



# the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

Bulletin 117 / March 2015 / [www.rhodogroup-rhs.org](http://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org)



## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

The mild autumn weather, at least in Southern England, brought forward flowering by weeks if not months. Whilst I remember seeing *Rhododendron* 'Nobleanum' flowering at Bodnant in the autumn some years ago, I have never seen it flowering here before January. In November, *R.* 'Nobleanum Venustum' and 'Nobleanum Album' treated us to weeks of flowering right through Christmas and up until the frosts of January, with more to come in early spring. If these were May flowering plants, you would pass them by, with their relatively poor flower trusses, but in the winter, they really do brighten up the garden, especially the pink and white clones. Our 'Red' form, possibly the same as 'Coccineum' came from John Slocock's Charles Hill Nursery many years ago and is a less satisfactory plant, being weaker and with flowers which are deep pink rather than red. Does anyone have a better clone? The Paradise series of *Camellia sasanqua* also flowered earlier than usual, and we even had spring flowering camellias displaying well during December too. So I thought we were off to an early start to the season, but of course the recent cold spell has slowed it back to 'normal', whatever 'normal' is nowadays.

But we can look forward to a good spring! Flower buds have ripened well after those hot weeks in August, so with luck there will be plenty of colour in the garden and on the show benches. The competitions around the country are growing in stature year by year, and display a wonderful array of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. Do look at the calendar on the back page and make a point of attending some of the competitions to study the flowers and meet up with like-minded enthusiasts. Even better, why not try your hand at exhibiting some of your own blooms for the first time. This year we have added new novice classes at Wisley so there's an even greater chance of a prize. Please ask if you would like help to get started. Details and schedules are available to download from our Group website.

As well as the competitions, we have arranged some excellent visits around the country to tempt you away from home. I hope many of you will be attending your local Branch events or even neighbouring Branch events, which all look excellent this year, but there are also some more major events further afield. First up is a whole Group visit to Tim Whiteley's Evenley Wood Garden in Northamptonshire on 17th April. We are sure for a treat here, in this large plantsman's garden belonging to a former member of the RHS Woody Plant Committee. Hopefully, both



*Camellia sasanqua* 'Paradise Glow'

Photo: Russell Beeson

the *Magnolia* collection and the extensive underplanting of bulbs will be at their peak.

The 3 day mini tour at the end of May, that Judy Hallett has planned around our AGM at Bodnant, has proved very popular with members, and bookings are superb – probably our largest gathering ever! Details are on the website and there is still time to

book, but accommodation in the area may be difficult. The Group is also holding promotional stands at two RHS events this spring, firstly at the RHS Malvern Spring

Festival 7–10 May. Here we should be positioned next to the International Camellia Society stand, so we can help each other, and hopefully gain more members in this under-represented area of the country. On 19–21 June, we will be at a new event at Wisley called 'All About Plants'. This is gearing up to be a large event, showcasing the works of specialist Groups and Societies, and as a Group we will be able to sell plants, so I am hoping there may still be some late flowering plants around! Offers of help to man these events would be very welcome, and we should be able to provide free show tickets in exchange for a few hours on our Group stand. Please contact me if you are able to help.

We will start our Centenary celebrations at Bodnant this spring, to mark the founding of the Rhododendron Society in 1915, but the main events will be next year to coincide with the Centenary of the first AGM. As the Bodnant AGM and mini tour has proved so popular, we are planning a four day event in the

*Continued overleaf*

Wisley area from 7–10 May 2016. In preparation for next year, we are launching our search for member's Top 10 varieties, from which we can publish the Group's Top 100 Rhododendrons. As well as being an interesting exercise for our members, which will reflect our current tastes, I am hoping it will be of interest to the wider Press and gain us some useful publicity. Please take the time to send in your entry, and don't forget to photograph your best plants while in flower this spring.

As I write, we are awaiting a decision from the Charity Commission regarding our application to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Becoming a charity will make us focus on what we do for our members and the wider community. The importance of plant research, education and conservation of our plants grows every day, and this is likely to give us more to think about than just our member services, shows and visits. But as a committee, we would like to know what you as members would like from us, and from the Group, so that we can direct our energies in the best possible way. With this in mind we are launching a membership survey, which really won't take you very long to complete, but which will provide us with valuable information so we can develop the Group better. We would love you to take part in this survey and give us your views.

So, a busy and colourful spring is on its way. Enjoy all your favourite rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias, and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible around the country.

*David Millais*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### AGM Wednesday 27th May at 2.30 and mini-tour

The Group AGM will be held at the Hayloft Restaurant, near the world famous Bodnant Garden, on 27 May and we hope as many members as possible will join us to mark the start of our centenary year.

We are delighted that over forty members have already registered to attend the AGM and some / all of the garden visits. Although there is now no more accommodation available at The Quay hotel we would welcome more members to join us: why not stay at one of the local inns, or take a self-catering cottage? Full details of the AGM and tour can be found on the Group website.

