



摄影：罗利俊

Plant Exploration In Vietnam

A photographic exhibition
by Richard Baines,
Curator of Logan Botanic Garden

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Scottish Rhododendron Society

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Front Cover: *Rhododendron williamsianum* on Wawu Shan, Sichuan. Used with permission. © Lijun Luo, Marketing Department Director, Wawu Shan Investment Co Ltd.

Back Cover: Top: Parasitic plant *Taxillus delavayi* red flowers. Growing on rhododendron

Bottom: *Rhododendron nitidulum* and *R. nivale* stretching into the distance on Zheduo Shan

Editorial

It is the second half of February and as I write this, the rain falls outside. It has been, even for the West Highlands of Scotland, a very wet winter, curtailing all but the most essential outside jobs such as inspection for damage after the gales and cutting logs for the stove. It has also been very mild with only a handful of nights with any frost.

So, welcome to the Yearbook for 2020. As usual, you the contributors have provided me with a wide range of topics to publish. That mainstay of winter gardening, the snowdrop, is given an in depth description. Large leaved rhododendrons are discussed and air layering technique explained. I must say after reading John Hammond's article on the subject, I want to go out and try it.

We have a report on rhododendron conservation issues at RBGE, and propagation work.

Garden design is at the forefront, especially after Kenneth Cox's book on Woodland Gardening, and we have an article about one person's interpretation.

Of course we cannot have a Yearbook without tales from plant exploration in the wild. One article tells the story of an interest in alpine plants developing more widely to include rhododendrons as treks to the wild were completed. My experience was the other way around with a keen interest in rhododendrons and other woody plants developing into a much wider interest in plants in general as I appreciated them in the wild.

As promised in the Summer Review 2019, I have written about my trip to Sichuan last year. 2019 marked 25 years since my first adventure into plant exploration in the wild to Yunnan in 1994. What a difference in that time, with good roads now meaning travel to remote parts of China can be done easily and quickly. This allows for a lot of different places to be visited in one trip and so it was with this one. The downside is that a lot of tourists are now visiting these areas with pressure on the environment from roads, cable cars and footfall.

That is enough from me for now. Enjoy your Yearbook 2020.

John Roy

My Treks to the Wild

Jeanie Jones

The Scottish Rhododendron Society members, some of whom I have already met, have made me feel very welcome as a new member. Willie Campbell suggested I join, having met him originally at Meconopsis Group meetings, then when I organised a day's outing for the Barony Gardening Club from Dumfriesshire to visit Gargunnoch. What a wonderful day it was and we saw rhododendrons I had never seen before. The next garden I took them to was Bryony Maitland's Briglands, before visiting Rumbling Bridge Nursery next door. Willie kindly looked at my photos of rhododendrons I had taken while trekking in the Himalaya with David and Margaret Thorne and named them for me.

In May last year I was invited with a friend to go and look round Anne Chambers' garden and was very impressed to see so many plant treasures in her garden. After a delicious lunch, she took us to Glenarn where Mike and Sue Thornley let us have a really good look around. I had seen it the previous year when the South West SRGC organised an outing there after visiting the SRGC West of Scotland show. There was not enough time to appreciate a garden of that scale, so I made sure I could go again and spend much longer. I am delighted Mike and Sue managed to call in to see what I attempt to grow in my garden, including a number of *Primula* and *Meconopsis*, besides the rhododendrons which have come from Willie, Glendoick, various friends and some which I am pleased to have grown from seed and cuttings which have yet to flower.

My first China visit was to Yunnan with the Alpine Garden Society in 2006, with Harry Jans and John Mitchell of RBGE as tour leaders. There were a number of rhododendrons, and I did not try to sort out what they were called as two members of the group could not agree on many of their names! Tim Lever of Aberconwy Nursery was such a help with naming so many new species for me. It was

**Meadows of *Primula sikkimensis*
in Bhutan**





Trekking through rhododendrons in Sikkim

a delight to see Evelyn Stevens face when she saw her first *Meconopsis* growing in the wild. It was also James Cobb's first time to see them too.

