

the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales

Bulletin 128 / November 2018 / www.rhodogroup-rhs.org



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I have huge pleasure in announcing that His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales has agreed to become our first Patron. I have been aware for some time of The Prince's growing interest in our three genera, but especially Rhododendrons and Magnolias. He has planted these at Highgrove, Clarence House and his other properties, and has shown great interest in collections elsewhere too. We are truly honoured to welcome His Royal Highness to our Group, and hope that he may appreciate some of our publications, conservation work, plant collections and other activities. It is likely that he will remain Patron for a five year term, so that he can support other worthy organisations in due course. His Patronage is a welcome endorsement of our aims and mission, and lends great kudos to our organisation. In turn, I hope this will raise awareness of our Group, and help us to grow our membership further.

When I wrote my last introduction we were in the middle of the drought, and for much of the country this continued right through till mid-August when we experienced a few deluges. I have watched the forecasts of rain in the North-West and Scotland with envy, and indeed experienced myself some soaking rain in the Lakes in mid-September, but for much of the country, the ground is still far drier than normal. One advantage of all this heat, is that the soil is warmer than usual, and we have noticed some amazing root growth in the last few weeks, proving that autumn really is the best time for planting shrubs in the garden. At this time of year we can expect some rain to settle plants in the ground now, so they are properly established overwinter, and ready to bloom and shoot into growth next spring.

But for those plants that suffered in the summer drought, and some really did, nature is wonderful at showing the problem and helping with recovery. We had a large evergreen azalea in the garden that had only been planted a year, but was in a rain shadow and missed its watering. Before I realised what was happening, all its leaves had turned brown and then most fell off leaving only bare twigs. I thought it was dead, but after several really good soaks over next few weeks, I noticed new leaves appearing, and although a bit thin, it is well on the way to recovery. I am sure that many members will have plants that have struggled this summer, and you may be wondering how to manage sick plants with dying branches. Following my experience, I would recommend checking if there is any life left in those branches before cutting out dead wood. If you are left with 'half a plant', I would leave the live portion for the winter, and then coppice all branches hard back in February-March just before the sap rises. At the same time, give it a good granular feed, mulch well, and make sure it is well

Volunteers are needed from the membership, particularly to join the Committee, so replacing members who wish to retire.



Rhododendron sinofalconeri AC1213 from Laujunshan Wenshan, Yunnan
Photo: David Coombes

watered from April to June, and with any luck you will have a bushy re-generated plant within the season.

Thinking of next spring, our programme of Shows and events is coming along nicely, as outlined on the back page. 2019 marks the Centenary of Lionel de Rothschild purchasing the Exbury estate in the New Forest, and starting the superb gardens now known and loved by all of us. The Rothschild family is planning a series of events to mark the occasion as described by 'young' Lionel in the

last bulletin. These include a book launch, a display at Chelsea Flower Show, and a new Centenary garden to be opened in early June. Exbury

has also invited us to hold a late flower show and our AGM on the weekend of the 1st and 2nd of June, and I do hope you can join us for that special weekend. Now we have also been offered a really rare chance to visit the Rothschild archives in the City of London, where I understand there is some fascinating correspondence between Lionel de Rothschild and his horticultural friends, plant collectors and nurserymen. Numbers will be strictly limited, so please register your interest with our Secretary, Polly Cooke as soon as possible.

By popular demand, our Events Co-ordinator Christopher Legrand is busy organising a superb trip to gardens in and around the Lake District. Having just returned from there myself, I am sure you will all have a wonderful time visiting choice private and public gardens, often

Continued overleaf

with the backdrop of jaw-droppingly beautiful mountain scenery. Christopher gives further details in the bulletin, but do please book early as spaces are limited when visiting private gardens.

Following a detailed review meeting with the RHS, the RCMG has decided to withdraw support for the Shimane Azalea Project. This year's visits were all completed, but the commitment required by Polly Cooke and her volunteers to arrange and visit gardens across the South of England with Professor Kobayashi and his team proved greater than expected, especially considering the small number of azaleas sampled for DNA analysis. Professor Kobayashi cannot promise to visit the UK next spring due to budget constraints, so we felt we had no option but to refund grants kindly made to the Group to help with our expenses. There is still a lot of confusion with evergreen Azalea naming, so there is certainly scope for further investigation in the future.

I hope that you will agree that Barry Haseltine produced an excellent 2018 yearbook, at really quite short notice. Now that we have an Editorial panel in place, nearly all the articles for 2019 have been commissioned from experts around the world. Indeed a number of fascinating articles have already been submitted and the editorial reviews have started, so we are about 5 months ahead of last year! This is where I again appeal for volunteers to help get involved with the Group. You really will be made most welcome with whatever contribution you can make, whether that is by writing about something of interest within your own garden for the bulletin, writing a more detailed paper for the yearbook, or helping with its editorial processing. Offers to join the Committee are particularly welcomed. The more involved you are, the more you will gain from your membership, so do please put yourself forward so that we can achieve an orderly rotation of members on the Committee.

