



The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN - 88

JULY 2005

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mike Robinson

No camellias in flower now, just a few magnolias and quite a lot of rhododendrons, but it is the roses that, this year, are especially outstanding. What should our attitude be to the dearth of flower on the three genera at this time of year, I wonder? Is it the season to enjoy other things, or is the pursuit of late flowering varieties worthwhile?

However, with rhododendron hybrids (derived from *R. discolor*, *R. decorum* ssp. *diaprepes* and *R. auriculatum*, with some pink from *R. griersonianum* and subsect. *parishia*), and *R. maddenii* ssp. *crassum* flowering here along side roses, one thing that has stood out for me this year is how much more fragrant are the rhododendrons than many of the roses – fragrant in the sense of scent carrying on the air that is. We should be emphasising this aspect of our plants far more. More fragrant still are the summer flowering magnolias, with *M. 'Nimbus'* (*M. virginiana* x *M. obovata*) and *M. x wieseneri* quite outstanding, followed closely by Maurice Foster's superb *M. 'Summer Solstice'* (*M. globosa* x *M. obovata*), and many of the late species.

I still have not seen (or smelt) a deeply coloured rhododendron that is really fragrant yet, though: does anyone grow one: I know the Americans have a thing called 'Fragrant Red' – is it? By the way, is there a properly fragrant hardy camellia? Are there any that flower into the summer months? Do write and tell.....

One of the books - I can't remember which - I read when starting gardening stated that it was impossible to grow rhododendrons and roses together: nonsense, of course, as long as the soil is properly prepared for each and the planting and siting are carefully done, but recalling this 'advice' set me thinking about other misconceptions which have become too widely accepted.

Foremost is Kingdon Ward's reputation for not believing in the existence of rhododendron hybrids in the wild. I quote from his address to the Rhododendron Society in 1927. "I am a complete convert to the theory that hybrids occur in nature quite commonly. To my mind hybrids in nature are as common as species. In this particular expedition, half the *Thomsonii's* were hybrids..."

continued on page 2



R. crinigerum at The Valley Gardens, Windsor.

See New Forest Branch report on page 8. Photo: Robin Whiting

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Another is H.H. Davidian's reputation for dogmatic and unreasoning adherence to the Balfourian system of classifying rhododendrons in series:- *"...In The Species of Rhododendron (Stevenson), the species are classified into groups known as Series. It has been acknowledged that within most ... there is considerable variation in habit and height of growth, in leaf shape and size, in flower shape, size and colour, and in other characters. The degree of variation is so great, and the fact that the Series merge into each other to such an extent that it was impossible to draw hard and fast lines between them. It was this linkage, and indeed it was this merging or continuity between the Series which made the making of a concise key to the Series impracticable the meaning of the word "Series" which means "join, succession, continuity, one group merging into another group"."*

This horticultural approach contrasts sharply with the modern approach to taxonomy, which is to emphasise evolution, and to try to trace the development from a few 'primitive' species to the present diversity. Such an approach has only become feasible with the advent of sophisticated laboratory techniques: the shift has been clearly explained in the introduction to the Cox's Encyclopaedia – compulsory reading for anyone interested in the definition of a species and the perils of working from only herbarium specimens. One quotation from this publication is worth special mention:

"some collectors tend to seek out exceptional and extreme forms which can make the available specimens less than typical"

This implies that, in order to assess even one species it is necessary to grow the whole range of forms of that species, preferably from throughout its geographical distribution. The diversity is quite well illustrated by the many different forms of *R. anthosphaerum* growing together in the Valley Gardens. Any worthwhile national rhododendron collection would have to be on these terms - a daunting prospect, but one that should be kept in view.

Back down to earth, now – yet more dead heading, more watering, more mulching and the occasional cross pollination for sanity's sake.

EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

Rhododendrons at Chelsea for 2005: Silver Gilt medal for Millais Nurseries.

Many congratulations to David Millais on the award of a Silver gilt Medal for his display at the Chelsea Flower Show. They staged a magnificent display of rhododendron species and hybrids, with flowers and foliage on a stand which drew a lot of interest. Of particular note were charming plants of *R. 'Crosswater Belle'* and *R. 'Pink Gin'*, both raised by Ted Millais, and the silvery grey the new growth of *R. macabeum*. (Photo - see page 10)

Erratum

A correction to my typing of the details of the Autumn Tour; my apologies. Please note that **The Holehird Garden** belongs to the Lakeland Horticultural Society (and not the Lakeland Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Society).

Tony Weston (until recently our Convenor of the Group Seedbank) has decided to move and is selling his property 'Whitehills' in Newton Stewart, Scotland. The agents, Savills, describe the property as "A charming country house set in tranquil gardens and grounds, surrounded by mature woodlands, about 1½ miles to the north-west of Newton Stewart". The estate comprises of Whitehills with exceptional grounds and extensively stocked gardens, plus Kirkland Farmhouse and land, about 45 hectares in all. Details from the agents above at 0131 247 3720.

