

RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP.

BULLETIN NO. 9. JULY 1979.

CALENDAR FOR NEXT FEW MONTHS.

AUGUST	30	International Camellia Society Congress - New Zealand. (See Bulletin No. 7).
SEPT	25-6-7	RHS Show (The Great Autumn Show).
OCT	9-10	RHS Show.
	21	The High Beeches - garden open 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. for a charity. See below.
	30	Rhododendron Group Committee Meeting. Time to be advised. RHS Show. Late Autumn Show. Tree and Shrub Competition.
	30-31	South East Branch meeting. See below.
NOV	9	
MARCH	23-27	The 1980 Congress of the International Camellia Society, Kyoto, Japan. See over on page 2.
1980		

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MATTERS OF IMMEDIATE OR CURRENT INTEREST.

OCT 21. THE HIGH BEECHES. The garden will be open on this day, a Sunday, for a charity - on this occasion it is the Knowles Tooth Children's Centre (working with children at risk). However, Mr and Mrs Boscawen inform me that members of the Rhododendron Group will also be welcome, with families and friends. The autumn colour is usually good at this time of the year. As the garden is being opened at 10.00 a.m. arrangements have been made for a Ploughman's Lunch to be available, and there are various activities including a Plants Stall, Produce Stall and Craft Stall. Free car parking, but no dogs please; it is regretted that the steepness of the grass paths renders the garden unsuitable for wheelchairs.

Apart from this opening, the garden can be visited by organized parties subject to private bookings, usually not later than the end of October. For further information on either of these matters, please get in touch with The Secretary, The High Beeches, Handcross, Sussex, telephone: Handcross 400589.

NOV 9. SOUTH EAST BRANCH MEETING. Subject to satisfactory completion of arrangements now in hand, it is proposed to hold a meeting of the Branch on Friday evening, 9th November, when slides of the gardens visited on the Rhododendron Group's 1979 Scottish Tour will be shown. Many of the photographs are of species which for various reasons are not widely grown in the South East of England. By kind permission of Mrs Benn and Miss Preston, the meeting will take place at Slaugham Park, Handcross, Sussex, and details will be disseminated to members later.

PLANT-HUNTING IN SIKKIM - SEED-SHARING OPPORTUNITY. Mr Derek B. Fox, of 54, Woodlands Road, Hockley, Essex, a member of the Group, is going on an expedition to Sikkim in October 1979 with Mr Oleg Polunin. If any member of the Group would like Rhododendron or other seed, would they please let Derek Fox know as soon as possible. He is suggesting that members might be willing to pay £10.00 for about twenty packets of seed.

NOTABLE CAMELLIA AND RHODODENDRON GARDEN FOR SALE SHORTLY. Lower Coombe Royal at Kingsbridge in South Devon is shortly coming on the market. For further information please read the mention in the Chairman's notes.

RHODODENDRON EXPERT NEEDED - INTERESTING OPPORTUNITY AND HOUSE. A free house in the south of England is offered in return for expert advice on showing and hybridising Rhododendrons. For more information see the advertisement in the section "Situations Vacant and Required", under SMALL-Ads in 'The Garden' for August 1979.



MINQUIERS - A DORSET-HAMPSHIRE GARDEN OPEN IN 1980. I have had a very interesting letter from Mrs Newman of St. Ives, Ringwood, Hampshire. She tells me that the garden will be open in 1980 for Gardeners' Sunday as well as on certain other days - see the Yellow Book of Gardens Open when it is published next year, entry under DORSET - N.B. The garden has been developed over the last twenty years entirely by her husband - Group Member Mr J.S.Newman; retiring at age 60, he is still 'going strong' at 80. The garden is about an acre and features Rhododendrons and Azaleas; this, a size which allows scope to many plantsmen and specialists, will be of interest to those who like a wide-ranging collection of plants but who do not employ a gardener.

1980 CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMELLIA SOCIETY, KYOTO, JAPAN. Mr H.J.Tooby, Membership Representative of the I.C.S., has sent me a copy of the First Circular, May 1979, for this congress. He has received a large consignment of these leaflets for distribution, and will be glad to send a copy to any Group Member interested. Unfortunately this bulletin will not reach members in time for the deadline for the acceptance of the invitation, which is 31st July. Anyone interested should get in touch with Mr Tooby, address:-  
New House Farm,  
Bransford,  
Worcester WR6 5JB.

#### THE GROUP EXHIBIT AT THE MAY 1979 RHODODENDRON SHOW, VINCENT SQUARE.

The South Eastern Branch tackled their 16' x 8' stand at the 1979 R.H.S. Rhododendron Show with great enthusiasm. The theme was 'The World-wide Distribution of Rhododendron'. Sixteen members took an active part, only two of them having any experience of staging an exhibit of this size. The work included research, collecting and transporting (over a wide area), staging, labelling (we were lucky to have an expert calligrapher on this), the drawing up and erecting of the very large map, and, not least, the onerous clearing up afterwards.

