



# The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

## THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN - 89

www.rhodogroup-rhs.org

NOVEMBER 2005

### CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mike Robinson

It is always a pleasure to receive feedback about these editorials, and I was thrilled to hear from Graham Ferguson who is growing scented rhododendrons of deep colour in West Sussex. Not only that but they are very late flowering and, in my opinion, one is a form of one of the best hybrids created at Exbury. The other is a hybrid bred from it by Graham and his gardener, Paul Strike.

The Exbury hybrid is R. 'Leonore' (*R. auriculatum* x *R. kwayi*). The pollen parent, widely used by Lionel de Rothschild to impart lateness and colour, is too tender even for Exbury, and I know of no plant in the south of the kingdom: I suspect the winter of 1963 killed off most *R. kwayi* growing outside, but perhaps someone is still growing a relatively hardy form? If so it needs recognising and propagating.

About a dozen clones of R. 'Leonore' grow at Exbury: they are all very late flowering with superb foliage similar to *R. auriculatum*, except that the upper leaf blade is shining. The flowers are shades of pink, the plants are much hardier than would be expected and must have survived two really cold winters (1940 and 1963). Graham's garden contains many Exbury hybrids which arrived there as small seedlings. What makes him especially fortunate is that his clone appears to be the only one that is fragrant.

His cross of this hybrid with an unnamed late red from Barry Hill has produced an equally late flowering hybrid of a deeper colour which retains some scent.

Recognition can be long delayed for all these late flowerers. Two of them R. 'Intrepid' (Beau Brummel Group x *kwayi* 1941) and R. 'Dragonfly' (*facetum* x *auriculatum* 1936) received A.M.'s only this summer. Perhaps more meetings of the Rhododendron and Camellia Committee are needed in the summer?

How many other worthy hybrids, unknown to all but their owners, unregistered, and therefore in danger of dying out, are there in members' gardens? One of the Group's purposes is to propagate such plants, and quite a few members enjoy seeking out such things, but the preservation of many such require the owner or a fellow enthusiast to take the trouble to tell us about them.

continued on page 2



R. 'Leonore'

Photo: Graham Ferguson



R. 'Leonore' x Late Red Photo: Graham Ferguson

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I am sure we have all seen a clone thriving in one of the great gardens which has failed in our own, and, of course, the longevity of a plant – whether marginally hardy or not, depends so much on how well it was planted: much has been said about this, but it is the aphorisms of the best gardeners that stick in the mind. These are condensed gems of wisdom:-

'Spend a shilling on the plant, and a pound on the soil'  
(Leonard Messel)

'I have always found that planting a rhododendron on the soil, rather than in it, has led to long term success'  
(Peter Cox)

'Camellias do not grow happily in impacted soil, so the soil round them should be firm but not rammed down'  
(Neil Treseder)

'When planting a magnolia, no fertiliser should be added, and, if the roots are damaged in any way during planting, the magnolia should be heavily pruned'  
(Amos Pickard)

If one scales up Leonard Messel's statement to modern prices it is clear that the attention given to the soil preparation and improvement should be tremendous - £5 on the plant and £100 on the soil? Can you be serious? Oh yes! A hundred pounds worth of effort are needed at any rate, and one nurseryman I know reckons that at least 40 litres of good compost are needed to give even a medium sized shrub a good start.

What price garden makeovers: they cost thousands: how much of that goes into thorough soil preparation?

## EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

Sadly, we have to report the recent deaths of three prominent and active (past or present) members of the Group.

We very sadly report the death of **Michael Jurgens** of The Old House, Silchester, Near Reading. Michael has been a committee member of the Group, but had been unwell for some time. A memorial service is being held on 12th November at Silchester.

A full obituary will appear at a later date.

### Peter Betteley

1950 - 2005

It is with great regret that we report the sudden death, in August, of Peter Betteley.

Peter was a member of the South East Branch of the RCM Group and The International Camellia Society. Brian and Iris Wright and Herb and Pat Short represented members of both organisations at his funeral.

Peter's father, Victor, had started collecting camellias and this passion was shared by Peter over many years. He gardened in Orpington, Kent, South East of London, on almost pure chalk which meant every plant was grown, very healthily, in containers - a tremendous feat. Peter's knowledge and skill saw him exhibit and win many prizes at the Vincent Square Shows and earned him an invitation to identify camellias in the gardens of Buckingham Palace.

At the time of Peter's death the collection amounted to almost 1,000 japonicas, williamsiis, sasanquas, reticulatas and other species and hybrids. Pat Short had the foresight to contact Lee Stenning at Mount Edgcombe with a view to Peter's collection being transferred there and to be known as 'The Betteley Family Collection'. We are very fortunate in that they and the Betteley family have agreed, so that we and the general public can enjoy their beauty and rarity for many years to come.

Iris Wright

### Trevor Crosbie

West Wales Country Gardeners (who once were the S.W. Wales Branch of the The Group) have reported his recent death. He was a loyal and extremely knowledgeable member but had been in steadily declining health for several years.

