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Newsletter

March 2026

Dear Member

Plant of the Month Magnolia 'Cecil Nice'



***Magnolia 'Cecil Nice'* *M. sargentiana* var *robusta* x *M. denudata*.**

Our plant of the month is an open-pollinated seedling grown at [National Trust Nymans, Sussex](#) UK and named after the former Head Gardener. It is somewhat rare in cultivation.

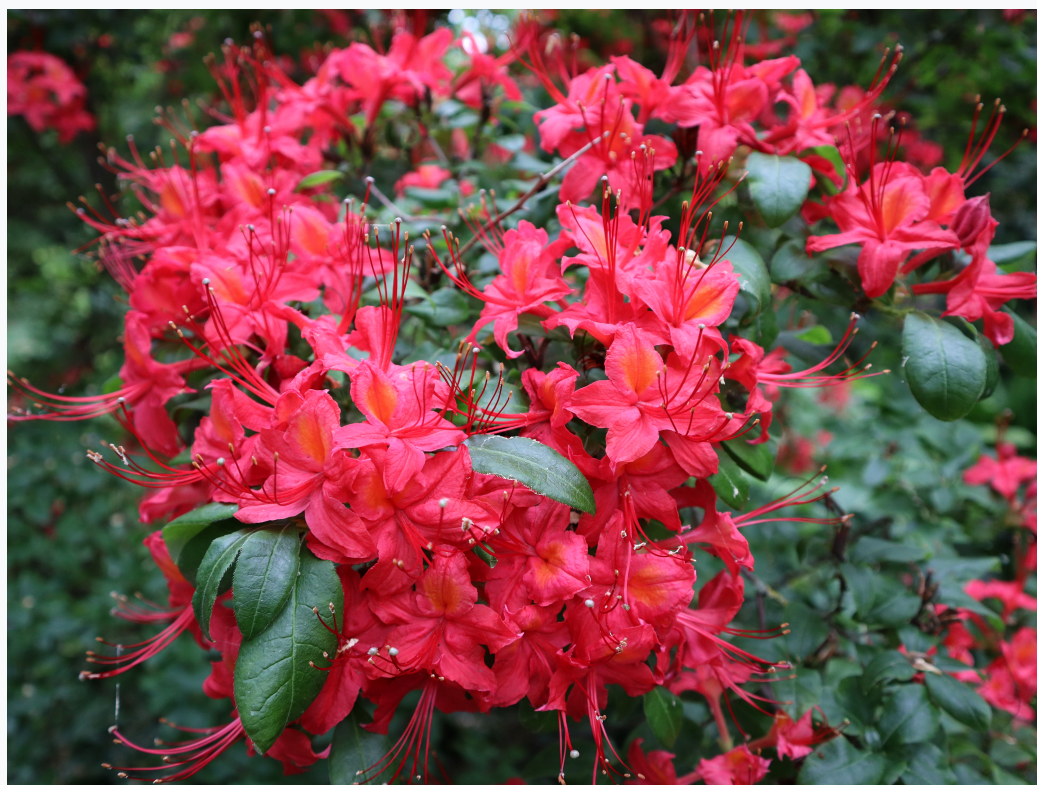
These images were taken three weeks ago at the RCMG visit to the garden. Cecil Nice BEM started work at Nymans in 1924 for James Comber who was then Head Gardener.

Cecil became Head Gardener in 1953 and was awarded the AJ Waley Medal in 1970. He achieved scientific importance in making Nymans the first garden to possess a

The original tree is in the walled garden and was named before 1970 by the Earl of Rosse. A second tree is planted near the nursery.
Cecil worked at Nymans for fifty six years.



Can you help to identify some Denny Pratt Azaleas ?



Denny 7 Wisley. Image copyright Jack Aldridge

M.C. (Denny) Pratt azaleas

number of these azaleas accessioned under numbers at Wisley. These are:

Denny hybrid 7

Denny hybrid 8.

Denny hybrid 9

Denny hybrid 10

Denny hybrid 22.