In addition to these sixteen members, there were all those others who so generously gave us their superb flowers and foliage, and also their time, picking them for us.

All our wants were eventually supplied, including R.canadense, for America, R.luteum (forced), for Europe, and R.macgregoriae 'Elsie Louise' for New Guinea. The unexpected arrival of a magnificent bunch of R.pseudochrysanthum (Mt. Morrison, Formosa, 13,000 ft !) caused a brief panic.

Considering the ambitiousness of our theme, and the fact that so few of us had worked together before, we were all more than satisfied with our Silver Gilt Lindley Medal.

Reflecting afterwards, experience is invaluable, and team work essential. We got by on enthusiasm, goodwill and talent!

Again looking back, we had three experienced people packing for two hours, and we should have had six people packing for one hour. Every hour saved in the morning is worth two at night, and everything possible must be done the day before. Every minute spent in forward planning counts towards the effectiveness of the finished exhibit.

We all learned a tremendous lot about rhododendron species, and enjoyed ourselves very much. It was very hard work, but it was immensely exhilarating to be co-operating with so many equally fervent enthusiasts.

A.P.B.

#### A REMINDER OF THE NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF THE GROUP'S HONORARY OFFICERS.

Hon. Secretary:- J.Waugh Owens, Jubilee Lodge, Yarpole, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 0BA.

Hon. Treasurer:- David N.Farnes, Corton Lodge, 7, Burntwood Avenue, Emerson Park, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 3JD.

Hon. Bulletin Editor:- K.J.W.Lowes, Rout Lodge, Colwood Lane, Warninglid, Sussex.

FOR LOCAL BRANCH ORGANIZERS, SEE NEXT PAGE.



LOCAL BRANCH ORGANIZERS:-

South West Branch:-C.J.Page, Derow, Kelliwith, Feock, Truro, Cornwall.

Wessex Branch:-R.Dudley-Cooke, Montclare House, Greenhill Road,  
Farnham, Surrey GU9 8TN.

South East Branch:-The Hon. H.E.Boscawen, The High Beeches, Handcross,  
Sussex RH17 6HQ.

East Anglian Branch:-C.E.Grainger, The Cherries, 24, Beaumont Way,  
Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1SA.

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EDITORIAL.

I am very lucky in the support I have had from members in response to appeal for the earlier numbers of the Bulletin. I am now able, not only to express my thanks to those who answered my last appeal, but also to say that I now have all I need. I have completed the file in the Lindley Library and have a file for myself. In addition I have a spare file for emergency use by any other of the Group's officers (and there may be new ones eventually I suppose) or for copying purposes. It is even possible to say that exactly the right number of copies have been supplied by exactly the right number of people, and there has been no waste !

THE SCOTTISH TOUR, MAY 1979.

The Scottish Tour is mentioned by the Chairman in his notes and is being written up in the new Year Book. My wife and I were staying in the area and were able to join the members on the Tour in six of the gardens they visited. Most of us must have learned a lot about rhododendrons, and as we gathered round some interesting specimen there was often a brief impromptu lecturette which was of a highly instructive nature. However, the atmosphere was not always serious - far from it. I think no-one can have come away from the Tour without at least one amusing incident in his mind. So as to let readers who were not with us have a small share in the lighter side, I record some samples below. In transcription, and away from context, they inevitably lose impact and spontaneity; but in substance they have not been unduly tampered with, even if sometimes slightly embellished.

At one garden a few cars arrived a few minutes early, and the occupants awaited the arrival of the coach with the main party. The owner of the garden came out to the entrance gate, and on hearing of the situation suggested that one of the early arrivals, who admitted that he had visited the garden a few times before, should set off with this small party and explain the layout and direction of the paths; so he became the Direction Explainer. Unhappily for him he was presumed to know the plants as well, and was soon being addressed by one of the light-hearted members as "Professor". As the party went along there were problems of identification in the subseries *Glischrum*, with *glischrum* itself, *glischroides* and *habrotrichum* all causing uncertainty. Eventually the Direction Explainer was hailed from a distance of about fifteen feet and asked his opinion about yet another bristly-foliaged plant about eight feet high and across, bearing as yet no open flowers. "Oh! another *glischrum*, *glischroides* or *habrotrichum*" he replied airily, still at fifteen feet distance. At this precise moment the owner appeared on the path conducting the main party. "And here is one of my very favourite rhododendrons", he was saying, "Rhododendron rude; you can easily distinguish it from the other *Glischrums*, because it always has hairs on the top of the leaf-surface". Total collapse of the Rather Under-informed Direction Explainer, who was, as you have guessed, the Editor.

Another incident related to a member who had driven up from Devon, and, arriving at a dividing of the route, some where in Scotland, had stopped to ask the way. The information having been provided by a passer-by, and the member preparing to drive off after thanking him, the informant said "Excuse me, Sir, are you aware that there is a pair of secateurs on the roof of your car?". Quite a driver !