David Millais

Privacy and Membership information

As you will know, new General Data Protection Regulations became law earlier this year, ensuring everyone's right that their personal details are protected. The RCMG takes members' right of privacy seriously and maintains a secure database with limited access. Our full Privacy Policy can be seen online at www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/membership/privacy

We are grateful to those members who have responded to Pam Hayward's emails in the spring and have updated their contact details. We now have an up to date email mailing list, enabling us to send information to members about up and coming events. If you do not already receive occasional emails from the Group, you are missing out on some of your membership benefits! Please advise your email address so that we can add you to our list, by emailing our Membership Secretary at marie@placeforplants.co.uk with any data changes. Emails are free and enable huge cost savings in postage.

Under GDPR, the Group is no longer able to publish a membership list, which we know was valued in the past. However, we are keen to encourage friendship amongst members, especially within local branches, so that everyone can share in their enthusiasm for plants and gardens with other like-minded members. I am sure that Branch Chairmen will be able to develop this at a local level, but only with your permission.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION NEWS!

If you have recently renewed your membership subscription online you will have noticed some changes to the subscription rates.

Using a mailing house for both the Bulletin and the yearbook has enabled us to bring down postal costs to the point that they are practically the same regardless of the destination worldwide. So we have taken the opportunity to reduce our rates and simplify them all in one go! At the same time we have extended the choice for UK members to opt for electronic bulletins sent by email.

Overseas members who prefer a printed bulletin are the principal beneficiaries of this exercise and we hope this will encourage everyone to renew their membership once again. We value our overseas members enormously and hope to encourage more members globally.

Visit www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/membership/renewal/ to renew and you will find all the options presented much more clearly than before and with a simple pay online system that can be used with or without a PayPal account

UK payments by Direct Debit are greatly appreciated as this saves time and money for everyone, so do sign up if possible. A Direct Debit form is included with the UK renewal application form online and can be easily downloaded. Arrangements and rates remain unchanged. This payment is debited from your account annually on or around November 1st and will be tagged with the reference EAZYCOLLECT.

2018-19 Membership Subscription Rates (1st November – 31st October)

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Mailed Bulletins:

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Annual Overseas Subscription

Mailed Bulletins:

Payment by card/PayPal	£22.50
Payment for Three Years in Advance by card/PayPal	£60.00

Emailed Bulletins:

Payment by card/PayPal	£20.00
Payment for Three Years in Advance by card/PayPal	£60.00

Please contact the Membership Secretary by email (marie@placeforplants.co.uk) if you have any questions or you pay by Direct Debit and would like to change to emailed bulletins for environmental reasons.

Seed Donations

With the limits still placed upon us by the Nagoya Protocol, we remain reliant on members to help make a vibrant seed exchange a reality. Without the time and effort of a relatively small number of members who continue to support us, we could not have produced the varied and worthwhile lists we have managed since this situation arose and we are deeply grateful to all those donors, spread right across the world.

Perhaps this year more of us can find something to send to help us make the 2019 list just as interesting.

Please send your donations to:

Mrs Julie Atkinson, 184 Crow Lane East, Newton-le-Willows, St Helens, Merseyside WA12 9UA

and any questions to pam@woodtown.net

Appreciations

Iris Wright

To those members who knew Iris Wright and had met her you will be saddened to hear that she passed away on 5th August 2018 after a long and characteristically courageous battle with cancer.

Iris had an enormous zest for life and always gave her fullest energies to anything she became involved with.

We have been so very fortunate to have these energies directed towards our treasured group of plants for the past 46 years that she and her husband Brian have been members of the RCMG.

Iris had known for some time that her cancer was terminal, and I have no doubt that her strong Christian faith and the love of those around her gave her the strength to continue to look forward with a positive view and continue to enjoy the things she loved most – people! Witnessing her joy when being with people who shared her passion for gardens and our group of plants in particular, was a great privilege and one that serves as a reminder of the very purpose of the Group.

It is appropriate in this tribute to mention Iris's husband Brian. Again, known to many members of the Group, Brian was chairman of the South East branch and for many years a stalwart exhibitor at RCMG Shows, firstly at Vincent Square and more recently at Wisley and Savill gardens. He also wrote the show reports for the Bulletin, and Iris was the driving force behind all this activity. The interplay between them both when deciding which direction to put their energies will bring a fond smile to all who knew them.

For my own part I first met Iris in the early 1980s when as a young (19/20-year-old) man I was invited by Ted Millais to my first Wessex branch meeting at his house to hear a lecture given by Sir Peter Smithers on his garden at Vico Morcote in Switzerland. As you may imagine, I was keen to hear the lecture but was somewhat nervous of all the older, more experienced and knowledgeable members there – all of whom I had never met. I clearly remember being engaged in conversation by Iris who immediately took an interest in me as she did on subsequent occasions in those early

days. This fostered my enthusiasm and made me feel welcome, Iris introducing me to more people at each meeting. This memory has always stayed with me.

