Regardless of my hopes for an early spring, central Bedfordshire remains gripped by winter. For the first time in many years the Snowdrops have not had the company of at least a few Camellia blooms and the Rhododendron buds seem to be getting tighter and tighter rather than getting ready to flower. I hope my situation is not echoed around your gardens.

With the ongoing cold weather it is wise to remember that even very hardy plants can succumb to spring frosts and even wind chill when they are small or young specimens. If you have general new plantings or replacements following the recent hard winters, I would advise that a small investment in protection now will negate the need to dig that planting hole yet again. Polypropylene garden fleece is a wonder product for protecting small plants and even blooms from spring frost, I use yards and yards of the stuff, sometimes at this time year the garden looks like a snow-field with all of the white fleece covering everything up. Whilst I accept it may appear unsightly I would rather put up with that than dead or, at best, defoliated plants.

So, if we are protecting our plants and blooms, why not get involved in one of the group or RHS flower shows, our genera remain well catered for with respect to shows and to some extent if we do not use them - we may well lose them. The RHS operate early and main shows for both Camellia and Rhododendron and have now added a later show for Rhododendrons at Harlow Carr. It does not matter if you have 2 plants or 200 acres, attending or even entering one of these shows will be educational and even the minor competitive edge that a show brings will improve your plant care. Details of these shows and the schedules are available from the RHS shows department at Vincent Square, or see our events page for dates and locations in this Bulletin.

Turning away from plants for a moment; we continue to progress the Group’s relationship with the RHS. This work is difficult, time consuming and not particularly appealing to plant focussed people; a clearer situation or set of options will be available for discussion at the AGM. – see page 10.

Finally, I must report the sad passing of the Dr. David Ives. David was a staunch supporter of the group and led the Peak District branch for many years; I will miss his considered and sensible approach to group business.
Rhododendron seinghkuense

My picture is of a plant of Rhododendron seinghkuense (PE97058) flowering in our garden room here in Devon, in the first week of January this year. The species is one of three within subsection Edgeworthia, the other two being edgeworthii itself and pendulum. The leaves are somewhat like a miniature version of edgeworthii – invariably ovate, the upper surface very bullate and the underside with a dense chocolate woolly indumentum. The flowers are close to pendulum i.e. rotate-campanulate but a good strong yellow, rather than pale pink. First collected by Kingdon Ward in 1926 under KW6793 it is named for the Seinghku valley of Upper Burma. My plants have been grown from seed I collected in October 1997 in western Yunnan. From the town of Gongshan on the R Salween (Chinese 'Nu-Jiang') we trekked north-west into the Nujiang Forest Reserve towards a peak, called in the local language Dulongla ha, on the divide that overlooks the R Dulong (Burmese ‘Tarun’) valley – one of the headwaters of the Irrawaddy. Plants of R. seinghkuense were growing virtually prostrate on a bank beside the trail at just under 2000m not far above our campsite at a small settlement delighting in the name of ‘Qiqi’.

Incidentally, within this reserve we also saw several immense and ancient specimens of Taiwania flousiana, the Chinese ‘Coffin’ tree. We were told by a local official, but whether this is true I do not know, that it can take fifty years for a seedling to reach five centimetres. These trees are now strongly protected in China.

Returning to seingkuense, Kingdon Ward described it in Plant Hunting on the Edge of the World as “…scraggy untidy plant growing on exposed ridges as an epiphyte on moss on derelict Fir trees, but that when occasionally met under forest-protection it is much neater…”. Davidian described the species as “…rare in cultivation, too tender for outdoors and suitable only for a cool greenhouse’? Whilst I have plants here that have thrived under glass in winter and flowering regularly by February, I also have two plants growing out of doors in our N Cornwall valley garden that have survived five winters without difficulty so far – including the really severe winter of 2010-11, when even by the sea in Cornwall the temperature went below -5C. I have had outdoor flowering just once so far. The habit seems to be slow growing, part prostrate but with a good upright leader, and I suspect they may reach 3ft in time. I have them growing near plants of a form of edgeworthii (my PE97015) with a particularly thick brown leaf indumentum, collected much further south on that trip. In fact, to date, the edgeworthii seems more tender than the seinghkuense, with dieback in that bad winter.

