

The Royal Horticultural Society

The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group



Bulletin 77 ~ August 2001

Forthcoming Events

The Forthcoming Events will be found later in the Bulletin combined with the Branch events.

Chairman's Notes

It is with great regret that we bid farewell to our editor. After some six years in the editorial chair, Eileen Wheeler has decided to step down so she can give more time to other responsibilities and activities closer to home, which is in West Wales. She has been an enthusiastic and effective supporter of the Group on the executive committee and her contribution in particular as Bulletin Editor has been an outstanding example of efficient, hardworking and unassuming dedication to the job that is easy for us to take for granted. The Bulletin has never missed a beat. All members owe her a big **thank you** for the service she has given us and that we have all enjoyed over such a long period.

I am delighted to be able to announce that we have a **new editor** to take over from Eileen with effect from the next issue, scheduled for December. John Rawling is a member of the S.E. Group with a keen interest in rhododendrons which he has indulged in two expeditions to China; to N. Yunnan in 1997 and again to N.W. Sichuan in 2000 with the RHS. He gardens on half an acre of clay at 750ft on the North Downs and is an enthusiastic propagator of woody plants from seeds, grafts and cuttings. He tells me his lawn is shrinking each year to accommodate new rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias, as well as roses and latterly, primulas. He is partly retired, but finds professional commitments interfere with his gardening. I am sure you will join me in welcoming John, who in his own words is looking forward to 'an enjoyable challenge'.

Our survey of the top ten magnolias launched in the Bulletin struck something of a chord. We had an excellent response and sent out a press release to the relevant sections of the press. At the time of writing, our survey has been mentioned in *The Times*, *Amateur Gardening*, *Garden News* and is scheduled for *The Garden*, and possibly others. In addition, our questionnaire reached a much wider audience than originally envisaged, as it was recently distributed to its world-wide membership by the Magnolia Society in its magazine. It will be interesting to see how results compare and to what degree they are influenced by local and climatic conditions. Mike Robinson provides details of the main results of our survey on page of this newsletter. Let us hope that in a small way we have used our store of knowledge in the Group to alert a wider public to a better choice of magnolias to plant in their gardens; and to encourage the trade to make them more widely available. If so, it will have been a worthwhile enterprise.

And now for something completely different - it may merely be that we are influenced by an increase in our own garden, but we get the impression that **rhododendron bud blast** is more prevalent generally. I was never quite sure if the name was descriptive or expletive in origin, as it is a most frustrating phenomenon, the origins of which are evidently in the Eastern USA and the causes and treatments of which are still a subject of debate. It is a fungal infection said to be spread by leaf hopper insects, active in July/August, which puncture the leaves and thus admit the disease. It came to the UK in the 1940's. Frederick Street (Rhododendrons) asserted that to blame the leaf hopper is so much 'scientific eyewash', on the grounds that both his own, and plants at Leonardslee were covered in hoppers, without succumbing to bud blast. This is almost certainly explained by the fact that the disease only affects plants with *caucasicum* or *ponticum* blood in their ancestry (Peter Cox, "The Larger Species of Rhododendron") or hybrids of the *pontica* series (Bean). Does anyone know why this particular group of plants should be so attractive to the insects? Or is it the only group susceptible to the fungus? Peter also reports that the disease was seen on *arboreum* during the monsoon in Nepal.

We find at White House Farm that whatever we seem to do, the disease recurs on the couple of dozen or so hardy hybrids we grow, and is particularly rampant on Arthur Bedford, Mme Masson and Mrs P. D. Williams, which I think all have a heavy dose of *ponticum* in their makeup.

On practical evidence, the leaf hopper is most certainly the culprit. Graham Rankin, now busy helping to restore Aberglasney, some years ago rescued the old neglected collection of hybrids in the rhododendron wood at Hascombe Court in Surrey almost at a stroke. Bud blast was rife and Graham used a motorised insecticide sprayer high into the bushes against the hopper. The effect was dramatic, eradicating the fungus almost entirely and restoring the volume of flower within a season.