**The RHS Main Rhododendron Competition** will again, this year, be held at Borde Hill in West Sussex.

The dates will be **Saturday 23rd** (12.00pm – 5.00pm) and **Sunday 24th** (10.00am – 4.30pm) **April 2006**.

Full details can be obtained from Sarah Owen on 020 7781 3345.

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

#### **RHODODENDRONS & AZALEAS**

##### **A Colour Guide – Kenneth Cox**

Described fully in the accompanying flyer, the latest publication by Kenneth Cox will now be published in late November. Full Price: **£29.95** Member's Price: **£24.50**  
Postage: UK **£4.50**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15**(Air)

#### **HARDY RHODODENDRON SPECIES –**

##### **A Guide to Identification – James Cullen**

A major new reference work exploring rhododendron classification and structure, and providing easy-to-use methods and diagnostic keys for plant identification. 496pp, illust. 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** Rest of World **£20**(Air)

#### **YEARBOOK Back Numbers**

Available for 1946 – 1971, 1980 – 2004. Please enquire. Please make cheques (Sterling) payable to:

The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group. Payment may also be made by Mastercard or Visa. Contact: Pam Hayward, Woodtown, Sampford Spiney,

YELVERTON PL20 6LJ, UK. Tel/Fax: +44(0)1822 852122

Skype: WoodtownUK

Email: RCMGPublications@aol.com

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## SEED DISTRIBUTION & PLANT EXCHANGE

### Plant Exchange

May I remind you that NOW is the time to be looking through your seedlings, cuttings and young plants to select some for the Group Plant Exchange and sale.

The exchange and sale of plants will be **advertised early in the New Year.**

This year, the plants available for sale were contributed by just two members, so make sure that they are not again the only ones on offer.

This list should provided similar plant attributes to those displayed in the list enclosed with the last Year Book: i.e.

Name/species

Provenance

Size (cm)

Price required

Source

Location.

(For the full details, see Bulletin 86 page 2.)

**Do contact Stephen Lyus soon:**

Stephen Lyus, email: [emailslus@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:emailslus@yahoo.co.uk)  
or at 13 Manor Drive, Surbiton, Surrey, KT5 8NE.

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### NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I still need your letters, reports from branches, articles etc, to keep the members up to date!  
So, please send me your letters and copy for the March Bulletin by 14th February.

Please send to:

**John Rawling, Hon. Bulletin Editor,**

**The Spinney, Station Road,**

**Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.**

**Tel. 01883 653341 or E-mail: [jr.eye@virgin.net](mailto:jr.eye@virgin.net)**

## REPORTS FROM EVENTS

### RHS Tatton Show 2005

This year, for the first time, the Group took a stand at the RHS Tatton Show with the objective of showing the Public the activities of the Group. It was indeed a success even though we had no prior experience of such an undertaking; that having been said, much was learnt.

We were able to add to the horticultural content of the Show in company with the other occupants of the National Plant Societies marquee. It seems strange that the Group, which is part of the RHS, had never before been present in the marquee.

I was indebted to the members of the Friends of Ness Gardens who helped in the manning of the stand without whom the venture would have been impossible. Considerable help was given in other ways by members of the staff of the RHS to whom I give my thanks.

*John Harsant*

Our thanks go to John Harsant for his splendid effort in raising the profile The Group.

**Where do members think that the Group should be represented in future? Perhaps at the Chelsea Show? ----- But see below!**

**Please let me know what you think?**

Do e-mail me or write to me,

*The Hon. Editor, addresses on this page*

### **The Joys and Tribulations of Showing - without having a Nervous Breakdown!**

### Showing Rhododendrons at Chelsea 2005

*David Millais, Millais Nurseries*

After a year or two of dithering, we applied to exhibit at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show for the first time. In December 2004, we were delighted to hear that we had been accepted, and the planning really started.

It had been ten years since there was a specialist Rhododendron exhibit, and we felt that we had plenty of wonderful new hybrids to capture both the judges' and the public's interest.



For the best part of last century, rhododendrons featured heavily in Chelsea exhibits, but the numbers dwindled as generations of nurserymen retired, or they found the costs uneconomic. Their advice was that it was too much work and hassle at peak season, and that because you can only sell plants on the last day, we would be thousands of pounds out of pocket. The markets had changed, and whereas in the 'good old days' a nurseryman would take significant orders at Chelsea, now the punters would admire the variety, but buy it in their local garden-centre. There were certainly some compelling reasons not to exhibit, but with all the nursery staff keen to go, it was time to conquer Chelsea!

### Preparation

During the winter, we chose the best of the new varieties, and selected those with the most buds. The selection included several of my father's recent hybrids, and also those of Hans Hachmann from Germany. To allow for perfection, we estimated we should allow 3 times as many plants as would fit in our exhibit. We put them in an open poly-tunnel to protect them from the worst of the winter, but knew they would have to be moved outside in early March to stop them from flowering too soon.

