



The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN - 96

www.rhodogroup-rhs.org

MARCH 2008

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mike Robinson

The desire, on the one hand, for mild winters to grow exotic taxa, and, on the other, for harsh winters to kill pests and diseases is a classic gardening dilemma.

Although the recent spate of mild winters has given us the advantage of permitting the growth of many exciting plants that were not hardy a couple of decades ago, a walk round the garden the other day produced more reminders that there are also considerable disadvantages as well. Pests and diseases that were formerly kept in check by winter cold are persisting and spreading

Sooty mould on camellia japonica varieties, in particular, is now evident all round the garden: the examination of leaf undersides reveals the presence of considerable numbers of scale insects. This is not altogether unexpected, though it was confined to camellias in the greenhouses a few years ago, but the discovery of a severe infestation on *R. racemosum* was a most unpleasant surprise. Scale insect has been a serious problem on rhododendrons in the milder parts of Scotland for some years now, but it looks as though it will soon be countrywide.

Powdery mildews on rhododendron seem to be getting worse once more, with species in subsection Thomsonia and hybrids derived from *R. campylocarpum* and *R. fortunei* being especially susceptible, but even some species with indumentum, especially from subsection Neriiflora are becoming afflicted by the disease. Bud blast is also increasing, and is no longer confined to subsection Pontica and its derivatives: presumably this is due to greater numbers of leaf hoppers surviving the winters.

One can only hope that the systemic insecticides and the fungicides necessary to control these problems will remain available to amateur gardeners.

And then, of course there are the phytophtheras. All one hears of these is uniformly alarming and depressing, so it is with great relief that research, based on magnolias, is in progress and is aimed at providing protection and cure, and that commercial crops in the tropics have been successfully treated by similar methods. But there is a funding problem! One must ask why research on this topic, in view of all the resources DEFRA have committed in diagnosing and destroying plants, is not fully funded by them or by other government agencies.

Continued on page 2



Magnolia campbellii in Torquay Photo: Malcolm Tilley, Barratt Homes
See page 7 for details.

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Amateurs once again may have to step in to maintain the beauty of the environment as opposed to its commercial viability: I hope that some of our members, together with those of other relevant societies, may be able to assist in what appears to be vital work designed to protect not only rhododendron and magnolia but also some of our most loved native trees.

But all this is to start the year on too gloomy a note; a much brighter tone is set by the 2008 yearbook. Its professional style and superb content show that the Group has a worthy successor to Philip Evans. Pam Hayward is to be congratulated on a splendid publication.

Members may not be aware that, since last summer, a great deal of time and effort has been spent reviewing the status of the three RHS special interest Groups – ourselves, the Fruit Group, and The Lily Group. This became necessary primarily because of increased scrutiny within the RHS by the Charity Commissioners of all activities apparently designed mainly to be of service to the members of organisations without perceived benefit to the wider world, and the fact that this was perceived by the RHS executive as being more true of the Groups than of the Society in general. Sparing members the minutiae of the processes involved, the final outcome is that the Groups will, subject to successful negotiations on the details, be more closely integrated into the structure of the Society, and will be encouraged to make their work more widely known.

The responsibility for making further progress is to be taken by an additional member of the RHS executive whose primary duties will include liaison with all the RHS plant committees. At the time of writing no appointment has been made, and further progress is unlikely before this summer. In the meantime any views that members have about this matter and the future of the Group in general will be gratefully received, but I can assure members that the Group's control of its own finances will be maintained. Any proposals will, in any event, have to be ratified by the members, as changes to the Group's constitution will be needed.

The AGM this year will be at the Savill Garden, and will include a conducted tour led by that distinguished plantsman and keeper of the garden, Mark Flanagan. This is a treat not to be missed and all for the price of entry only. I hope the event will be very well supported. The AGM is at 2pm on Tuesday June 17th, and the garden walk starts at about 11.30am. Meet at the entrance to the garden with cameras and notebooks(!) about 10 minutes beforehand.

The amount of flower bud set makes the spring look inviting indeed. I wish you all a happy and successful season.

EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

Dates for 2008

International Camellia Society

International Camellia Conference

Falmouth, Cornwall - 2nd – 5th April 2008

Join the ICS Conference and Garden visits for just a day or two?

Contact: Pat Short 020 8870 6884 or for days:

Marie-Anne James, Eyas Ltd.,

5 Cooper Street, Chichester, W. Sussex, PO19 1EB.

A Reminder!

The RHS Main Rhododendron Competition will be held at RHS Rosemoor - **on 26th & 27th April 2008.**

International Rhododendron Conference

Jointly Hosted by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
and the Scottish Rhododendron Society –

May 7-11th 2008

***Rhododendron 2008: 50 Years of Modern Day
Exploration, Hybridising & Conservation.***

Applications to: Marjory McFarlane, Conference Registrar,
14 Loaning Crescent, Peebles, Tweeddale, Scotland EH45 9JR
e.mail: rhodo08@btinternet.com

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 July Bulletin by 14th June 2008.

**Please send to: John Rawling, Hon. Bulletin Editor,
The Spinney, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.
E-mail: jr.eye@virgin.net or Tel. (&Fax) 01883 653341**

Obituary

Cecily Perring

Cecily Perring who died last summer, served on the Group Executive Committee for eighteen years, from 1985 until 2003. From 1991 she also wrote the reports for the Yearbook on the two RHS Westminster camellia competitions each year, her last report appearing in the 2004 edition.