We have a list of those staying at the Quay but if you are staying elsewhere or coming as a day visitor, please make sure Judy Hallett has your contact details (email address is fine). A detailed programme, and costs for individual components will be sent to everyone. There will be a charge for garden entries and speakers which will not exceed £50 per head.

**If you are just planning to come the AGM, and would like to join us for lunch beforehand at The Hayloft restaurant (£15) please let Judy Hallett know.**

#### Itinerary

■ **26th May** Visit to Plas Cadnant guided by Ivor Stokes

Late afternoon: arrive at Quay Hotel.

Dinner followed by talk given by Bleddyn Wynn-Jones of Crûg Farm Plants.

■ **27th May** Tour of Bodnant garden with the assistant head gardener.

Buffet lunch at Hayloft Restaurant

#### 2.30pm AGM at Hayloft Restaurant

Late afternoon: tour of Bodnant Garden's propagation area.

Dinner at Quay Hotel followed by a plant sale – please bring some with you!

■ **28th May** Visits to Aberconwy Nursery (run by alpine plant specialists Keith and Rachel Lever) and Crûg Farm Plants.

Lunch at a local hostelry for those who wish.

■ Don't forget to bring waterproofs and stout footwear.

■ Bring National Trust membership cards to avoid entrance fee at Bodnant.

Other gardens to visit in the area:

- Portmeirion, especially The Gwilt
- Plas Newydd
- Plas Maenan
- Bodrhyddan
- Plas Brondanw

Colin Mugridge has kindly offered members the opportunity to visit his garden (Pen-Y-Craig, situated 3 miles south of A55 outside the village of Tremeirchion) on either the morning of Monday 26 May or the afternoon of Thursday 28 May. The garden, built on the side of a limestone quarry with pH7.4, was started fifteen years ago. Colin has over 300 rhododendrons, together with some camellias and magnolias. Those wishing to visit on either occasion are requested to let Judy Hallett know so that Colin has an idea of how many to expect.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

*Peter Furneaux*

I need your letters, reports from Branch events and articles.

**The copy date for the next Bulletin No.118 is Friday 12th June 2015**

Please send your contributions to:  
email: [peterfurneaux@gmail.com](mailto:peterfurneaux@gmail.com)  
or post to: Peter Furneaux

Lucton Court, Lucton, Herefordshire HR6 9PQ  
Transparencies, digital images or line drawings will be accepted for illustrations.



Photographic Competition entry by Jim Stephens  
*Rhododendron 'Bergie Larson'*





Part of the garden at Pen-Y-Craig

Photo: Colin Mugridge

If you have any queries about the tour, contact Judy Hallett 01981 570401 or [judy.hallett@gmail.com](mailto:judy.hallett@gmail.com). For queries about the AGM contact Barry Haseltine, [barry.haseltine@which.net](mailto:barry.haseltine@which.net).

The Agenda for the AGM will be sent to those who have registered to come, whether staying at the Quay Hotel or elsewhere, by email nearer the time of the meeting and it will also be posted on the website.

You may have seen Bodnant Gardens featured on the recent BBC *Great British Garden Revival* programmes; don't miss the opportunity to see it for yourselves this May in the company of fellow members, before hearing more about Group activities at the AGM.

## Garden visit

### By Kind Invitation.....

**W**e are most fortunate to have been invited to visit Evenley Wood Garden, owned by Mr and Mrs Tim Whiteley. Tim is a true plantsman and was on the RHS Woody Plant Committee for many years. Full details of the garden can be seen at: [www.evenleywoodgarden.co.uk](http://www.evenleywoodgarden.co.uk)

Our visit is scheduled for Friday 17 April 2015 starting at 10.30am with coffee, then a tour of the woodland led by Tim and his gardener, followed by a light lunch, to be served in the woodland pavilion. There is no charge for the visit; the cost of lunch, payable on the day, will not exceed £10.00. After lunch we are welcome to spend more time in the garden.



The azalea glade in EvenleyWood

Photo: Evenley Gardens

Evenley Wood, a 60 acre garden, has a large collection of magnolias, camellias and rhododendrons. In a predominately

alkaline area this garden enjoys a band of acid soil, providing the opportunity to grow our genera. There are 130 magnolias in the wood, which should be looking good at the time of our visit. Our Group, led by Maurice Foster, helped to establish some of the magnolias in the garden.

Please contact me as soon as possible if you would like to come to Evenley Wood (Evenley, Northamptonshire NN13 5SH). Tim has kindly offered to share his buggy with 4 less energetic members so let me know if you would like to use this facility. If you would like a lift to the garden let me know and I will endeavour to put you in touch with someone who lives in your area. Don't miss this opportunity to see an excellent collection of our genera!

*Judy Hallett*

[judy.hallett@gmail.com](mailto:judy.hallett@gmail.com) Telephone: 01981 570401  
The Old Rectory, Thruxton HR2 9AX

## RCMG Membership Survey

**I**t would help the Committee immensely in planning future developments/activities for the Group if we had a clearer view of your interests and desires.

Previously, the cost of contacting a large enough percentage of our membership to be significant has always been too expensive but technology in the form of the Internet has transformed the situation and it is now possible to mount surveys on the web fairly easily and at low cost.