Magnolias - A Promising Trio

Magnolia wilsonii ‘Sandling Park’

Magnolia wilsonii, introduced from the Washan in W Sichuan in 1908 by Ernest Wilson and by George Forrest from the Cangshan above Dali in W Yunnan as M. taliensis, produces copious seed which germinates easily. It will flower in 5 years which probably explains why it is the most widespread in gardens of the Oyama section. It is known to be variable from seed and instead of the usual 9 tepals, semi-double forms with 12-16 tepals are sometimes seen, with variation in flower size and in the depth of colour of the central boss of stamens.

One such form with extra tepals and much larger flowers than the type, is in the great garden at Sandling Park near Folkestone, on what appears to be a very old tree, a true veteran with a girth of 125cm at the base and about 6m tall. It is now going back and probably in terminal decline. It is planted on a bank so that the pendent flowers are seen to maximum effect. The illustration shows the crowded tepals of differing sizes, one lightly stained with pink and the whole flower brought to vivid life by the intense dark crimson red stamens. It is an outstanding form and though the vegetative characters clearly indicate M. wilsonii, there is always the possibility of hybridity, perhaps involving M. sinensis. Its age is difficult to determine and curator Michael Warren can find no reference in the archive and its origins are unknown. Though Oyamas are not noted for longevity, it may originate from between the wars, when magnolia seed from the Wilson collections was freely exchanged between the great estate gardens.

Michael has raised seedlings from it which offer an intriguing prospect and the original tree has been grafted and is thus preserved for posterity and further increase and distribution. Hopefully there will be a few flowers to see when the SE Group visits in May this year. Even in this collection of so many notable plants, it easily holds its own as an outstanding small tree.

Magnolia x globosa 'Pink Petticoats'

Some years ago Peter Chappell kindly sent me some seed of M.
Magnolia sargentiana seedling ‘Premier Cru’ has yielded a plant of some promise to which I have given the ‘kennel name’ of ‘Premier Cru’. I have called it this as I think it is probably – only an informed guess – a hybrid with an adjacent tree of M. sprengeri ‘Claret Cup’. The flower has the relative informality of a sprengeri type, though still retaining a good shape. It is slightly smaller than ‘Blood Moon’ and of a nice bright but deep pink with a contrasting paler centre. The strong colour carries well in the landscape. It is also very early, perhaps too early for its own good, and in full flower, like a glass of premier cru, it induces a happy and well disposed frame of mind.

It flowered in year nine from seed, giving the lie to the old canard that you plant these things only for your grandchildren. I also flowered the Caerhays M. sargentiana var. robusta ‘dark form’ in year nine. This is not an unconscionably long wait – a further reason for trying magnolias from seed.

I have grafted a couple of plants, to trial it elsewhere to see if it is worth registering. A sibling with greater vigour, flowering for the first time this year (year twelve!) might become a ‘Grand Cru’ – I am impatient for the spring.

Photos by Maurice Foster
**AZALEAS**

**Denny Pratt Azaleas**

*Steve Lyus and Tim Baxter at Ness Botanic Gardens*

Late flowering and scented azaleas are in increasing demand. Work carried out by Denny Pratt in the 1960’s to 80’s looked at both extending the flowering season and increasing the flower size, whilst retaining the scent, by selectively crossing known good plants from both groups. Ness Botanic Gardens has a number of the Pratt plants, and in 1998, twenty two of the best were selected and named by the former Curator - Peter Cunnington (q.v. his excellent article on these plants in the 2006 Yearbook).

Plants were selected on late flowering time, large prominent flowers, good scent and autumn colour.

Due to personnel changes, little work was done on the Ness plants after registration, leaving them in varying degrees of health. During the last two years great effort has been made to identify which named cultivars are still present, and to rejuvenate and propagate more. It was evident they were scattered around the gardens, with a great many having lost their labels, and often not planted in the best location to thrive. Luckily only two of the Ness Holt azaleas appear to have been lost to cultivation at Ness (‘Heswall’ and ‘Irby’).