Story number three concerns Mr Davidian at Edinburgh, talking to our party, grouped like students round their professor. One of the members asked "How can one distinguish between this species X and the



very similar Y ?" Mr Davidian's reply will not be forgotten: "Well, if a man sends you a leaf and asks what it is, just put it in a little alcohol, and when you look at it under a high-powered microscope the name will come up and write itself."

Finally an incident to illustrate the intense specialization of your genuine species enthusiast. One garden owner, recognizing the difficulties associated with conducting a large party up, around and down the steep narrow paths of his beautifully natural glen garden, had enlisted the help of a distinguished garden-owning neighbour and friend, with an intimate knowledge of the plants in the garden, so that groups could be smaller and thus hear better. On the way round it became clear that our learned - and I must add, very keenly-appreciated - guide held in clear disdain all but the pure blue-blooded species; and even then it was evident that any plant we passed would be all the better for being at least a rhododendron. Later, at an open-air lunch very kindly provided by our hosts, the distinguished gentleman was overheard to say to a member of our host's household: "I've had quite a shock this morning; I've just been talking to a man who says he likes camellias !"

I think you will agree that that's about enough for now.

#### BULLETIN NO. 10.

Although I know as I am doing this that the date JULY at the head of Page 1 of this issue is nominal and not factual, I believe it has been worth running late in order to include several items which I knew to be virtually on the way to me after the dead-line. In spite of this I intend to maintain the target of October for No. 10, and would therefore like contributions to arrive by October 10th.

#### CHAIRMAN'S NOTES.

#### TOURS, 1980.

As was reported at the Annual General Meeting, the majority of members expressing any opinion at all seemed to be in favour of a tour of Cornish gardens in 1980, though they were probably worse affected by last winter's weather than most of the rest of the country, and have been more often visited by the Group than any other region.

No Tours Secretary has yet emerged, but it is proposed in future to ask Regional Branches to organise the Group's annual tours. After 1980, the location of tours will be decided by the Executive Committee advised by Branch Organisers, and in this way it is hoped to make it possible to visit some of the fine rhododendron gardens which are off the well-beaten track, as we did in 1978.

Will members interested in taking part in a tour of Cornish gardens, probably over the last weekend in April next year, kindly notify the Chairman before the 1st September, saying whether they prefer to make their own arrangements for accommodation and travel, or would like to take part in a package tour ?

There will be a one-day visit to two gardens in the South East region during Chelsea Week, to be arranged by the Vice-Chairman.

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

At the A.G.M. on the 26th June, Mr J.D.Bond and Mr A.F.George were re-elected unopposed to the Executive Committee for a further period of three years.

Sir Eric Savill was unanimously elected an Honorary Life Member of the Group. The text of an exchange of letters with the Chairman is below.

Dear Sir Eric,

28th June 1979

I have very great pleasure in informing you that, at the 2nd Annual General Meeting of the re-constituted Rhododendron & Camellia Group, on the 26th June, by unanimous resolution, you were elected an Honorary Life Member of the Group, in recognition of our appreciation of all that you have done to encourage the cultivation of rhododendrons.



With great affection,

Yours ever,

Walter.

( E.W.M. Magor )

(REPLY)

2.7.79.

My dear Walter,

What a delightful thought of you and your Committee to elect me an Honorary Life Member of your Rhododendron and Camellia Group. It is a very great honour which I love to have.

Yours ever,

Eric Savill.

A.G.M. 1980.

The next Annual General Meeting will be held on the 17th June, 1980.

#### THE PLANTSMAN.

To those members of the Group who have not seen it yet, I cannot recommend too highly 'The Plantsman', to be published quarterly by 'The Garden: Journal of The Royal Horticultural Society', at £6.50 to members of the R.H.S. The first number, dated June 1979, contains at least two articles which I should like to have had for the Rhododendron & Camellia Yearbook, and the start of what promises to be a most interesting survey, proposed by Mr and Mrs Kenneth Beckett of King's Lynn, a survey of the hardiness of slightly tender trees and shrubs in the 1978-9 winter, on the lines of the survey carried out by the 'New Flora and Silva' in 1934-6.