We have therefore developed a questionnaire which we believe will give us some extremely useful information, and will help the Committee develop the Group to the benefit of its members.

We would therefore appreciate it if you would complete this questionnaire which you will find here:

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

We have timed completion and it should take less than 5 minutes, unless you provide very full responses to some of the questions, which we would encourage.

Your responses will be collected anonymously and the results of the survey will be published in the Bulletin and on the website so you can see your fellow members' views.

*Graham Mills*

### GROUP WEBSITE

*Steve Lyus & Graham Mills*

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

## Seed List

**B**y the time that you read this the Group Seed List will have been available for some time on our website. It is intended to keep the list open all year with updates to the list as seed becomes out of stock. First come, first served!

## Member's Photographs

The winning entries from the 2014 competition are on the home page of the website. With the peak of the flowering season for our three genera about to occur, now is the time to get your camera out and see if you can win this year's competition.

## Centenary

Activities with respect to the Group's Centenary will be shown on the website, so keep checking back to see what is happening.

## 100 FAVOURITE RHODODENDRONS CHALLENGE

As you are probably aware by now, 2016 is a very special year for the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group as it marks the Centenary of the first Annual General Meeting of the Rhododendron Society, the forerunner of the Group we have today. The Centenary Year will be launched at the 2015 Annual General Meeting to be held at Bodnant on 27th May. There are various events being planned for next year to celebrate the Centenary which we hope you will all get involved in and enjoy.

To begin the commemorations of these 100 years we are planning to create a list of the Group's 100 Favourite Rhododendrons, compiled from voting lists contributed by our members. So, we would like you to think about your TEN favourite rhododendrons. I know that it will be an extremely difficult task to confine your list to just ten, with all those thousands to choose from, so it will be necessary to focus your mind on those outstanding plants that you grow now that you would not like to be without, or maybe a rhododendron that you loved once and were sad to lose, or a bloom that you have admired on the show bench, or even a rhododendron that you covet, that is growing in someone else's garden! You can choose species or hybrid rhododendrons, including deciduous or evergreen azaleas and vireyas. Please remember that your hybrid choices must have been registered. If you are unsure about this, please do not hesitate to contact me so that I can check for you. You don't have to worry about putting them in any priority order – I know how hard it will be just to get your list down to ten names. You may only submit one list of ten names; subsequent lists will be disregarded, so think carefully! You will have until 31st July 2015 to submit your entry form, but you need not wait until then if you have already made up your mind how to vote.

If you have supplied the Group with an email address, you will receive a voting form via email which you will be able to fill in and return to me. If you do not have access to email, a printed copy of the form has been included with this Bulletin with information about where to send it once you have completed it. When the lists have been returned, the results will be collated and from them our combined 100 Favourites will be established. The Top Ten Species, Top Ten Hybrids and, ultimately, the overall Top Ten Rhododendrons chosen by members will play an important part in our Centenary publicity.

As a further bonus of this Centenary project, we are aiming to get really good photographs on the Group website of as many of the chosen 100 plants in bloom as possible, which is why we are launching this mission at the start of the 2015 flowering season. There are many good images already on the website, but where there is a shortfall it would be helpful to know if you have photographs of your chosen rhododendrons that we could add to the website to continue to improve this valuable resource. The entry form has a Yes/No box for you to indicate if you might be able to provide a digital image. If we need your help with this you will be contacted once the 100 Rhododendrons for the Centenary have been established. Please do not submit photographs with your entry forms. If you are unable to supply photographs, please do not let that put you off taking part.

In the meantime, if you have taken the time to photograph your chosen rhododendrons, why not give some thought to entering them in the 2015 Group Photographic Competition, you will find details on the Group website. This will be another

way to add to the Group database, and, you never know, there could be a prize waiting for you too!

I really hope you will take part in this project whether you are a UK member or overseas. Your help with creating this list will contribute to the creation of a legacy for the next 100 years of the Group and a true record of what we believe to be the very best rhododendrons for the Centenary.

Sally Hayward

## PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Steve Lyus

### 2014 Photographic Competition

The response to Pam Hayward's request for photos of our plants that have recently had AGMs awarded or confirmed has been fantastic! Thank you to the 27 members who provided some amazing pictures. I know one shouldn't single out particular individuals, but the number and quality of those Philippe de Spoelberch has provided is truly amazing, and everyone an AGM! I really must get to see his gardens in the spring.

In total, our 2014 cohort includes 137 Rhododendrons (60 species, 75 hybrids, 2 vireyas; 58 AGMs), 20 Magnolias (10 AGMs) and 15 Camellias (5 AGMs).