Next was Bhutan in 2008, what a wonderful country, and I was so lucky to be invited to join David and Margaret Thorne who organised a private trek. There were six of us, Nigel Birch and Rosie Steel who had also been in Yunnan and Jim Cane who was curator of Hobart Botanic Garden in Tasmania. *Primula* are my main love and they were to die for, so many species I had never seen before. *P. sikkimensis* by the acre and tumbling down the mountain sides along the edges of streams. We were blessed with some wonderful weather too, always a bonus in the monsoon season.

In 2010 I went to Tibet on an AGS tour led again by David and Margaret. This tour had been postponed in 2008, because the Olympic Games were being held in Beijing and China closed Tibet to tourists. Tibet was disappointing, I thought it would be a Mecca for plants, but there were thousands of sheep and goats and much of the vegetation was cropped to nothing. It was interesting on the high screes to see *Meconopsis* and *Delphinium* flowering at a couple of inches high in the howling gales! There were cushion plants there which the animals did not seem to eat. *Meconopsis tibetica* was a real beauty, a magnificent crimson lake red, and there was also *Primula tibetica*. We finished by driving to Everest Base Camp - there is an excellent tarmac road all the way! I was delighted to be able to photograph the sun rising on Mount Everest (Qomolangma).



In 2012 I went on two spring tours, first to Turkey and then to the Greek Island of Samos, where my mother-in-law had been born. They

Good *Meconopsis paniculata* in Sikkim



were totally different from each other and the Himalaya, again with David and Margaret as leaders. David is a wonderful organiser and extremely knowledgeable on birds and Margaret an expert on flowers.

The following year 2013, I

joined David and Margaret to Arunachal Pradesh in north east India. (I had to look on a map to see where it was!) It was the wettest trek I have ever been on, but we saw some wonderful flowers, including these and many other species, *Rhododendron*, *Primula*, *Meconopsis*, *Cory-*



dalis, *Styrax*, *Roscoea*, *Lilium*, *Pedicularis*, *Lloydia*, *Anemone*, *Cassiope*, *Clematis*, *Arisaema*, orchids, *Rubus*, *Magnolia*, *Gaultheria*, *Maianthemum* and *Saussurea*.

Sichuan was another AGS tour in 2016 and Alan Oatway was a wonderful help with identifying plants. We both went up quite high in different directions and

then compared notes of what we had found. Christopher Bailes led and as his field was shrubs I learned a huge amount from him. There were two *Meconopsis* new to

Top: 2 coloured forms of *Primula hopeana* in Arunachal Pradesh

Middle: *Primula soldanelloides* in Arunachal Pradesh

Bottom: *Primula woolastoniana* in Tibet



Above: *Arisaema elephas* and *Primula cockburniana* in Sichuan

Below: *Meconopsis punicea* in Sichuan

All pictures in this article by Jeanie Jones

me, *M. henrici* and *M. psilonomma*.

My tour in 2017 was again with David and Margaret to Sikkim, India and we were joined by Peggy Anderson and from the USA, Claire Cockcroft. There had been a huge land slip, of many acres, a whole hill side had collapsed into the valley and dammed the river. We had to cross the lake, which had been formed, on a raft made of empty plastic drums and planks of wood. It was attached to a rope which our porters pulled on in unison. We started up a valley and had trekked for a day and a half along a track which led to a monastery, until we came to a land slip which could not be negotiated, so we had to turn around. As you need permits where ever you go, we could not approach the area by another route, so had a few days visiting low level areas before going for the other half of the trek up the Zemu river to

Green Lake where we camped at 5,000 metres (over 16,000 feet). This was as near to Kangchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world, as tourists are allowed to go. We were woken at 4am to see it, because during daylight it is nearly always covered in cloud. On the way up we crossed the river on a snow bridge, but by the time we were due to trek out, it had collapsed into the river, and we had to come down a rope to get out!

Unfortunately, I think that will be my last visit to the Himalaya as my knees could not do another month's trek. I am so grateful to everyone who made it possible to visit that marvellous part of the world, where years ago I could only have dreamt of going to. I should have joined SRS before I went for the first time, then I would have been able to describe details of the rhododendrons for you!