#### EFFECTS OF THE 1978-9 WINTER.

This, I think, is worth adapting for the shrubs that members of this Group grow. After two 24-hour blizzards in February 1978, which incidentally blew all but one of the 2000 or so flower buds off my Magnolia campbellii, Cornwall had in 1979 the toughest January-February since 1963; all my big-leaved Rhododendron species except R. coryphaeum were defoliated, and most of the Maddenii Group killed. Although the owner of one of the gardens which we visited in Argyll wrote to me at the end of February, that they still had 18 feet of snow in drifts at the top of the glen, I was very struck, in comparison with Cornwall, by the very good health of the rhododendrons that we saw in Argyll, even though several of our hosts felt that they must apologise for the previous night's frost and, in true Ruth Draper style, said "You should have seen the garden last week". In fact, to one coming from the rigours of a quite exceptional Cornish winter, they would not appear to have had a winter in Argyll at all. I hear that they were far less favoured in Wigtownshire, and curiously this year in Cornwall the south coast gardens seem to have suffered worse than the north. On the 24th May, during the Group visit to Exbury, there was a pause during the fascinating tour that Mr Douglas Harris gave us, to discuss the horrors of the winter. Nobody seemed very clear whether they were talking about degrees of frost, or below zero C or F, but in a sort of Dutch auction, someone said they had had -20 degrees, which someone else capped by saying that it had been -25 at Redruth, and a small man at my elbow murmured "I don't like to boast, but we had it minus sixty all winter". When I expressed astonishment, and asked where he lived, he replied "Yukon".

#### SURVEY OF SLIGHTLY TENDER PLANTS.

Many plants are described in 'Bean' and in Hillier's Manual as 'hardy only in the south west', yet some of these have survived for years in the north and east, at least since 1963, and a few gardens seem to have had specimens which survived when all others around the country were severely damaged or killed. There may be special reasons for this, such as the micro-climate which permitted a Fremontodendron californicum in the Chelsea Physic Garden, 20 feet high against the house, to survive the winter and be in full flower during Chelsea Week. In some cases, they may be fortunate enough to have hardier clones, which perhaps should be more widely distributed.



Mr and Mrs Beckett, in 'The Plantsman', suggest a new survey, in which garden owners, growing plants on a list of semi-tender shrubs, are invited to report their performance during and since the 1978-9 winter, giving in each case where possible:

- (a) source of material;
- (b) when planted (there is an age-hardiness correlation);
- (c) situation with regard to walls, hedges, etc., and prevailing winds;
- (d) any steps taken to protect the plant in winter.

Adapting this to the genera in which the Group is interested, we shall be glad to hear from members, particularly from the colder areas, growing any of the following plants, what their performance has been during and since the 1978-9 winter.

#### List of Plants.

Camellia x Cornish Snow	Michelia doltsopa
granthamiana	Rhododendron burmanicum
hongkongensis	ciliicalyx aggregate
reticulata, cultivars	cinnabarinum & hybrids
-do-, wild form	grande
saluenensis	griffithianum & hybrids
sasanqua	macabeanum
tsai	maddenii group
Magnolia delavayi	mallosum
grandiflora	
ALSO:- nitida	

Any other plants of these genera not normally considered hardy.

#### THE MADDENII GROUP.

Now that all 8 species in sub-series Maddenii, recognised in the 1967 edition of the Rhododendron Handbook, Part One, are to be regarded as a single species, maddenii (Maddenii Group) - Notes Roy.Bot.Gard.Edinb.36:107(1978) - it might be of interest to record a comparison of the performance of the different forms in the severe winter of 1979 in this garden where they have grown for many years.

brachysiphon Balf.f. H2-3. Filaments hairy at base, stamens 20; hardly affected.

crassum Franch. H2-4. Filaments hairy at base, stamens 15-21; regarded as 'the hardest of the Maddenii rhododendrons'; F26923; F27593 and F21582. Just surviving.

maddenii Hook.f. H2-3. Filaments glabrous, stamens 20. Looked alright in May, but now looking sick and flower buds failed to open.

polyandrum Hutch. H2-3. Filaments hairy at base, stamens 25. All killed.

#### LOWER COOMBE ROYAL.

Members thinking of retiring or of exhibiting camellias grown in the open at the Vincent Square shows may be interested to know that Lower Coombe Royal at Kingsbridge in South Devon is shortly coming on the market - agents Fox of Exeter. There were descriptions of this fine garden in the 1974 and 1978 yearbooks. It is here that R.'Luscombei' originated, and there is one of Hooker's original plants of R.niveum. There is also a fine collection of modern rhododendron hybrids, and an outstanding collection of camellias, which has enabled the present owner to be the leading prize winner at the Camellia Show on a number of occasions in recent years. The house and garden are of a manageable size, and there is a small nursery, which could be developed. This is an outstanding opportunity.

E.W.M.M.

PRESENTATION TO OUR CHAIRMAN - May 1979.

On the penultimate day of the Argyll Tour, in the gardens of



Brodick Castle, on a fine sunny afternoon, a presentation was made to our Chairman as a token of thanks by the members on the tour for all the effort that he had put in and the hard work that he had done to arrange the tour, which had been such an outstanding success and so thoroughly enjoyed by all concerned.

For obvious reasons a seven-foot sapling tree could not be carted around Scotland for direct presentation, but the tree 'Sorbus sp. Ghose (aucuparia section) had already been obtained, and was delivered to Major Magor soon after his return from Scotland. The last report that we had from 'Lamellen' was that the tree was settling well into its new home - long may it flourish!

Sorbus sp. Ghose is probably new to cultivation and comes from the Himalayas. It is a small tree of upright habit, hardier than Sorbus insignis, to which it has some affinity, and it has been introduced into this country by Messrs Hillier of Winchester.