Possible West Midlands Branch

Alastair Stevenson, long standing Committee Member of the Group now living close to Ross-on-Wye, is hoping to establish a Branch of the Group covering **the West Midlands (and hopefully accessible to members in South East Wales)**. He is establishing a list of members in the area and will be writing to them later in the year. In the meantime he would be interested to hear from any members who would be interested in participating in the Branch and/or planning and organizing events. Suggestions of gardens to visit or events would also be appreciated. Alastair can be contacted on 01989 780285 or at alastairstevenson@tiscali.co.uk

The Group Hardy Hybrid planting at Ramster

On a recent visit to the Group's planting of **Hardy Hybrids at Ramster** at Chiddingfold, Surrey, I can report that they were looking very healthy and all flowering magnificently.

Michorrhiza

With reference to the article by John Lancaster on michorrhizal fungi in the March 2004 *Bulletin* (No.84), it is very interesting to see that "**michorrhizal fungi – a major innovation for the gardener**" are now being sold in local Garden Centres. It is being marketed under the name **Rootgrow** by a company called Plantworks (who previously marketed the product as Pro-Root).

It comes in two forms, with the recommendations for use of **Rootgrow** for roses, vegetables, hanging baskets and garden plants, and the second type, **Rootgrow Plus** for all trees. It is sold in several sizes (small sachets at £2.99) and in larger drums (from 10.99) (The company claim it is particularly useful in beds with 'rose replant sickness').

They also publish a note to say "**Plants which will not respond are few but include Rhododendrons, Azaleas, carnations and any brassicas.**"

More information can be seen on the website:

www.friendlyfungi.co.uk

SEED DISTRIBUTION & PLANT EXCHANGE

The continuation of the Notes from Peter Betteley published in the March issue of *The Bulletin*.

Camellia seeds – the need for a radical approach.

It does seem to me that global warming has encouraged camellias to set more seed naturally than say 10 or 20 years ago.

The process can be made more certain and precise by using a small camel hair paintbrush to transfer pollen to the flower of the parent plant.

It appears that successful pollination is helped by fine weather and higher temperatures - so pick your day and time with that in mind and use glasshouse facilities if you have them. In late summer you will find that the seeds pods start to split open naturally and you must get to the seeds before the squirrels or field mice find them. The number of seeds per pod varies according to the variety and season usually ranging from one to perhaps six or seven. On average you can expect three seeds per pod.

I suspect that the use of the best forms is as important with camellias as it is with rhododendrons and other genera.

The rhododendron specialists amongst us will recall the story of Sir Edmund Loder using a superior form of griffithianum when hybridising his Loderi strains and the late Les Jury claimed his *Camellia saluenensis* "Sunnybank" was an excellent form for developing williamsii crosses. Possibly there is a role for Group members to identify and share superior forms of their camellia species and to identify plants with good seed setting records or other special qualities to pass onto their progeny.

After collecting camellia seeds I soak them in water for 24 to 48 hours to soften the shell. I think this aids germination but I am not convinced it is essential. You will find that some seeds float and others sink. Some growers believe that unless seeds sink they are of dubious viability and therefore discard them. The late Tom Savige, a former President of the International Camellia Society, observed "... it will be found, particularly with the reticulata and hybrid seed, that many of the floaters will be quite viable." So do keep the floaters – some will germinate. I sow seeds in pots (seedtrays are not deep enough), in a free draining mixture of acid sand and ericaceous compost. It is important to water the seeds in, so that the compost is moist, and don't let the compost dry out subsequently. Ensure that the seeds are protected from mice as they consider them to be a delicacy and, then, leave until the spring. Hopefully, you will be rewarded with a crop of vigorous seedlings. Usually the germination percentage is good to excellent and you will be very unlucky to get no plants at all. Bottom heat is not necessary for successful germination but if you have it then the germination process can be speeded up.

However, the tender seedlings need to be nurtured carefully until spring arrives. Some growers advocate the pinching of the taproot at the potting up stage to encourage a more fibrous root system but in my experience it does not seem to make much difference whether you pinch or not. A successful

American grower claims that retaining the taproot results in hardier and more drought tolerant plants.

Camellia seedlings can take a long time to flower. However, I have produced flowers in 3 years with the above method and this year had a 3 year old seedling which itself produced two seedpods.

Alas, I have not yet grown any seedlings meriting registration but some are definitely too good (in my view) to be used as understock. I think that the key is to grow some seedlings each year and try to develop a hybridisation programme that has specific targets such as hardier or more compact plants, better reds, fragrance, or the elusive yellow. If enough members of the group play the numbers game and sow some seed annually from a range of crosses we should see some worthwhile results. In time we might get to the position of having a class for camellia seedlings in the camellia competitions as they do in other countries. This would I am sure do much to promote interest in camellias in the U.K.

Growing camellia seeds is clearly a long term project but it is a path that should provide Group members with opportunities for exchanging scions of interesting plants and of course seeds and seedlings. This would help to ensure that rare species and breeder plants are protected. Exchanging information and experiences would assist others with their hybridisation work and promote interest in camellias generally. I think all of these are positives during a period when we have seen some negatives in the camellia world e.g. camellia society membership falling, camellia flower blight in England, more vine weevils, camellias claimed to be a host for sudden oak death syndrome (SODS) and no doubt other nasties still to be identified by the scientists.