To improve this situation, eighty were moved to a central single bed, to both showcase the plants and provide much needed care through feeding and pruning. Almost all have grown well in 2012, in part due to unexpectedly high rainfall! Another issue is the impact of the plant’s environment on flower colour. For example, ‘Denny Pratt’ under complete shade and on heavy clay soil in 2011 was excellent, but when moved to full sun and loamy soil in 2012 was poor.

The greatest problem remaining is the identification of obviously distinct clones. The main characteristics of identification are the size, colour and shape of the corollas; although leaf and bud characteristics are also useful (e.g. ‘Raby’ has distinctive dark green glossy leaves). Unfortunately, the variation of shape and colour in a single plant and between the plants in different conditions, have made it impossible to identify, with any certainty, any plant that did not have a label.

We have however decided we can place the Ness plants into five loose groups:

- Dark Pink with yellow or orange flash
- Pale Pink with yellow flash
- White with yellow flash
- Yellow
- Mid Pink

We have now chosen our best representatives of each group, see table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Flower time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denny Pratt</td>
<td>Dark pink</td>
<td>Mid to late June</td>
<td>One of most floriferous with brilliant pink flowers. Upright habit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurstaston</td>
<td>Dark pink</td>
<td>July – August</td>
<td>Plant of uncertain identity. Name not registered. Last to flower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ness</td>
<td>Pale pink</td>
<td>Mid-June</td>
<td>Highly floriferous diffuse pink-yellow flowers. Compact habit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raby</td>
<td>Pale pink</td>
<td>Mid-June</td>
<td>The most vigorous selection with dark green glossy leaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neston</td>
<td>Mid pink</td>
<td>Early to mid June</td>
<td>Superb purple-bronze foliage and good autumn colour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreton</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Mid to late June</td>
<td>Upright habit. Best late white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spital</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Early to mid June</td>
<td>Beautiful pink buds. Earlier than some and probably related to ‘Stopham Lad’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have attempted to propagate plants by cuttings and air layering. Ground layering and micro-propagation will commence in 2013.

We will be interested in providing some of these clones to people who might have more favourable growing conditions. Please contact us if you are interested in helping us trial these fantastic plants.

Contact Details

Email: che1ef@liv.ac.uk
University of Liverpool
Ness Botanic Garden
Ness
Cheshire
CH64 4AY

**Appendix: photos**

**Thurstaston 2**

Unregistered and unknown plant. Superb bright pink and latest of selection.
Recent reference to the International Magnolia Society website showed that “Magnoliaceae expert and researcher, Professor Zeng Qing-Wen of South China Botanical Garden (SCBG) in Guanzhou, tragically lost his life when he accidentally fell from a 40 meter high research platform which had been erected in 2011 in order to reach into the canopy of the famous Magnolia sinica tree in a remote area of Xichou County near Fadou Town in Southeast Yunnan, China.

He has authored several books including Volume 15 of a series of Illustrated Practical Handbooks about Landscape Plants entitled Featured 98 Ornamental Magnolias (Mulans) and he was also an Associate Editor of the very popular and well known Magnolias of China. In addition he has authored over 25 papers – mostly on Magnoliaceae – in various scientific journals, and was author or co-author for 6 Magnoliaceae species”.

As a committed botanical bibliophile it was the reference to ‘Volume 15 … ’ that attracted my attention. This was not a title that I had previously encountered. However just a few moments on the computer found details and confirmed that I could purchase a copy for approx £27.00 direct from China to include airmail to UK. The on-line details indicated the complete text was in Chinese but was accompanied by colour photographs on almost every page. With no more knowledge than this and an assumption that the illustrations would likely carry their species identification I was tempted to order a copy unseen!