Within our group of plants, propagation is always a hot topic, it being a means of both to obtain and possess but also to share and enjoy. I shall always think of Iris in the latter category 'to share and enjoy'. In reference to propagation – yes, she was skilled in raising plants but her greatest gift was sowing the seed of pleasure, joy and friendship in others.

I wonder how many members of the group have like me benefitted from her 'seed sowing' over the years, a great gift and one which we should all try and emulate.

Rod White



Iris Wright and her husband Brian at the Savill Show this Spring.
Photo: Rod White

Dougge Betteridge

I first met Dougge at Exbury Gardens when I joined as Head Gardener in December 2005. He was working at Lover's Lane Nursery layering Rhododendron 'Bach Choir' a classic Rothschild hybrid and one of Dougge's favourites. After a long chat about the world of gardening we got onto the subject of propagation where he gently asked me if I knew or had ever layered Rhododendrons. I said I had but nothing more than placing a stone or sod of turf and a mixture of leaf mould and soil over the stem and waiting in vain to see what came of it. He kindly acknowledged my skills! But shortly afterwards went onto give me a master class in the art of layering Rhododendrons in this a near forgotten garden technique, that's kept Exbury's most noted collection of Rhododendrons in the public eye.

Continued overleaf

Dougie was passionate about everything he did, with a gentle and understated happy demeanour that could easily pass you by. He worked at Exbury for over sixty years starting in the layering fields producing Azaleas and Rhododendrons for the then Exbury Nursery in the 1950's. Working his way to become Head Gardener in 1970 until his official retirement in 1995. Dougie wasn't a man to retire as he loved to be outdoors being active and working, and soon negotiated a part time role as propagator layering Rhododendrons two days a week. He also loved growing vegetables and before long was back maintaining several gardens in the village, especially Upper Exbury, the home of Mr. Leopold de Rothschild. Here he helped create and develop the gardens with Mr Leo for over fifty years.

Dougie had a deep understanding and love of Rhododendrons and was a great expert especially when it came to the Rothschild hybrids. He was a driving force at Exbury, with Mr Edmund de Rothschild, when it came to competing. They were a tour de force as the records show for their competitiveness, dedication and appreciation for the RHS and Chelsea Flower shows, winning just about every cup and trophy and over time every class that they entered.

Many a good Rhododendron won an AM or AGM including Rhododendron 'Dougie Betteridge' (R. fortunei x R. Jalisco Group) getting an AM in 1980 and he was immensely proud of his late wife's Rhododendron 'Pearl Betteridge' (R. Damaris Group x lacteum) with its beautiful yellow flowering truss in spring.

He was a highly skilled hybridiser of Rhododendrons (having spent many an afternoon with him picking up some of the best kept secrets). He had a great eye for what would make a good cross and ultimately would take pride of place in the gardens of Exbury when it had earned its stripes!

Dougie enjoyed a good social event at Exbury Village Hall chatting about old times with friends, staff young and old and often in the company of Norma his companion of later years.

Dougie was awarded the RHS Associate of Honour by the RHS in 1992.

John Anderson

Keeper of the Gardens
Windsor Great Park



Dougie Betteridge. Photo: Stephen Betteridge

Corrections

Two errors crept into the last Bulletin (August 2018, No. 127).

The caption to the photo on p.8 of the Crown Estate's winning entry for the Leonardslee Bowl should have credited Russell Beeson, not Sally Hayward. My apologies to Sally and Russell.

Two photos of *Rhododendron heatheriae* appeared, one on the cover and the other in the article on the visit to Seaforde. I now realise that both trusses were photographed on the magnificent specimen at Mahee. The similar specimen of this species at Seaforde was still in bud when we visited. My apologies to Mrs Anthea Forde, owner of Seaforde, and Wang Liston who wrote the report of our visit.

It has also been pointed out to me that there is an error with the date of the Rhododendron Show at Rosemoor in April 2019 in the Year Book. The advertisement of the RHS Garden Rosemoor on the last page of the 2018 Yearbook should state that the National Rhododendron Show is on 27 & 28 April 2019.

Peter Furneaux

The Royal Horticultural Society Awards

Every year the RHS gives awards to people involved with rhododendrons and camellias who have made significant contributions. The selection process is carried out in conjunction with the RCMG Committees. In early summer, members of the Management and Plant Committees are invited by the Group Secretary to nominate suitable candidates for these awards. The members of the two Committees are then sent a voting paper, inviting them to vote. By early September voting has closed and the votes are counted. The winners' names and their original nominations are sent to our Chairman and to the RHS for ratification by the Woody Plant Committee at their meeting in late October. These results remain confidential until the RHS notifies the winning candidates, and arrangements are made for the presentation of the awards. The Awards for 2017 were slightly different. For some time, Group members have been asking for an Award for magnolias, so that those involved with all three of our genera are acknowledged. The RHS agreed and The Jim Gardiner Magnolia Cup became a reality for the 2017 Awards. The Awards process takes a long time and the votes cast for the 2018 awards have been counted and the names of the successful candidates are already with the RHS for ratification. The 2018 winners will be presented with their awards during the spring of 2019.