Cicely was born in 1920 and lived her whole life in East Sussex. Her parents built Watermill House at Pett, having first cleared an area of woodland. This was her home for nearly eighty years, and an ideal place to foster her love of camellias, rhododendrons and magnolias. Fellow committee members became familiar with her sharp lawyer's mind and direct approach to issues. In her youth she overcame financial obstacles, and very real prejudice against women in the legal profession, to qualify as a solicitor. In 1946 she established her own firm, Perring & Co, in Hastings. Two of her cases went to the House of Lords, one apparently leading to amendments to the Married Women's Property Act, relating to the rights of women in divorce cases. Charities were very important to her, especially for the Blind - for whom she held many garden Open Days and plant sales.

Cicely was, of course, a member of the SE Branch of the Group, and when the SE Shows were commenced in 1996 was a supporter with camellia entries from her large collection.

She was able to live in her beloved house and garden right up to the end of her life, and I believe she died in her conservatory. Her family held a memorial service for her last October.

Philip Evans

Camellias: The Gardener's Encyclopaedia

This beautifully produced new book by Jennifer Trehane contains excellent photographs and descriptions of over well over 600 cultivars and species. It also contains a detailed description of various methods of propagation and of pests and diseases. This is a significant advance on any existing camellia encyclopaedia. It is a worthy and invaluable reference book that is a joy to read and to return to for information and identification. *Editor*

Stop Press

I have just received a brief note from Pam Hayward, to advise that:

The National Collection of Hybrid Vireya Rhododendrons is now held at Flete Walled Gardens, near Ermington, South Devon. For more information: contact Andy Byfield on 01752 830577 or email andy@byfield1068.freerve.co.uk

TOURS

Judith Hallett

Autumn Tour 2008

The 2008 joint tour with the ICS will be to the Lake District, from **Wednesday 8th October until Saturday 11th October**. This area will be well known to many members for its rich garden heritage set in a spectacular landscape.

I am working closely with group member Shelagh Newman to secure visits to both large and more modestly sized gardens in the Southern Lakes. Shelagh is responsible for the National Collection of Hydrangeas at Holehird and will personally guide us around this and the Rhododendron area of the garden. We shall also be visiting the private gardens of Kath Brown and David Kinsman, and there is plenty more in the pipeline!

I have reserved accommodation at the Netherwood Hotel, Grange over Sands. This is a family run hotel, set in fifteen acres of grounds overlooking Morecambe Bay. The hotel has a reputation for consistently good food, and we shall have full use of the spa facilities during our stay. The cost of the tour will not exceed £375.

I urge you to book the date of the tour in your diaries and return the enclosed slip to make your reservation as soon as possible (by 1st June latest). Local members are most welcome on a daily basis and will be charged accordingly.

Finally, may I recommend a new publication: *Gardens of the Lake District* by Tim Longville as an excellent introduction to thirty magnificent gardens to be seen in the area.

Judy Hallett at, judy.hallett@googlemail.com or 01981 570401

SEED DISTRIBUTION & PLANT EXCHANGE

The Seed List and the Surplus Plants list has been circulated with your Yearbook.

Apply for your seed request promptly – March is a good time to both sow your seeds and to plant out those young plants.

MEMBERS NOTES

Following the Members note in the November 2007 issue of the Bulletin on Sofiero Castle Gardens by Alan Duncanson, I have received another interesting letter about the Garden from Jim Gardiner, which I publish below

Sofiero Castle Garden, Helsingborg, Sweden.

Dear Editor,

I was delighted to read Alan Duncanson's article on Sofiero Palace garden in the November Newsletter and thought readers may be interested in some personal memories of Sofiero and south west Sweden.

During May 2007 (3rd-6th), I was invited by Cecilia Liljedahl, the manager of Sofiero Palace to formally open a new Rhododendron bed in celebration of the first Rhododendron planting at Sofiero Palace 100 years ago. In the past, the RHS had sent both Rhododendron plants and seed from Wisley to Sofiero, primarily during the 1950's and '60's. In fact, substantial plants of *R. fortunei*, gifted in 1956 and *R. planetum* in 1963 are still in 'rude' health.

The new Rhododendron bed had been planted by Svend Hansen from Denmark, mostly wild collected and had been raised by him including a plant of *R. planetum*, hence the link with Wisley.

The opening was given national Press and TV coverage as the Garden is a significant tourist attraction in south west Sweden.

Whilst in Sweden, Kenneth Lorentzon, from the University of Alnarp took me to Wrams Gunnarstorp a country Estate and Farm where Carl von Linne had visited. There is a famous box hedge and hornbeam arbour which will have been in existence 300 years ago when Linnaeus visited.

He also took me to see Karl Evert Flinck and to walk around his garden at Bjuv. A great privilege to meet him in his own home and a great intellect. Two magnolias that stood out, M. 'Ingemar' ('Yellow Bird' x 'Gold Star'). - a good deep yellow, vase shaped flower, strong upright habit and *M. pseudokobus*. We have a plant of the latter at Wisley but this was the first time I had seen this plant in flower. Apart from its striking poise, was its remarkable fragrance, quite distinct in magnolias reminding me of fermenting hops!



M. pseudokobus

Photo: Jim Gardiner

What was really fantastic was the opportunity to meet fellow Magnolia enthusiasts, Erland Ejder and Magnus Carlstrom. Erland had recently returned from Japan where he made a thorough study of all the *M. stellata* sites. With the help of Karl Flinck, the group have been responsible for the initial phase of planting a Magnolia forest at the University of Alnarp. I also met Gunnar Ericson, the Director of the city of Malmo Parks Dept. He is pressing ahead with the planting of magnolias as street trees throughout the city, linking with the work being carried out at the University of Alnarp.

Jim Gardiner.

Wisley.