After just a few days the carefully packed book arrived: it is a small hard-backed edition measuring approximately 8.5” (215mm) x 6” (155mm). Initial inspection indicated that most of the 112 pages are devoted to individual Magnolia/Manglietia/Michelia species to include several high quality colour photographs for each one as (i) habitat (ii) foliage + flower (iii) seed pod/s. Eleven of the pages are also devoted to Alcimandra, Liriodendron, Parakmeria, Paramichelia, Talauma, Tsongiodendron and Woonyoungia.

Inquisitiveness immediately prompted me to make comparison with the photographs of some of the magnolia species with those in my copy of ‘Magnolias of China’ - I selected half-a-dozen or so species that came to mind and to confirm that a large proportion of them are either new or different. It makes no attempt to provide an exhaustive list of species such as depicted in Magnolias of China nor does it emulate the superb coloured botanical illustrations and line drawings but where it does score however is as a small and relatively cheap pictorial addition to the magnoliaphile’s bookshelves.

For those of you who were either unable to obtain a copy of Magnolias of China (*) or have yet to see this comparatively expensive tome, I have no hesitation in recommending this new title. Whilst it makes no attempt to match the extent and coverage of the former, its small size ensures that it can be fitted into the pocket as a field reference whilst it also gives the magnolia enthusiast a comparatively cheap collection of high quality colour illustrations to whet the appetite.

Just a pity that I am not able to decipher the Chinese text! May be there is an English translation lurking?

*For info - I think that I am correct in saying that ‘ Magnolias of China’ is now available as an E-book @ approx £24.00
STODY LODGE GARDENS

Set only a few miles inland from the coast of North Norfolk, and only three miles from the popular market town of Holt, even the experts in the field have been amazed to find the Gardens at Stody Lodge.

There are certainly some well known rhododendron gardens dotted around Norfolk for the right soil type only occurs in a few, well spread out, locations such as Sandringham, or Blickling Hall owned by The National Trust (many of their rhododendron originally came from Stody Lodge) or How Hill on the Broads, which has a wonderful display of azaleas. However, none of these begin to rival the displays that can be found in the Gardens at Stody Lodge. An extraordinarily intense blend of shape and colour is achieved from over 200 different varieties of azalea and rhododendron, complemented by a fine collection of trees and other spring flowering shrubs and carpets of spring bulbs. Stody Estate was bought in 1932 by Lord Rothermere. Following a fire which all but destroyed the original Lodge, he decided to build a new house on the southern edge of the surrounding woodland and, in 1933, he engaged the London architect, Walter Sarel, to design a new house and grounds.

The Gardens are divided into two distinct parts: firstly the Main Garden. The basic layout of this is much the same to-day as it was on Mr. Sarel's original plan; and secondly the Water Gardens, which form part of the grounds of the original Lodge.

As the Gardens move through the five week open period in May, the characteristics change considerably. First there is the fresh, and probably most delicate stage, when the early azaleas (R. 'Blue Diamond' etc) are in bloom and the later varieties are giving a tantalising taste of what is to come showing a hint of colour as their buds await their moment to fully open.

This is the time to appreciate the magnolias, whose numbers have recently been increased by the addition in 2004 of *M. soulangeana* 'Heaven Scent', *M. x soulangeana*, *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra' among others; the wonderful show of late daffodils which have been grown commercially on the Estate; and camellias, including a 15 ft bush which was double grafted and produces both pink and white flowers at the same time.

Next comes the stage when most of the azaleas and a number of rhododendrons are in full bloom and the daffodils have given way to carpets of bluebells. The colours are an extraordinary mix where pink and yellow and purple and orange sit happily side by side – the sunken garden to the right of the main lawn being particularly spectacular.

The senses are assaulted by the sheer intensity of colour and scent, and this is added to by the clumps of late tulips planted in the terrace beds and the large wisteria, planted in 1982, growing up the walls of the house. *Rhododendron* 'Cynthia' provides tall banks of colour along both drives giving structure to some of the more utilitarian parts of the Gardens and many more varieties are out or well on their way. Some of the more recently added are *R. 'Peter Koster' and R. 'Madame Carvalho'.