The Winners in 2017

The A J Waley Medal was awarded to Alison Clarke, taxonomist at Bodnant Gardens since 2005. Alison was responsible for creating the plant database for Bodnant Gardens. Identifying, curating and recording the various collections was a huge undertaking. In particular, Alison's commitment to the Aberconway/McLaren hybrid rhododendrons, until recently in decline, has resulted in the restoration of this collection, which now holds National Collection status.

The David Trehane Camellia Cup was awarded to Jim Stephens. A retired nurseryman and a long standing volunteer at Mount

Edgecumbe, Jim has spent over 20 years growing and photographing camellias. This award recognises his immense knowledge of and boundless enthusiasm for camellias and for the wonderful resource provided by his website: www.jimscamellias.co.uk

The Loder Cup was awarded to Pam Hayward. Pam is a long serving Group member who helps and supports the Group in many ways. Her commitment in serving 10 years as Yearbook Editor, brought improvements and a more modern layout to our esteemed annual publication. She sought articles from leading authors and experts across the world to achieve the varied and interesting content published every year. Pam continues to support the Group and various RHS shows. Her role as our Archivist is ongoing and she now serves on the Plant Committee. Her work and 'value to horticulture' is acknowledged through this award.

The above three Awards were presented to the winners during the Rosemoor Show in late April 2018.

The Rothschild Cup was not awarded in 2017 as no exhibits fulfilled the criteria. It is normally awarded to the best exhibit, in which rhododendrons predominate, shown to the RHS during that year.

The Jim Gardiner Magnolia Cup was awarded to Maurice Foster. Maurice grows an enormous range of magnolias, furthering the understanding and experience of varieties both new and old. He has a phenomenal knowledge of magnolias and an incredible enthusiasm for the genus. Maurice's contribution to our greater understanding of magnolias is recognised through this award.

Jim Gardiner presented Maurice with the Award at the Magnolia Study Day held in the Valley Gardens during April 2018 (see August 2018 Bulletin, no.127 for photos and details)

Polly Cooke

RCMG Outstanding Garden Scheme

In the March 2018 Bulletin you may recall the article proposing an Outstanding Garden Scheme for Rhododendron and Magnolia gardens. I am pleased to report that the details of the scheme have now been agreed and it is now open for applications.

This scheme furthers the goals of the RCMG by recognising public gardens that hold magnificent, well maintained collections of Rhododendrons and Magnolias. This will help prospective visitors, whether interested amateurs or professional, to find gardens they will enjoy. The scheme also provides additional publicity for the gardens, with opportunities for networking and collaborating.

It may seem odd that the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group only covers Rhododendron and Magnolia gardens in its Outstanding Garden scheme. The reason is that the International Camellia Society (ICS) already has a very successful Camellia Gardens of Excellence programme, which was started in the late 1990s and now boasts almost 50 gardens. Jennifer Trehane (an ICS Regional Director and RCMG member) suggested that the RCMG should have a similar scheme, and so the RCMG Outstanding Garden

Scheme was born, closely modelled after the ICS Gardens of Excellence programme (with permission).

Initially the scheme applies to gardens in the UK only, and any UK garden is welcome to apply. To receive the award, gardens must meet a set of challenging criteria, and may apply for either Outstanding Rhododendron Garden, or Outstanding Magnolia Garden, or both. Applications are assessed by the Plant Committee, including a visit to the garden.

The RCMG Outstanding Rhododendron Garden and Outstanding Magnolia Garden awards are valid for ten years, after which gardens must reapply in the same way as for the original award. Those gardens with the award are listed on the RCMG website, along with an overview of the garden and contact details. Those gardens which are well on their way to meeting the criteria, but not quite there yet will also receive a mention.

Nick Butler, Outstanding Garden Scheme Coordinator

Full details of the scheme and how to apply can be found on the website at www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/current/outstanding/. Any questions can be addressed to the Outstanding Garden Scheme coordinator (ogs.rcmg@gmail.com)

New Rhododendron Registrar.

Following the retirement of Dr. Alan Leslie, a new International Rhododendron Registrar has been appointed by the Royal Horticultural Society. Sharon McDonald joined the RHS in 2006 as an International Registrar, since when she has looked after several plant groups. She is currently responsible for conifers, Dahlia, Dianthus and now Rhododendron.