In our own garden, we have found that simply removing the affected buds before they spore, as most authorities advocate, on its own had little effect, though clearly it must contribute and is desirable. We sprayed twice against the bug with a two-week gap over July/August with a standard proprietary non- systemic insecticide, with myriads of hoppers rising from the bushes, and reduced the incidence of the disease by about 60-70% in one season. We have not tried spraying against the fungus itself. Bean says this is not effective but Peter Cox recommends trying a sulphur-based fungicide.

If you have experience of the disease and have dealt with it successfully, it would be very useful if you would pass on your observations for the benefit of other members. Please write to our new editor, John Rawling, about your experience and the measures you have taken. He is at The Spinney, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.

Here in NW Kent we have had little rain now for well over two months since the beginning of May, having missed all the storms that the forecasters told us were rampaging across southern England for 2 or 3 weeks. They seemed to have missed an awful lot of other people too, down in this bottom right-hand corner. The point is - we again noticed that once growth had been completed, camellias took the lack of moisture completely in their stride and magnolias seemed positively to relish the high temperatures that characterised our long dry spell. Again it helps to confirm that these are easy, tolerant and tough plants for everyone to grow - and, of course, with a huge dividend when they flower.

Maurice Foster

Editor's Notes

This will be my last Bulletin and I know I am going to miss editing it immensely. It has been enormous fun and brought me many new gardening friends, but unexpected family commitments mean that I would not be able to give the time the Bulletin deserves, especially as we hope to upgrade and burst into glorious colour. I am certain John Rawlings will be more than equal to the task of issuing in this new Bulletin (though I am a little jealous of the challenge he will have), and I want to say welcome John and I hope you get as much enjoyment as Editor as I have had.

I also want to say a big thank you to Bruce Archibold who has proof-read each issue for me and put me right on many botanic details. It is a task that usually gets no mention or praise but his eagle eye spotting my typing errors and general advice and support on all aspects of the Bulletin has been invaluable. Finally, thanks to my husband Peter who has helped stuff and address 750 or so envelopes!

TOURS, TOURS, TOURS !

Autumn Weekend South Wales 11-14 October

By the time this reminder appears in the Bulletin, all members who registered an interest in this Joint Societies meeting will have received notice and further details from the Organiser, David Farnes. If they haven't - or maybe there are still some members interested in attending the event - please contact David at once (letter or telephone) for details - there are still a few places left. David Farnes, 5 Pine View, Ashgate, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 4DN. Tel. 01246 272105.

Spring Tour to Germany

Rhododendron Parks, Nurseries and Private Gardens in Northern Germany

With advice on the choice of gardens from Charles Quest-Ritson, co-editor of the *Gardener's Year Book*, David Millais of Millais Rhododendron Nurseries in Surrey, and Julia Westhoff of the German Rhododendron Society, the parks, gardens and nurseries should ensure a very interesting tour. In addition, and importantly, David Millais has offered to lead the tour, and as he knows most of the gardens himself we should also have an instructive tour. He has a high opinion of rhododendron gardens in Germany.

A travel firm will arrange comfortable accommodation, and flights will be arranged from London Heathrow. There will be more news of this later and it will be made known to members booking places.

If you would like to join, please fill in the form on page 7.

A Brief Description of the Gardens

Bremen Rhododendron and Botanic Park has 700 of the world's species rhododendrons within its 89 acres. It also incorporates the Botanic Garden which is laid out with both modern and formal systematic beds.

Bremen itself is a city which can look back on a thousand years of history and has some wonderful buildings such as the Gothic town hall and St. Peter's Cathedral which still dominates Bremen's skyline today. In the oldest district of Schnoor small houses from the 15th and 16th centuries are clustered together like a chain of pearls. It would be very interesting if we could have time to explore Bremen.

The Hobbie Rhododendron Collection at Linswege is one of the best known in Germany and with a wonderful collection. It has made many improvements of late and covers 160 acres. From colour photographs it looks wonderful.

Bruns Rhododendron Park - a woodland rhododendron collection developed by one of Germany's leading nurseries and opened now to the public.