Perhaps this short commentary has whetted your appetite to give raising camellia seedlings a go. I do hope so. It seems that there have been fewer registrations of new varieties recently. In the Sept - Dec 2004 edition of *Camellia Review* it states "... because of a very small number of new camellias introduced since the publication of the 2002 Camellia nomenclature, the board of Directors of the Southern California Camellia Society decided NOT to print a 2005 Nomenclature". If you are still considering if raising camellia seeds is worth the effort then, please remember that some of the camellia stars of the woodland gardens, and good doers for the north, were raised in England. To name a few: 'Donation', 'Inspiration', 'J.C. Williams', 'Leonard Messel' and of course the Carlyon hybrids, including the whites 'China Clay' and 'E.T.R. Carlyon' - so we know it can be done. Have a go at making some controlled crosses.

Still not convinced? Did you know that the superb camellias 'Nuccio's Cameo', 'R.L. Wheeler' and 'San Dimas' are recorded as being chance seedlings? So even if you don't make controlled crosses there is still the possibility that your seedling might produce a prize winning variety. Offer up your ideas and tell us about your experiences !

Peter Betteley,

Orpington, Kent.

Plant Exchange

The exchange and sale of plants 'advertised' in the Plant List has proved a great success, with demand greatly exceeding supply. This initiative sprang into life following the delivery of the last Year Book. More than 20 members submitted their requests by email with a further 6 members communicating by letter. (There was clearly a significant demand for John Rawling's Magnolias!)

The plants available for sale were contributed by just two members, so we are now looking for more members to take advantage of this facility to pass on their "spares" to good homes. All a member needs to do is to write or email me with a list of their spare plants. This list should provide similar plant attributes to those displayed in the list enclosed with the Year Book.

Stephen Lyus

REPORTS FROM EVENTS

The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group Spring Tour 2005

Sunday, 17th - Saturday, 23rd April 2005

This was a most enjoyable and superbly organised tour of West Devon and East Cornwall, and hugely enjoyed by all who participated. Our thanks go to Joey Warren and her husband John for the excellent organisation.

TOURS

Joint Societies Autumn Weekend in Cumbria -

Thurs. 13th to Mon. 17th October 2005

They are still a few spaces available for this interesting 'Weekend' Please do make contact as soon as possible to receive detailed information and to book your place.

Contact: Mrs Pat Short, 41 Galveston Road, London SW15 2RZ. Tel. 020 8870 6884.

Outline itinerary:

Thursday 13th Assemble at the Hotel for an informal dinner.

Friday 14th Morning visit to Holker Hall. Hugh Cavendish will greet us and show us his garden & arboretum. Afternoon visit to Levens Hall and gardens. Informal dinner at the Hotel.

Saturday 15th Coach via Honister Pass to Roman Fort then to Boot Station in Eskdale. Take "Li'l Ratty" train to Ravenglass. Coach to Muncaster Castle with lunch at The Buttery. Afternoon, escorted tour of the Gardens and Owl Centre. Return to the Hotel for Formal Dinner, followed by a Talk.

Sunday 16th Visit to Lakeland Horticultural Society Garden at Holehird. Then a visit to Kath. Brown's garden near Bowness. Afternoon boat trip on Windermere, then on to Brockhole National Park Centre.

Disperse or return to hotel for dinner.

Depart Monday morning 17th October.

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GROUP TOUR to NW USA AND CANADA

18th APRIL to 3rd May 2006

FIRST DRAFT of the ITINERARY of the TOUR – as at mid-June 2005.

Tuesday 18th April Depart Heathrow early afternoon. Arrive Vancouver approx 5pm. Transfer to hotel. 7pm waterfront stroll & reception at Glen Patterson's roof garden on harbour front.

Wednesday 19th Morning departure for Lions Bay, to Ronsley & Mossakowski gardens. Later drive to Indian Arm in North Vancouver for transfer by small coach/boat to Charlton/Sale garden for lunch & visit. Leave at 4pm for hotel arrival before 5pm. Evening reception and talk by Peter Wharton at hotel.

Thursday 20th Depart for visit to UBC Botanic Garden. Noon departure, Box Lunch on coach for Van Dusen Garden. Then on for Dartshill, arriving at 2.45. Leave Dartshill at 4pm. Drive to Harrison Hot Springs Hotel. Arrive 5.30. Talk by Peter Wharton.

Friday 21st Depart from hotel for Dr. Mike Bales mountain garden. Depart 11.15 for Ferry terminal at Tswassen for 1pm departure. Arrive Schwartz Bay 2.45pm. Visit Al & Shirley Smith's garden on way into Victoria. Proceed into town along ocean front.

Saturday 22nd Visit Abkhazi Garden, Valerie Murray's garden, plus additional small private garden. After lunch, Finnerty Gardens at the University of Victoria.

Sunday 23rd Morning visits to Whitehead & Trelawney gardens at Deep Cove. Afternoon: to be arranged.

Monday 24th Morning - Depart Victoria on 10.30 ferry for Port Angeles, USA at the foot of the Olympic Mountains and drive to Warren Berg's garden. Also visit to June Sinclair's garden.

Then drive to Port Ludlow Resort Hotel or similar.

Tuesday 25th Drive to Federal Way to visit the Rhododendron Species Foundation.

End of "Short tour". Drop off at the airport. (Note: If departure is in the evening then Short tour group will continue with Long tour group to Jim Barlup's garden.)

"Long tour" Drive to Jim Barlup's garden. Then proceed to Seattle Hotel. Talk by Steve Hootman.