### Problems

In the event, we had even more juggling than expected. The seasons are changing so much that it seems impossible to know what will flower when. This year our early dwarfs flowered 2 weeks late, and many of the mid season ones which should have been perfect for Chelsea week suddenly opened 10-14 days early. We were facing ruin. A few phone calls later, and we secured the use of a local strawberry coldstore to hold the flowers back. A few more phone calls and we found the recommended temperature of 4-5°C, but John Hillier's advice that all the blue flowers would turn out white was worrying and too late; the plants were in there! With less than a week to go, we found the buds on those remaining at the nursery swelling too slowly due to the unusual cold spell, so these had to be forced in a hot greenhouse, while most of the rest were still in the coldstore. Oh, and fortunately, only the dwarf blues had turned white in the coldstore, so obviously these had to be discarded.

### Display

We started building our exhibit 3 days before judging, trying to follow the plan that Richard Thornton and I had discussed. Richard works for us part time mainly on propagation, but has many years of Chelsea experience with Hydon Nurseries and, most recently with Carol Klein. Formerly a commercial artist, his artistic eye was most useful in making the most of colour combinations. Two days later, and the stand was almost finished, and looking excellent. We just hoped that the buds of 2 critical but shy varieties would decide to open boldly in time for judging on the Monday. The stand had to be worth at least Silver.

### Award Day

Monday morning is official Press day, when the place swarms with celebrities, and those that think they should be. Judging takes place in the afternoon, followed by the Royal visit. In the evening the place fills with champagne and corporate suits from the city for the Gala preview.

So it was not until we arrived at 7.00am on the Tuesday that we found the Silver Gilt proudly displayed on our stand. Not bad for our first attempt. The keenest gardeners visit that morning, paying premium ticket prices to avoid the crowds and seeing all the displays at their freshest. We soon discovered their favourites were two of my father's *cinnabarinum xanthocodon* hybrids with tubular bell shaped flowers, 'Pink Gin', (pale pink) which we have had for several years, and 'Crosswater Belle' (salmon pink) which we launched that day and which is one of only 7 new varieties featured in the RHS Chelsea video. His hardy hybrid 'Spring Sunshine' and deciduous azalea 'Silverwood' also drew much admiration.

It was a long week, but an enjoyable week for all our staff who took turns to man the exhibit, answer everyone's questions, and even take a few orders. Thanks to the organisation by the RHS, the whole operation went remarkably smoothly, and it was not nearly as stressful as I had feared. Lawrence Banks, Chairman of the judges, kindly advised us on those aspects of our exhibit which would need improvement to justify Gold next time, so we have learnt a lot.

The publicity we received has been good with features on BBC Gardener's World (daytime), BBC local radio and numerous mentions in the press. We now hope the interest can be turned into additional sales to make it all worthwhile and justify the weeks of 12 hour days!

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## TOURS

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### Joint Societies Autumn Weekend in Cumbria -

Thurs. 13<sup>th</sup> to Mon. 17<sup>th</sup> October 2005

Sadly this interesting tour had to be cancelled due to the lack of response. Please book early in future or indicate that you are seriously considering joining the trip.

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### GROUP TOUR to NW USA AND CANADA

18<sup>th</sup> APRIL to 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2006

You will, I know, all have looked with longing at the schedule for the Group visit to Canada and the United States next spring. This is by far the most ambitious trip that the group has planned so far, and it was with some trepidation that we decided on something so grand!

Bookings are a little slow at present. **We do need 30 people** to make the trip viable, but can't let the numbers get much above that. So, if you wish to join us, get your reservations by December 31st at the latest.

**This great Tour needs your participation or, (like the Hon. Editor) an indication that you intend to join us, if you possibly can!**

**PLEASE LET US KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**



## RHODODENDRONS

### Members Notes 1

John David

#### Which is the true *Rhododendron burmanicum*?

As a result of acquiring a plant labelled as *Rhododendron valentinianum* which, by virtue of its lanky habit and undoubted bud-tenderness when grown outside, it could not possibly be, I embarked on an investigation into yellow-flowered maddenias. The rhododendron in question proved, when it eventually managed to flower, to be *R. burmanicum* 'Elizabeth David', a cultivar registered in 1980, receiving an Award of Merit (*Rhododendrons with Magnolias and Camellias*, 1980-81) when exhibited by Mrs Elizabeth Mackenzie in that year. It was registered as a selection of *R. burmanicum*, from a plant that was originally grown in Scotland and is distinctive in the four-flowered trusses of butter-yellow flowers. It is illustrated in Phillips & Rix, *Shrubs* p. 112.

*Rhododendron burmanicum* was described in 1914 from material collected by Lady Wheeler Cuffe from Mount Victoria in Burma. She collected seedlings in 1912, having first seen the rhododendron in 1911, and sent them to Glasnevin, whence propagated plants were distributed to other gardens, both botanical and private. A plant consistent with the original introduction is illustrated in Walsh & al., *An Irish Florilegium*, pl. 47 (1983) from a plant growing at Kilbogget in 1981, and has pale cream-yellow or sulphur-yellow (true sulphur-yellow is a pale colour) flowers. It was, in early published descriptions, said to be sweetly scented. There is also a black and white photograph in Millais's *Rhododendrons* (1924) of a plant flowering at Lanarth in May 1923.