In the final stage, it is the rhododendrons that take the limelight. Although some azaleas are still coming out, particularly the heavily scented flamboyant 'Knaphill' varieties of 'Cannon's Double', 'Klondyke' and 'Silver Slipper', the atmosphere becomes more stately and my favourite part of the Garden are the paths on the outer margins where the rhododendrons have the space to impress and the eye is led from the creams and pinks of rhododendrons such as *R. Albert Schweitzer* to the more vibrant pinks and purples and reds.

Over the years many trees had been added to the original design, and by the 1990s there came a point when the azaleas were being adversely affected by the amount of moisture and goodness that these trees were taking from the ground. The overwhelming feeling in the Gardens at that time was of being closed in by solid walls of conifers and there were many blank areas where nothing would or could be grown underneath. It was certainly very dramatic but the trees were taking over as the main feature prohibiting any perspective and making it impossible to enjoy the often startling and kaleidoscopic views which are such a feature of the Gardens to-day.

There was only one course of action and we embarked on a phased programme that has seen the removal of over fifty large trees, most of which were large mature conifers. This was no small task. Skilled tree surgery was needed to avoid damaging the rhododendrons and azaleas below but the biggest problem was removing the often very large stumps – clearly this did not happen when the garden was first laid out – resulting in an ongoing problem caused by honey fungus. The benefits have far outweighed the problems. Now you can appreciate the shape of the better specimen trees; we have begun to create individual areas or ‘rooms’, for example, the wild garden to the left of the Azalea Walk; new paths have been constructed through the woodland area with its carpets of late daffodils and leading around to the now exposed wall; the tall *Acer palmatum* ‘Heptalobum Rubrum’ which is such a feature of the main lawn, is beginning to grow back into a normal shape and suddenly azaleas that were beginning to fail have responded with tremendous vigour.

We have also constructed a new horseshoe-shaped garden and as this can be seen clearly from the house, we particularly chose some azaleas that would also have striking autumn foliage such as *R. Orange Beauty’ or *R. vaseyi* ‘Pink’. We broke them up with *Pieris* ‘Variegata’ and some more magnolias and have also added in some summer flowering shrubs such as *Weigela florida* ‘Variegata’ and *Potentilla’ and *Cistus’ and also a few shrub roses.

The Water Gardens

The Water Gardens, and original Old Lodge, are approached by a long drive leading up through the woods, which is lined on both sides by the distinctive dark pink *Rhododendron* ‘Cynthia’. These were allowed to grow to a great height, which looked
magnificent, but inevitably there came a time when the growth on the lower part of the plants became very sparse, the woodland behind caused the plants to grow out into the drive and which made them vulnerable to being knocked off by passing traffic, and gradually most of the flowers were either only very high up or out of sight on the top. Clearly drastic action was called for and in 1992, somewhat tentatively, the present owner took the decision to cut back half of one of the sides to approximately two to three feet. This proved a success. The extra light allowed the plants on the other side of the drive to produce new growth lower down the stems and over the next couple of years the same exercise was repeated on both sides all the way up the drive.

Only 18 years later we found ourselves in the same situation again. This time we decided to do both sides at the same time, accepting that for one year there would not be many flowers, but wishing to achieve a more balanced ‘look’ than the previous method. But this time we also extensively thinned, or high pruned, the trees behind in order to increase the light and allow the rhododendrons to grow back straight and in a more uniform manner. Already there is plenty of growth although we have to be vigilant as one or two will revert, at the base, to the original common R. ponticum from which they were grafted and it is very important that all such growth is removed before it becomes too vigorous and completely takes over, as R. ponticum is prone to do.

Strong winds in the 1980s and 1990s, and more recently the very heavy and lasting snows of 2009 and 2010, have brought over some of the older rhododendrons. Their shallow rooting nature makes these plants particularly vulnerable to these conditions and the fact that they were old and so magnificently tall, only made matters worse. However, in almost every case they are growing back from their original trunk and beginning to rise again. We have taken the woodland behind further back, as we did with the drive, in order to promote good regeneration and straight new growth.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Old Lodge was occupied by a Mr Ernest Horsfall. He was a keen gardener and decided that he should extend the existing garden by clearing the large "dark and boggy" area in the woodland. Set in a natural bowl, the water comes entirely from the natural drainage of the surrounding area, there are no springs. Tucked down in the middle of the wood this is a wonderful peaceful spot. Finding that azaleas and rhododendrons not only thrived, but seemed to be less attractive to rabbits than many other types of shrubs, Mr Horsfall set about forming the lake, which had to be lined with a thin layer of blue clay in order to hold water, and digging out a network of channels and small islands.