How to decide where to live in order to grow Rhododendrons

I currently live in a typical 1930's semi-detached house in a South London suburb with a small garden. Attendance at Mike Robinson's propagation day in 2003 (SE Branch Propagation Day) led to a severe attack of the RCM bug, which means that I now have rather a large number of pots of plants from our three genera plus several others that also looked interesting along the way. As I plan to retire in late 2009, my thoughts have recently focused on the difficult decision as to where to move to that would be suitable for growing these plants.

The first attempt I made at identifying likely areas of England was to analyse the areas where our members live. My assumption was that most of our members would already be living in suitable areas.

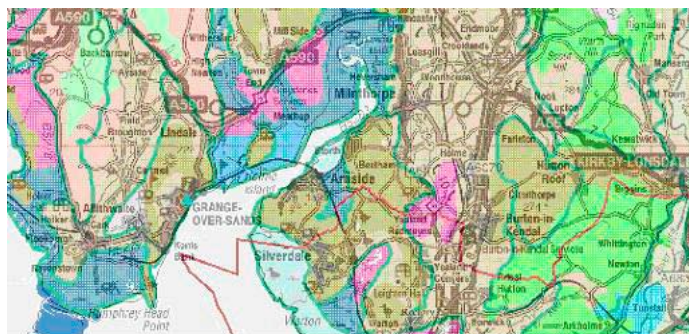
These were the top 8 rows of the table:

County	Member Count
Devon	84
Surrey	49
Cornwall	47
Sussex	45
Hampshire	30
Kent	20
Cumbria	17
London	16

This I found interesting, but not very surprising. However I quickly realised that the County level was far too large to work with, as it would be very time consuming to search for property in such a large area. Districts or Boroughs would be a more realistic focus. I tried plotting members' towns on county maps, but found that our membership list was of little use at this detailed level as we don't have enough members in each county to clearly identify any clusters.

So it was back to the drawing board. I decided that I really needed a map of the soil surface. Nowadays the first port of call for all information is the Internet and the Google search engine in particular. This search literally delivered up a "Magic" site (<http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/>) that allows you to overlay data from a number of topics on the same map. If you choose "Land Classifications" and do not go any more detailed than 1:200,000, then you are able to see the area coloured according to some 27 different Soilscaapes.

Here is an example, around Grange over Sands in Cumbria:



This was very pretty, but unfortunately the legend does not say what any of the colours mean! After some correspondence with the owners of the website I found that the key could be obtained by using the "Identify" icon. This showed that the green area around Kirkby Lonsdale on the map above was "Slowly Permeable Seasonally Wet Acid Loamy And Clayey Soils". This seemed to be what I had been looking for and I duly printed off maps of some possible locations, together with the legend descriptions. In practice however, it was quite difficult to distinguish between many of the colours on the printed paper, even though I had printed them at the highest quality that my colour printer provides.

Whilst in Kendal library we found that they had a map of Northern England entitled "Soils of England and Wales" which had been published by Rothamsted Experimental Station. This was a much more detailed definition of the soil types and was clearly the source for the map on the Magic website. It had much clearer colour gradations and also numbered every area with a code reference, so there was no possibility of making an error. Once I got home I found that I could purchase these regional maps for £18 from <http://www.landis.org.uk/gateway/ooi/contact.cfm>.

This site is owned by Cranfield University and has its own version of the "Magic" map (<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscaapes/>) with a much easier to understand display:



I did ask the very friendly people at Cranfield University whether there was such a thing as a PH map of the UK and they said that they could produce one for me, but it would cost around £500!

So I think I now have enough information on the soil, but what about the climate?

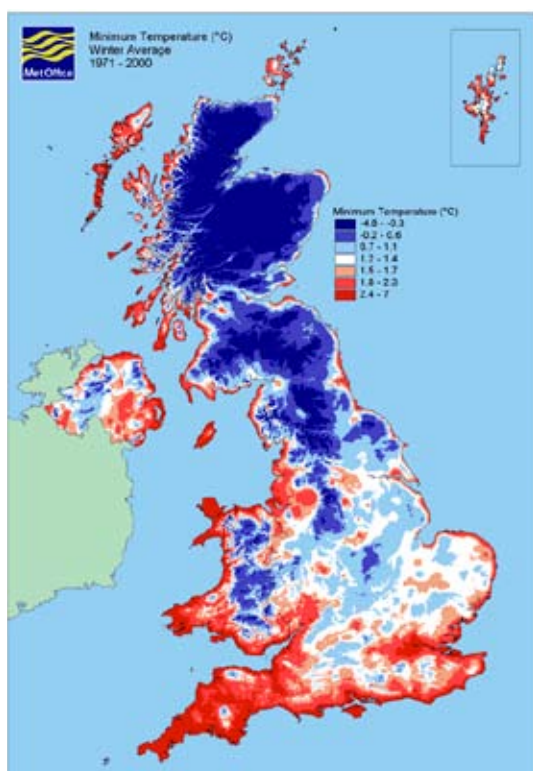
The obvious source is the Met Office and they did not disappoint me. They have averages of a large number of useful statistics for the 30 years between 1971 and 2000.

Here you can obtain beautiful maps of the UK for the following statistics:

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/averages/19712000/mapped.html>

Maximum temperature	Sunshine
Minimum temperature	Rainfall
Mean temperature	Days rainfall greater than 0.2 mm
Soil 30 cm temperature	Days rainfall greater than 1 mm
Grass minimum temp.	Days of snow lying
Days of ground frost	Days of thunder
Days of air frost	

What is more, all of these statistics can be examined for any month or season of the year. As an example, here is the map of the Winter Average Minimum Temperatures over the 1971-2000 period:



Note the interesting channel of colder temperatures south of Shrewsbury.

