2nd and 3rd. In addition some classes also carry trophies i.e. the best species rhododendron truss wins the Maclaren Challenge Cup, the best hybrid rhododendron truss wins the Loder Challenge Cup, the best exhibit of 12 camellia blooms wins the Leonardslee Bowl. For full details, see the competition schedule.

Entering the Camellia and Rhododendron Competitions is to be part of the wider Spring shows programme put on each year by the RHS at Vincent Square. It is fun to take part and provides immense interest and enjoyment for those who visit the shows.

You can enter as many blooms, trusses or sprays as you wish as long as all your entries in any one class are different from each other.

Entry is free and with skill and good fortune you might even win enough to cover your travelling expenses. But win or lose, the real reward is in taking part. Start by asking for a competition schedule and entry forms - they're only a phone call away.

B. Wright.

## Rhododendron Hybrids in Clyne Gardens, Swansea

Members attending the two annual Rhododendron Competitions in Vincent Square may, in recent years, have seen blooms exhibited from Clyne Gardens, Swansea featuring prominently on the show benches.

Clyne was, for many years, the home of Admiral A.W. Heneage-Vivian, a keen horticulturist and avid collector of Rhododendrons. Following the death of the Admiral in 1952, the gardens and castle were acquired by the Swansea Corporation, later to become the City of Swansea. After an initial clearance of paths and overgrown areas, the gardens were opened to the public on a daily basis, providing visitors with a verdant landscape that belied its urban location. A programme of refurbishment was started in 1979 when the value of the collection, with so much wild collected material, was realised.

Assistance with the verification and identification of the species was kindly given by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh and with recent additions the collection

at Clyne now has almost four hundred taxa representing more than one hundred and eighty species, with only a few still to be identified. Putting names to the hybrids in the gardens is not proving so straightforward, especially as many are estate raised. The Admiral's studbook and planting records have still not been located; they would greatly help with the documentation of the collection.

Rhododendrons grow well in the mild moist climate of South Wales and there are many plants that would normally be deemed tender over most of Britain thriving in the tall oak woodland of Clyne. The large leaved species do particularly well in Swansea and are a dominant feature in sections of the garden. The Admiral was fond of these statuesque plants and created a range of hybrids crossing *R. falconeri* and its subspecies *eximium*, *hodgsonii* and *grande* with each other and the tight purple trussed *R. niveum*. Many of the offspring from these particular crosses still grow at Clyne, although we are really only sure about the identity of two of them, namely *R. 'Taranto'* and *R. 'Singleton Blue'*. Several plants bear labels showing their parentage and can therefore be given grex names but their clonal names are, as yet, missing. Show reports in old Year Books have been helpful indicating some of the plants that were growing at the time, and a list of Clyne raised hybrids we are keen to locate has been compiled. Available descriptions of these hybrids are rather vague and can occasionally seem to refer to totally different plants. For example, the 1948 Year Book describes *R. 'Grand Prix' (grande x falconeri ssp. eximium)* as 'Soft magenta purple with a *falconeri* type of truss'. Whilst Salley and Greer in their magnificent work 'Rhododendron Hybrids' state 'Ivory coloured flowers shaded pale carmine on the reverse'. Both descriptions could be applied to a dozen or so different plants in Clyne. The Admiral was known to have gifted or exchanged plants from Clyne with other growers. The late Walter Magor once told me that his father and the Admiral regularly exchanged plants, perhaps there are other gardens where these exchanges also took place. I would be most pleased to hear from anyone who grows or knows the whereabouts of any of the Clyne hybrids on the following list or others that originated from the gardens:-

R. Shepherd's Delight	R. Beryl	R. Clyne Blush
R. Clyne Cerise	R. Clyne Elsau	R. Clyne Pearl
R. Grand Prix	R. Coronation	R. Morawen
R. Kewdec White Lady	R. Graham Vivian	

Ivor T. Stokes, City of Swansea Botanical Complex, The Guildhall, Swansea SA1 4PE

## Study of *R. ssp. Saluenensia* at Ness

Many rhododendrons were sent back to Britain from remote areas of South West China, Burma and N.E. India around the turn of the century by well-known plant collectors such as Forrest, Kingdon Ward and Rock. Many of these plants have been retained in cultivation since their introduction, being passed amongst British gardens by means of seeds or cuttings. The original collection data has in many cases become confused or lost and collections are often only represented by a single genotype (clone). Since the early 1980's, when botanical expeditions returned to these regions, further collections of *Rhododendron* have been made. From these new collections many clones are now available for study.