Designing our Rhododendron Garden

Paul Haynes

At the spring and autumn conferences I am always impressed by the knowledge and experience of the speakers and their depth of knowledge about gardening and plants in general, also when visiting gardens with the SRS members their enthusiasm is so infectious I go home full of renewed enthusiasm and determined to make my garden a bit like the ones we visit. At the 2018 SRS & RSCG joint autumn conference Kenneth Cox gave a lecture on woodland gardening, the presentation closely following the content of his newly published book of the same title. I bought the book and read it thoroughly, especially the sections on the practical bits. So I have decided now is the time to actually plan my garden rather than put plants into any spaces that happen to be available at the time.

For a woodland garden ideally you need clearings in established woods with varied topography with a burn in a gorge perhaps with a loch and a vista to die for. Add to that well drained humus rich acid woodland soil, a favourable climate and plenty of rain plus the funds to allow ambitious development. Is that too much to ask for? Well! We are all allowed to dream.

You will not be surprised to hear our garden doesn't live up to that description. What has our garden got that correlates with the suggestions in Kenneth's book?

The plot is 30 by 60 metres (almost ½ acre) and while not in woodland, we do have some established trees in the garden. Fortunately we have a borrowed landscape that includes trees in neighbouring gardens, the shelter of woodland on a sloping ground



rising to the north and north west of the garden which gives us protection from the prevailing south westerly winds, open ground with a few trees and mountains to the south plus views to Loch Morar to the east. As to the soil, the land used to be a market garden and it is slightly acid (PH 5.8) deep sandy loam on a gentle downward slope to the south so the drainage is quite

Borrowed landscape

good which is useful with our annual rainfall of 1.8 metres (6 feet). Due to the gulf stream our climate is very mild. I think Christine and I are very lucky with the site because it wasn't bought with rhododendrons in mind.

Since catching the rhodoholic bug I have bought and propagated rhododendrons and many other shrubs as well as herbaceous plants, far more than anyone could squeeze into the space available. Kenneth's advice was get rid of half of the rhododendrons, good advice but which of the close to a 100 different species and hybrids to keep.

The design options to consider are, is the garden going to be like a stamp collection of species or a carefully designed layout of aesthetically pleasing beds using a limited palette of colours in bold groups. The latter is probably what a professional designer would advise but being a rhodoholic I want to keep as many species as I can so my plan is to try and fit in a decent number of different species but with each bed planned with harmonious colour combinations or contrasts and to some extent foliage contrasts to show off the great variety of leaf types available.

When visiting Mike and Sue Thornley's garden at Glenarn I saw Mike with his detailed maps of the garden and at the time I thought that the level of detail was a bit over the top but I later asked him for advice and now armed with a 30 metre tape I have drawn a scale plan of my garden marking the positions of the permanent features plus the existing trees and shrubs that I intended to keep and importantly, I looked around the garden and asked what each plant contributed to the garden. Those that didn't contribute much were marked for removal and this included natural occurring rhododendron seedlings that I collected from Larachmhor and I had been growing on for about four or five years. That was just the starting point.

The next stage I had to decide where the beds and importantly where the paths should be before I could consider the actual planting. The garden divides up conveniently into rectangular sections, a sheltered back garden to the north of the house, a bed on the east gable and a larger south facing front garden section and a narrow front garden strip by the main road where the tourists stop to take pictures. This strip is separated from the main garden



Raised bed for better drainage



Abies koreana cones forming

by an access road passing between the two sections.

I started with the scale plan of the garden and marked where each of the rhododendrons was to be planted, trying to keep them in groups of three or more and to coordinate the colours with the existing plants in each bed. Not being of the artistic type I found deciding which colours

to put together very difficult even though Kenneth's book has plenty of suggestions related to what complements or contrasts well with each other.

Then I went out into the garden to put labelled sticks in the ground to mark where each plant was to go. At this stage I had to reduce the number of sticks/plants because I had been too optimistic about the spacing and when at a later date I started the actual planting I had to reduce the plant numbers again because the sticks were too close together. I am trying to get the spacing right for a good show in about 10 year's time. As the garden develops I will have to be ruthless about evaluating the results and remove the poorer performers to allow growing space for the best plants.