Wednesday 26th Washington State arboretum. Drive to Mukilteo Ferry for Whidbey Island & Meerkerk Gardens and to Frank Fujioka's garden. Return to Seattle via Mukiteo Ferry. Evening talk by Steve Hootman.

Thursday 27th Morning Departure for The Highlands and transfer to vans or private cars for drive to the Elisabeth Miller Garden (no buses allowed in this community). This privately endowed garden is permitted to host only 500 visitors annually. Later, visit to Jim Senko's garden. After lunch, drive to Olympia, WA. to Briggs Nursery to see microprop facilities.

Leave for Portland for a downtown hotel within walking distance of the river.

Friday 28th Depart for visit to Bishop Close Gardens at Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden. Lunch at Crystal Springs. Leave Crystal Springs for Van Veen Nursery about 5 minutes away. Afternoon tea at Van Veen Nursery. Evening

is free to tour Portland.

Saturday 29th Visit Jane Platt Gardens. Then drive to Aloha, Oregon, to the Tualatin Valley Chapter of the ARS flower show. They will provide lunch. Afternoon tour of Jenkins Estate.

Return to hotel. A Wine tasting in the evening.

Sunday 30th Leave Portland for Eugene, driving along Willamette Valley. It is a two hour drive to Gossler Farms. Lunch at Gossler Farm. Drive to Marietta & Ernie O'Byrne's North West Garden Nursery. Return to Portland.

Monday 1st May Morning flight to San Francisco. Transfer to hotel. Possible garden visit. Waterfront lunch. City Tour.

Tuesday 2nd Drive to Quarryhill. Then a Winery lunch & further visits to Sonoma/Napa County Wineries. Farewell banquet at Domaine Chandon.

Wednesday 3rd Morning visit to Strybing Arboretum.

Details and reservations from David Wade, Arena Travel, Hamilton House, Cambridge Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk, IP11 7SW
Tel: 01394 691201 Email: enquiries@arenatravel.com

PHYTOPHTHORA RAMORUM

More on 'Sudden Oak Death'

Phytophthora at Heligan

Rhododendrons are Heligan's most spectacular springtime showpiece and so the discovery of significant levels of infection by *Phytophthora ramorum* last year came as a great shock. The real horror was the realization that in North America, where the infection is known to be prevalent, the policy has been the removal and destruction of infected plants to attempt the eradication of the disease.

DEFRA conducted the investigation at Heligan and the first few months were very tense since there were enormous issues which needed to be considered: on the one hand it was unthinkable that any of these plants, some as much as 150 years old, could be destroyed; on the other hand it would clearly be irresponsible for the infection to be allowed to develop and threaten other plants, not just rhododendrons, but other susceptible species including camellias, pieris, drimys, viburnum and some types of oak.

R. ponticum appears to be the main host plant and the removal of all *ponticum* in the Garden began in the summer last year. In many areas, *ponticum* is now regarded as a weed, but a hundred and fifty years ago its purple trusses were considered very attractive and the plant was further valued for its use as windbreaks and game cover. It is always sad to see plants of this age destroyed but the spaces left can now be used for new planting and the windbreaks to the north and east boundaries are being replaced.

The hybrids pose a much more serious problem. The huge Cornish Reds on Flora's Green are infected, as is the large, May-flowering 'Pink Perfection' type just outside the Vegetable Garden. Intense negotiation with the DEFRA team, now led by Stephen Eales, Plant Health and Seeds Inspector, has resulted in a policy of containment and monitoring. The fungal spores are likely to be transported

in water and so the infected plants have been cut back to 1.5m above ground level and the area beneath heavily mulched to control the re-infection of the plant by rain splash. An unexpected result of this pruning has been the revealing of the graceful structure of the rhododendrons, hidden before by the low growing foliage. Rhododendrons hanging low over the pools in the Jungle have also been cut back to prevent infection from spores which may be contaminating the water courses which drain the Northern Gardens and flow into the ponds. A similar policy has been applied to the infected oaks and drimys where the suckers have been removed to prevent re-infection of foliage close to the ground.

A very much more significant result of the SOD emergency has been the expansion of the joint micropropagation project between Heligan and Duchy College. I first came across the technique several years whilst a student at the college. Ros Smith, who is in charge of the unit, was already propagating one of the Trebah rhododendrons, Trebah Gem, by this method and three years ago we tried a small pilot scheme with Heligan's rhododendrons and camellias. Last year, Heligan donated £10,000 for new equipment with the intention that the unit would propagate our own plants and also be a resource to the rest of the Southwest. Then, with the outbreak of SOD, it looked as if this could be a way of reproducing unique hybrids that might have to be destroyed.

Dr Barry Mulholland, lecturer in Horticulture and Plant Science at the College, took up the administration of the project last year and has been successful in gaining substantial funding (£279,000) to finance the development of the work. A licence has been granted by DEFRA to work on infected plant material, making the College micropropagation unit the only laboratory in the country that can carry out this work. This propagation service, available to any gardens and nurseries in the Southwest that require micropropagation of rare plants, is free of charge. Together with Heligan's rhododendrons, Ros is currently working on the potato variety 'Lord Rosebery' and a rare hydrangea, *Hydrangea asperia* 'Pink Cloud' from Barry Champion at Treillick.