The 2014 winners are:

#### Rhododendrons

Class 1: Rhododendron species: *Rhododendron rex* ssp. *rex* entered by Jens Birck

Class 2: Rhododendron hybrids: *Rhododendron* 'Exbury Angelo' entered by Russell Beeson

Class 3: Vireya species and hybrids: *Rhododendron* 'Dawn Chorus' entered by George Hargreaves

#### Magnolias

*Magnolia sprengeri* var. *diva* 'Copeland Court' (with *M.* 'Purple Breeze') entered by Philippe de Spoelberch

#### Camellias

*Camellia sasanqua* 'Paradise Glow' entered by Russell Beeson (See front cover for image)



*Rhododendron* 'Exbury Angelo'

Photo: Russell Beeson





*Rhododendron 'Dawn Chorus'*

Photo: George Hargreaves



*Rhododendron rex ssp. rex*

Photo J.C.Birck



*Magnolia sprengeri var. diva 'Copeland Court' (Left) with M. 'Purple Breeze' (Right)*

Photo: Philippe de Spoelberch

## MEMBERS NOTE

Steve Lyus

### Trial of Ericaceous Peat-Free Compost

Dalefoot Composts have developed a range of composts over the last few years, based on a blend of bracken and sheep's wool. This means it is guaranteed peat-free and, as a result of these two ingredients, has these useful properties:

- Rich potash base
- Slow-release nitrogen fertiliser
- Water retention based on natural products
- Kind to your hands from the lanoline

They have recently produced an Ericaceous mix and are offering our members a free bag to trial this year. Ideally we should undertake a proper trial against other peat-free competitors, but we have found that as the variability of the quality of the content of the others is so variable, even within a brand, there does not seem to be much point in involving the others!

So, if you would like a free trial bag for this season please email me at: [slyus@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:slyus@yahoo.co.uk) with your name and RCMG region and I will arrange for a delivery into each of our regions. (You could probably collect from Rosemoor, Millais Nursery or Ness Gardens. I will email you when and where you can collect.) Your only commitment is to let me know at the end of the season of your experience. I have been using it for the last two years and think it is a wonderful mix.

Dalefoot would particularly like to know whether you will buy their product in future. They are also prepared to modify the mix if there are any characteristics that you think could be improved.

## OBITUARY

### The Hon Edward Boscawen

Edward Boscawen died on 13th January 2015 aged 93. Edward had a passion for rhododendrons, and many other plants, having been born in Cornwall at the family estate where he was one of five children. After a Cambridge engineering education that was interrupted by 7 years' service in the army, he became a civil engineer, with an inventive mind. He and his wife Anne bought The High Beeches in 1966 and they both worked tirelessly to restore and nurture it to its present pristine condition as one of the best rhododendron gardens in the UK.

Edward was a very active member of the RHS and our Group, having been on the committee, acted as a judge, lectured and shown at the main competitions of the Group and the RHS. His garden won many awards, indeed, at the last RHS and South East Branch show at Wisley, his garden took the award for 'Best in Show' with an excellent *Rhododendron primuliflorum*.

Edward was the founder Chairman of the South East Branch of the Group in 1977 and set it on its way to become one of the most active of the Branches. He remained very involved with the garden until age made it impossible and he suffered somewhat in his later years through hearing difficulties.

His knowledge and enthusiasm for our plants will be sorely missed.

Barry Haseltine

## Wessex Branch

**W**hen Mrs Miranda Gunn became Chairman of the Wessex Branch in 1997, following the retirement of the late Lady Adam Gordon, she began a successful 14 year term of office. During that time every Wessex Annual Show has been held at her home, 'Ramster' which is a splendid venue with the bonus of a walk round the beautiful grounds during judging, followed by a delicious tea at prize giving time! Not only that, but she has always hosted Branch committee meetings and other events every year.

As well as this hospitality, Miranda agreed to accommodate and nurture the Group's collection of Hardy Hybrid rhododendrons in the part of the grounds known as 'Ant Wood' and planting was done by Branch members in February 1999. The plants have grown well since then and bloom regularly and are there for all Group members to see.

We shall be sorry to see Miranda leaving the helm but there are so many other activities that keep her busy, not least her family. We are extremely grateful to Miranda and her husband Paul for their genial hospitality over the years and look forward to continuing our warm friendship with them and Ramster for many more.

*Malcolm Nash*

And the new Wessex Branch Chairman writes:

**I** was born in Haslemere, Surrey in an area surrounded by greensand where rhododendrons were always evident. Just seen on a simple walk up to Blackdown with my parents as a young child and later as a teenager delivering newspapers, these wonderful plants were fascinating to me.

I never really thought more than that until I was given three plants by Clair Robinson when I was first married and lived in his tied cottage along West End Lane, Haslemere. I tried to grow them where I was living but without success and gave them to my mother who was very green fingered. They developed into beautiful plants which roused my interest again. At the time I had a young family and was busy running my own business so I never had time to develop my love of them.

Later, I did acquire a few whilst living at Whitmore Vale in Grayshott, but my chance came when my wife and I moved to Pinecroft in West Sussex in late 1995. We have 3 acres of garden that had not been touched in over 26 years and was completely overgrown with ponticum, brambles and bracken, but the soil is, thankfully, greensand.

We started clearing the garden and acquiring our collection of the genus and it is now a true and everlasting passion for us both, especially showing them in the spring and meeting like-minded people!