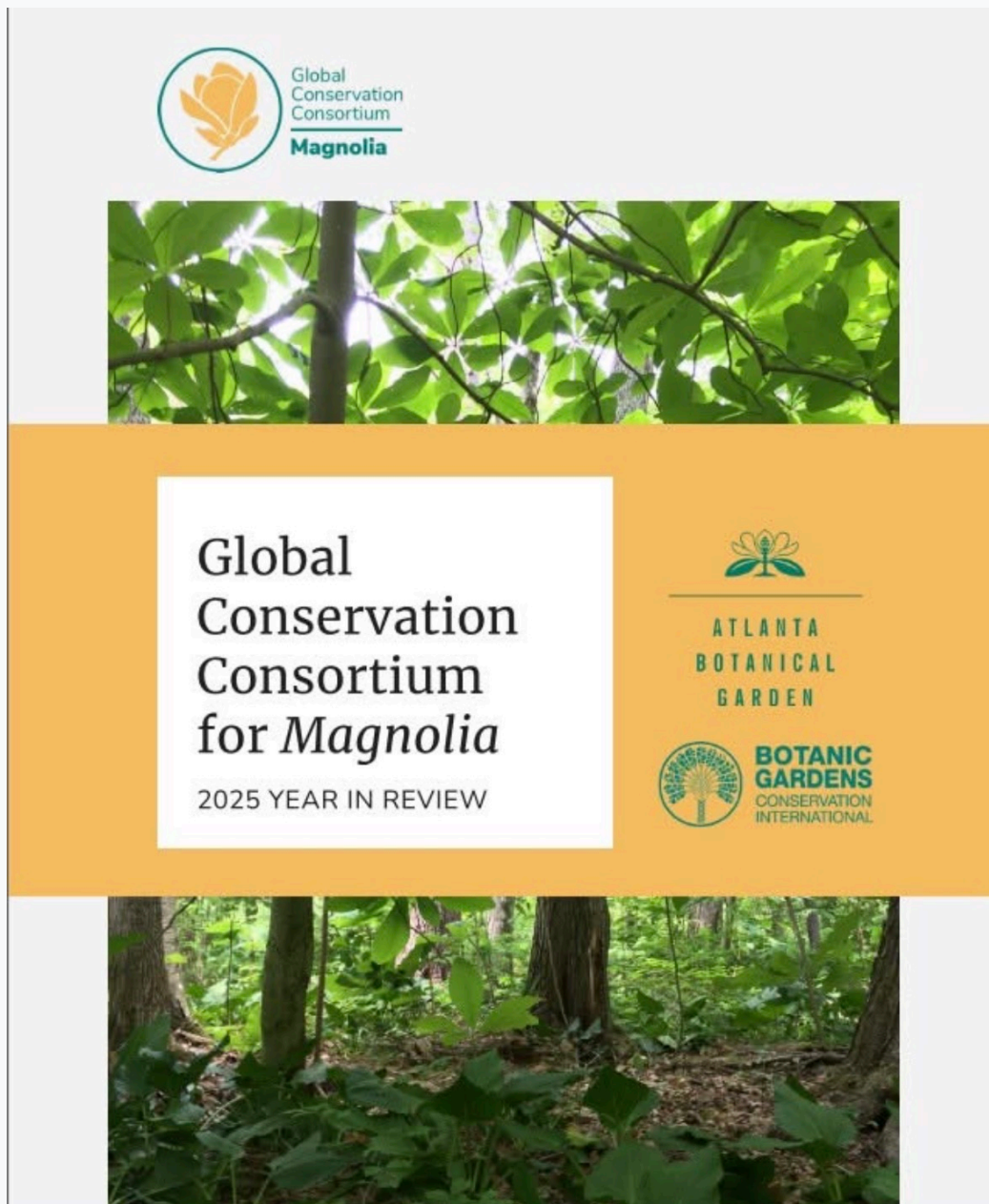
Denny hybrid 24

Denny hybrid 42

Denny hybrid (deep pink)

We are trying to establish whether any of these have cultivar names so we can update our database and our labelling accordingly. From talking with people with an interest in Pratt's azaleas, we are aware that no. 07 was named 'Coral Sea', which was an unacceptable name, and this was changed to 'Sea Coral' but, as we don't have a photo of 'Sea Coral', it's hard for us to know whether what we have as 07 (photo) is the same cultivar. [Ness Botanic Gardens](#) maintain a large collection of Pratt's azaleas and we hope to compare with their plants in due course.

We would like to develop better descriptions for most of the Pratt azaleas so if you are lucky enough to grow any of these lovely plants please send information and/or photos, along with a short note on provenance, to the [Registrar here](#)



2025 Year in Review

Members will have enjoyed reading the work of the GCCM in our 2025 Yearbook. The year in review has now been published and can be downloaded by clicking on the image above. We thank their members for their continued dedication to the conservation of magnolia around the world and for publishing this most interesting account.