Considering each section: The choice of plants for the sheltered back garden was relatively easy, the existing trees including an attractive *Abies koreana* a *Cedrus deodara* and some flowering species like *Amelanchier canadensis*. Some of the rhododendrons I chose are Falconera subsection for their large leaves and indumentum along with Maddenia subsection and their hybrids for their glossy leaves and fragrance, and for foliage contrasts, subsections Triflora, Cinnabarina, *R. orbiculare*, *R. schlippenbachii* and *R. occidentale*. The basic flower colour for this area is pale colour along with the red of *R. hookeri* and *Crinodendron hookerianum*, although I did squeeze in some yellows in one corner and as in other beds I will certainly have to move some plants due to colour clashes when they all get to their flowering stage. For added fragrance I have used *Azara microphylla* and *Osmanthus*. The same area has *Magnolia*, *Camellia* and a plant I had problems with *Embothrium coccineum*. The first one died and when I read up about them, I discovered they come from an area with poor soil, low in phosphates and they die if they are given fertiliser or manure (I had killed it with kindness by adding compost and manure). I had more cuttings so I planted them in sandy soil with some peat mixed in and no fertiliser and they are now growing away rapidly.

The east gable bed has a semi-circular path abutting onto a straight path at the front forming a “D” shape with rhododendrons chosen for their variety of foliage and bark, the back row *R. thomsonii*, *R. augustinii* and *R. albrechtii*, then a semi-circle outside the “D” of *R. lanatoides*, *R. bureavii*, *R. roxieanum*, *R. lutescens* for early yellow flowers and its reddish leaves and some subsection Cinnabarina. Inside the “D”, *R. glaucophyllum*, *R. taliense*, *R. wiltonii*, with space left for a few dwarfs and herbaceous planting. The plan was for groups of three or more but in most cases I had to settle for ones and twos of each type. The flower colours are intended to be predominantly pink and compatible colours.

The narrow strip by the road faces south and gets plenty of sun. Here the colour scheme was dictated by a large established *Rhododendron* ‘El Camino’ with its large red flowers and at the opposite end a 20 year old “Yak” hybrid *R.* ‘Dreamland’, flowers pink fading to white. The trees are *Pinus sylvestris* with a large rose *Rosa* ‘Paul’s Himalayan Musk’ growing through it and *Sequoiadendron* with some smaller conifers and *Picea abies* ‘Tabuliformis’ which after 25 years is only 0.65m high x 1.4m wide (26 x 55 inches) and *Taxus baccata* ‘Fastigiata Aurea’ which contrasts well when viewed against the dark *Pinus sylvestris* across the road.

The list of rhododendrons is extensive with the plants chosen to be more wind resistant. The colour scheme is predominantly red at one end through whites to pink *R. yuefengense* at the opposite end and the theme of contrasting foliage and plant shapes continues. You will just have to visit to find out what I have planted.

The planting in the areas described above are now almost completed and I am looking forward to see how it turns out. Currently the front garden is a work in progress with no specific plans yet. By the time the first three areas had been designed my brain was starting to hurt trying to work out a pleasing design. So this bit will have to wait until next year. In the front garden there are existing *Camellia*, *Enkianthus* and *Rhododendron* around the borders plus recently planted *Sorbus* and *Acer*. Part of it is nursery beds for the cuttings and seedlings I am growing on for my own use and for other people’s projects. One of the future plans is for a bed of fragrant rhododendrons and another with hot coloured azaleas. An area below a bedroom window is intended to be for smaller species. In here are already, *Kalmia latifolia*, *Pieris*, *Mahonia* and other flowering shrubs mixed up with *Rhododendron pachysanthum*, *R. roxieanum*, *R. saluenense*, *R. calostrotum*, *R. austrinum*, *R. kiusianum*, *R. tsariense* var. *trimoense*, and *R. impeditum* so there is no shortage of future work to sort out this part of the garden.