The whole area was filled with thousands of Mollis azaleas and surrounded by a bank of rhododendrons, some destined to grow to over sixty feet in height. At some point a very few later flowering or scented azaleas were added, but, apart from these, all of the azaleas in the Water Gardens are the distinctive orange and yellow Mollis variety and these Gardens have, reputedly, the largest single planting of Mollis azaleas in the country.

In 1998, we decided to remove a large belt of ponticum from the east bank of the lake. Taking great care not to penetrate the clay lining, we dredged the lake and burnt all of the ponticum in the mud. At the same time we cleared around the cedar tree, planting a line of rhododendrons (R. ‘Mrs A T de la Mare’, R. ‘Faggetter’s Favourite’ and ‘Earl of Donoughmore’) around the back of the newly grassed area. We also substantially increased the numbers of azaleas around the lake. An interesting feature is the bank upon which that row of ponticums once grew. We left the roots to rot down and it has become the most wonderful nursery bed on which hundreds of azaleas and a few less welcome seedlings, have established themselves naturally and then been used in other parts of the garden.

It is a constant challenge to remove the self-seeded conifers and ponticums that seem to grow right in the middle of the azalea plants. Once the azaleas have finished flowering, it is an important job to prevent the very fast growing weeds and bracken from swamping the azalea plants and preventing any natural regeneration or new growth on the lower part of the shrub.

There are only a few trees within the Water Gardens but each can claim importance in its own right. The magnificent Cedar on the far side of the lake adds a touch of grandeur, the tall Metasequoia glyptostroboides and the odd swamp cypress provide height without being overbearing; my favourite, the stunning pale green acer that has slowly returned to shape since the Ponticum were removed, and, at the entrance to the rhododendron drive, the two very large Sequoiadendron giganteum – the Wellingtonia.

The Gardens at Stody Lodge are well worth a visit. Normally open every Sunday afternoon in May, individual groups are welcomed during the week, by prior appointment. Whether an expert or just in search of a good day out, The Stody Gardens experience is one that we hope will remain with you for many years.

Adel MacNicol

EDITOR’S NOTES

John Rawling

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I need your letters, reports from branches, articles, future events etc, to keep the members up to date!

So, please send me your letters and copy for the next issue

BY 16TH JUNE 2013

for the July 2013 Bulletin

Please send to: John Rawling, Hon. Bulletin Editor, The Spinney, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.
E-mail: jr.eye@virgin.net or telephone 01883 653341
Dear Editor,

I am aware that Christmas will be long past when the next issue of the Bulletin is due but just wondered if this note might be of interest to include in the next issue of the Bulletin?

John Sanders

Rhododendron argentaeflora - a unique and recent rhododendron discovery:

It is not often that one is fortunate to witness the only plant of a particular species in existence - but even more so when it is very conveniently displayed on the show bench - without even the need to travel to its original remote and undisclosed location!

Many members will know Barry Starling as a very successful plantsman and regular competitor at RCMG Shows alongside his gargantuan plant knowledge and expertise together with his literary talents which are frequently witnessed in numerous botanical and horticultural publications. What many of you may not know is also his skill and dry wit to wring some humour out of our favourite genera. For several years Barry has applied this talent to bring amusing and clever plant descriptions together with ‘erudite’ botanical notes to the attention of others!