On another part of this site there are also monthly averages of five of the above statistics for 26 Met. Office stations for every month going back to January 1959. Data for other stations can be obtained for a fee.

However, these weather statistics are for the past and we are clearly living in a period of Climate Change. The recent January issue of *The Garden* has some UK maps for projected rainfall and temperatures (p27) for the remainder of this century that are thought provoking and maybe more important than these historic values. There does seem to be a North/South divide about a line from Chester across to Hartlepool?

Of course these sources are addressing my location selection criteria; Helen has hers, which include a maximum temperature of 24C, within walking distance of a railway station and being close to the sea. I do hope that there is a feasible solution to our problem!

Our search is still in progress; so if anyone knows of a suitable location, or knows of a suitable property available, please contact me through either the address or email shown in the membership booklet.

Stephen Lyus

RHODODENDRONS

Aberconway Rhododendron Hybrids at Bodnant Garden

Introduction

Bodnant Garden has a unique collection of Aberconway hybrid Rhododendrons raised in the period 1920 to 1976 apart from a more general collection of other hybrids and species. All collections need regular attention and this is no exception.

Register of Plants

A list of the hybrids registered by Lord Aberconway is held at Bodnant and consists of 324 cultivars. At the time of writing only 96 of these hybrids growing at Bodnant Garden have been identified and propagated. If this unique collection is to be preserved these plants need to be identified, tended and propagated. The resources currently available in the garden are limited.

Identification

The first and perhaps the easiest way in which the RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group (Group) could help would be in the identification of plants.

For this purpose visits during the flowering season have been arranged to which members are invited. Familiarity with rhododendrons as a genus, not necessarily with the Aberconway Hybrids is all that is asked. The tours would be accompanied by Alison Clarke the Propagator/Taxonomist and /or the Head Gardener, Troy Smith and would be over the whole garden, parts of which are not generally accessible to the public.

The visits would commence at 10.00 am and last for a full day; lunch would be provided by the Garden for participants.

Dates for these visits are:-

- Tuesday 1 April
- Saturday 19 April
- Friday 2 May
- Tuesday 20 May

Members who wish to attend and indeed benefit from a unique opportunity to learn about the Bodnant collection are asked to contact John Harsant 0151 342 3664 or john@harsant.uk.com

(For those coming from afar a list of nearby accommodation can be supplied.).

John Harsant.

Heswall, Wirrell.

A budding rhododendron problem?

The current fashion is 'gardening for wildlife' and our garden fits that category to perfection. We provide near perfect conditions for food and shelter - it's true, without much deliberate effort on our part apart from lots of nesting boxes - and a whole range of furry things show their appreciation by proliferating, ganging up on us and eating or otherwise mangling many of our plants. As a result we spend valuable time trying to discourage them, in an endeavour to have some garden left for ourselves.

Mice seek out clematis - have yours really got wilt? - and practically anything in a greenhouse, rare seeds being a real delicacy. A 12 bore is a little on the heavy side for them but ideal for rabbits that eat or chisel anything, even things they don't like, evidently just for tooth exercise. Immaculate Bill Badger can turn a neat grass path into a ploughed field overnight. Mercifully we do not have deer, but squirrels more than compensate.

Squirrels are probably the most consistent enemy to arboricultural conservation yet encountered. We know that sadly they have driven the reds to the periphery of this island, but rarely is the point made that they are also maiming and destroying our young trees faster than any of the currently threatening diseases. The damage in our own arboretum is everywhere in evidence – all maples, beech and oak being their particular favorites, many killed or damaged beyond recovery by having the bark shredded as if by a cheese grater. It is beyond frustration to have 20year old, strategically sited oaks written off in an hour or two. No one can give you back the lost years.

Squirrels have reached plague proportions. One example – a friend in Surrey has a single much prized high yielding walnut tree – a 50ft *Juglans regia* cv Franquette - in his garden that would normally provide sackfuls of nuts. Last year out of an estimated 1,000 crop he was left with 40 nuts, even though he managed to dispose of 113 predating squirrels on this one tree during the season. The squirrels ate just one in fifty of the nuts, mostly bitten off just before they were ripe. Calling them tree rats is being unkind to rats.

And now, for the first time in our garden, it looks as if they have turned their malevolent attention to rhododendrons. We recently moved some 5-7ft big-leaf rhododendrons into a quiet corner of our little wood and within a week the big, firm vegetative buds on a *R sinogrande* hybrid and *R. kesangiae* had been damaged or removed, some cleaned right down to the hard woody base. A second sinogrande was untouched, suggesting random activity. The top bud only on a nearby *R falconeri* had been nibbled but the rest untouched, presumably less substantial or not to taste. The remains of the buds were on the ground beneath the affected plants and it was difficult to establish what, if anything had been eaten.



Severe bud damage to large leaved rhododendrons. Photo: Maurice Foster

We have not caught squirrels *in flagrante delictu*, but making due allowance for my squirrel paranoia, we have still concluded, by a process of elimination of the alternatives, that they are the culprits. The stiff stout rhododendron shoots would support their weight and some of the petioles

were broken, with a few leaves on the ground, suggesting something obsessively active and jumping around. Birds are not likely, with pigeons' softish beaks incapable of chiseling down to the hard wood and jays and magpies lacking the motivation. We have no parrots. We also have no deer and anyway some buds would have been out of reach. Even our rabbits do not climb and it would require a real army of mice to inflict such damage so quickly. So it has to be squirrels?

We would be interested to know if any member has had a similar experience and in particular could confirm beyond reasonable doubt that squirrels are definitely the answer.