Any one interested in using this service should contact Dr Barry Mulholland and/or Ros Smith at Department of Horticulture, Micropropagation Duchy College, Rosewarne, Camborne, TR15 1LA.

Bee Robson

Lost Gardens of Heligan

Phytophthora

Following the excellent item on *Phytophthora ramorum* by Charles Williams of Caerhays (Bulletin 87), may I, as a horticulturist and one-time microbiologist, add a few words.

The genus *Phytophthora* is vast with many different classes of plants being affected and in line with many fungi, capable of mutation. As the one that is infecting English oak is to be named *P. kernoviae*, this indicates a new species, rather than a variant of *P. ramorum* and consequently might have originated anywhere. *Phytophthora* infection is far from news and in 'Dwarf Rhododendrons' published in 1978

and written by Peter Cox VMH, there is a full description of 'Phytophthora Wilt', known earlier as 'Root Rot'. Furthermore, the text mentions that three different species might be involved.

Whilst I admire the efforts of Defra in regulating and monitoring the importation of containerised nursery stock, I feel that they are aiming far too high in seeking to cure the malady by mass culling.

My own thoughts centre around identifying affected plants, removing for burning all growth showing signs of the disease, spraying the remainder with fungicide and old-fashioned sulphur or Bordeaux mixture might be best, together with adjacent plants and awaiting results. Rhododendrons with rough bark will usually sprout from old wood, while smooth barked ones often fail.

Should the affected plants not recover, the ground should be sterilised with formalin or an equally effective proprietary preparation.

Since 1840, *Phytophthora infestans* has raged in arable fields and gardens, but with adequate spraying with fungicide, we continue to enjoy potatoes on our plates, for that particular *Phytophthora* is the cause of blight!

Geoff H. Taylor, Pant-yr-Holliad Garden, West Wales

MEMBERS NOTES

Anne Boscawen

Trees In A Changing Climate

Some Notes on the Conference held at
Guildford University on 14th-15th June 2005.

There was a general consensus that climate change is inevitable, and may indeed come faster than expected. The outlook presents many challenges. Some points brought forward by the speakers

The problem is global, but these notes refer to the UK. There has been some research, but only very general, as funding is very limited. There are very few useful records on which to base the research.

In the UK, the effects will be felt most strongly in South East England. It will be very noticeable by the year 2020. Efforts to reduce harmful emissions will have little short term effect, but are essential for the long term. Local conditions and microclimates, will make a difference, and there are many other influences.

According to DEFRA, a cooling of the UK climate over the next 100 years, due to changes in the Gulf Stream, is considered unlikely.

It is expected that spring will start earlier, but that late frosts may continue. Summers will be hotter and drier, making water conservation very important. Autumn will start later, and there will be late spring frosts. Winters will be increasingly warmer, and wetter, but overall we must expect less rain. Much of it will be in the form of violent storms, and flash floods, and there will be severe gales. There will be little or no snow.

Speakers differed on whether we should be planting native species only, or introducing species from warmer climates. By 2100 we could expect conditions similar to those at present in the Bordeaux region of France.

It was pointed out that different species, or even slightly different seedlings, or plants from different locations, could vary in their performance. There is some research into DNA, and the transplanting of genes, which may help to clarify this.

There are many pests and diseases which will thrive in the warmer weather. They will tend to move north faster than the plant species. Many of them invade trees already stressed by the changing conditions. *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which has lately arrived in the West Country, is water borne, and invades the roots of plants which are already stressed. The present measures to control the introduction of plant pests and diseases are quite inadequate.

The rising concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will tend to increase the rate of growth of young plants, where not limited by water or nutrient availability.

Shelter belts are important, and should be of a mixture of species, to ensure that there are some which do well. It was pointed out that Pedunculate Oak had often survived over 350 years in the UK, and should continue to adapt well, better than Sessile Oak or beech. Sweet Chestnut was suggested, and Maritime Pine and Corsican Pine. Sitka Spruce, and *Rhododendron ponticum* should not be planted, and beech and birch are badly affected by drought.

Mike Calnan, Head of Gardens and Parks, The National Trust, said that the maintaining of the layout and character of historic gardens would be a special challenge. Their policy was still under discussion, but in general, they would 'go with the flow' ie adapt to the changes. They would be planting native trees whenever possible.

To conclude, every site has to be treated differently. Many of us will have noticed these trends already, and we must learn to cope. Good drainage, with water conservation, avoidance of compaction of the soil, use of suitable mulches, and maintenance of shelter belts and forested areas will all help. Watering should be from rainwater only.

©HBGCT

CAMELLIAS

The Pillnitz camellia. - Schlosspark Pillnitz

ICS member Louise Wolff-Boresch kindly sent John Harsant the information published below.

In the year 1767 the botanist Thunberg brought back four camellia plants from his journey to Japan to Kew Gardens near London.. Later two of these came to the Castles of Herrenhausen near Hanover and Schonbrunn near Vienna. One of them remained in Kew. The fourth camellia came to Dresden in 1770 as a 30-year old potted plant. Today it is the only surviving cultivar of Thunberg's journey to Japan.

In 1801 the royal gardener Terschek planted it in the place where it still is today. In winter the delicate plant had to be sheltered by a heatable wooden greenhouse that was complicated to install. At the beginning of January in 1905 the house caught fire due to an attached stove. At temperatures around minus 20° Celsius, the water needed for the fire fighting froze into an iceberg and so sheltered the camellia..