Here are the details for upcoming competitions

RHS Wilsey

11th April

RHS Main Camellia Competition

RHS Early Rhododendron Competition

RHS Main Spring Ornamental Plant Competition

International Camellia Society Apprentice Plate

North West and North Wales Branch Show

18th April

Ness Botanic Gardens

RHS Rosemoor

25th April

RHS Main Rhododendron Competition

SW Branch Camellia, Main Magnolia, Floral Display Competition

RHS Harlow Carr

2nd May

Harlow Carr Rhododendron Competition

Wessex Branch Show

9th May

Leonardslee Gardens

RCMG Centenary Cup

30th May

Sir Harold Hillier Gardens

Schedules and Entry Forms for these are all now on our [website here](#).

The entire RHS Ornamental Plant Show Schedule for 2026 [can be found here](#).

Contact email for the RHS [shows is here](#)



Ethan Ash and Pat Short - image RHS Rosemoor

***International Camellia Society (UK)
Apprentice Plate***

***Calling all RHS or LANTRA apprentices
studying for level 2 or 3
horticultural qualifications***

This month, Ethan Ash, a second year apprentice student at RHS Rosemoor, was awarded the first International Camellia Society (UK) Apprentice Plate for a single bloom of Camellia. Ethan was presented with the plate which has been engraved by a Dartington Glass master engraver, by Pat Short, Past President of the ICS.

The ICS (UK) will hold this competition at RHS Wisley on the 11th April which is aimed at encouraging horticultural apprentices to enter the world of showing. A second plate of a different Camellia has been engraved.

The International Camellia Society (UK) Apprentice Plate is awarded for the best entry of a single camellia bloom exhibited by an apprentice working towards a level 2 or 3 horticultural qualification at any garden, public or private. Contact and entry details for the [RHS Wisley Competition on the 11th April are here.](#)

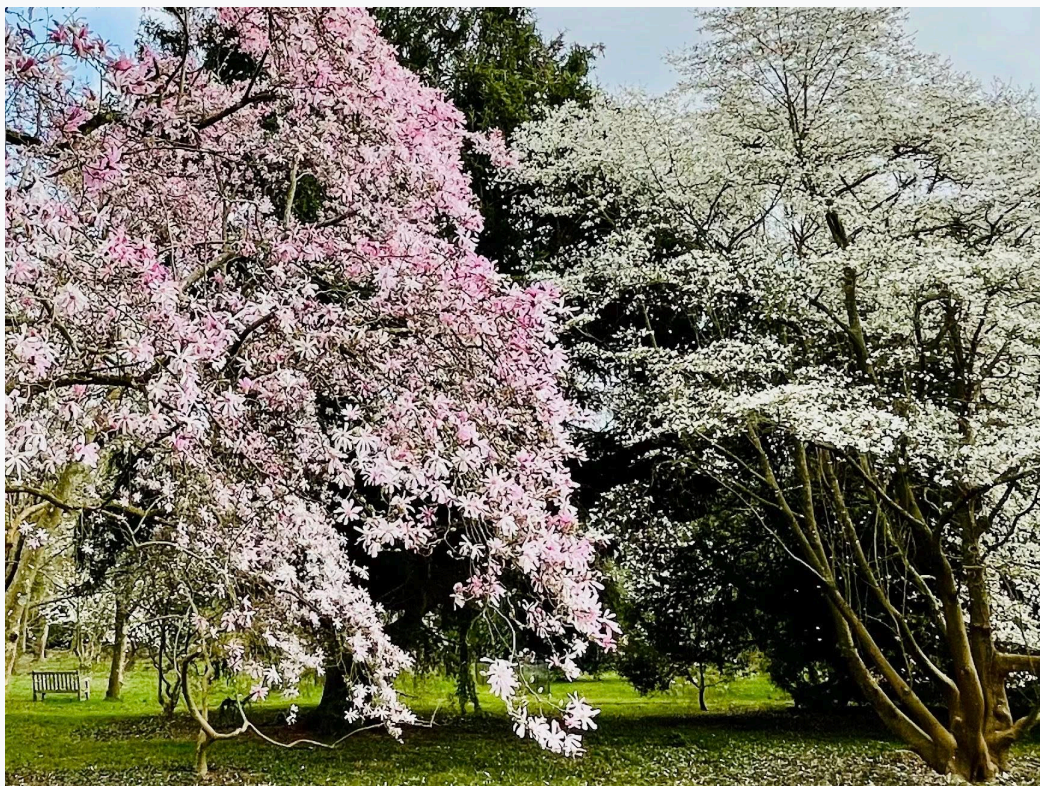
RHS People Awards

We congratulate all recipients of the RHS People Awards this month and especially congratulate these recipients for their work in supporting our genera.