There has been only one further recorded introduction of this species into cultivation in the British Isles. In 1956 Kingdon-Ward explored Mount Victoria and there found a rhododendron which he described as having flowers with a 'corolla of a pleasant yellow, in tight many-flowered trusses...' and stated that it appeared to belong to the Triflorum series. He did not connect it with *R. burmanicum* although was clearly aware of Lady Wheeler Cuffe's earlier visit to Mt. Victoria. He collected both herbarium material, now in Edinburgh, and seeds (KW 21921) by which it was re-introduced into cultivation. His tentative identification was still accepted in the *Rhododendron Handbook* (1980) and cited as 'triflorum aff.'. In the 1980 revision of *Rhododendron* subgenus *Rhododendron* Cullen re-identified the herbarium material of KW 21921 as *R. burmanicum* and this was followed in the 1998 *Rhododendron Handbook*.

Following its introduction the species was used in a number of hybrids: those that have persisted in cultivation being *R. 'Michael's Pride'* (*R. dalhousiae* var. *dalhousiae* × *R. burmanicum*) and *R. × chrysomanicum* (*R. chrysodoron* × *R. burmanicum*), the latter raised by Lord Aberconway and given an Award of Merit in 1947. This was illustrated in the *Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Yearbook* 1993, fig. 13 (unfortunately captioned '*R. burmanicum*', but the reference

in the text is to *R. × chrysomanicum*). There is also a hybrid *R. 'Parisienné'*, raised by Lionel de Rothschild, which is the product of crossing *R. valentinianum* and *R. burmanicum*, reported to be in cultivation at Gigha in 1965, and still grown at Portmeirion ([www.mygardenme.uk/portmeirion.htm](http://www.mygardenme.uk/portmeirion.htm)).

Coincidentally, a cultivar from the same cross was registered as *R. 'Goldfinger'* by Sir Giles Loder in 1965 when it was also given an Award of Merit.

The reason for this diversion into hybrids is that Cox & Cox, in the *Encyclopaedia of Rhododendron Species* (1997) illustrate a plant which they note is the one most commonly grown as *R. burmanicum*, or sometimes as the 'Cox' form which they suggest is a hybrid, possibly with *R. valentinianum*. This, then, brings me back to original question. Is typical *R. burmanicum* still available - for what seems to be currently offered is either *R. 'Elizabeth David'* (which may itself be a hybrid) or the Cox form? Is any of the material traceable back to either of the introductions? Cox & Cox (1997) also illustrate a plant of *R. burmanicum*, probably KW21921, growing at Brodick Castle and the RBG Edinburgh Living Collections on-line catalogue cite an accession of *R. burmanicum* (19599989) growing at Logan that might well be derived from Kingdon-Ward's original material. If anyone is aware of such material then I would be most interested to be informed. It seems probable, based on reports in *Rhododendron Yearbooks* and the *Irish Florilegium* plate, that the Wheeler-Cuffe introduction was still grown in gardens in Ireland until comparatively recently and may well be still grown today. The Kingdon-Ward introduction was through RBG Edinburgh and could still be around in the mild gardens on the western seaboard of Scotland. However, it was never particularly hardy and was probably lost from gardens in Britain and replaced by more reliable yellow-flowered maddenias and their hybrids circulating under the name *R. burmanicum*.

John David, Botany Department, RHS Gardens Wisley, Woking, Surrey, GU23 6QB

### Members Notes 2

#### Contrasting *R. hodgsonii* Cultivars

Iris Wright

In April 2005 I visited the Valley Gardens, Windsor, at the time to see *R. hodgsonii* flowering.



*R. hodgsonii* C&H 581 (Fig. 1)

Photo: Iris Wright



The spreading AM clone known as 'Poet's Lawn' (Fig. 2 below) only had 5 flowers, and unusually is white shaded brown purple at the base. The previous year it had covered itself with flower but even with few flowers the foliage and stature of the plant was a marvellous sight.



*R. hodgsonii* 'Poet's Lawn', at Windsor (Fig. 2) Photo: Iris Wright

A good pink *R. hodgsonii* collected by Peter Cox and Peter Hutchinson in 1965, C & H 581 (Fig 1 on p.5), was growing more upright than spreading. A truss of this won the McLaren Cup in the class for 'best species' two weeks later at the RHS Show held at Borde Hill.



*R. hodgsonii* BLM323 (Fig. 3)

Photo: Iris Wright

The third *hodgsonii*, BLM 323 (Fig 3 above), was collected by Beer, Lancaster & Morris during their 1971 expedition to E. Nepal. Its flowers were a wonderful luminous pink which sat surrounded by a huge ray of leaves. Note the attractive and distinctive bark (see photo).

I wait with huge anticipation for the day of the first flowering of my own plant but meanwhile its handsome leaves and new growth give much enjoyment.