Das Arboretum at Ellerhoop, is an amazing arboretum filled with every imaginable type of plant, firstly rhododendrons, then a cottage garden, a meadow with flower bulbs, magnolias, vegetation before the glacial periods, carnivorous plants, trees in the time of the dinosaurs and petrified trunks - and much more. It should provide light relief from our favourite rhododendrons.

Hans Hachmann's Nursery at Barmstedt in Holstein is one of Europe's premier rhododendron breeders. There is an outstanding collection of new hybrids planted in a demonstration garden.

Gerd Dieter Bohlje Omorikastr 6 Westerstede. This is a long-established nursery from the heart of Germany's nursery area. They make a speciality of the smaller modern hybrids, many bred in Germany to survive cold winters, but they are also well known for their azaleas and pieris.

Julia Westhoff of the German Rhododendron Society has sent me descriptions of two private gardens which she recommends. The first belongs to **Dr Eberhard Puhl** of Westerstede. The garden is divided into three sections; a formal rose garden, and a part with topiary of *taxus* and pine wood with a pool and rhododendrons. Dr Puhl is a landscape architect with a good knowledge of rhododendrons.

The second garden belongs to **Katherina Haunschild and Hans Bergemann**. In this garden there is a collection of hybrid rhododendrons, but of special appeal is its position in the middle of a fen and its wild romantic character with an old farmhouse.

The cost of the tour including flights, hotel half-board and coach is £620 for a party of between 15 and 20 members. Less if there are more than 20.

A Long Weekend in Devon 26-30 April, 2002

A long weekend is planned to cover the several gardens we could not visit this year, because of the foot and mouth outbreak.

Firstly, there is the outstanding garden of **Sir John and Lady Quicke** at Sherwood, Newton St. Cyres, near Exeter. This consists of 14 magical acres bounded by a deer fence, the whole being surrounded by about 1,200 acres of wood and farmland. Set in two steep valleys this garden is probably one of the best we have seen in terms of variability of collections, each set out thoughtfully and artistically with enough space for each plant to be shown to advantage.

There are collections of both species and hybrid rhododendrons, several of the same sort in groups of six or seven; collections of different buddlejas and hydrangeas, a collection of *Acer palmatum* and 1960 plantings of large rhododendrons such as *macabeum* and *malotum* hybrids. Also there is the National Collection of Knaphill azaleas, and 120 varieties of magnolias. It is a fascinating garden, sure to inspire the serious plantsman.

Then there is the **Woodland Grove at Bovey Tracey**, owned by Peter and Helen Reynolds. The garden is spread over 21 acres with 11 of these planted out with rhododendrons, camellias, and other associated plants. Some members will remember the beginning of this lovely woodland garden when Peter's father, Dick Reynolds, began to plant rhododendrons and camellias with great enthusiasm.

There are around 500 rhododendrons planted and many camellias; some of the rhododendrons are species but most are hybrids all delightfully displayed under high cover.

Our own garden, **Starveacre**, was not covered either this year, and will be on the programme. This was planted out in 1985 on 5 acres and the hundred or more deciduous and coniferous trees are now very mature and underplanted with rhododendrons, mostly species, some originating from wild collected seed arriving from the Himalayas and Yunnan, some not in cultivation before. There is plenty to interest the enthusiast.

A garden we may visit again is **Lukesland near Ivybridge**; this is on the edge of Dartmoor forest, and water from the moor cascades down through the garden in little fast-flowing rivers and waterfalls with great effect.

Great care has been taken in the planting and welfare of the rhododendrons, and altogether it is an exceptional garden and well worth a second look.

Meanwhile I will be looking for two more exceptional gardens, details of which I will pass on to interested members.

If you would like to join this party, we will be staying at the same hotel, the Deer Park, where we were very comfortable this Spring, and the cuisine is first class.

Please fill in the slip on page 7 if you are going to join this weekend, and enclose a cheque for £30.00 refundable up to one month before the week-end if necessary. Total cost will be around £300.