#### CAMELLIA 'ELSIE JURY' AND THE RECENT HARD WINTER.

Sir Giles Loder has made some interesting observations on this camellia's performance in the 1979 flowering season. His note is reproduced here; the reactions of readers will be of interest.

"This recent hard winter has demonstrated - at least in the South-East - the hardness of camellias, which in many cases here flowered better than normally. One curious exception is the hybrid 'Elsie Jury', whose numerous buds have turned brown, rotted away and fallen off, though the plant itself looks quite healthy.

Checking up on this phenomenon, I inspected the camellias in the Trial Ground at the R.H.S.'s gardens at Wisley. There I found a plant of C. 'Elsie Jury' which obtained an F.C.C. in 1975 has been affected in a similar way, with no flowers on it at all; all buds have rotted away and fallen off. Immediately adjacent was C. 'Mildred Veitch', covered with blooms, as indeed were the majority of the Williamsii hybrids nearby.

It would be interesting to know if other growers of C. 'Elsie Jury' have had a similar experience. "

#### ONE-DAY VISIT TO EXBURY, May 1979.

On the afternoon of May 24th, 1979, some fifty members gathered at Exbury for a tour of part of the gardens under the guidance of Mr D.C. Harris, who welcomed us on behalf of Mr Edmund de Rothschild. This visit had been especially arranged to coincide with Chelsea Week, to enable those members living further afield to attend a Group excursion whilst they were nearer the venue, as many make the long journey for the Chelsea Show each year but find that the distances are usually too great to attend our excursions.

Those who did attend were treated to a most interesting and horticulturally educational two-hour stroll through the woods, with many of the rarer trees and shrubs to admire as well as the massed plantings of azaleas and rhododendrons, far too numerous to be named in a short report like this. The weather was perfect, with warm sunshine and little wind, and judging by the almost constant clicking of cameras there must now be some good collections of lovely photographs amongst the members, as a record and happy reminder of a wonderful afternoon.

In leading the tour party, Mr Harris gave an almost non-stop commentary on the Exbury Estate, its history and development from the early part of this century, and the story of the de Rothschild family, including the great pioneer work of Lionel in producing rhododendron hybrids before 1940. Apart from comments on the plants, he had many interesting stories and amusing anecdotes to relate. These were prompted by the plants as he came to them, and covered such subjects as the following:- tree surgery, meteorology which included rainfall and frost and drought damage, conservation, geology, folklore, plant propagation, forestry, history, plant nomenclature, plant siting and associations for colour effects. Mr Harris has such a wide range of knowledge and information that everybody must or should have learned something, and it would be true to say that every plant, tree or shrub had a story to tell



through his lips.

It was very encouraging to learn of the present methods and future plans for the estate, in order that Exbury can continue to be maintained in these difficult financial times. From the business viewpoint, its future seems assured; members were able to see much evidence of careful maintenance of the gardens and plants, together with replanting and development of new areas so that future generations will be able to enjoy Exbury as much as we did this year. We were privileged and delighted to have also with us, Mr Betteridge the head gardener, to whom great credit is due for the way in which he and his staff maintain the gardens in such excellent order. No doubt those members at the back of the 'crocodile', unable to hear Mr Harris in front, learned more than a thing or two from Mr Betteridge, who seemed to be engaged in conversation with them for most of the time.

After the tour, members were free to wander at will and visit the garden centre, where many bargains and choice plants could be obtained. Several cars were seen to leave in the early evening well laden with plants, and as Mr Harris had said earlier, "All this helps Exbury; we charge a small entrance fee and hope or expect that visitors will spend more on our plants". The Group did its bit !

----- David Farnes. -----

#### INSTANT GARDENING IN DORSET.

by H.J.Welch.

If, as they tell us, happy marriages are arranged in heaven, someone up there must have had a whale of a time bringing my wife and me together. It doubtless secured the Award of the Year for the 'Most Unlikely Match'.

Members of the Group know Elaine well as the inventor of the rhododendron (or was it the camellia?) and the present writer is the marginally successful owner of a dwarf conifer nursery at Devizes, not far from Salisbury Plain. At the time, Elaine had a rather old but very faithful dachshund of which she was very fond; but it was soon obvious that the old adage was not applicable to this occasion - "Love me, love my rhododendrons" being much more the issue, since she had a small but choice collection of these, together with some camellias and other calcifuge plants. Its importance was borne out by a telephone call that she put through to her geologist son, informing him of what seemed to be looming, and his reply "You can't, Mother, he's on chalk !"

Fortunately it turned out that the soil was greensand (pH neutral), so the matter was allowed to proceed. The dachshund's reaction was equally confirmatory. She (unusually for her) accepted me at once and it was just as if, her beloved mistress having found a male of her own species to care for her, she felt that her own task was done, for she quietly slipped out of life soon thereafter.