*In the last year, it has been suggested that *R. hodgsonii* 'Poets Lawn' could be a hybrid.*

**However**, it is listed in many reference books as a **clone or selection**:

(a) *Rhododendron & Camellia Yearbook 1965* (p.183) Register - - Poets Lawn. **Form of *Hodgsonii***. Followed by a description...

(b) 'The *Rhododendron Handbook 1967 Rhododendron Species in General Cultivation*' (p.197). ..... Poet's Lawn is an AM **clone** with white flowers..... This is followed with clear hybrids of *hodgsonii*

(c) 'The *Rhodo Handbook 1980. Rhodo Species in Cultivation*' (p.156) AM 1964 (CR Est Comm, Windsor) to a **clone** 'Poet's Lawn'; flowers white, shaded rhodamine purple (HCC29/2)

(d) 'The *Rhodo Handbook. 1998*' (p.131) same as above.

(e) 'The *Larger Species of Rhododendron. By Peter Cox*' (p.161) Poets Lawn AM 1965 Crown Lands

(f) 'The *Rhododendron Species Vol 11. Elepidotes. - Arboreum to Lacteum*' (p.173) H H Davidian. A **clone** 'Poets Lawn' received an Award of Merit when exhibited by the Crown Est, Comm, Wind. Gt. Pk., in 1964

(g) The *International Rhododendron Register and Check List* 2005 edition (p.1086), it is registered as a '**selection** from *hodgsonii*' by The Crown Estate Commissioners.

**What do you think? Do you have any evidence to to indicate that it is not just an unusual clone?**

Do let us know your views, - to the Editor, please?

Perhaps, only an up-to-date taxonomy investigation would tell us!

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## CAMELLIAS

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Andrew Simons

### New Camellia Hybrids and The Promise Of A Golden Future



*C. chrysanthoides*

Photo Andrew Simons



Having started to develop an interest in Camellias some 20 years ago I began attending the RHS London Camellia shows in search of inspiration for new varieties to add to my collection. Initially I thought that these shows would provide an almost inexhaustible list of varieties BUT after a few years it became clear that no matter the quality of the blooms on display it was the same varieties being shown and winning year after year, this stagnant beauty caused me to look into the issue more closely.

With research it was sadly apparent that the United Kingdom has a relatively limited track record in the production of Camellia hybrids, rather like Athletics, the occasional superstar like *C. 'Donation'* masks little progress in reality. Consequently, when my search turned overseas, I was pleasantly surprised that hybridising was alive and well, not only in the form of chance seedling selection but with real purpose, plant size, colour, fragrance, and hardiness all have innovations, few of which make it into UK gardens beyond a trickle into the most ardent Camellia enthusiast's.

Novelty in the production of hybrid Camellias has most notably come about by the wider introduction of new species and a more selective approach to the established ones.

With the relative availability of the golden yellow species *C. chrysantha*<sup>1</sup> the dream of yellow Camellia varieties became tangible. Unfortunately the compatibility of *chrysantha* with existing camellias in cultivation has meant that the number of yellow varieties has been limited, although I now find that I have some ten or so hybrids within my collection with a yellow Camellia in its parentage. It should be noted that the plants to which I refer are genuine yellows rather than appearance of yellow observed in plants such as 'Gwenneth Morey'. Although still considered by most as steps on the road toward yellow garden varieties some of these new hybrids do have significant merit for the grower with some greenhouse space to try them out. My two personal favourites are the result of work by a Mr Yoshikowa of Osaka, Japan, firstly Camellia 'Ki-No-Moto 95' (illustrated below) has large pale yellow blooms.



*C. 'Ki-No-Moto 95'*

Photo Andrew Simons

Its quality should be of no surprise when its parentage is revealed as *C. chrysantha* crossed with the best of all *C. reticulata* hybrids, 'Lasca Beauty'. This plant has proved a significant horticultural challenge even under greenhouse cultivation but is worth the effort. The second variety of interest is the much easier to cultivate Camellia 'Kogane-Yuri', the result of a Camellia 'Barbara Clark' cross which produces many small tubular blooms on an upright and very vigorous plant.

As I stated earlier, new Camellia species are the route for genuine novelty within hybrids and two such new species are just bringing the promise of even greater diversity in the Camellia garden. Firstly *C. amplexicaulis* with medium sized cup shaped blooms in a most unusual purplish red, and secondly, *C. azalea*<sup>2</sup> a plant which in some forms has the appearance of being somewhere between an Azalea and a Camellia with rhododendron type foliage and single Azalea flowers, although this is only in appearance. The plant does appear to flower over a very long period, in some cases reported as throughout the summer and autumn.

Perhaps in 100 years, as global warming starts to influence gardens, the prospect will be for yellow perpetual flowering Camellias supplanting Roses in British gardens



*C. azalea*

Photo Andrew Simons

<sup>1</sup> To be taxonomically correct *C. chrysantha* should be known as *C. nittidissima*, but for the purposes of this article I use the term *C. chrysantha* in reference to the specie Group *chrysantha* and its some 30 species therein.

<sup>2</sup> *C. azalea* is synonymous with *C. changii*.