In the following spring it sprouted again.. In 1992 the Pillnitz camellia got its new, and for the first time movable greenhouse, in which temperature, air, humidity and shading are computer assisted.

In the cooler months from mid-October to mid-May the temperature is 4-6° Celsius. In the warmer season the house is rolled next to the camellia so that the plant is standing in the open.

It now has a height of 9 metres and 30 metres in girth.

The flowers can be seen from February to April. They are bell-shaped, carmine-red and non-fragrant.



Kamelie · Schloßpark Pillnitz



The Pillnitz Camellia and its movable glasshouse

Photos Helmut Schulze.

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BOOK REVIEW

'Glendoick - A Guide' by Kenneth Cox

The Cox family has added to their list of publications with this booklet entitled Glendoick, by Kenneth Cox.

It is profusely and beautifully illustrated largely in colour and chronicles the history and plant hunting of this rhododendron-famous family and its Nursery.

It is readily readable and covers the three generations of the family and their expeditions to the Himalaya regions of Burma, China, Tibet and in more recent years, Arunachal Pradesh in N.E. India.

The book is in ten sections and includes the Plant hunting expeditions, the Cox plant introductions, the Fundamentals of rhododendron culture, the Hybridising of rhododendrons and azaleas at Glendoick and a Guide to the Gardens and the Garden Centre. All this, in just 30 pages.

Altogether an interesting and fascinating account of a family with a passion for rhododendrons.

Available from Glendoick. www.glendoick.com

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LETTERS

R. baeticum

Over thirty years ago, I was given two plants of *R. baeticum*, a sub-species of *R. ponticum*. Despite agreeing botanically with the appropriate description, now grown to three metres in height and flowering each year, seed has never appeared. Many other elepidote rhododendrons are growing and flowering nearby, so lack of pollinating plants cannot be the reason.

Planted as windbreaks, these *R. baeticum* appear to have the virtues of *R. ponticum*, but none of the vices, as self-layering is not a feature. For grafting purposes, one plant has even suffered portions of root being removed, without complaint.

Growing naturally on the Portuguese/Spanish border, it would be interesting to know the behaviour of *R. baeticum* in the wild and if it seeds down with the alacrity of its near relation.

Geoff H. Taylor, Pant-yr-Holiad Garden West-Wales

In Praise of Camellias

The Ideal Shrub for The Overworked Gardener!

I am a confirmed Rhodoholic - especially of species - of which we have over 350 different in our garden in Silchester. I have always said that Rhododendrons are so much more interesting than Camellias and I continue to believe that - especially in the variety of sizes and leaves. But, they often need pampering and can take a long time to bloom - or only do so every other year.

Not so Camellias. They can be relied upon to bloom in profusion every year no matter the weather and the lack of attention or water they might have received during the

year. They go on flowering over a very long period, mostly between February and May - and some as early as January. As not all the flower buds on one shrub open at the same time, (as Rhododendrons,). They open in succession and can go on for two months. Should the blooms get frosted one night, pick them all off and a fortnight later the bush will be covered again. Amazing!

There are now many more forms available than when we first started over thirty years ago when only Japonicas and a few Williamsiis were about. In addition, we now have Reticulatas, with blooms the size of dinner plates and Cuspidatas, with tiny, charming flowers, as well as Sasanquas, Oleiferas, Saluenensis and many other hybrids, all in their different forms and seasons.

One tip - early whites are a disaster. They spoil so much more easily than reds or pinks, and Camellias don't like being moved.

Don't worry too much about aspects. Be sensible and allow them plenty of light (even sun) but give a bit of protection from North or West winds. For reliability they are unbeatable and, of course, they get bigger and better every year.

Michael Jurgens

Silchester, Berkshire

Rhododendron Toxicity

I am a new member of the group, based in the Poole area. I have read with great interest the correspondence in recent Bulletins regarding the well-publicised claims about the toxicity (to other plants) of *R. ponticum*. Having recently seen a leaflet produced by the local authority here which repeated these claims, I challenged the author for her sources. She sent me this link, which might be of interest to those who have taken up their pens on this subject. Whilst acknowledging that there is some controversy, the writer seems to establish that the claims about toxicity are more than just a myth put about by Rhododendrophobes.

The link is: www.offwell.free-online.co.uk/rhododen.htm

Russell Beeson

Donation of Yearbooks

I would very much like to thank the family of the late Lt. Colonel R. C. Glanville of Catchfrench, Belper, Derby, for their very kind donation to the Group, of his Rhododendron Yearbooks. Without such generosity, we would be unable to ensure that these books remain in circulation, nor would we be able to assist other members in completing their collections.

Pam Hayward (Yearbook Archivist)

BRANCH REPORTS

New Forest Branch

Robin Whiting

The Valley Gardens in Windsor Great Park was the venue for our visit in mid April. We were shown round by Mark Flanagan, Keeper of the Valley and Saville Gardens. He gave us a brief history of the garden and explained how Sir Eric Saville had created a magnificent woodland Spring garden with vistas running down to Virginia Water.