The garden is still progressing and we hope to end up with one which provides something of interest for each of the four seasons.

*Andy Fly*

## South East Branch

**A** small but enthusiastic band of members from the South East, Wessex and New Forest Groups, met at Sheffield Park gardens on the 1st November, when it seemed as if most of the world had decided to go there that day as well!! To be fair to the rest of the world, it was warm and sunny, with the

colours in their autumn peak range! Some of the party had met for a convivial lunch in Horsted Keynes, before making the trip to the Gardens, when some found that they were being 'waved by' because the car park was full! These hardy souls were not put off, however, and parked on the road to join the rest part way through the walk.

It was certainly a good choice of date for the visit as there was a riot of colour from liquidambars, acers and a spectacular ginkgo. The water was reflecting blue from the sky and the rhododendrons, of which there are many huge stands at Sheffield Park, were fully budded and a rich healthy green – auguring well for the spring display, albeit that Sheffield Park is not noted for a great collection of plantsman's rhododendrons.

There are several circuits that one can take on a visit to the gardens and most of us took in the obvious routes and one around Upper Woman's Way Pond, where the whole character changes from parkland to shady woodland, and ending up at the foot of the slope up to the historic cricket pitch there, which we were told is being restored.

It was good to see so many of the public taking in the beauty of the garden, without expecting that too many of them would have had very much idea of what plants they were looking at – a slight problem with the garden is that there is a dearth of labels, so one cannot easily learn from being there.

All in all a successful outing – now for something for the spring!!

*Barry Haseltine*

## South West Branch

The Southwest group dates for visits are:

### ■ Wednesday April 15th

Tremough (Penryn) Campus, Falmouth University, Gill's Old Nursery & Woodland Garden, Penryn

### ■ Tuesday May 5th Knightshayes Court, Tiverton

### ■ Friday June 19th Kilmarth, Par, nr. St Austell and Lethyep, Lanreath

**T**remough, now Penryn, Campus was home to the Shilson family and then a convent school before becoming a joint campus for Falmouth school of Art, School of Mines, and Exeter university. Gill was head gardener to the Shilsons and he created Gill's Himalayan Nursery which was famous in its day for Himalayan plants. There is a walled garden, and new plantings of many different genera. The move to Carclew followed, which is where we will spend the afternoon. The woodland has reverted to nature, but there is a magnificent *Rhododendron magnificum* and other mature rhododendrons. Stout footwear will be necessary!

Knightshayes Court is a well known garden, formerly the home of the Heathcoat-Amorys and created by them and Michael Hickson. It is now in the hands of the National Trust. One of the greatest of Devon gardens and full of fascinating plants as well as those of our three genera, beautifully kept.

Kilmarth is a private garden, rarely seen, of 20 acres overlooking St Austell bay, and Lethyep is a nature reserve with many wild plants and native orchids. The varied habitat supports a great number of varieties of birds. This is a day of visits of general interest.

*John Marston*



## MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

**W**e welcome the following new members and hope they will enjoy the benefits of membership of our Group.

### UK

Dr Nuala Sterling (Chairman of the RHS Lily Group)  
Vermont House, Withers Lane, East Boldre, Brockenhurst,  
Hampshire SO42 7WX nualasterling@btinternet.com

Mr Gerry Edwards (Chairman of the RHS Fruit Group)  
24 Rodney Gardens, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 2RR  
gerryedwards@blueyonder.co.uk

Mrs M. A. Steele  
Holywell, Bratton Fleming, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 4SD  
steele.anne1@googlemail.com

### USA

Mr Jackson H. McCarter  
280 Trammell Road, Travelers Rest, South Carolina  
SC 29690 USA jacksonmccarter@yahoo.com

Mr Sidney Nisbet  
8409 South Ar 9 Hwy, Barrel Rock Road, Melbourne,  
Arkansas AR 72556 USA sidneynisbet@yahoo.com

Mr Lynn Marcy  
118 Detha Lane, Ringgold, Georgia 30736 USA  
mrlynn118@aol.com

## WANTED: A NEW HON. TREASURER

**T**he Group is looking for a new Hon. Treasurer. This is a great opportunity to become more closely involved in the running of the Group, and, as the current Treasurer, it has been extremely rewarding to serve on the Committee for over 25 years. You do not need to be an accountant (although it probably helps) but familiarity with book-keeping and the operation of bank accounts is important. The main things that the role involves are:

- Managing the Group bank accounts.
- Keeping records of income and expenditure.
- Operating the collection of membership subscriptions through Direct Debits (largely handled by an outside agency).
- Working with the Membership Secretary on the collection of membership subscriptions.
- Attending Committee meetings and keeping the committee up-to-date with the Group's finances. These are four times a year, usually in London, together with Skype meetings from home once a month. (Expenses for attending meetings are paid by the Group.)
- Producing year end income and expenditure accounts and balance sheets for submission to auditors and to the AGM.
- Producing budgets and recommending changes to the membership subscription rates.

If you would like to know more about what is involved please feel free to give me a ring.