Branch News

Wessex

Ray Redford

It is very sad to report the death of Ray Redford in December last. Ray was joint Treasurer and Membership Secretary and latterly Membership Secretary of the Main Group for about ten years until 1994

He and Marcelle had a charming connoisseur's garden in Farnborough, containing rhododendrons with fine foliage and flower; a Japanese garden, summer flowers and a kitchen garden. Although very ill, Ray won the Wessex Branch Best in Show Cup in 2000. Readers of *Rhododendron Hybrids* by Salley and Greer may have noted that many of the photographs were attributed to Ray Redford. He and Homer Salley were great friends and there is no doubt that Ray will be missed on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly by Committee members and by the Wessex Branch.

Malcolm Nash

Spring Events

In a departure from our normal arrangement our lecture was held on a Saturday to encourage more members to attend. This time David Millais, who has recently taken over the Crosswater Farm Nursery, talked about "Recent Introductions of Rhododendron Species and Hybrids". He dealt with the species first, mainly those introduced through his father's expeditions in China many of which are new to cultivation in the UK. These showed great promise - either for their flowers or foliage or because they should be hardier than forms already introduced. Of particular note were *R. glanduliferum* with striking red foliage; *R. ochraceum* with wonderfully richly coloured flowers and *R. serotinum*, flowering in July to September and thereby extending the rhododendron flowering season throughout the year. David Millais also treated us to a selection of new hybrids, particularly those raised in the USA and Germany that showed exciting developments in flower colour and size. It was interesting to discover that these too perform differently in other rhododendron growing areas. We are thankful to David Millais for a splendidly illustrated and fascinating talk.

Forthcoming Group & Branch Events

Date	Group/Branch	Event	Organiser
2001			
Sept. 9	Norfolk	Lecture : B. & P. Horrobin "Rhododendrons in UK Gardens"	Mrs. J. Idiens
Sept. 18	Group	Executive Committee	Mrs. J. Warren
Oct. 11-24	Group & ICS	Autumn Tour : South Wales	D. Farnes
Oct. 26	Wessex	Lecture : G. Rankin "Aberglasney - the Quest for a Dream"	M. Nash
Nov. 10	South West	Lecture : Jennifer Trehane "Camellias"	A. Edwards
Nov. 17	New Forest	Lecture : M. Foster "In Search of Plants"	M. Gates
Nov. 20	Group	Executive Committee	Mrs. J. Warren
Nov. 23 or 24	Wessex	Lecture : M. Foster "In Search of Plants"	M. Nash
2002			
Mar. 12-13	RHS	Early Camellia & Rhododendron Competitions	RHS
Apr. 26-30	Group	Weekend Tour of Devon	Mrs. V. Archibold
May 21-24	RHS	Chelsea Flower Show	RHS
May 24-29	Group	Tour : Germany	Mrs. V. Archibold

Martin Gates

On Saturday, 3rd June Branch members were invited to visit three members' gardens. We started with Mrs Linney's garden just outside Farnham which she created with her late husband. It is a large garden packed with rhododendrons, mainly hybrids, and we were lucky that, despite the lateness, there were still a number in flower. The next garden visited was Mr and Mrs Thornton's at Headley Down, remarkable since it was started in 1995 and developed from an empty site on a steep slope. Since then the garden has been filled with a diverse array of plants from tree ferns, a banana to *Meconopsis*, *Primula*, alpines and yes, the odd rhododendron and magnolia as well. After a ploughman's lunch kindly provided by the Thorntons, the group went on to the garden of Mr and Mrs Barber near Rogate. This extensive and mature garden enjoys a marvellous vista of the South Downs and is filled with interesting plants. Azaleas and large old hybrids were in full flower as well as some more recent acquisitions from the Millais nursery. The tour was rounded off with a lavish tea. All the owners are thanked for their generosity in opening their gardens and especially Richard Thornton for all his hard work in organizing such a rewarding day

John David

Wessex Show, 2001

Our annual competition was held on 6 May at Ramster. We are very grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Gunn for their generosity in letting us meet at their home yet again. It is indeed a wonderful setting. It was, therefore, a great pleasure when Miranda Gunn's truss of "Igham Yellow" won the cup for Best in Show.

After so many years of having John Bond as our judge we were very lucky to obtain the services of Ted Millais to bestow his expertise in judging our efforts. Unfortunately some of our usual exhibitors could not be with us, therefore the numbers of entries were slightly down on last year's high. However, the standard was as high as ever and caused much exercising of Ted's "little grey cells". A wide range of varieties were shown, the overall winner with the most points being Richard Barber, who was presented with the Shield. The HTA voucher for the best three trusses was won by Lady Adam Gordon.