On our way to the Rhododendron Species collection we were shown a very fine *Prunus Tai Haku*. Mark explained how this cherry was lost to cultivation in its native Japan, but was reintroduced by Collingwood Ingram from a plant he found growing in a garden in Sussex. This and many other fine cherries, acers and dogwoods were planted around the garden.

Mark reminded us that the collection of species rhododendrons in the Valley gardens originated from the Tower Court garden of John Stephenson and were saved only through the intervention of King George VI.

The rhododendrons in the collection were grouped in their series, or sections as they are now called, when established in the garden and over the years the beds have become overgrown. At the Taliensa Section we were shown how it had been renovated. Most of the plants being lifted out; the beds cleaned and then replanted.

The under planting in the beds of herbaceous perennials is being discontinued to enhance the appearance and also to avoid the competition for water. Over the next few years the other sections will be replanted with many of the older rhododendrons replaced.

For the final part of our tour we were shown round the woodland nursery where many seed raised rhododendrons were being grown on to replace some of the older specimens in the collection.

After lunch we looked at many of the fine rhododendrons in the gardens. *R. crinigerum* looked very elegant even whilst still in bud as the [photograph on the front page](#) shows.

Our last event in the spring was a social gathering at the home of Martin Gates, our branch secretary and his wife. They have created a beautiful garden filled with high quality plants.

A heavy shower kept us under shelter for a while before the sun shone again brilliantly. But then no true rhododendron enthusiast resents rain, particularly if he lives in the south!

South East Branch

Barry Haseltine

Visit to Heaselands, Haywards Heath

The South East Branch was privileged to be able to visit the beautiful gardens of Sir Richard Kleinwort, at Heaselands, on Saturday 14th May. In the past, the Branch has visited the gardens and held meetings in the tea rooms, but since the death of Lady Kleinwort, it has not been possible to visit. We were, therefore, delighted that Sir Richard allowed this visit; we were greeted by the new Head Gardener, Stephen Harding, who had only had a few days to get to know the garden himself! He has come from a post in Barnstaple.

Heaselands is a relatively new garden compared with others in the area, having been planted when the house was built in about 1933, but it is now a fine, mature, collection of trees, rhododendrons and azaleas, which were looking particularly good during the visit. The garden is typical of others in Sussex, occupying sharp valleys giving good protection from the south west winds; even so, two fine cedars of Lebanon were lost in the 1987 storm.

A feature of the garden is the two collections of azaleas

that are held there – one of the Knaphill/Exbury forms and the other of Mollis Azaleas. There have been a few problems recently with die back and death because of some surprisingly wet patches, despite the beds being on a hill! Stephen intends to follow the policy of the previous Head Gardener, Chris Franks, in propagating and refurbishing the collections, as well as trying to improve the drainage.

The party was fascinated by the sheer scale of the colour, always changing as the views changed with the terrain, beautifully set off by the new growth on the deciduous trees and the darker colour of the evergreens. It was fortunate that the day was fine, if a little windy, quite at variance with the depressing weather forecast. All in all a fine garden to visit and a most enjoyable afternoon.

Wessex Branch

John David

On Saturday 5th March we were fortunate to have Mr Herb Short of the International Camellia Society give us a talk on early introductions of Camellia into cultivation in the West.

This talk, based on Herb Short's own researches, revealed that although the earliest published record of a Camellia dates to 1702, the first English record is a painting of *C. japonica* by George Edwards dating from 1747 and this plant was derived from the collection of Lord Petre in Essex. He poured cold water on the idea of the earlier introduction of camellias into Spain and Portugal despite the anecdotal evidence and the great size of the specimens. A particularly interesting aspect was the role of the East India Company ships in bringing back new plants, rather than any formal approach to plant collecting such as occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Herb then went on to cover the introduction of *C. reticulata* 'Captain Rawes' and the arrival of the Kunming reticulatas in 1948. Despite the title of the talk, we were treated to more recent Camellia developments, such as the introduction of the yellow-flowered species as well as the selection of more cold-hardy varieties of *C. oleifera*, known to withstand the harsh winters of the eastern USA.

This year we organised a tour of the gardens of S.W. Wales on 7-8th May. The first day we visited the National Botanic Garden at Llanarthne where former director, Ivor Stokes, conducted us round. We saw the double-walled garden now being planted in a systematic arrangement following the new molecular classification of flowering plants as well as the now famous glasshouse filled with all kinds of interesting plants from mediterranean regions around the world. This was followed by a tour of Aberglasney with the present Director, Graham Rankin, and we were privileged to see the newly completed Atrium, yet to be planted with epiphytic orchids and rhododendrons. It was exciting to see the range of plants that Graham is trying at Aberglasney as well as the remarkable developments in uncovering and restoring the gardens. Graham also showed us round the arboretum at the Golden Grove with some truly gigantic trees, flourishing in the mild, wet climate of the area. The following day Ivor Stokes showed us the rhododendron collection at Clyne Castle, amazing not only for the diversity of plants but also for their size, as indicated by a small tower built by a previous

owner in order to be able to view the flowers properly. For those that wanted, Ivor provided an encore with the nearby botanic garden of the University of Swansea which has a small collection of Hooker rhododendrons. This is only the briefest resume of what was a wonderful if intensive weekend and our thanks go to Malcolm Nash, Graham Rankin and Rod Wild for their superlative organization.