In the 1980's a revision of the genus *Rhododendron* was published in the Notes from the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh (Cullen, 1980 & Chamberlain, 1982), which reclassified the species into subsections. During the 1940's Janaki Ammal at the Royal Horticultural Society Gardens, Wisley studied the cytology of *Rhododendron*. She found certain trends, with virtually all the *elepidote* (non scaly) species being diploid (with a chromosome number of  $2n=26$ ) while the *lepidote* (scaly) species showed six ploidy levels (with  $2n=26-156$ ). Her work also highlights variation in ploidy levels within currently described species in the *lepidote Rhododendron*



subsections *Maddenia* and *Saluenensia*. This suggests the existence of more than one breeding unit (species) within what has been named as a species. Unfortunately, Janaki Ammal did not make reference specimens, so there is no way of verifying if the plants she used were correctly identified. This meant that Cullen and Chamberlain were forced to reject her work. To date, few chromosome counts have been carried out to assess Janaki Ammal's analyses.

At Ness Botanic Gardens a Masters Degree has been designed to look at the cytotaxonomy of *Rhododendron* subsection *Saluenensia* (and *Maddenia* if the funding becomes available to extend the project to a PhD). Currently the occupant of this studentship is Miss Janet Cubey, who trained as a horticulturalist at The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, and is leading a botanical trek to N.W. Yunnan to look at *Rhododendron* in May/June 1996. In the course of her research Janet is gathering together at Ness Botanic Gardens a collection of all the known origin collections of *Rhododendron* subsection *Saluenensia*. Of particular interest is *Rhododendron saluenense* ssp *saluenense*, Rock 11238 - the plant at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh is a triploid and is likely to have been the vigorous seedling in the seed pan. If anyone knows the whereabouts of a different clone of Rock 11238, or of a wild collection *Saluenensia* that is rarely found in cultivation then Janet would be interested in hearing from you.

Janet can be contacted at: Ness Botanic Gardens, University of Liverpool, Environmental and Horticultural Research Station, Ness, Neston, S.Wirral, L64 4AY

tel: 0151 353 0123 ext. 230 fax 0151 353 1004  
email: J.J.Cubey@liv.ac.uk

### Seed Distribution Scheme (Progress Report from Tony Weston)

The scheme is well under way, some 800 packets having been sent out to 45 members including (apart from Great Britain and Ireland) some in Canada, Germany, Holland, Sweden and New Zealand. Ninety per cent of the seed ordered has been from wild collections and I am particularly indebted to Alan Clark of Muncaster Castle Garden for making so much seed from his 1994 expedition to Yunnan available to the Group, for without that the list, which eventually offered a choice of over 270 lots of seed, would not have been nearly so tempting.

It will be appreciated that these expeditions to China and other countries in the Far East are very costly both in time and money and we cannot expect to receive the quantity of seed which has been made available free of charge. We must therefore either sponsor an expedition by putting a sum of money up front and take a chance on what we get, or be prepared to pay for it on the basis of the number of packets we receive. I have so far opted for the second alternative - at any rate until I have more experience of the extent of the supply and demand.

I feel that, as a Group, we would be making more of a contribution to botanical science if we were in a position to sponsor, say a student of botany specialising in the genus *Rhododendron* to enable him or her to accompany someone like Alan Clark on the understanding that the bulk of the seeds he or she brought back would be handed over to the Group. It goes without saying that such an expedition would need to be officially organised with the approval of the government of the country visited.

It is chiefly with this object in mind that the price of a packet of wild-collected seed will, in future, be £1.50 since at the price of £1 there is not a significant profit and, frankly, I do not feel that the time spent on administration is justified unless there is some beneficial result such as I have outlined above and I am sure that I have the support of the Executive Committee in this aim.

Hand-pollinated seed will still be offered at £1 per packet and I propose to reduce the price of open-pollinated seed to 75p.

Turning to the question of how the scheme is organised in future, clearly there must be a cut-off date after which the Availability List will be printed and issued with the December bulletin, and any seed received thereafter will be refrigerated until the following season. There will also need to be a date fixed, probably the end of February or middle of March, after which no further orders will be accepted and any seed not sold by then will again be carried over to the following year.

I hope those members who ordered seed this year all received it in good order and that none escaped in transit. I do realise that some packets only contained a very small amount of seed but this is unavoidable in the case of wild-collected seed where sometimes only very small amounts are available for distribution. I endeavour to ensure that a packet contains a minimum of thirty seeds, which in view of the size of *rhododendron* seed, appears very little indeed, but it should be sufficient to produce enough plants for most people's requirements.

CAW.

### The Scottish National Rhododendron Show

This Show will take place on Monday 6 May 1996 at the Corrans Halls, Oban in connection with the American Rhododendron Society's 51st Annual Convention. In addition to classes for both species and hybrid rhododendrons there will be a sale of rare and interesting plants including primulas and other species, photographic and art competitions and displays by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. The classes are open to all and there is no entry fee. Show schedules are available from John Watson, Glenesk, Polvinster Road, Oban, Argyll. Opening times are 12.00 noon to 1.00pm for delegates and 1.00pm - 10.00pm for the general public. Admission:- adults - £1 - children under 16 and senior citizens 50p.

### A New Constitution for our Group

After long negotiations a new constitution for the Group has been agreed between the Group Executive Committee and The Royal Horticultural Society.

This new constitution will be put to the Annual General Meeting on 30th April next, and copies will be available at that time for members' use.