Top Ten Magnolias for General Planting - An Update

Subsequent to the chairman's drollery and appeal in the last bulletin top ten magnolia lists were received from over 30 more members - quite satisfying, and sufficient for the conclusions to be meaningful. Thanks to all who took part.

Although no less than 100 different magnolias received votes, the top four received no less than one-fifth of all the votes cast (78 votes out of 382), an emphatic recommendation as to what gardeners should be asking the trade to supply. The top twelve were:

	Votes	Entries	
Leonard Messel	24	44	AGM
Star Wars	23	15	
Elizabeth	18	22	AGM
<i>wilsonii</i>	13	35	AGM
<i>cylindrica</i> (Pegasus)	11	4	AGM
Merrill	10	32	AGM
<i>sieboldii</i>	10	30	
<i>stellata</i>	10	46	AGM
David Clulow	8	4	
Heaven Scent	8	33	AGM
Wada's memory	8	22	AGM
<i>X wiesneri</i>	8	13	

The first column shows the number of votes, and the second the number of entries in the RHS Plant Finder 2001-2.

Whilst *sieboldii* does not have an AGM, the closely related *sinensis* does.

The time aspect is especially interesting: of the top four, "Leonard Messel" received the first of a chain of RHS awards in 1953, "Star Wars" was raised in the 1970's, "Elizabeth" was named in 1978, and *wilsonii* was introduced into the UK around 1920. If just these top four were planted the flowering period would be around three months. Who says magnolias are all the same? Only one of the top four is available in most garden centres, with two of the others available in a few, so it is, once more, the specialist nurseries alone that make the great majority the first class plants on this list available.

In view of its recent introduction, it is remarkable that "David Clulow" was voted for by so many, will this be the outstanding white magnolia of this century?

The submission closest to the final list was from Chris Fairweather, the chairman of the New Forest branch (no nepotism here, just plain skill - honest!) with seven matches. He wins the "new, rare, and outstanding magnolia" from the chairman.

The success of the press release on the survey (see the Chairman's Notes in this bulletin) is very good news, and we can hope that the publicity generated will be to good effect.

A similar survey is being taken among members of The Magnolia Society, with most contributions so far being from its members in the United States. Results differ from the UK survey, and are also different for gardeners who experience the much colder winters of the Eastern and Central United States, but their responses and those from climate zones more similar to Europe and New Zealand make it clear that there are some outstanding cultivars available abroad which should be widely grown in UK gardens.

Watch this space!

I should be delighted to send the complete results of the UK survey to anyone who sends an e-mail request to lanarth@hotmail.com or a stamped addressed envelope to my home address.

Mike Robinson

Stop Press ! From America

I noted with interest the bemoaning of the apparent lack of varieties of Magnolias offered in "the trade". That doesn't seem to be the case here in Oregon. The Oregon Association of Nurserymen's, OAN, Buyers Guide lists some 20 or 30 growers and some 35 plus varieties as available. A large share of Oregon nursery stock is shipped all over the U.S. so this stock is available for purchase by retailers nation wide. I checked a local retailer and they had about 10 varieties on hand in containers ready for planting. They were willing to get just about anything I wanted in addition. I also note that Magnolias are increasingly seen in commercial plantings around shopping centers, etc. While this is not to say that the market is saturated, Magnolias do seem to be available if people know about them and go looking. Perhaps we need to concentrate in getting the word out to gardeners. I recently experienced what happens when gardeners hear of a good Magnolia. In the "Peoples Choice" column of a Fall 2000 issue of "Fine Gardening" Magazine M. macrophylla ssp. Asheii was featured with a photo. While I was not listed as a source, a nursery that was listed sent me all their requests when they sold out. I also sold out. However, that was not a lot of plants, 50-60. I have 10 to 12 Magnolias in my garden and plan to add more. In comparing the Top Ten List with the offerings, I did not find the following:

Star Wars, Caerhays Suprise, Maryland, Samuel Sommer, although I know this is available as I have seen seen in wholesale catalogs. It's probably under *M. grandiflora*.