Our annual show was held on the 17th April and, despite the treacherous late frosts this year, we had a good array of entries.

Lakeland Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Society

Fred Tattersall

At the beginning of April 16 members of the Society enjoyed a Tour to visit Gardens of Cornwall. This was superbly organised by Bill Revell who managed to fit into the programme 10 different Gardens in five days. This was prime viewing time to see Magnolias and Camellias in full bloom although many Rhododendrons were also to be seen. Our Branch Show took place on Tuesday 10th May at Holehird. There were 9 different winners and Best in Show was Thelma Potter with *R Lindleyi*.

The Millais Silver Gilt Medal Display at the Chelsea Flower Show



Photo: The Editor

MEMBERSHIP

Miranda Gunn

After five years as your Hon. Membership Secretary I am now handing over to Rupert Eley.

It has been a great pleasure during this time to get to know so many members, even if only by phone or e-mail.

Rupert has been a member of the Committee for a year. He runs his own successful nursery, 'A Place for Plants' in Suffolk. (Well worth a visit if you are in the area.) I am delighted to be leaving you in such capable and efficient hands.

Rupert Eley's address is Highlands House, East Bergholt, Suffolk, CO7 6UP, Telephone 01206 293385,

Fax 01206 299224, e-mail sales@placeforplants.co.uk

We are so pleased to welcome the following new members:

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The following publications are available to Group Members and are sold in support of the Group:

MEMBER'S PRE-PUBLICATION OFFER – Order now!

HARDY RHODODENDRON SPECIES – A Guide to Identification – James Cullen

Due to be published in September 2005, this major reference work explores rhododendron classification and structure, and provides easy-to-use methods and diagnostic keys for plant identification. c496pp; 175 photographs. Full Price: **£35** Member's Price: **£23.50**
Postage: UK **£4.50**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15** (Air)

International RHODODENDRON REGISTER and CHECKLIST Second Edition – RHS 2004

Full Price: **£90** Member's Price: **£75**.

Postage: UK **£7.50**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£12** (Air)

THE RHODODENDRON HANDBOOK 1998

Includes full descriptions of all rhododendron species in general cultivation in Europe and the USA, including Vireyas. 352pp, illust. **£30** post free. Airmail: add **£5**.

THE RHODODENDRON STORY

224pp illust. UK: **£15** RoW: **£16.50** (Surface) **£20** (Air)

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NOTICES

Pat Bucknell

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2005

This was held on 12th April 2005 at 2.00p.m. at the RHS
Lawrence Hall, London.

For your information, the Minutes of that meeting, the
Annual Accounts and the up-to-date List of the Committee
are enclosed as a separate insert.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

It still needs your letters, reports from branches, articles
etc, to keep the members up to date! So, please send
me your copy for the October/November Bulletin by
1st October.

Please send to: John Rawling, Hon. Bulletin Editor,
The Spinney, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey,
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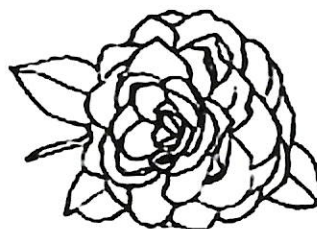
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FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2005

Date/Time	Organiser	Location	Event	Contact
July				
16th	South East Branch	Forest Row	Propagation day	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
September				
10th & 11th	Lakeland Rhododendron Camellia & Magnolia Society		Joint meetings with the Scottish Rhododendron Society Full details from the Secretary	Fred Tattersall 015394 43963
October				
11th	Lakeland Rhododendron C & M Society		AGM and Slides of Cornwall Tour	Fred Tattersall 015394 43963
15th	Wessex Branch	Wisley	Talk by Dr Roland Fox on fungal & other diseases affecting our genera	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
November				
8th	Lakeland Rhododendron C & M Society		Talk by Tessa Moor on on Transforming a Scottish Moor into the spectacular Glenwhan Garden	Fred Tattersall 015394 43963
12th	Wessex Branch	Wisley	Talk by Richard Thornton on his recent Trip to China "In the footsteps of George Forrest".	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
26th	South West Branch	Rosemoor	Kenneth Cox, talking on "The Riddle of the Tsang Po Gorges"	Alun Edwards 01272 343324
27th	South East Branch	OA room Ardingly College	Talk by John Gallagher on "The wonderful world of Camellias"	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
December				
13th	Lakeland Rhododendron C & M Society		Talk by Mike Swift from Torosay Castle	Fred Tattersall 015394 43963

The Group Collection of Lammerts Peer reticulata Camellias at Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens



Brian Wright and Steve Griffith, the Curator and Head Gardener, planting the last plant of the collection at Abbotsbury Sub-Tropical Gardens.

A good crowd of members, guests and friends gathered at the Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens in Dorset. They came from all around the country, including London, and from Kent to Cornwall. The weather was kind on that day and a splendid lunch was enjoyed afterwards at the Restaurant.



R. rex EGM295

Photos The Editor

The assembly also visited the flourishing **John Bond Memorial Collection** of large leafed rhododendrons, planted by the Group in March 2002 (*see Bulletin 79 April 2002*). We can report that the plants are growing well and it was noted that *R. rex* (EGM295) was about to flower.

NEW RHODODENDRON BOOK - See Publications Advertisement for SPECIAL OFFER!