## LETTERS

### Thai Magnoliaceae

As a Life Member of the Magnolia Society International - from time to time I scan the contents of their website. Recently (July) I noticed that there was passing reference to a recent publication entitled 'Thai Magnoliaceae' and their plans to support the funding of an English translation edition at some future date.



As a botanical bibliophile - with an interest in this genus - I spent a short while 'on-line' and established that the Thai edition was currently available via USA! The information gleaned suggested that it contained high quality colour illustrations and that whilst the text would be completely unintelligible to me the various species did include their correct botanical 'labels'.

Notwithstanding the fact that at sometime in the future an English translation edition might become available - I am only too aware that even the best laid plans do not always reach fruition. Fearful that this might be the case and that I might miss the opportunity to add this title to my bookshelves - I decided to strike whilst the iron was hot and purchase unseen and in the knowledge I probably would not be able to read much of the text.

The book duly arrived (\$42.00 + air mail charges) and to say that I am not disappointed would be an understatement. Published in 2002 - I am surprised that it has escaped my attention until very recently. 188 pages of 'gobbledy gook' interspersed with high quality close-up colour illustrations of magnolia flowers and foliage together with an amalgum of smaller pictures to include tree shape/form, foliage, seed pods etc.

To further whet the readers' appetite - I mention just a snippet of some of the species depicted: *Magnolia rajaniana*; *M. lilifera*; *M. floribunda* et al!

Oh - for the forthcoming translation edition when it becomes reality; meanwhile I will pursue my magnolia edification (!) via my new found copy. If any colleagues should wish to pursue the purchase of a similar copy - I will willingly provide the website/email links.

John Sanders, Devon

ewenique@eclipse.co.uk

Dear Editor,

I read with interest the comments by Peter Betteley in the July Bulletin regarding the greater readiness of camellias to set seed compared with 10-15 years ago.

We have a small (1/3<sup>rd</sup> acre) woodland garden on the Wirral peninsula, which includes a number of mature camellias, now about thirty years old. The grass paths between the trees and shrubs have been replaced with woodchips. After six months or so, these are sufficiently rotted to mulch the beds, and are replaced with fresh material. As an incidental benefit we have found that the mulch provides an effective growing medium for stray seeds.

Three years ago we began to notice a number of evergreen seedlings in the garden. After identifying and weeding out the laurels, we had about a dozen camellia plants left, which are now sturdy shrubs varying from 9-18" in height. Since then each year produces up to half a dozen new seedlings. This summer the oldest of these have produced flower buds and we look forward to seeing whether these plants are of any merit. So far as I can tell they are all *Camellia japonica* seedlings, and not *C. x williamsii*.

It is interesting to think that this may be due to global warming, even this far north and certainly it did not occur during the previous thirty five years we have lived here.

Mrs Muriel Patterson

Prenton, Merseyside

Dear Editor,

Can members please help me locate an elusive book title that I am seeking? Any leads would be much appreciated and pursued.

Title: 'The Species of Rhododendron in Japan' ~Author: Ohta Published: 1981 Publishers: Seibundo Shinkosha Publishing. No ISBN identification available.

Please send any details of source and/or price to:

John Sanders, Devon

ewenique@eclipse.co.uk

## BRANCH REPORTS

### South East Branch

Barry Haseltine

#### A ROLE FOR THE GROUP IN HELPING TO IDENTIFY PLANTS IN HISTORIC GARDENS

This Spring I was contacted by staff from no less than three very diverse gardens, asking for help in identifying plants from our genera of Rhododendrons, Camellias and Magnolias. The first request came from Crawley Borough Council, through their staff at Tilgate Park, on the South West side of Crawley. Soon after, I was contacted by some landscape architects, who had a project to advise on the clearance and partial restoration of a rather neglected garden dating back to early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, at Shirley, Croydon. Then, before having really digested the task arising from the first two requests, I had a call from the Curator of Ashdown Centre, responsible for the large estate that is open to the public on Ashdown Forest. The three requests were very different, in that Tilgate wanted to identify as many as possible of the rhododendrons in the garden, the landscape architect wanted basic help in dealing with a rhododendron jungle and the Ashdown Centre was curious to know something of the plants that had been put in along an elaborately trained, but long since derelict, stretch of woodland river on the west side of the forest, with a view to making it more accessible to the public.

The garden at Shirley was in the grounds of what is now retirement accommodation but it had been the home of the Reverend Wilks, Vicar of Shirley, a former Secretary of the RHS, and the breeder of the Shirley poppy; it seems that he built the house, 'The Wilderness', now called **Hall Grange**, early in the twentieth century, on seven acres of Shirley Common, towards the top of a hill.



Photo: Barry Haseltine

This is an attractive but unlabelled rhododendron. Perhaps 40 years old or so. Can anyone identify this plant? **Suggestions of its identity to the Editor please.** (Address on page 3)



Despite this, it has a bog garden that is still treated with great respect, being a 'Site of Metropolitan Importance'; drier weather, particularly in the last year, has left the bog element of it rather difficult to spot! Originally, and no doubt when the garden was well cared for, the basic land was heath; now it is mainly rhododendron woodland with walks, one of which is a very colourful Azalea walk, and odd clearings surrounded by banks of very tall trees, which do at least shield the estate from the domestic housing that has come right up to the boundaries.