She previously worked in the Herbarium at RBG Kew, where she participated in two collecting trips (Kamchatka Peninsula 2003 & New Zealand 2006), collecting herbarium specimens and seeds. She also taught on the Herbarium techniques training course in Istanbul in 2006. She is a member of the Executive Committee of Hortax – the Cultivated Plant Taxonomy Group (www.hortax.org.uk).

Sharon has been living in France but is now returning to the UK, and I was delighted to meet her recently. Although she has not worked much with Rhododendrons in the past, her botanical and herbarium experience makes her ideally qualified for this important global position, being responsible for registering new rhododendrons all around the world. She is keen to learn more about the genera, and to meet those involved with plant breeding and naming. She intends to join us at some of our Shows next spring, so I hope I will have the opportunity to introduce her to as many as possible.

If you have new plants to Register, Sharon can be contacted via email at sharonmcdonald@rhs.org.uk or at RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU24 6QB. Registration forms can be requested direct from Sharon or downloaded at the RHS website (www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/Plantsmanship/Plant-registration).

David Millais

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Wessex Branch

Wessex Branch Flower Show - 26th May 2018 at Ramster

The flower show this year was a real challenge for exhibitors. This was due to being late in the year and the heavy torrential rain prior to the show. Despite this, many members did their level best to support us and the woody plant section was again outstanding. This section is getting very interesting and the unusual exhibits were greatly admired by the visitors.

Best in Show was won by Russell Beeson for his beautiful and unusual exhibit of Agapetes 'Ludgvan Cross'. An unusual rarity in the Blueberry family with pendant blooms that look like Chinese lanterns



Russell Beeson and Dr. John David Photo: Jenny Fly

Russell must have a marvellous collection of plants and we are so grateful for all the exhibits he manages to bring each year and the distance he travels.

The cup was presented by our Steward, Dr. John David and Colin Tomlin kindly did the judging.

Amongst the rhododendrons that did well were the hardy hybrids. They looked so good that after the presentations and lunch, Miranda (who holds the RCMG collection), Jenny and I decided to pick some more of them from Ant Hill at Ramster. We wanted to take a photo of them for other members to see. This is just a small sample of what is growing at Ramster –



Some hardy hybrids from the RCMG collection at Ramster. Photo: Jenny Fly

We are hoping to hold our show on the 4th May next year which, depending on the weather, may enable us to show more species as well as hybrids.

A full report of our show was published in our August newsletter.

Summer Picnic, Norney Grange, Godalming, Surrey

This year's get-together was hosted by Therese McKenzie and her son Christopher. Norney Grange was created by the world famous architect CFA Voysey and his vision and design are easily recognisable. The main house and estate is owned by Russell and Christine Clapshaw. They told us that Norney Grange is a popular film location, the latest being 'Goodbye Christopher Robin'.

A few lines from Therese:

"Uncovering Norney Grange Gardens"

The WL Grane, Arts and Crafts Gardens of 1897, (CFA Voysey) and the Kingdom Ward Walk of the 1930s gardens of HC le Marchant.

Fifty years of growth from 1975 made it impossible to walk in any direction in 2012. Living on the Estate, I would scramble through areas of bracken and bramble, amazed at the old walls, potting sheds, Upper and Lower vegetable gardens. Iron apple cage and then the 192 feet long iron stone wall.

Joining RHS Wisley, spending days in the Library with wonderful people, taking in samples, so the journey began. I approached the owners on clearing some of the paths, and by 2015, I was able to get permission and agree that we would share the cost. Rare trees, Champion trees, species of Rhododendron and Azalea, perhaps more to find.

She has undertaken a mammoth task and we have seen much change in the couple of years of visiting. She had brought a magnificent specimen of *Magnolia obovata* to the Wessex Branch Show at Ramster which won 1st prize.

Therese was most welcoming and, with the same grit and determination, she ensured that she catered for both wet and dry conditions in the courtyard and stables. Tea and coffee flowed all day with the most scrumptious cakes.

Members of the group brought along sprigs of plants and trees for identification. Many of which were uncommon and will now



Magnolia obovata won First Prize for Therese McKenzie at the Wessex Show. Photo: Jenny Fly

be sought by others! Rod White also showed members how to graft rhododendrons. We all came away with deep admiration for Therese, having had a very enjoyable day.

Andy Fly



Rod White demonstrated rhododendron grafting. Photo: Jenny Fly



Members of the Wessex Group at Norney Grange. Photo: Jenny Fly

South West Branch

RCMG SW Branch Summer Away Day at Trewithen Gardens
Wednesday 18th July.

Our third Summer Away Day was this year held at Trewithen, Grampound Road near Truro hosted by Head Gardener Gary Long and his team. It proved a great success and was enjoyed by all who attended. We were joined by some members of the Cornwall

Professional Gardeners Group (CPGG) who also expressed their appreciation. We are trying to engage other gardening groups in our South West Branch events which should broaden our interests with the exchange of ideas. In fact the numbers attending meant we were at full capacity which was gratifying. To start the day, James Treseder gave a very interesting illustrated talk about the history of the Treseder nurserymen in Cornwall. He is the fifth generation of his family to enter horticulture. It was interesting that through the Australasian nurseries run by members of the family, many Australasian plants were introduced into Cornish gardens as early as the mid to late 19th century. Neil Treseder, of course, wrote one of the definitive and most comprehensive books on Magnolias in 1978.