Maurice Foster.

Ivy Hatch, Sevenoaks.

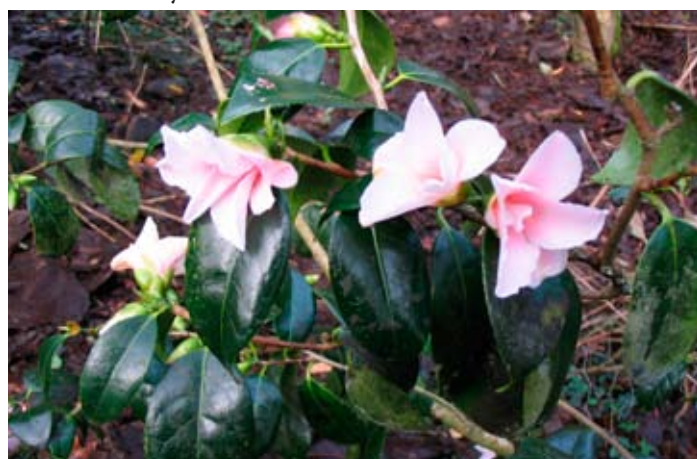
CAMILLIAS

Winter Wabisukes

The small and little-known group of Camellias known as Wabisuke (pronounced Wa-bis-kay) is not featured in UK catalogues or the Plantfinder and little reported in the literature.

Our experience in growing three Wabisuke cultivars over the last ten years has led us to believe that were they better known they might be more widely planted. What we did not realize when we acquired the plants some ten years ago is that they flower right through the winter. They are a delight with their exquisite, small, single funnel-shaped flowers in shades of pink and white and as the bushes increase in size, they are becoming a significant winter feature. Early in the new year they are delightful companions in flower arrangements with Daphne, Viburnum, Sarcococca et alia.

Our plants are Fukurin Wabisuke, with pale pink flowers, edging to white; Hina Wabisuke, rose pink; and Shiro Wabisuke, white. 'Woody Plants of Japan' (text in Japanese!) lists cvs Wabisuke, Campanulata and Bicolor. The plants are rather like japonicas, but have small to medium sized leaves and are quite slow-growing and rather loosely shrubby in character. The small 4-5cm funnel-shaped flowers (the Japanese call them 'Choko' which is a small cup for drinking sake and refers to the shape) begin to open in November and the succession continues right through to spring, only pausing through periods of cold frosty weather. The small flowers are seriously weather-resistant and the substantial petals of even the white cultivar do not easily spoil in the wind and rain of the average winter and most important, fall before they discolour.



Camellia 'Hina Wabisuke'

Photo: Maurice Foster

The name 'Wabisuke' evidently derives from the Japanese 'wabishin' which means 'poor, degenerate stamens' as the stamens are without, or with only a few degenerate, anthers and the flowers thus sterile.

They are generally accepted as camellias of Japan, but at the January Vincent Square RHS meeting I was delighted to see a beautiful painting of Shiro Wabisuke exhibited by a charming Japanese lady. I asked if she knew the origin of the plant and she told me it had arrived in Japan from Korea, adding that with such a provenance it could well have originated in China. As to its parentage, she thought it was a japonica hybrid and that the other parent was not sasanqua, but some other, perhaps Chinese, species.

I am indebted to Jennifer Trehane who very kindly obtained for me from Japan an extract from 'Camellias and Wabisuke for Tea Ceremonies' by Professor Shuho Kirino. He describes Wabisuke as a special group which is used to decorate tea ceremony rooms, 'for their particular appearance' and is evidently especially revered in this respect. Jennifer speculates that this special ceremonial status may be because they have no male viability and are thus in effect perfectly female.

Professor Kirino divides Wabisuke into two groups. The first derives from an ancient cultivar called 'Tarokaja' with large specimens to be seen not only in Japan but also in China, in Shanghai and Hangzhou. Unlike *C japonica* forms, it has a densely hairy ovary and is thought to be a hybrid with a Chinese species. It is also fertile, with functional stamens and blooms from December to March with larger 7.5cm flowers. It may be this connection to which the lady painter at Vincent Square was referring.

The second group comprises forms of *C. japonica* and *C. rusticana* (snow camellia), essentially mutations which have occurred spontaneously in wild populations. These are the sterile forms that I have described growing in our garden in Kent and clearly close to *C. japonica*.

For those hard case enthusiasts who believe that the sasanquas are only really suitable for the conservatory or somewhere south of Lyon, the Wabisukes present a more reliable, weather resistant and equally attractive alternative through all the dark months. We discovered them quite by accident and have grown to appreciate their qualities at a season when beautiful flowers are at a premium in the garden.

Maurice Foster

Ivy Hatch, Sevenoaks

MAGNOLIAS

Against the odds! Torquay's Magnolia Campbellii Tree Survives Two Massive Site Demolitions!

The recent unveiling of a commemorative Blue Plaque to the novelist Eden Phillpotts who wrote eighteen specialist books on Dartmoor unearthed the amazing story of a large "campbellii magnolia" surviving two major redevelopments at the site of what was, for twenty eight years, Mr Phillpotts home Eltham in Oakhill Road, Torquay.

When researching the history of Eden Phillpotts (EP), Torbay Civic Society Chairman Ian L Handford discovered that his daughter Adelaide had written an autobiography entitled "Reverie" in which she recalled in detail the years of her youth including the fact that she had assisted as a child with the planting of a rather special magnolia tree. Her words tell that her father on planting the tree said "I

want you to help me plant it because, though I shall not live to see it flower, you may. It will not flower for thirty, forty or fifty years". The tree had been put in the ground near the entrance to Eden Phillpotts' large Victorian home and having been bedded into peat and regularly watered, by the time Adelaide was in her teens she had still not seen it in flower. In fact she would never see it flower.