Our bulletin editor and I visited the garden on 3<sup>rd</sup> May with the landscape architect; it was pretty clear, from the outset, that identification was not going to be the main task, as, although few of the rhododendrons were in flower, they looked very likely to be mostly ponticum. There were exceptions, including one lovely scented peach coloured rhododendron, a very obvious *R. 'Sappho'*, and *R. 'Cynthia'* and one or two 'Loderi' type seedlings. The basic request became agreeing what was ponticum, so that massive clearance could be undertaken in conjunction with limited development, largely centred around rebuilding and extending the retirement accommodation, which does not now meet statutory requirements. John Rawling made a second visit to check on the ponticum, when a spray can was used to mark areas for clearance! The landscape architects, or perhaps their clients, seemed very pleased with our help, to the extent that we received a very welcome cheque to supplement branch funds.

**Tilgate Park**, partly running alongside the M23 south of Crawley, has an old garden that was laid out soon after the house was built in 1880; unfortunately, the house fell into serious decay after the last family to live there left in 1938 and it was demolished in 1970. The original development was by the Ashburner family, but by marriage it soon passed to the Nix family, who were friends with Colonel Messel of Nymans. The Ashburners were merchants from Massachusetts, no doubt explaining the now very large American species trees in the garden. The grounds are open to the public and provide a fine recreational facility for Crawley residents. The Branch was approached in the Spring with a request to assist the staff with identification of some of the rhododendrons that are a major feature of the Park. Mike Robinson and I spent a full morning towards the end of May walking around with two of the staff of Crawley Borough Council, one of whom had added a large number of new plants about 20 years ago, when he had a previous job there. Unfortunately, some of the labels had disappeared, so those plants were on the list for identification, too. It was interesting to see how the new plants had developed over the 20 years – some had grown well, others had barely moved and there was evidence of the death of others.

There is a good mixture of hybrids and species rhododendrons, and there is plenty of evidence to show that the other Sussex Gardens, such as Leonardslee and Nymans had passed on seedlings of their crosses. There are old large *R. barbatum*, *R. argipeplum* and *R. niveum*. According to Anne Boscawen, many of the plants are from the 'Chinamen' grown from seed collected by Wilson in Szechuan between 1899 and 1905.

The show of flowers in the Park is most impressive and the garden can be highly recommended for several visits over the flowering period of rhododendrons camellias and

magnolias, as well as for the many fine species trees, although there had been more, but some had unfortunately succumbed in the 1987 gale.

The final visit was as different from the first two as each of those was from the other. There was a large part of Ashdown Forest that, for nearly 400 years, had been outside the control of the Conservators, because it had been allowed private status – it was **the land of Chelwood Vachery**, a large estate that used to be owned by the Nettlefolds of GKN screw fame.

When the house was converted into flats a few years ago, about half of the land was returned to the control of the conservators, the other half remaining with the Vachery. The part that came back into public use had become very overgrown, but there are a few paths through it, and the present management would like to make it more accessible to the public. There are a large number of interesting trees and rhododendrons in a valley area that has an elaborate system of weirs, sluices and small lakes on a trained river passing along the valley floor. There are not a huge number of rhododendrons in the valley, but a dozen or so were 'Loderi's, two of which had deeper markings than the known clones and will be propagated. There was an interesting hybrid close to *R. griffithianum*, and a hybrid of *R. wardii*, the ubiquitous *R. 'Sappho'*, but little else that could be identified. However, if opened up a bit, the area would be very attractive for walkers.

A cascade of imported rocks (apparently brought by train along a specially constructed branch line) runs from the remaining private area down to the river, a very extensive valley rock garden that is heavily planted with rhododendrons and other plants, now sadly very overgrown. Again, there were no obviously named varieties, but the whole gave a very colourful effect.

It was pleasing to find that there are people or organisations that are prepared to seek help through the Group, and the South East Branch was very pleased to have had the opportunity to help. There are likely to be follow-up visits next year.

### **Lakeland Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Society**

*Fred Tattersall*

On Saturday 10th September we held a joint meeting with The Scottish Rhododendron Society at The L H S Holehird Gardens. The first workshop was taken by Alan Clark who discussed the propagation of Rhododendrons and the selection of plant material for making cuttings. Members visited the garden to take cuttings and then made their way to the Potting Shed for further demonstrations.

A similar format took place for the second workshop when Shelagh Newman discussed the propagation of Hydrangeas and their suitability for Rhododendron Gardens.

Much knowledge was gained by all members and we were very grateful to our speakers.

Lunch was then taken followed by a Plant Auction and members could then explore the gardens on their own.

In the evening Dinner was taken at a local hotel and then Patrick Gordon Duff Pennington gave a most amusing talk about his life and Muncaster Castle.



## MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

**Your subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup> November** and I enclose a payment slip to make payment a little more convenient! For those who do not pay by standing order please take note and act accordingly.