Following the talk, we had the popular session of 'Bring & Tell' where members make a short presentation about a plant of particular interest to them, having brought some material with them with

which to illustrate the subject discussed. This session is always most informative and stimulating and I only hope that in future more Branch members must feel able to join in and speak. It should not be perceived as presentations by 'experts'. I feel sure there are plants in members' gardens of particular meaning for them as well as rarities. It would be good to hear from them in future sessions.

An example of the range of plants discussed can be illustrated by the following examples: Pam Hayward discussed how to tell the difference between *Rhododendron* 'Fragrantissimum' and *R.* 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam' which are often confused (*R.* 'Fragrantissimum' has aromatic leaves when crushed); John Marston talked on the curious flowering of *Lonicera subaequalis* which looks like a string of bells and Russell Beeson talked about two very rare and tender gesneriads; *Sinningia tubiflora* with its scented flowers and *Petrocosmea* 'Creme de Crug'. Kew botanist Dr Martyn Rix was in attendance to lend his extensive botanical knowledge to the proceedings.

We adjourned for a delicious pastie lunch followed by a plant & book sale.

After this, Gary outlined a brief history of the garden, and then he and the other Trewithen gardeners guided us around. We were taken to the site for a new development by a stream at the bottom of the valley. The drought had affected the garden with some dejected and drooping plants, but it did not seem as bad as in some other gardens in the South West.

The walled garden has been redesigned and greatly simplified, and the long vista in front of the house is to be bisected and

Continued overleaf



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reorganised. There is much going on and it is a sign of a good garden that there is continuing development and redevelopment.

The whole day ran very smoothly thanks to Gary's organisation and by way of thanks, he was sent a plant of the newly introduced *Magnolia caveana* for the garden.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members who brought plants for sale and those who spoke most interestingly at the Bring & Tell session.

John Marston, Branch Chairman



Gary Long talking to members of the South West Group.
Photo: John Marston



Rhododendron edgeworthii CCHH 8016 at Trewithen.
Photo: John Marston

Notes from Members

Rama Lopez-Rivera, International Branch Chairman for the RCMG, writes about recent visits to South Korea

During the spring of 2017 and 2018 I made a number of whistle stop trips to the mountains of South Korea in East Asia to look for some of their stunning native rhododendron species in bloom. Here I've shared some images from two sites that were particularly satisfying to visit in a country full of incredible landscapes.

In early May 2017, I visited Baraebong Mountain on the edge of Jirisan National Park, a vast wilderness area set aside for recreational hiking and wildlife conservation being particularly notable for its high number of Sun Bears featuring on the Parks logo.

Each May, the peaks of Baraebong Mountain burst into vibrant pinks as the Korean azalea, *Rhododendron yedoense* var. *poukhanense* come into bloom. Here it formed large blocks, making stunning scenes against perfect blue skies. Here, I also found both white and red forms of *Rhododendron yedoense* var. *poukhanense*. The red forms in particular were fantastic, and caused a buzz when I showed images of them during my lecture at the ARS conference in Bremen, Germany this year.

Growing along side the Korean azaleas on Baraebong Mountain were Royal azaleas, *R. schlippenbachii*, truly one of the most beautiful of all the azaleas and a joy to see growing in the wild.

This April, I visited Wonmisan Mountain in Bucheon on the outskirts of Seoul on a bone chillingly cold morning to see a truly breathtaking display of *Rhododendron mucronulatum*. Here rhododendrons literally grow in their thousands, forming soft clouds in various shades of pink and drawing in vast numbers of visitors from around Seoul, but if you get there early enough you can beat the crowds and have the place virtually to yourself to enjoy the spectacle. Visiting Wonmisan was definitely one of the best experiences of my time looking for rhododendrons in East Asia!

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Looking into Jirisan National Park.



Rhododendron schlippenbachii on Baraebong Mountain

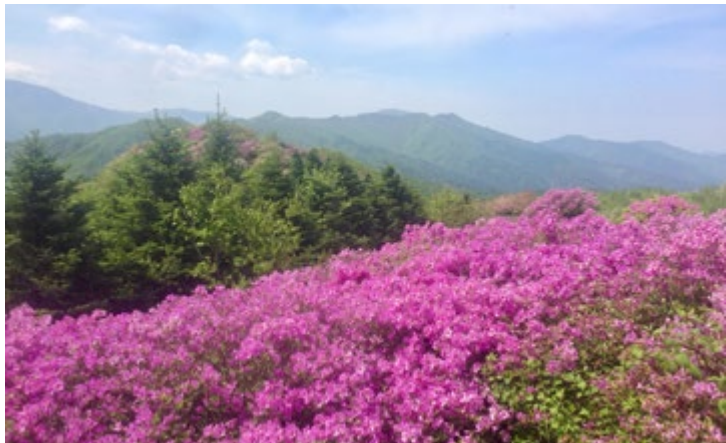


R. yedoense var. *poukhanense* and *R. schlippenbachii* growing together on M. Baraebong.



R. mucronulatum on Wonmisan Mountain near Seoul.

All photos: Rama Lopez-Rivera



Stunning views of *R. yedoense* var *poukhanense* on Baraebong Mountain.