Today both father and daughter have died but by an amazing coincidence some fifty years after Eden's death, the tree, having survived the fact that Eltham was demolished over half a century ago to make way in the first place for a new boys' grammar school that itself was demolished to make way for a brand new technical college (later renamed South Devon College), decided to flower. In 2007 the college was demolished to make way for a new housing estate on the ten acre site and yet through all of these many upheavals Eden and Adelaide's tree, in spite of being totally neglected, has survived. By luck the magnolia burst into flower in February 2007 and fortunately the site manager of the Barratt Housing developers, Mr Malcolm Tilley, had the foresight to capture on disc some marvellous colour pictures of the tree sitting in the middle of his huge building site. (See front cover photograph)

Protected by a Tree Preservation Order the special magnolia still sits proud at the centre of a new housing estate. The Torbay Civic Society plaque honouring Eden Phillpotts has been unveiled not fifty yards from the magnolia in a newly created stone pillar made from the original wall of EP's estate courtesy of Barratt Homes.

Should any reader like a copy of the commemorative pamphlet outlining the life and times of Eden Phillpotts and the history of his home "Eltham" in Oakhill Road, Torquay then please write to the Torbay Civic Society c/o 137 St Marychurch Road Torquay Devon TQ1 3HW enclosing a stamped addressed envelope and enclosing two or three stamps as a contribution towards the cost of posting the colour pamphlet.

LETTERS

SAVING BRITAIN'S GARDEN HERITAGE

Dear Garden Owners,

The Cornwall Garden Society is working as a team with Ros Smith of Duchy Rosewarne over funding for their micro propagation programme of irreplaceable plant stocks, in response to the threat from *Phytophthora ramorum* or Sudden Oak Death (SOD) disease.

Can you imagine Cornwall or your garden without rhododendrons?

Rhododendrons are surely one of the jewels in Cornwall's crown, the highlight of so many of our lovely Spring gardens. Yet they are seriously threatened as never before.

Almost certainly you already know about SOD disease and the danger it poses to rhododendrons in particular, and the urgent work that is being done at Rosewarne laboratory to propagate plant material before disaster strikes.

Protect your garden from this virulent disease.

Would you like to be sure that your garden is safe? Would you feel more comfortable if the micro-propagation work had a viable future, so that if the worst happens you could call on Rosewarne for help?

We have a two-way plan that could put your mind at rest.

Government funding has stopped, so Rosewarne is now asking Cornish gardens (and other UK gardens) if they would be prepared to supplement our anti-SOD funding. In return, if SOD affects your garden in years (or months) to come, we could then offer you cloned plant material for reintroduction to your garden at a greatly reduced price.

Rosewarne has been tremendously successful with rhododendrons, processing close to 300 different varieties, as well as a small number of magnolias and other rare and threatened plants. Rosewarne is the only laboratory in the UK licensed by the Plant Health and Safety Inspectorate to propagate plant material that may fall victim to SOD. However, our work itself is threatened without further resources because we have a funding shortfall.

How much is it worth to protect your plants?

ANY contribution would be greatly welcomed. If you could afford £1,000, £2,000 or £3,000 (or other amount Ed.) that would be a great help in securing our propagation programme and the future of your precious plants in the process.

Please help us to help you if you possibly can.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Bryan Coode

Chairman, Cornwall Garden Society.
Carwinnick, Grampound, Truro TR24RD

(Also, if you would like to visit Rosewarne's micro-propagation facilities, you would be most welcome. Please give Ros Smith a call on 01209 722138 or e-mail ros.smith@duchy.ac.uk)

PLEASE HELP ME PROTECT MY GARDEN

I/We are prepared to give £ _____ to continue the micro-propagation work, and ensure my plants against SOD.

Cheques to be made payable to Duchy College.

Send to:

Ros Smith, Rare Species Project Manager,

Duchy College, Rosewarne, Camborne, TR14 0AB

Dear Editor,

For the past fifteen years the North West and North Wales Branch have been organising week-end tours for members of the Branch. We have ranged from Scotland to Cornwall and South East England, from Newcastle to South West Wales, and points in between. Over the course of these tours we have seen many interesting gardens and stayed at helpful hotels. It has occurred to me that it might be useful to draw up a list of gardens which have been visited by us and other branches, and hotels which can be recommended in the various areas. This might prove helpful to those members charged with organising visits or tours by their branches.

I would be glad to hear from other branches or members willing to contribute to the list. If this idea proves to be of

sufficient interest I will prepare a pro forma which would be circulated to interested members. The subsequent list would be available to branches and members by email.

Please contact me, preferably by email at cmreddington@lycos.com or alternatively at

18 Westwood Road Prenton CH43 9RQ

Michael Reddington NW & N Wales Branch Secretary

Dear Editor,

I think the tenderness of R. 'Fragrantissimum' is much exaggerated. I grew it successfully years ago in my mother's garden in West Cumberland. It was very successful as you would expect there. I grew it in my garden in Central Wales near Hay-on-Wye where it did adequately but not brilliantly. I have grown it for ten years in this garden (between the other two gardens in hardiness) where it flourishes. It may of course depend on the source.

I always enjoy the Bulletin.

John R.E. Borron.

Ambleside, Cumbria

Dear Editor,

I was reading with interest Chairman Mike Robinson's observations in Bulletin 95 about the reliability of flowering of the Michelia section.