To elaborate further - at many of the Exeter Group of the Alpine Garden Society December meetings - Barry has regularly brought an interesting plant - usually something with a topical and ericaceous twist - to whet our appetites. It occurs to me that the wider membership of the RCMG might also be interested in some of his rarer plant introductions - hence I include a photograph of the most recent, together with a copy of the supporting botanical notes which detail the recently discovered R. argentaeflora. To further support his case he had also managed to self-pollinate his plant which had subsequently produced copious quantities of seed for distribution. To this end he produced several packets of seed at the same Group meeting which were generously available to our members. The ‘seed’ took the form of small silver ball bearing-like edible beads - best described as the sort of thing that are used to decorate an iced Christmas cake!! I do wonder if any more gullible colleagues may have already sown their share of the seed harvest. If so - it will be interesting to see if it breeds true?

Herewith Barry’s botanical notes that accompanied the above photograph: “Rhododendron argentaeflora : species nova

Collected and introduced from an area north of the North Pole by S. Claus, Lapland University Botanic Garden Expedition, December 2009. The aims of the expedition were made quite clear from its name - ‘Polar Bear’ (Polar Botanical Expedition for Arctic Rhododendrons). This species was discovered growing amongst dense colonies of Leucojum. It is possible that, on closer examination, it may prove to be closely related to species R. pseudoargentaeflora.

Cultural requirements

The species is hardy throughout Great Britain but during hot spells in Summer may benefit from iron as a trace element in the soil, R. argentaeflora requires a certain percentage of silver to thrive.

Botanical details

The expedition leader Dr S. Claus is head of the Botany Department at Lapland University during the Summer months. However during the dormant winter season he is employed at a department store, while over the Christmas period he has a job delivering toys.

Dr Claus has asked me to pass on his best wishes for the Christmas season to members of the Exeter Group of the Alpine Garden Society” (and likewise members of the RCMG ex JS).

We are delighted to welcome a group of New Members. We hope that they will enjoy their membership and make full use of the facilities and activities available.

The Editor
The Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group Annual General Meeting

At the kind invitation of The Marquess of Lansdowne, the AGM will be held at 2.30pm in the Kerry Suite, which adjoins the Bowood Hotel, Calne SN11 9PQ. Tel. 01249847695.

An Agenda for the meeting will be available by email and on the Group’s web site nearer the time of the meeting.

In the morning, prior to the AGM, Lord Lansdowne will lead a tour of the celebrated Bowood Hybrid Rhododendron collection, which is situated quite close to the Hotel on Derry Hill.

Members can meet either at (a) the Kerry Suite at the Bowood Hotel at 10.00 – 10.15 am for coffee, or (b) inside the Lodge Gates leading into the collection from the Rhododendron Car Park (which is a mile from the Hotel off the A3102 and sign posted between Derry Hill and Sandy Lane), at 11.00 am for the start of the tour.

A light buffet lunch will be available for members in the Kerry Suite on return from the tour at a cost of £12.00 (pay on the day)

Bowood House is clearly marked with distinctive brown signs all the way from Junction 17 off the M4 around Chippenham via the A350 and A4. About three quarters of a mile before Bowood House on the A4 Calne road, the A342 Devises road forks right up Derry Hill, and about half a mile up this road there is, first, the entrance to the Bowood Hotel and, further on, the Rhododendron Collection car park, both on the left. Further information about Bowood is available on www.bowood.org.

This will be an interesting and enjoyable day and members are warmly encouraged to come and take part.

Please notify the Honorary Secretary, Barry Haseltine, barry.haseltine@which.net or 01342 713132, by 22nd May, if you plan to attend, stating if you will visit the gardens, if you will want lunch, or will come to the AGM only.

A light buffet lunch will be available for members in the Kerry Suite on return from the tour at a cost of £12.00 (pay on the day)

The Group Finances – A Report from the Treasurer

Members will have seen various reports of our thoughts on membership subscriptions in previous Bulletins. The Group is in a perfectly stable financial position, resulting from careful financial management over many years. We have worked to keep costs to a minimum, and have been helped by the substantial contributions to our income from book sales and our successful seed list.

However, like everyone, we are faced with increasing costs and after very many years of stable membership fees we must now face up to an increase in November 2013. We will keep the increase to a minimum, aiming to ensure that membership fee income covers the Groups basic operating costs. This change creates a good deal of work for our voluntary team of officers. Later this year we will send out membership renewal information and we are going to introduce payment by Direct Debit for those with a UK bank account --- it will help us greatly to reduce the administration task of the Group if as many members as possible will choose this method of payment.