As for most popular, the following had the most listings. Several of these are rather generic and would likely include a number of varieties:

M. X soulangiana (16), *M. stellata* (15), *M. s Royal Star* (14), *M Xs Rustica Rubra* (12), *M. denudata* (11), *M. virginiana* (10), *M X I 'Merrill'* (Dr. Merrill Loebner Mag.) (9), *M. grandiflora* (8), *M. g. Edith Brogue* (8), *M. sieboldii* (8).

The OAN also has a web site:
www.nurseryguide.com and a search of this site resulted in excess of 325 offerings.

Dick 'Red' Cavender

Review - *The Illustrated Rhododendron*

Author Pat Halliday Published by Scientific Publications Department, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. ISBN 1 900347 99 7. Price £49.95 (Hardback).

This beautiful book arrived on my desk shortly before we went to print. 121 plates, virtually all in colour, culled from the illustrations of rhododendrons in Curtis's *Botanical Magazine* represent all of the subgenera, sections and series in the genus. Each illustration has a facing page with full details of the plant, the artist who painted it, habitat and distribution and the botanical (English) description. For the gardener with a newly-awakened interest in rhododendrons, this is an invaluable reference book - however assiduously one studies the botanical descriptions, a quality picture imprints directly on the memory! The more experienced grower is sure to find plants he does not know and will learn much from all manner of interesting details included, such as unusual pollinators, degree of toxicity, whether likely to be a precocious flowerer (in age not season though that is usually included too). Growing tips e.g. "Bark-split can be a problem, so some shelter should be provided if such damage is to be avoided." There are plenty of historical notes, when, where and by whom collected, and whether the plant has an Award of Merit etc.

At the front of the book is an alphabetical List of Plates showing page numbers, a numerical List of Plates, The Classification of the Genus and very brief notes on cultivation, while at the back is a small glossary of botanical terms, an alphabetical index with the correct name, name under which first published, Plate No. Year collected and the artist/engraver.

This gives some idea of the vast amount of rhododendron knowledge that has been amassed and clearly presented, but the huge joy of this book is the stunning illustrations, often with enhanced drawings of important details. A book to dip into and keep by the fireside for the long winter evenings, or as my gardening daughter put it - "a book to die for." (I shall need to guard my copy well!)

I understand Peter & Kenneth Cox have issued a second edition of their book *Encyclopaedia of Rhododendron Species*. This new edition includes several recently discovered new species, but for those who own the first edition these may be purchased on three supplemental pages for the price of £3.50 inclusive of p.&p. Cheques should be made out to: "P. & K. Cox", sent to Glendoick Gardens Ltd., Glencarse, Perth, Scotland PH2 7NS. I believe these are also obtainable from the Species Foundation, Seattle.

Another desirable book due to be published this Autumn is *Magnolias in Cornish Gardens*. You may remember the colourful flier advertising this book included with last year's August Bulletin. For more information, contact Alexander Associates, 4, South Street, Fowey, Cornwall PL23 1AR. Tel. +44(0)1726 832 900. Fax 833 900

Eileen Wheeler

Crarae Garden

Members will probably recall the article by Duncan Donald on the Crarae appeal in the August Bulletin last year. The Garden has been in the care of the Crarae Gardens Charitable Trust for the past 25 years, but the trustees are no longer able to maintain the property and keep it open for visitors. They have invited the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) to take over their responsibilities, but the NTS cannot assume this role without additional funding.

The NTS has set a target of £1.5 million, which is the amount required to set up an endowment fund to meet the annual costs of running the Garden. So far, the appeal has raised £740,000 including tax refunds and the NTS has provisionally allocated £280,000 from legacies previously received for the benefit of gardens. Therefore, £1,020,000 has been promised towards the target of £1.5 million. The NTS will continue fundraising throughout this year, and will make a final decision on whether they are able to accept the property in January 2002.

In order to save costs the Garden was closed on July 1, 2001 by the trustees of the Crarae Gardens Charitable Trust, as their resources were insufficient to continue to maintain the property to a satisfactory standard. The Garden will remain closed unless the NTS can raise the required funds.