My address is Highlands House, East Bergholt, Suffolk, CO7 6UP. Tel 01206 293385 Fax 01206 299224 e-mail sales@placeforplants.co.uk

**Don't Forget  
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**We are delighted to welcome the following new members:**

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## NOTICES

Pat Bucknell, Hon Secretary

The 2006 Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2006 in the Garden Room, Hillside Centre, R.H.S. Garden Wisley. At 2.00p.m. There will be a short Garden Walk in the morning.

Philip Evans has agreed to become Vice Chairman. Philip has given many years of service and expertise to the Committee and is Editor of our excellent Yearbook.

Pam Hayward has agreed to become our Yearbook Production Manager.

We still have a vacancy for a Tours Organiser.

Chip Lima has efficiently organised the sales of seed for the last two years, but will be unable to continue doing so in 2007. A New Convenor of the Group's Seed Bank will be needed. The Chairman will be drawing up a job description with a list of equipment and facilities required. Anyone who might be interested could contact Mike Robinson, Tel. 01342 822745 or email mlarob@hotmail.com for details

### Officers.

Rupert Eley has now taken over as Membership Secretary from Miranda Gunn; Miranda was our super efficient Membership Secretary for five years and remains on the Committee as Chairman of Wessex Branch.

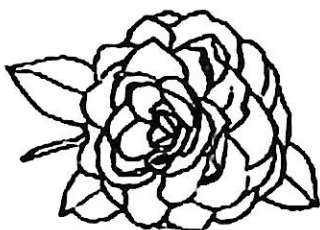
### Committee Members - A vacancy

Dr. R. L. A. Jack TD is due to retire from the Committee after his present three-year term. He has given many years of service to the Committee and now wishes to retire.

**A nomination form is enclosed** Please come forward yourself or nominate someone, making sure he/she agrees; a proposer, a seconder and a brief horticultural history of the nominee are all that are required.

Please telephone the Chairman on 01342 822745 or the Hon. Secretary on 01503 220215 if you require any further details.

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2005

Date/Time	Organiser	Location	Event	Contact
<b>November</b>				
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
12th	NW & N.Wales	Liverpool Uni Vet.Dept, Neston	Talk by Ian Sinclair "Plant collecting in the Pacific NW of USA"	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
26th	South West Branch	Rosemoor	Kenneth Cox, talking on "The Riddle of the Tsang Po Gorges"	Alun Edwards 01272 343324
26th	South East Branch	OA room Ardingly College	Talk by John Gallagher on "The wonderfulworld of Camellias"	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
<b>December</b>				
13th	Lakeland Rhododendron C & M Society		Talk by Mike Swift from Torosay Castle	Fred Tattersall 015394 43963
<b>2006</b>				
<b>January</b>				
14th	NW & N.Wales	TBA	Talk by Morna Knottenbelt on "The Rhododendrons of Bidston Hill"	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
24th	Lakeland Rhododendron C & M Society		Annual Dinner at the Windermere Hydro	Fred Tattersall 015394 43963
<b>March</b>				
14th	<b>Group</b>	<b>RHS</b>	<b>Group Committee</b>	Pat Bucknell 01503 220215
<b>April</b>				
18th Apr. - 4th May	<b>Group</b>	<b>Group Tour to Canad &amp; W. USA</b>		Arena Travel 08700 737 767 More Info from Mike Robinson
21st - 23rd	NW & N.Wales	South Wales	Branch Visit	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
22nd - 23rd	<b>RHS + SE Branch</b>	Borde Hill Gardens	<b>Main RHS Rhododendron Competition &amp; Branch Magnolia Competition</b>	<b>RHS Show Secretary</b> Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
29th - 30th	NW & N.Wales	Ness Gardens	Branch Show	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
<b>May</b>				
7th	NW & N.Wales	Members Gardens	Branch visit	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
7th	Wessex Branch	Ramster	Branch Show	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422

### Do visit the Group's Web-site

[www.rhodogroup-rhs.org](http://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org)

Graham Mills, our 'webmaster' has indicated below some of the exciting aspects available:

The Group's web site is an ever-expanding resource concerning the classification, cultivation and care of plants in the three genera for enthusiasts whether they are beginners or experts. We are progressively building a database of information and photographs on species and hybrids within all three genera, which can be accessed via the site. At the current time the database covers in excess of 400 individual plants.

As well as covering administrative information about the group such as current contact details and Branch information the web site provides details of the various services that are uniquely available to members of the group:-

**Seed List** - Each year the seed list is published on the web at the same time as the list is posted to members. Details of the seeds available may be perused and the whole list and ordering details downloaded

**Surplus Plants** - Here you will find a number of plants that are surplus to the current owners needs which you may purchase from them, some will cost you nothing!

**Publications** - Details of the various books that may be purchased via the group at discounted prices to members.

**Events** - Full details of forthcoming events organised by the group and its branches are provided.

Finally but not least we carry any interesting news items that involve our three genera such as newly introduced species and controversies such as the flowering of *Magnolia* 'Vulcan' in the U.K.