Alastair Stevenson  
Hon. Treasurer  
01989 780285/07774 819022  
alastairstevenson@mpaconsulting.co.uk

## An important date for your diary!

### Sandling Park

is one of the legendary gardens located on the greensand in Kent. It is famed for its historic woodland gardens with significant plantings of trees and shrubs in natural settings and an important collection of rhododendrons.



Once again the garden will be open to the public for **one day** only from 10am–5pm

**Sunday May 10th 2015**

All proceeds will go to *Pilgrims Hospices* – a specialist palliative care charity. For details visit:

[www.pilgrimshospices.org/events/sandling-park-open-garden-2015-pilgrims-hospices/](http://www.pilgrimshospices.org/events/sandling-park-open-garden-2015-pilgrims-hospices/)

**Do take the opportunity to visit Sandling Park if you are able – you will not regret it !**

SANDLING PARK, SANDLING, HYTHE, KENT CT21 4HN

### Ramster Gardens

**Open daily 10am – 5pm**

**27th March – 14th June**

Over 20 acres of woodland garden, developed over the last century. Outstanding displays of camellias, magnolias, azaleas and rhododendrons.

Home of the Group collection of Hardy Hybrid Rhododendrons

◆  
**Ramster Embroidery and Textile Art Exhibition**

17th – 30th April

◆  
**Wessex Branch Show**

Sunday 10th May from 1pm

◆  
**Delicious light lunches and teas available**

Ramster, Chiddingfold, Surrey GU8 4SN

1.5 miles south of Chiddingfold on A283

Tel: 01428 654167

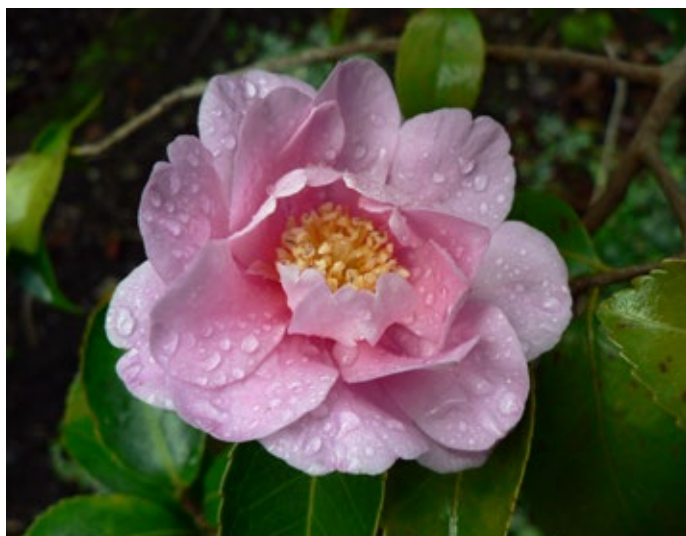
[www.ramsterevents.com](http://www.ramsterevents.com)



Dear Editor,

### Autumn flowering Camellias

Many times I have been told that autumn flowering camellias do not perform well in the UK. After growing them for over thirty years I believe the answer lies in a sufficiency of sunshine and warmth. This autumn and early winter has seen the best display I have witnessed and it may be coincidental that it was the warmest autumn since 1772 and that we have had few air frosts to damage the open flowers. At the same time, some of the spring flowering varieties have been producing flowers, including 'Jupiter', 'Takanini', 'Spring Promise' and an unnamed *Camellia japonica* seedling from 'Alba Simplex'. These are not varieties that normally produce early flowers, at least not here, near Chester.



*Camellia* 'Winter's Joy'

Photo: Angela Brabin

The true autumn flowering varieties started their display with *C. sasanqua* 'Hugh Evans'. This started in late September and continued through to the end of December, bearing hundreds of single red flowers. It is a prolific grower and needs plenty of space to expand. *C. sasanqua* 'Rainbow' followed shortly after and again bore large numbers of white-tinged pink flowers. More or less at the same time, some of the late Bill Ackerman's varieties started to flower. All of these have some *C. oleifera* in them, this species also having produced plenty of its small white flowers. A range of single reds, single whites, semi-double whites and some delicate pinks all flowered well. Some were from seed from a 'Winter's Charm' here in the garden and some were from seed that Bill sent to me in 2002. One of the best of these is a small, dark green leaved, very bushy upright plant with many small pink flowers and a big boss of stamens. If it keeps doing well I will consider giving it a name. Another species coming into flower in late December/early January is *C. yunnanensis*, with smallish white flowers. Bill's 'Winter's Joy', although suffering from bark split, has produced some lovely, relatively large pink flowers. Late to flower is *C. sasanqua* 'Narumigata' with large, white single blooms, coming out in December through into January. The only two *C. sasanqua* varieties not to flower well are both now in shady conditions – my trees keep growing!

However, perhaps the best 'doer' of all the autumn/winter varieties is *C. x williamsii* 'Bow Bells'. This starts in November/December and carries on until May or June. An air frost will knock off some flowers but as soon as the frost has gone a new crop appears. It is not my favourite pink hue but its flowering period makes up for that.