Red form of *Rhododendron yedoense* var. *poukhanense* on Baraebong Mountain.

Russell Beeson writes about his objections to a certain camellia:

I am not usually a destructive person, and would normally hesitate before getting rid of a healthy plant. However, a year or so ago I dug up and destroyed a fine, vigorous plant which I had come to hate. The purpose of this note is to explain my reasons and perhaps also to draw a couple of conclusions about fashions in gardening and strategy for improving the quality of our gardens.

Camellia japonica 'R.L.Wheeler' is without a doubt one of the most popular cultivars amongst camellia enthusiasts and is often to be seen on the show bench. Indeed I have occasionally exhibited its blooms myself and have even won prizes with it. It was bred in the USA and in its time has been awarded an AM, an FCC and an AGM, reconfirmed in 2012. Many gardeners must think very highly of it. Yet I have taken against this plant in a big way or, perhaps more accurately, I have come to realise that I always disliked it. But 'R.L. Wheeler' is strong-growing and healthy with an abundance of large pink flowers over a long season: what's not to like? I have two problems with this plant. One is aesthetic and therefore simply a matter of personal opinion; the other is a matter of fact whose importance may be disputed but which cannot simply be put down to a question of taste.

The flower is usually described as semi-double to anemone-form, having a boss of stamens often mixed with white variegated petaloids. Therein lies the aesthetic problem for me. The petals are of heavy texture and of a colour which I would describe as "flesh pink"; the overall effect, particularly with those white

Continued overleaf

petaloids poking out of the centre, reminds me just a bit too much of anatomical structures revealed when dissecting animals – I will not go into any further detail. Looking at the plant with a fresh eye one day, I simply thought: “no, thank you”.

As to my other objection, in my experience the flowers start turning brown almost as soon as they open and, much worse, the plant holds on to the hideous brown balls of rotting mush for many days, completely spoiling the visual effect the plant might have otherwise had whilst in full flower. To me this is a glaring and unforgiveable fault in any flowering shrub. Fortunately there are many fine camellias which drop their faded flowers cleanly and quickly, without the need for the rather disgusting going over that has to be performed daily with ‘R.L. Wheeler’.

I have no wish to lay down the law, particularly in matters of personal taste, and I am quite content for many readers to disagree with these views. Nevertheless, I cannot help being surprised at the accolades this plant had had over the years; I suspect many have bought the plant partly because of the gongs it has been awarded, but I wonder whether any, like me, later regret it but wonder whether perhaps there might be something wrong with them for disagreeing with the apparently generally accepted opinions. This is not an argument against the AGM, which is a useful guide for gardeners wondering where to start when selecting from the huge number of cultivars on the market – a very real problem with genera where there have been arguably far too many named forms introduced.

A practical issue is that this episode has encouraged me to look at the plants I grow with a more critical eye. With limited space, you cannot afford passengers. I still have many rhododendrons, camellias and other plants that really do not pay their way, whilst my nursery area is overflowing with quality young plants eager to get going in the garden. The answer is obvious and requires clear thinking, a bit of boldness and a good sharp spade. The shredded remains of the discarded plants will rot down nicely and feed their successors.

So what have I planted to replace the disgraced ‘R.L. Wheeler’? It could have been many things, not necessarily another camellia, but in the end I plumped for the *C. cuspidata* hybrid ‘Spring Festival’, whose columnar habit makes for a small footprint and whose small clean flowers are very pleasing. I now wait to hear from someone who dislikes this cultivar as much as I hate ‘R.L. Wheeler’. Just a matter of taste?

Postscript

It has occurred to me since writing the above that my camellia may have been a victim of that much-feared fungal disease Camellia Petal Blight rather than being guilty of an inherent fault. If so, I can only say that no other camellia in my garden has suffered to a similar degree so it is possible that ‘R.L. Wheeler’ is unusually susceptible - perhaps because of the heavy texture of the flowers. Advice would be welcome.