I have only visited Crarae once, but I was very impressed with the plant collections and the natural setting in which they are displayed. Apart from over 400 different rhododendrons, the Garden contains many fine trees and shrubs, and it would be a great loss if this collection were allowed to disappear.

Donations may be made to the Development Department, The National Trust for Scotland, 28 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, EH2 4ET; phone 0131 243 9300; website www.nts.org.uk. If the NTS is unable to proceed with acquisition of Crarae, because of the additional burden on its over stretched resources, then the Trust undertakes to offer all donors the choice of having their donation returned in full.

Martin Gates

Rhododendron Shows

Recent correspondence has demonstrated the inappropriateness of London as a venue for shows and indeed this has been recognized in the recent announcement, in the April edition of *The Garden* that the late April Show for 2002 will now take place at Wisley. This will be of advantage to those who live to the west of London, whilst at the same time emphasising the need for regional shows as mentioned in the April Bulletin.

In the North West we are again to have our own show this year, the third in successive years. The programme for the event combined with the integration with Ness Gardens and the lecture makes this a major local event for rhododendrons.

I hold that the interests of the Group will in future be better served by regional events such as this, and I include the London suburbs with the regions, than by events in central London. If the RHS is to expand in the regions outside the home counties it must offer more. With the advent of the Tatton show we have a good start but the local groups have a big part to play.

John Harsant

Tony Weston our Organiser of the Seed Lists, thought this e-mail would interest members. It is from Philippe de Spoelberch and is reproduced here with his permission:

The magnolia flowering season has been good up to now, with only two nights of frost in early March. Cool weather has kept buds fully open, although wind and rain have damaged some flowers.

The axe has been busy, although not enough for all the seedlings that will come up from all the seed I received from friends. A good seedling of "Sir Peter" x "Iolanthe" has presented a good first flower, big size, deep colour (what grand-parent provided that?) on only six sepals, and three big spectacular papery sepaloid tepals. Elsewhere, three seedlings of *sprengeri* "Diva" x "Forrest's Pink" only produced miserable dirty pinkish flowers. I would have expected better from such parents. *Magnolia* "Pickard's Garnet" has had one of his good years with many truly double flowers.

Philippe de Spoelberch,

Although it is rather early to remind members, subscriptions are due on November 1st - which is before the next Bulletin goes out in December. For yet another year we have been able to keep the subscription at the same level, £15.00 for those in the UK and Europe, and £17.50 for the rest of the world. For those of you who do not pay by Bankers' Order, credit card details can be faxed, e-mailed, posted or telephoned to me at Ramster, Chiddingfold, Surrey GU8 4SN, UK. Tel. (44)(0)1428 644422. Fax (44)(0)1428 658345. e-mail Ramster@bigfoot.com. Accounts will not be debited until the due date if subscriptions are received early.

Member's Name

.....

(b) Please charge my
VISA/Mastercard a/c with the sum of £

Name on Card

**THE RHODODENDRON, CAMELLIA &
MAGNOLIA GROUP OF THE R.H.S.
MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on Tuesday, 22nd May, 2001**

Chairman : Mr Maurice C. Foster

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Valerie Archibold, Mr Derek Cox, Dr Alun Edwards, Mr Philip Evans, Mr Christopher Fairweather, Mr David Farnes, Mr John Hilliard, Mr John Hillier, Mrs J. Idiens, Dr R. H. L. Jack, Miss Cicely Perring, Mr Alastair Stevenson, Mr Ivor Stokes and Mrs Eileen Wheeler.

Minutes of A.G.M. 2000, published in BULLETIN No. 74, August 2000, were agreed to be a true record, and were signed by the Chairman.

Chairman's Report

The most significant event since the last AGM has been the death of John Bond, our former Chairman. His loss to the Group and to horticulture generally is immense. A tribute from Roy Lancaster will appear in the next issue of the Yearbook.

Our warm thanks go to Ken Hulme who retired this year as Chairman of the NW and Wales Branch and we welcome Ted Brabin who replaces him.