Michelia Ernestii (wilsonii)

Photo: Nigel Edward

Down here in my south west garden, *M. doltropa* and *dianica* flower reliably. ("Silver Cloud" seems to flower reasonably but at the moment every other year, but the plant itself is fairly small).

M. figo does reasonably well with *M. Ernestii (wilsonii)* again flowering annually but not abundantly.

I have had Ernestii now for over ten years from a twig of about 6", see photo above, a flower from earlier this year. This plant has been kept in a pot since I had it just in case I had to put it under cover if we had a period of severe frost; but not needed to be done so far, and is left outside all year round.

I also have one which does flower annually bought as *M. alba*. This begins to flower in about August/September time and continues through until about the following February/March. It is flowering now (November).

Having spoken to Mike Robinson about it some years ago, he indicated I should not leave it out all year and so it is put under cover at the least sign of frost.

Other Michelia types I have bought recently or grown from seed have yet to flower.

Nigel Edwards.

Bishopsteignton, Devon.

BRANCH REPORTS

The new West Midlands Branch *Alastair Stevenson*

- Study Day at Hergest Croft Gardens

After a couple of false starts an inaugural event for a West Midlands Branch has been arranged with the help of Lawrence Banks for **Saturday 4 October 2008** at Hergest Croft Gardens, Kington, Herefordshire.

It is to be a full day event and will include a tour of the garden, lunch and practical guide to propagation lead by Head Gardener Stephen Lloyd. Full details will be available later in the year and will be sent to all members in the West Midlands and other accessible locations to Kington. However, as numbers will be limited, to ensure you are included please register your interest as soon as possible with Alastair Stevenson on 01989 780285 or at alastairstevenson@mpaconsulting.co.uk

North West England & North Wales Branch *Ted Brabin*

We enjoyed four interesting, enjoyable and educational talks during the winter and are now preparing for our last major event of the season – the Branch Show on Saturday/Sunday, 3/4 May. This is always well supported by Branch members, who bring an eclectic and dazzling assemblage of blooms. As this year is “Cheshire Year of the Garden” and as nearby Liverpool celebrates being “Capital of Culture”, both the staff at Ness and our Branch would love to demonstrate that we are also a “Capital of Horticulture”. We are hoping that some of our local “big” gardens will bring a collection of their beauties and that as many of our Branch members as possible bring along some of their treasures. For the first time Ness Gardens will be entering formal exhibits, in addition to their usual floral decorations. It is a friendly event, its main aim being to share our enjoyment of our plants with as many visitors as possible. This year Ness Gardens are making available the much larger “Hulme Room”, which has spectacular views along the Rhododendron Border and as usual the Show will be open to all visitors to the Garden.

This year, for the first time and to celebrate the tenth year of our Show, a prize will be awarded for the best exhibit in the Show. It will be named “The J.K. Hulme Prize,” after our first Branch Chairman, who was Director of Ness Gardens for thirty-two years and principal architect of the present gardens. To assist those staff from other gardens who work on weekdays only, or are busy at week-ends, “setting-up” will be from noon on Friday, 2 May until 4.30 p.m. and from 9.30 a.m. until 11.0 a.m. on Saturday, 3 May. Judging will be from 11.0 a.m. until 2.0 p.m. on Saturday, after which the Show will be open to the public. Members of the Main Group, Branch members and non-members will all be welcomed, especially if they bring along some of their blooms. They will also be warmly welcomed if they come simply to enjoy the Show. Come and join us if you can, especially with an armful of flowers.

Report of Peak District Branch 2007 *David Ives*

The members of the Peak District branch enjoyed two organised visits to see gardens associated with historic houses, together with tours of these houses.

The first visit took place on 14th April on a gloriously sunny day to Renishaw Hall. The gardens there are quite extensive, beautifully laid out on different levels, in woodland and up the walls of the Hall. There was an avenue of camellias in full flower, but limited in varieties planted. There were many different magnolias coming into flower in this very attractive setting, but for these our visit was on the early side despite the warm April. Altogether we had a most enjoyable visit.

The second visit took place on 16th September at Eyam Hall, starting with a tour of the gardens given by the head gardener, the long established garden being in process of restoration. This visit was by way of an autumn get together, rather than focussed on our three genera. But a real highlight was provided by one of our members, Ralph Millward, who gave us an excellent illustrated presentation covering many aspects of a recent plant hunting trip under the title “In the Footsteps of Frank Kingdon-Ward”.

NOTICES

Pat Bucknell, Hon Secretary

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2008

This is to be held on Tuesday 17th June 2008
at **2.00 p.m. at the Savill Garden, Windsor.**

Please do come. Mark Flanagan is hoping to escort us on a tour of the Garden before lunch

The Committee

Mr. John Harsant and Mr. Alastair Stevenson have served their present three year term on the Committee but both are willing to stand for a further term. I have received nomination forms duly seconded for both of them.

The Chairman, Dr. Mike L.A. Robinson

Vice Chairman Mr. Philip Evans

Hon. Treasurer Mr. Martin Gates

Hon. Secretary Mrs Pat Bucknell

Hon. Membership Secretary Mr. Rupert Eley

Yearbook Editor Mrs. Pam Hayward

Hon Bulletin Editor Mr. John Rawling

Hon. Tours Organiser Mrs Judy Hallett

Together with Archivist Mrs. Pam Hayward, Convenor of the Seed Bank Mr. Gerald Dixon and Webmaster Mr. Graham Mills are all continuing in post.

Other mid-term Committee members continuing in post are: Mr. Eric Annal, Mr. Stephen Lyus, Mr. Andy Simons,

Your voting form is enclosed

MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

For any membership enquiries, contact :

Rupert Eley, Hon. Membership Secretary,

East Bergholt Place, East Bergholt, Suffolk, CO7 6UP.