Jennifer Trehane is awarded the **Victoria Medal of Honour**. Jennifer was a branch chair of the RCMG and supported our work for many years. She is a world expert on

Dr Gary Firth is awarded the **Veitch Memorial Medal**. Gary is a member of the RCMG and recently joined the South East Branch committee. Gary was awarded the VMM for his work with Sussex Plant Heritage and services to the science and practice of horticulture.

Mike White is awarded the **Sir Harold Hillier Award**, awarded for significant contribution to the science, art, breeding and growing of hardy trees, shrubs and climbers. Mike has worked at the internationally famous Mount Congreve Garden for forty years. he has actively hybridised rhododendrons and magnolias and has brought focus to the garden. He is one of Britain and Ireland's great plantsmen.



Magnolia at Sir Harold Hillier Gardens

RCMG Centenary Cup Weekend 30th/31st May 2026

Sir Harold Hillier Gardens

Jermyns Lane

Romsey, Hampshire SO51 0QA

Thanks to the kind permission of Clare Goddard, Director of Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, this year's Centenary Cup Competition will be held in the Hazel Room, opposite the Courtyard Cafe. Access is through the main entrance to the gardens. The competition will be on Saturday 30th May.

The event will be hosted by the New Forest Branch.

are nine classes, the best exhibit in each class being awarded a certificate.

The Centenary Cup will be awarded to the best of the nine winning exhibits.

All members are welcome to exhibit, and stewards will be available to help with staging.

[There is an entry form is available to download here](#) which would be helpful if you could complete as it would be useful to know who is exhibiting and roughly how many exhibits you intend to bring to help with staging.

[Please download this form](#) to confirm your plans for attending and send it to us [here](#)

Friday 29th May

2.00pm to 6.00pm Staging for the Centenary Cup Competition

Saturday 30th May:

7.00am to 10.00am Competition Day Staging for the Centenary Cup

10.00 am until 11.30am Judging.

All exhibitors will be asked to leave whilst judging takes place. The Gardens will be open to all attendees and competition entrants whilst the judging takes place.

11.30am Presentations. Immediately after judging is completed the presentation of the prize certificates for each class will be made. Once judging has been completed the show will be open to the public. The winner of the Centenary Cup will be announced and presented with the Cup.

11.30am approximately. There will be **guided tours for members and their guests** with the Head Gardener, Fran Clifton and the team after the presentations.

The show will also be open to the public on Sunday 31st May from 10am until 4pm.

Tea and coffee will be available in the Courtyard Café from 8am for RCMG attendees and competition entrants. Lunch will be available in the adjacent Courtyard Café

Any questions...please [address them to the secretary here](#)

The evening meal will be at 6pm at the Dog and Crook which is a few minutes drive from the gardens.

Overnight accommodation options below.

Potters Heron

Duke on the Test

Dog and Crook

Holiday Inn Eastleigh

Sunday 21st May: There will be an opportunity to visit other gardens in the area. At 11.00 Tom Clarke Head Gardener will be taking the Group around **Exbury Gardens** at a cost of £13.50 per person. At 2.30pm **Emma Page** owner of **Lepe House Gardens** is hosting a tour of the garden with refreshments .

There is no charge to enter the Centenary Cup competition.

AGM Absentee form

Here is the form for those not attending the AGM in person. Apologies, we are attaching it here again due to technical formatting problems in the previous version.

Branch Events for your diary

North West and North Wales Branch

6th May Ned Lomax - a tour of Bodnant Garden.

South East Branch

18th April Private garden visit **jointly with Wessex Branch** - hosts are Mr and Mrs Wotton in Kent.

6th May Visit to Mark Oddy's garden

20th May Visit to Wakehurst Place

South West Branch

2nd August Branch Picnic at Upper Gorwell

To book for branch events please contact branch chairs. Details on [our website here](#)



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