Also to John Hilliard, Chairman of the S.E. region, who has not been able to join us here due to illness. He retires today and our best wishes go to him for a full restoration to health. I am happy to welcome Dr. Mike Robinson in his stead. He has been a very active member of the S.E. Branch for many years.

Mrs Eileen Wheeler has resigned as Editor of the Bulletin after 6 years in the chair and we are especially grateful to Eileen for her major contribution.

The Lady Cynthia Postan has accepted our invitation to become an Honorary Life Member of the Group in recognition of her outstanding service over many years firstly as Minute Secretary and then as Yearbook Editor.

You will hear from the Treasurer that we have a reasonably satisfactory financial position with supplementary income from seeds and Yearbook sales to help promote the Group and support plant collections.

The conservation collections have been strengthened and expanded. Ramster now has amassed 127 hardy hybrids with plans for more and we are very grateful to Mr and Mrs Gunn for their generosity in making the collection possible. Plants at Wisley are doing well and plans for Abbotsbury are well advanced. This is an important part of our contribution to the knowledge and enjoyment of our three genera.

In spite of the weather with record rainfall and the foot and mouth epidemic continuing, both the autumn tour to N. Wales and the spring tour to Dorset were greatly enjoyed. Co-operation with ICS will continue for the autumn. Arrangements are going forward for a 2002 tour to North Germany with a tour operator and it will be led by David Millais. Plans are being laid for a tour of Belgian gardens in 2003.

The Yearbook continues to maintain its high standard of both content and presentation and a good balance between the three genera. It is our most effective and appreciated link with the whole membership and as such important to our continuing progress.

The seed exchange continues as a valued service both in terms of the appreciation shown by members and also for the welcome addition to funds it provides. Our thanks to Tony Weston for his tireless organisation and to Alan Clark for continuing to supply interesting seed.

Looking ahead, I see our main objective being to improve knowledge and awareness of the Group and thus create a better environment to increase membership, necessary to secure the future. This is a longer term objective and warrants investment in two areas:

Tour of Germany May 24-29, 2002

I would like to join the Germany Tour 2002 and enclose a deposit of £100.00 returnable in the event of the tour receiving insufficient numbers to be a viable proposition.

Name

Address.....

Tel.No

Devon Weekend 26-30 April, 2002

Name

Address.....

Tel.No.

Please make cheques payable to the Group and send to me, your Tour Organiser, Valerie Archibold, Starveacre, Dalwood, Axminster, E. Devon EX13 7HH

1—We need to improve our benefits package and make it more attractive to members and potential members. We will continue to produce an excellent Yearbook. Plans are in hand to strengthen the appeal of our tours by taking them into Europe where interest and activity is high. We also plan to upgrade the Newsletter by expanding the content and improving the presentation. We will set up our own Website. As our plant collections become better known they will be seen as an increasingly important part of our contribution to conservation. Our regional activities are at the heart of our appeal to members and Branch Chairmen are aware of the need to continue to enhance the quality of activities on offer.

2—We need to communicate. these benefits more effectively.

Alastair Stevenson has taken on the demanding role of Publicity Officer. We hope to secure some coverage in The Garden, and extend publicity to the wider public as we are able to create an opportunity for better information on our three genera. We plan to produce a promotional membership leaflet for wide distribution; our own website will allow easy access to browsers and potential members, especially overseas.

Finally, may I thank most warmly all those committee members, both on the executive and regional committees, who give their time, energy and knowledge for the good of the Group and whose willing support brings members together to enjoy our plants and gardens and the friendship they bring.

Hon. Treasurers Report and Accounts -attached.

Appointment of Auditors. The R.H.S. Auditors were re-appointed.

Election to the Committee

The Hon. Secretary had received 58 completed election voting forms, which all confirmed the Chairman and the Officers in post, and re-elected Mr David Farnes, Mr Martin Gates and Mr Ivor Stokes to the Committee for a further 3 years.

Date of Next Year's Annual General Meeting

To be decided at the next Committee Meeting on 18th September, 2001, and to be published in the Bulletin following that meeting.

When closing the meeting, the Chairman called for more active participation from all members, and thanked all Committee Members for their contribution.