Tel. 01206 299224

or by e-mail: sales@placefroplants.co.uk

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members. We hope they will enjoy their membership.



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

CAMELLIAS: The Gardener's Encyclopedia – Jennifer Trehane 2007 428pp, illust.

Full price: **£35** Member's Price: **£23.50**

Postage: UK **£5.50**, Europe **£10**, Rest of World **£19**

RHODODENDRONS OF SABAH – George Argent, Anthony Lamb and Anthea Phillipps 2007

New edition, revised and updated, hardback, 280pp, illust.

Full Price in UK: **£55** Member's Price: **£30**

Postage: UK **£5**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15.50** (Air)

RHODODENDRON SPECIES 2007

The yearbook of the Rhododendron Species Foundation. 150pp, illust. UK **£7**, Rest of World **£10**, including post

RHODODENDRONS OF SUBGENUS VIREYA – George Argent 2006

Full Price: **£55** Member's Price: **£39**

Postage: UK **£5**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15** (Air)

RHODODENDRONS & AZALEAS – Kenneth Cox

Full Price: **£29.95** Member's Price: **£24.50**

Postage: UK **£5**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15** (Air)

International RHODODENDRON REGISTER and CHECKLIST Second Edition – RHS 2004

Full Price: **£90** Member's Price: **£75**

Postage: UK **£9.50**, Europe **£10**, Rest of World **£14** (Air)

THE RHODODENDRON HANDBOOK 1998

352pp, illust. **NOW £19** post free. Airmail: **+£5**

YEARBOOK Back Numbers – please enquire.

Please make cheques (Sterling) payable to:

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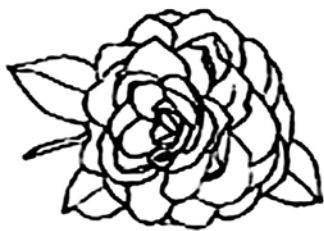
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FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2008

Date	Organiser	Location	Event	Contact
March				
15th	SE Branch	Ardingly College	Charles Williams on "The National Collection of Magnolias at Caerhays and other plants raised there"	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
18th	Lakeland Society	Holehird 9.30am	Working Party	Robert Smith 0153 944 3041
April				
13th – 19th	Lakeland Society	Spring Tour	Tour to Devon led by Malcolm Bradbury	Robert Smith 0153 944 3041
19th - 20th	SE Branch	Borde Hill	Annual Show in conjunction with the ICS	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
24th – 28th	NW & N.Wales	West Coast of Scotland	Branch Spring Tour	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
26th - 27th	RHS	Rosemoor	RHS Main Rhododendron Competition	
May				
3rd	SE Branch	Savill Garden	Spring visit – 10.30am	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
3rd.- 4th	NW & N.Wales	Ness Gardens	20 th Annual Show	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
7th – 11th	International Rhododendron Conference at R.B.G Edinburgh			SRS or RBGE
8th	Lakeland Society	Garden Visit to Fourways, Windermere.	6.30pm	Robert Smith 0153 944 3041
16th	Lakeland Society	Garden Visit to Stagshaw, Ambleside –	630pm	Robert Smith 0153 944 3041
22nd	Lakeland Society	Garden Visit to Briery Close –	2.00pm	Robert Smith 0153 944 3041
June				
17th	Group AGM	Savill Gardens	Annual General Meeting – 2.00pm	Pat Bucknell 01503 220215

Members Photographs

One of our keen members, Charlotte Jacobson, has suggested that she would like to see photographs of other member's best plants. To start this concept off, she has provided us with some excellent pictures of three of her plants. If you now go to our website (<http://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/>) you will see that there is a new button on the end of the central green bar (Members Photos). Clicking on this brings up a page that gives quick access to the pictures that have been provided by our members. Clicking on any plants in the list will deliver the relevant page from the Dictionary area, now with Members' pictures at the foot of the page. If the pictures supplied are big enough, these small pictures can then be clicked on individually to see the plant in all its glory. Our aim is that the list of plants on this page will be sorted with latest pictures at the top, so that as time goes by the older ones will still be accessible by scrolling downwards.

So now the **challenge to our membership** is to review your pictures of your own plants and send them to us. We are limiting these pictures to ones that can be emailed to me (emailslyus@yahoo.co.uk). Our assumption is that as digital cameras now seem to have taken over from 35mm cameras this should be possible for most of our members. We are hoping that we will get enough contributions this way, however, if any of you think that this restriction is unreasonable, we will think again.

If any of you utilise the Picasa (or equivalent) software to share your photos on the web, this would be an alternative easy way of getting the pictures to me.

Stephen Lyus

Group Web-Site (www.rhodogroup-rhs.org)

The group's web site continues to grow with the addition of more high definition photographs of plants in our three genera. In addition there is of course the 2008 seed list and other current information. Around two thousand individuals visit the site each month, if you have not done so then please join them.

We have recently added a Member's Photos section where we are showing photographs that our members have supplied of their most noteworthy plants. If you would like to contribute, please send your digital photos (as jpg files) to Stephen Lyus at his email address of: emailslyus@yahoo.co.uk

Ideally these photos should be a set of the following: the flower truss, the whole plant and the detail of the leaves (if noteworthy). Photos can be either portrait or landscape, with the minimum length of the longest side as 300 pixels. There is no limit on the maximum length of the longest side. If you have no idea what the previous paragraph means, send your best photographs in anyway!

If there are additional features that you would like to see added to the site, then please contact webmaster@rhodogroup-rhs.org

Graham Mills