In due course, Elaine's plants reached Devizes and, with but few losses, were established there. Eventually their owner joined them but not until we had enjoyed a short courtship and still shorter honeymoon, often under conditions characteristically present when an irresistible force has met an immovable mass. I joined the International Camellia Society and we went on several memorable tours which we much enjoyed, even though, when expected by other members to shew some knowledge of the plants we were inspecting, I had to admit to having none and to being "only here for the beer", or words to like effect.

Back at home, the limited space and other personal considerations combined to point to another move being inevitable. The nursery was going through a bad patch at the time, so an early sale was out of the question; but later, when business had improved and I had become accepted by the welfare state as a permanent liability, we began to look for someone to carry on my aim to make Wansdyke a source of supply for even the rarest of dwarf conifers. Several applicants came along. One turned out to be a ladies' hairdresser wanting a change. Others were keen and suitable, but impecunious. Finally the present purchaser turned up - proof, we hope, that "Mister Right" always does, in the end.



In the meantime the search for a final home for Elaine's plants (plus a nice selection of conifers) went on. Elaine insisted on Scotland: my choice was Devon. So we had to compromise, and many Sundays were spent scouring the Devonshire villages with a BDH Soil-testing kit in the boot! Suddenly the nightmare turned into a dream - in Dorset. At Morcombelake, between Bridport and Charmouth, we found a small cottage on 1½ acres of acid soil on a south-facing wooded hill, with a nice view seawards and almost everything else in sight in the ownership of the National Trust. The land was of a peculiar shape, the result of the addition by a previous owner of extra bits as they became available; but it lent itself to a simple but rather bold layout, and there were enough trees, of sorts, to give shelter and shade. Not only so, we find that the valley across which we see the sea deflects up-Channel gales, the wind that actually reaches us having crossed the coast some miles further west, so we seem to have struck a favourable micro-climate.

A few loads of small plants were moved in the Spring of 1978, but with the sale of the nursery and the future of the Pygmy Pinetum at Devizes now assured we have been able, despite the appalling weather conditions this year, to move the larger plants. These, having come to Devizes as well-established plants, and with seven years' further growth, are now quite attractive specimens. This makes the chief, perhaps the only interesting, feature of the project to other gardeners. Although the area is not large, few such plantings will have got off to such a good start as is represented by plants such as Abies concolor 'Candicans', 5 ft., Acer capillipes, 8 ft., A. griseum, 7 ft., Davidia involucrata, 6 ft., Rhododendron augustinii, 6 ft. x 6 ft., R. fargesii, 5 ft. x 5 ft., R. insigne, 5 ft. x 5 ft., R. cinnabarinum, 6 ft. x 6 ft., Picea brewerana, 7 ft. x 4 ft., P. orientalis 'Aureo-spicata', 8 ft., or Magnolia 'Leonard Messel', 5 ft. x 4 ft. Such plants, with others only slightly smaller, do give a worthwhile immediate effect and justify the title of this note.

With a ruling gradient of 1 in 5 and with virtually no outside help Elaine and I have faced quite a task lumping the larger plants up the hill to their allotted stations one at a time in a wheelbarrow with one of us hauling in front on a rope. Beneath the thick rich woodland carpet the soil is a sticky loam full of large stones, so the actual planting has called for the use of a pick, but members must not believe all they hear. The story that I was hard at work back-filling the soil over a large magnolia until I noticed that what I had taken for roots were Elaine's wellingtons, must not be taken seriously. In any case I am sure that it would take much more than being firmly planted in loam to immobilise her!

Our final transfer from Devizes is programmed for late July. Thereafter we shall be very pleased to welcome any members of the Group or other garden-lovers who ever find themselves in this part of the South Coast Trunk Road, A 35. The address will be 'Pine Cottage', Gibbs Lane, Morcombelake near Bridport. When travelling westwards (i.e. towards Charmouth) in Morcombelake, look out for Moore's Biscuit Factory on the left, after which Gibbs Lane is the first turning on the right, just past the Post Office, Pine Cottage being the first house on the right. Steep gradients make the use of bottom gear desirable. If travelling eastwards (i.e. towards Bridport), do not attempt the left-hand turn. Continue on into the village and turn near the Biscuit Factory.

If practicable, a telephone call beforehand (029 789) 455 would be appreciated.

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WHAT IS IT WORTH ? THE ULTIMATE VALUE OF A RHODODENDRON.

by Peter A. Cox.

They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Take as an example, a Rhododendron species, perhaps reputed to be the only one in the country as named by one well-known authority, which is much esteemed by its owner and coveted by fellow enthusiasts. Along comes another taxonomist who says that the species was never introduced, that the said plant does not match the type herbarium specimen and that it is a hybrid, natural or otherwise. The owner wails in dismay and if the second opinion is accepted, the plant loses almost



its entire hypothetical value, however attractive or indifferent it might be horticulturally. Likewise, a supposedly rare species may be shown to be synonymous with another much commoner one.