Seedling of *Camellia* 'Winter's Charm'

Photo: Angela Brabin

If you have a warm, sunny spot try some of those mentioned above. I am sure they will not disappoint.

Ted Brabin

Dear Editor,

### *Magnolia x foggii* the fog clears on a magnolia hybrid enigma

Browsing a well-known nursery's magnolia offerings, I came across an evergreen magnolia with rusty furry buds labelled *Magnolia x foggii* 'Allspice', a selected form of the strangely named hybrid, *M. x foggii*. As an obsessional collector of evergreen magnolias, I had to have it. I took it home and planted it in a not particularly sheltered spot in my North Devon garden. I stood back, admired it and waited to see what happened. It started flowering as a young plant at the end of April, and the flowers were a good white colour arising from the furry buds, and were spicily scented. The tree-like shrub grew away vigorously.



*Magnolia x foggii* 'Jack Fogg'

Photo: John Marston

I was intrigued by the name, and I tried to find out more about this seemingly hardy and robust plant. To my surprise, I found out that it was allegedly a cross between *Magnolia* (*Michelia*) *doltsopa* – fairly tender, and *M. figo* – very tender. I thought that there must have been some mistake, as the progeny was both robust and hardy. On further investigation, I found that this unlikely parentage was indeed the case. S. Christopher Early,



an American magnoliophile living in Georgia, USA, in the late 1960s had been experimenting with evergreen magnolia crosses, including crossing a *M. doltsopa* he had bought in California with his *M. figo*, using the latter as the seed parent. His *M. doltsopa* promptly died but the vigorous hybrid grew away well. His hybrid's flowers were not scented, unlike both the parents. Phil Savage, a prolific magnolia hybridist in Michigan, made a similar cross in the early 1970s but using *M. doltsopa* as the seed parent and this hybrid with scented flowers became known as *M. x foggii*.

It was named in honour of Dr John 'Jack' Milton Fogg Jr., a botanist attached to the University of Pennsylvania for most of his working life; first as an undergraduate, then as a lecturer in botany, and as director of the Morris Arboretum in 1959 when the University took it over. At that time, he began academic research into magnolias. Dr Fogg eventually became International Registrar for magnolias in 1966 and he also co-authored the 1975 edition of the *Checklist of Cultivated Magnolias* with Magnolia expert Joe McDaniel (who also has a magnolia named after him). His wife, Helen Fogg, had a vigorous *M. denudata* 'Sawada's Pink' x *veitchii* 'Peter Veitch' hybrid named after her, which is still available. In 1978 he co-founded the American Magnolia Society (now Magnolia Society International). He died in 1982 at the age of 83 and was giving talks right up to the end of his life. A few years after planting 'Allspice', I was given a cutting of John Gallagher's *M. x foggii* 'Jack Fogg', a selection with a marked pink edging around each tepal. This was planted in a more open spot and has been very vigorous and full of scented flowers produced from an early age over a long period in April and May. Both my *M. x foggii* forms survived our very cold winter in 2010/11 without dropping a leaf, whereas *M. doltsopa* was defoliated and died back badly. *M. figo* has not survived outside here except for last winter when we had no frosts.



*Magnolia x foggii* 'Jack Fogg'

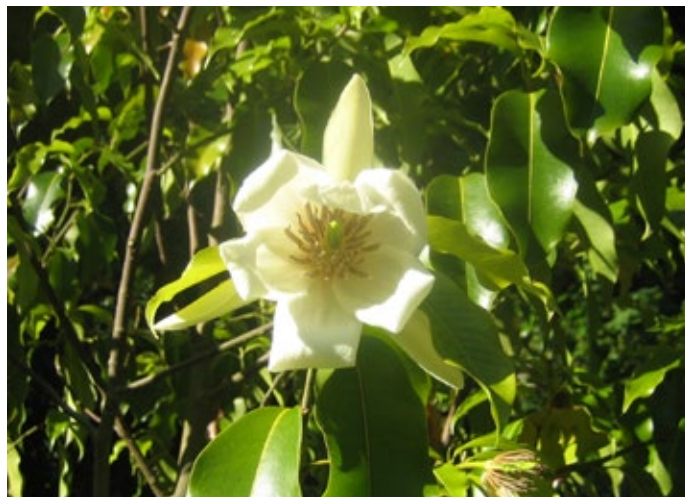
Photo: John Marston

This cross has twice been well documented, and so out of two tender magnolias have come hardy vigorous floriferous trees; an enigma, but one which has resulted in evergreen magnolias of easy cultivation and well worth growing.

John Marston

Dear Editor,

It seems surprising that an evergreen magnolia such as *Magnolia cathcartii* (formerly *Alcimandra cathcartii*), with such a wide distribution in the wild (from South West China and Vietnam through to Burma and North East India), should not have been introduced to cultivation in Europe before the twenty-first century. This is all the more so as it a tree of exceptional ornamental qualities with an elegant habit, beautifully coloured new leaves and an exquisite scent.