The flowers of *Camellia* ‘R.L.Wheeler’ turning an unsightly brown (above) and fresh and unblemished (below). Photos: Russell Beeson



‘Please excuse my winter garb’

– a note from **Barry Starling**

Contained in Colin Mugridge’s excellent article on hybridising rhododendrons in the RCMG Yearbook No 69 (2018) are the questions you need to ask as a breeder about the progeny you have raised. One of these is “Is the foliage good?”. Now as a general rule a cross between a deciduous and an evergreen rhododendron will have poor foliage but in some circumstances, particularly if it is winter foliage that is not so good, this may be acceptable providing the plant performs well during the growing season.

In 2006 I made a cross with pollen from a unique form of the deciduous *Rhododendron lepidotum* and the white form of *R. minus* (*R. carolinianum* var. *album*). The *lepidotum* had been collected as seed in the 70s by Derek Fox (DF 571) in Sikkim. It had white flowers with a yellow central blotch. Sadly, two years ago the plant was being bullied by a large male fern which, in removing I damaged the root of the *R. lepidotum* and it died. Searching the corpse for old seed capsules I managed to extract and germinate just one seedling which I hope will take after its parent.

Back to the cross. *R. minus* is a very leafy shrub and the hybrids are abundantly foliated from late spring through summer dropping about a third of their leaves in autumn. Flowering is prodigious and is sustained through late May into early June. As one would expect most of the seedlings are white with a central yellow blotch though this latter feature varies in size through the young plants. Just one plant has pink flowers and this and the best of the whites, I felt, had sufficient merit to keep, as they certainly live up to Colin Mugridge's criteria for a good hybrid. Both parents are very hardy; neither parent is susceptible to powdery mildew; the habit is compact so that in 17 years they have reached about 70cms in height and 1m in diameter; they flowered young and produce an abundance of bloom each year and the foliage is good when it is most needed. One of them reminded me of a heavy snowstorm so this is 'Dartmoor Snow' while the other is 'Pink Lace'.



Rhododendron 'Pink Lace'



Rhododendron 'Dartmoor Snow'.

Photos: Barry Starling

Membership

We welcome our new members and hope they will enjoy all the benefits of membership of the Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group.

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the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group forthcoming events



NOVEMBER 2018

Sat 3rd

New Forest Branch

Hillier's Arboretum, Jermyns Lane, Ampfield, Romsey SO51 0QA

AGM and talk by Tom Clarke, Head gardener at Exbury 'Plants and People of India's Frontier'

Martin Gates 023 8025 2843
mgates@talktalk.net

Sat 10th at 2pm

North West England & North Wales Branch

Bulley Room, Ness Botanical Gardens

Talk by Steve Lyus 'Camellias in Brittany'

Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
angela.brabin@btinternet.com

Wed 28th at 2pm

Wessex Branch

Ramster, Chetworth Road, Chiddingfold, Surrey GU8 4SN

Talk by Ken Cox, 'Woodland Gardening'

Andy Fly 01903 742350
pincroftgarden@btconnect.com

Members are more than welcome to attend events at any branches

DECEMBER 2018

Sat 8th at 2pm

Wessex Branch

Ramster, Petworth Road, Chiddingfold, Surrey GU8 4SN

Illustrated talk by Rosemary Legrand 'Exploring the North Island of New Zealand'

Andy Fly 01903 742350
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JANUARY 2019

Tues 8th

North West England & North Wales Branch

Athenaeum Library

Talk by Steve Lyus 'Rare Botanical books at the Athenaeum' with lunch

Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
angela.brabin@btinternet.com

FEBRUARY 2019

Sat 9th at 2pm

North West England & North Wales Branch

Bulley Room, Ness Botanic Gardens

Quiz and social

Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
angela.brabin@btinternet.com

MARCH 2019

16th-17th

RHS & South West Branch

Early Camellia Show, RHS Rosemoor Torrington, Devon EX38 8BP

Earl Camellia Show

Georgina Barter 020 7821 3142
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk
Dr John Marston 01271323202
artavianjohn@gmail.com

APRIL 2019

13th-14th

RHS

The Savill Garden Wick Lane, Englefield Green TW20 0UU

Early Rhododendron, Main Camellia and Spring Ornamental Competition

Georgina Barter 020 7821 3142
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk

27th-28th

RHS

RHS Rosemoor Torrington, Devon EX38 8BP

Main RHS Rosemoor Show Main Rhododendron Competition

Georgina Barter 020 7821 3142
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk
Dr John Marston 01271 323202
artavianjohn@gmail.com

MAY 2019

4th-5th

RHS Harlow Carr

RHS Harlow Carr, Crag Lane, Beckwithshaw, Harrogate HG3 1QB

Harlow Carr Rhododendron Competition and Late Flower Show

5th-6th

North West England & North Wales Branch

Bulley Room, Ness Gardens

Ness Botanic Gardens Branch Show

Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
angels.brabin@btinternet.com

7th-10th

RCMG Tour of Gardens in the Lake District

Christopher Legrand 01202 873344
clegrand@pirltd.org.uk

JUNE 2019

1st-2nd

AGM Exbury.

Further details in next Bulletin

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