One authority may value a species with no collector's number or even a seedling from a numbered plant, while others reckon only plants with authentic numbers have any real worth, taxonomically or genealogically.

Gardeners can be split into purists and those willing to grow anything of some horticultural merit, regardless of its uncertain ancestry. With all the talk of conservation of gardens and plants nowadays, these differing outlooks bear rather more significance than they did a few years ago. So much is being lost both in nature and in gardens due to development and neglect; the latter often because of the inability to afford the inflationistic wages of gardeners and general garden upkeep. Many gardens contain countless open pollinated seedlings, some self-sown, others from seed pans. The owners are reluctant to destroy plants they have grown for years, regardless of how little apparent value they may have botanically, horticulturally or even aesthetically.

Look at the case of species or hybrid clones. At the recent Rhododendron Show in London there were two excellent clones of R. charitopes. One won its class for the Glaucophyllum Series, while the other received an Award of Merit. Comparison of these two proved (in my and a friend's eyes) that the class winner was slightly superior to the award winner, and yet the latter will be given a clonal name and more than likely will be distributed and recognised as the best available clone of the species. Likewise, a clone of a particular cross may receive an award, only to find a year or so later that a sibling of the same cross is superior but too similar to the award clone to name also. How do we place our values?

Is an inferior clone, with a collector's number attached, of more value than a superior one without? Here it depends on whether you are a botanist or just a gardener interested in beauty for beauty's sake.

Another angle on considering merit. Some people dislike species with purple or mauve flowers such as R. niveum and R. ririei, while others hold these in high esteem. How do we rate such species?

To sum up. Surely most of us strive to have beautiful and yet interesting gardens. Posterity should more and more be taken into consideration. It must in the end be more worthwhile going to a little extra trouble and perhaps expense to obtain and grow plants of some authenticity and merit, rather than a collection of bastards. Everything in life is susceptible to change, however sacrosanct we may consider something to be. Botanists come and go, and the popularity of certain plants rises and falls. Let us not become too upset if plants we cherish lose their authenticity and value.

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#### WHY I LIKE GRAFTED RHODODENDRONS.

by David Farnes.

Many of us, rhododendron enthusiasts, attempt to grow our beloved plants under conditions which range from slightly unfavourable to absolutely adverse. Our gardens are situated, not to suit our choice of plants, but very largely to suit our places of work and employment. Few of us are in the enviable position of being able to select our garden site first and our employment as a secondary consideration. Yet it is amazing how many of us do seem to be successful in growing rhododendrons, more especially the hybrids but also the easier species.

Of course, there are many factors which can contribute to this success, but there is one above all which appears to have been overlooked, and that is the influence of the rootstock of grafted rhododendrons. For the most part R. ponticum has been used for many years as an easily obtainable, relatively cheap and reliable rootstock. It is easily obtainable because in many parts of the British Isles it has naturalised itself on such a scale as does a rampant weed. It is probable that there are very few true ponticums growing in the wild in this country and that most plants are hybrids, so near to ponticum as to make the distinction impossible and



certainly unnecessary for the theme of this essay. Rhododendron ponticum can be said to be a native or certainly a natural plant of the Flora of The British Isles. There is evidence from fossil records that it existed here before the last Ice Age, which wiped out the species at the time, and although the climate may have changed since then, the soil conditions probably have not to the same extent. It is therefore not surprising that ponticum is at home in its natural environment, with consequent extensive regeneration from seed, since its re-introduction in the eighteenth century.

In the British Isles ponticum appears to exhibit great tolerance of adverse conditions, of both soil conditions and weather extremes. It will tolerate a soil pH of up to neutral, and survive severe winters and droughts. After the long hot summer of 1976 which followed the equally dry but less hot year of 1975, there appeared to be little permanent damage to wild plants yet very many garden plants were reported lost. Relatively few of these were of plants grafted to ponticum rootstock, and even with plants of this type that suffered under the drought conditions, many made complete recoveries when the autumn rains did eventually come. Plants on their own roots, and especially species, seem to lack this power of recovery.

It has been reported that when transplanted and imported into a new garden, mature rhododendrons often grow less well than plants derived from them - either by layers or cuttings - but rooted in the soil of the new garden from the start. This enhanced effect would seem to apply to plants grafted to ponticum rootstock, if the new garden soil can be likened in this case to the natural soil of Britain, to which ponticum has more affinity.

Much has been written and spoken about the undesirable features of grafted plants, the chief of which is the suckering habit; yet it is a simple matter to inspect the plants in one's garden at regular but infrequent intervals for removal of the suckers. This can be conveniently combined with the operation of flower dead-heading in the early summer, when suckers are most likely to appear. Few of us would doubt the value to the health of our plants of dead-heading; yet many probably find the operation very tedious but refrain from saying so! It seems strange that many complain about the operation of de-suckering, which takes very much less time per plant and surely is a small price to pay if by growing grafted plants one is able to enjoy rhododendrons in an otherwise unfavourable situation.