*Magnolia cathcartii*

Photos: Thomas Methuen-Campbell



Two trees planted at Penrice Castle in Spring 2007, from a 2003 Crûg Farm Vietnamese introduction, tell two contrasting stories. The first, with a more sunny aspect, initially grew vigorously and flowered beautifully in 2009; sadly it has declined since and now looks sick with a large amount of die back. The reasons for this can only be guessed at and one hopes that it is not

*Continued overleaf*



a sign of the tree being more difficult to cultivate than anticipated. The second tree, in a shady spot, has grown more slowly and has not flowered but looks extremely healthy. I recently saw a tree in Cornwall covered in seed and evidently growing well.

The scent of the flowers is hard to describe but certainly superior to the scent of any other evergreen magnolia. It is refined and musky without being overpowering.

When the IDS held a Summer Flowering Magnolia Day in 2011, *Magnolia cathcartii* was among the top eight recommended evergreen magnolias and I would urge anyone in the South West with enough space to plant one.

Thomas Methuen-Campbell

Dear Editor,

### Bloombux – the ‘non’ Rhododendron

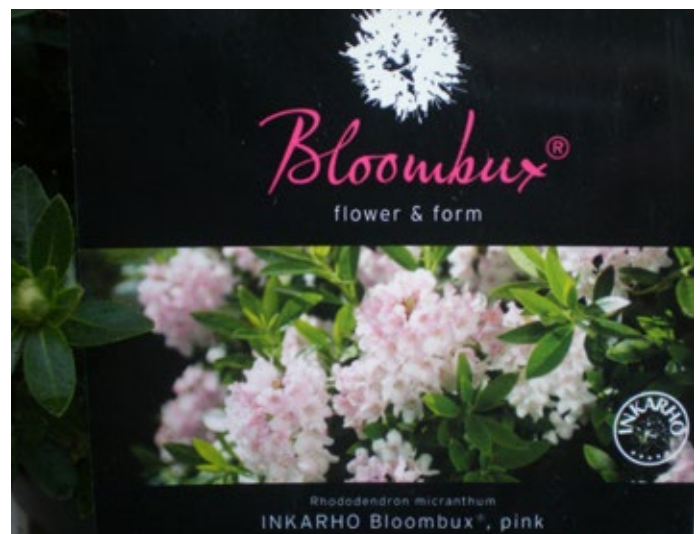
Over the past few decades, we have become used to more plants joining the ranks of our 3 genera; new species have been found in the Himalayas, ledums have joined rhododendrons, and michelias have joined magnolias, at least in the eyes of botanists. But now, in the name of marketing, we are about to ‘loose’ a Rhododendron!

As you may be aware, Box Blight (*Cylindrocladium buxicola* and *Pseudonectria buxi*) is a fungal infection which seriously affects box hedging and topiary. The symptoms start with spotty leaves, but the spores spread very rapidly in warm and humid conditions and any sort of control is difficult to manage. Pruning and clipping of the plant creates a wound through which infection can spread. Retail fungicides are not very effective at controlling the disease, and the RHS advice is to remove and destroy affected plants. As you can imagine, fewer and fewer people are planting box hedging!



Because box plants are often sold in large numbers for low hedging, the German nursery syndicate which raised the Inkarho lime tolerant Rhododendrons spotted a gap in the market. After many years of research, they have bred and selected a special clone of *Rhododendron micranthum* which they believe is a much more suitable modern-day replacement for traditional box hedging. Whether planted as a low evergreen hedge or in a patio container and trimmed into shape, it combines the excellent qualities of box with an abundance of fabulous soft pink flowers in late June which are loved by bumblebees and butterflies. The leaf colour and appearance is similar to box, and it can be trimmed straight after flowering. It also requires very little maintenance, and is able to grow in most normal garden soils.

But rather than selling a clone of *Rhododendron micranthum*, the syndicate are marketing these plants as Bloombux, - a name they have registered, and which they believe will sell better throughout Europe without the association of rhododendrons and their ‘fussy’ soils. Be prepared to see these plants in garden centres this spring, and if you look carefully on the label you’ll see the name *Rhododendron micranthum* in very small print! This interesting and distinctive late flowering plant is the only member of the Subsection Micrantha. It is a native of Northern and central China, and Korea and at elevations between 1600-3000m, where it grows to heights of 2 metres or more. It was first described in 1848, and collected by Ernest Wilson in 1901. It has terminal and axillary flower trusses at the end of the shoots, containing at least 20 small bell-shaped flowers. They resemble those of the subsection Ledum, so are very different from nearly all other rhododendrons.



Before long, perhaps rhododendrons will make their comeback in a formal situation, with little low hedges resembling box hedging, surrounding patches of bedding and vegetables!

David Millais



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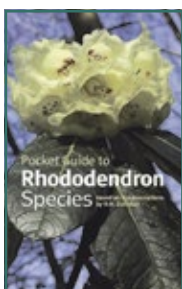
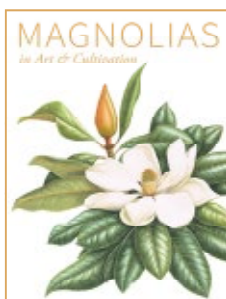
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