The new membership subscriptions will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscription Type</th>
<th>Direct Debit in Sterling</th>
<th>Other Methods in Sterling</th>
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<tr>
<td>UK members</td>
<td>£20.00</td>
<td>£22.00</td>
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<td>Europe</td>
<td>£25.00</td>
<td>£22.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rest of the World</td>
<td>£27.50</td>
<td>£22.50</td>
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<td>Discount available for three years payment in advance</td>
<td>For Europe or R.O.W only</td>
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In the case of overseas members we offer a discount for those who are happy to receive the three annual Bulletins by e-mail as this reduces our postage costs and we urge as many as possible to take this option.

Alastair Stevenson Group Treasurer
alastairstevenson@mpaconsulting.co.uk

Members’ Photograph Competition

There was a steady trickle of photos throughout 2012, with many more Camellias (15) than we have had for several years. However there was massive reduction in Rhododendron pictures from 117 to just 23 (12 species, 11 hybrids). John McQuire, our judge, commented that there were “…very few new photos of a good quality”. He “…hopes it improves next year…", so that's challenge for you all. The number of Magnolia photographs was also down from 30 to 13.

Judging by the buds on my plants of all 3 genera, 2013 should be a good year for blooms, as long as we have a reasonable Spring! So I am hoping that you will send many new photos of plants that are not in our dictionaries. Please be aware that there are now rather too many pictures of some plants (e.g. M. yunnanensis), so please check before you send in your photos, that they will be of interest to our members. Details of the 2013 competition and how to send in your photographs are given on the web site.

See next page for the winners’ photographs.

Steve Lyus
Rhododendrons

Class 1: Rhododendron species:
  *R. mallotum* entered by John Archer

Class 2: Rhododendron hybrids:
  *R. 'Loderi Sir Edmund'* entered by Chris Callard

Class 3: Vireya species:
  *R. jasminiflorum* entered by George Hargreaves

Class 4: Vireya hybrids:
  *R. 'Bold Janus'* entered by George Hargreaves

Magnolias

M. 'Pink Surprise' entered by Alain Gorlin

Camellias

C. 'Bokuhan' entered by George Hargreaves.
We supply a wide variety of high quality ericaceous plants to gardeners throughout the UK. We are able to supply the rarer and more unusual varieties of Species and Hybrid Rhododendrons as well as Azaleas, Magnolias, Cornus and other Himalayan plants.

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Internet: www.eisenhut.ch — now reworked with many more photos of our listed plants

Advertise here and engage directly with Rhododendron, Magnolia & Camellia enthusiasts both here in the UK and overseas

Contact John Rawling on 01883 653341 or email at jr.eye@virgin.net
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Date</th>
<th>Event Location</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 February 2013</td>
<td>North West Branch Ness Gardens</td>
<td>SE Branch Competition in association with RHS Main Camellia Competition and RHS Early Rhododendron Competition (Head Gardener's lecture at NT Trelissick)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/10 March 2013</td>
<td>S E Branch Wisley</td>
<td>Visit to John McQuire's garden (advance booking essential)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20/21 April 2013</td>
<td>SW Branch Rosemoor</td>
<td>Visit to Sue Kenwell's garden at Rowen and Aberconwy Nursery</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 May 2013</td>
<td>Wessex Branch Storrington</td>
<td>Visit to three private gardens</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 May 2013</td>
<td>North West Branch Ness Gardens</td>
<td>Visit to Sue Kenwell's garden at Rowen and Aberconwy Nursery</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/9 June 2013</td>
<td>NW Branch Exbury</td>
<td>Rhododendron display</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 June 2013</td>
<td>New Forest Branch Hillier Arboretum</td>
<td>Rhododendron display</td>
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<tr>
<td>20/21 June 2013</td>
<td>SW Branch Par and Lostwithiel, Cornwall</td>
<td>Private visit to Sandling Park</td>
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