For those of us fortunate enough to enjoy our gardening and the growing of rhododendrons under ideal conditions, the advantages of ponticum root stock grafts are probably not obvious or relevant; but for the many like myself, who labour under difficulties, they are such as to make life possible for both the plants and ourselves! It is to be hoped that the several commercial nurseries that produce grafted plants will continue to do so for many years to come. By so doing they will increase the growing of our beloved plants and so widen the interest in them. This must surely be of ultimate benefit to the study of rhododendrons and to our Group, which could have an increased membership and further dissemination of knowledge and plant material, and a sharing of our pleasure.

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A PLANTING PROBLEM IN A NORTHERN GARDEN. Notes by the Editor.

By now the correspondence has turned into action, and there should be a good deal of detailed information available during the 1979-80 planting season. The owner of the garden has now paid very purposeful visits to Sir Charles Richmond Brown's garden, to Lea Rhododendron Gardens Ltd., and to three other sources of planting material; of these, more anon. At present the owner is heavily engaged in the absorbing task of planning the layout - and somehow the size of the border has been increased - and choosing plants. As I know what is available and under consideration I hazard a guess that most members would love that part! Much advice on the selection of plants has been offered and accepted, and some of the hard work of preparing the ground has already been done. There may be a further note in No.10, and fine detail in 11 and 12. By July, dead-heading!

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AMERICAN CORNER.

CONTROLLED POLLINATION VERSUS HAND POLLINATION.

By B.C.Potter.

A bumble bee loads its body with pollen as it crawls in and out of flowers and, during its flight above a group of rhododendrons, its whirling wings dislodge the pollen grains clinging to its body into the air, allowing them to settle down on waiting stigmas. These bees are notorious pollinators. Birds, landing on flowering rhododendrons in search of insects, do a good job of pollinating with their heads. Also picking up pollen on their body feathers and wings, their distribution of pollen should not be under-estimated. Pollen, dropped on corollas and leaves from ripe stamens, soon dries to dust-like grains. With the first gust of wind, these pollen grains can cover a large area of naked stigmas. There are many insects that are not generally considered to be pollinators that are really very effective in their ability to pollinate and distribute pollen. They range in size from the tiniest to the large-winged types.

Do we not defy the power of nature to pollinate receptive stigmas when we suggest hand pollination is meaningful? In the wild plant kingdom, nature has its own complex methods for controlled pollination, without which there would be no species. When we bring rhododendron species out of their natural environment and place them in close contact with other species and existing hybrids, we destroy nature's control of their purity.

Of course, controlled pollination only applies to the serious rhododendron breeder who is breeding for a definite purpose. This type of breeding demands a high degree of accuracy, that is necessary in the evaluation of parental contribution and progress toward the goal sought.

BOOKS.

Note by the Editor.

To bring members up to date on the book "Hybrids and Hybridizers" mentioned in "American Corner" in Bulletin No. 7, I append an extract from a further letter from Mr Mayers to the Chairman. With reference to the book on Japanese Maples, I have seen this, and have read most of it, so I can endorse the idea which presumably impelled Mr Mayers to bother with it at all. For those who can envisage the outlay, I recommend at the very least an investigation, for it is beautifully produced, very comprehensive and beautifully illustrated with 200 colour photographs. If I considered I could afford it I should undoubtedly buy it at once - surely this is the best recommendation!

"I have shipped out six copies of HYBRIDS & HYBRIDIZERS and have ordered an additional nine copies from America. Those who sent cheques will receive the book for £10 but, as you will note from the enclosed advice from the publishers, I shall have to increase the price henceforth to £12 per copy postpaid. It is still a bargain.

I am also in a position to supply fellow members with copies of Vertrees' book on Japanese Maples, which lists for \$39.50, at a special price to members of £15.00. Delivery will be in two to three months."

Mr Mayers' address is:- Lorient, Wadhurst, Sussex TN5 6PN.

FINALLY- - - (and Stop Press)

MR FOX'S TRIP TO SIKKIM WITH MR OLEG POLUNIN'S PARTY. As I received information by telephone that details were on the way to me by post, I re-cast this final sheet in order to amplify the note on the front page. These extracts may appear disjointed; this, due to compression, was inevitable. "---one purpose of the trip will be the collection of seed. For the first time in many years it will be possible to collect in Sikkim again, and that at heights up to above 14,000 feet. I only hope we find the rhododendron seed sufficiently mature.----- My gatherings will not be restricted in any way solely to rhododendrons but, I hope, cover a broad spectrum of the large and fascinating Sikkim flora.----- There is no need for subscribers to send any money in advance. It will be better to wait until I see what is collected, but if those people definitely interested would let me know that they wish to participate, then a short note to my address would suffice indicating any particular preferences such as, trees and shrubs, ferns, rhododendrons, primulas, alpine, hardy plants, sub-tropical plants---".