The actual planting: Most books recommend oak or beech leaf mould. I don’t have a good supply of this. I was using seaweed in the past but due to alkaline shell sand

contamination it was increasing the pH of my soil. I am now using composted horse manure and partially composted shredded material. This is mostly conifer branches and any woody prunings I can find. I prefer to shred material that still has its needles or leaves attached. For each rhododendron I dig in half to one barrow load of manure and one of shredded material and this forms planting mounds. Then I mix in ericaceous compost or peat in the planting hole, then they are mulched with more shredded material. For species that require very sharp drainage I have built raised/terraced beds on the steeper sloping parts, holding the planting mix back with rows of short logs. The only problem with this planting mix is that the birds love digging away the compost to find worms.

During planting I noticed one of the tree stumps that I had been unable to remove was covered in what looked like honey fungus and that was very worrying. Searching the internet showed that it did look right for honey fungus but the spore print should always be white. I placed a sample on light and dark paper for 3 hours and to my great relief the spore print was brown confirming the fungi was harmless.

The garden is not just for spring. When I started writing this at the beginning of December the *Sorbus*, *Acer* and *Vaccinium* were losing their autumn colours but *Mahonia*, *Hebe*, *Desfontainia spinosa* and *Schizostylis coccinea* were all still in flower and the brilliant purple berries of *Callicarpa* were still brightening up the winter days.

My future plans are to finish the design and planting for the front garden and then build a decorative wooden bridge over a drainage ditch. This is mainly for aesthetic reasons, but it will definitely look better than just a plank.

We would like to invite any members who are visiting the Morar area to come and see us and have a look round to see how the garden develops. You will be made very welcome.



Happy gardening.

Callicarpa bodinieri 'Profusion'

All pictures in this article by
Paul Haynes

Snowdrop

Micky Little

A dear friend was quoted as saying “After visiting snowdrop gardens with friends who are very keen on them, I started my collection with *Galanthus* ‘S. Arnott’ and a few more of the common ones. Then I was given the Irish cultivar *G.* ‘Cicely Hall’, and I was taken”. She went on to say “For me, snowdrops bring the winter garden to life – so I look forward to them every year”.

But within the plant kingdom, where does the snowdrop fit? Let us use *Galanthus* ‘S. Arnott’ as an example.

Kingdom – Plantae

Division – Magnoliophyta

Class – Liliidae

Order - Liliales

Family – Amaryllidaceae/Liliaceae

Genus – *Galanthus*

Species – *nivalis*

Cultivar – ‘S. Arnott’

The Greek word ‘*gala*’ means milk.

‘*anthos*’ means flower and the word ‘snowdrop’ is possibly derived from the German word ‘*Schneetropfen*’, meaning pendants or ear-rings which were fashionable in 16th and 17th Centuries.

The snowdrop is a perennial plant that exists and grows below the soil as a true bulb. It is a storage organism which has been developed to carry the plant through dormancy.

The bulb comprises of:

A basal plate (where the roots form, bulbils develop and where the flower originates)

A compressed stem which forms the flower

Scales which are starchy food storage organs which become the leaves. (In the case of *G. nivalis*, two leaves)

The Bulb: The shapes of snowdrop bulbs do vary from species to species but are usually spherical with differences in girth, size and elongated ‘noses’ or the top.



The outer skin of the bulb is covered with a fine papery brown film called 'the tunic'. This tunic can either be all the way round the bulb, partly round or even sometimes absent and is made up of older scales.

The white bulb scales are filled with a starch and by the end of the growing season the bulb should feel firm and plump, however,

it could be quite soft and flabby when in leaf and flower. (This is quite normal).



The Roots: The primary function of any plant root is for anchorage and it is no different for snowdrops. All the feeding and watering comes once stable. The roots appear as soon as the soil becomes moist and the temperature dips in Autumn. Simply, the root is a single 'branch' that emerges from the basal plate.

The Leaf: There are usually 3 different of ways in which the leaves form from the bulb depending on which snowdrop it is. (Vernation):

'Flat'

'Plicate'

'Convolute'

These 3 variations are seen within the bulb if it is cut through horizontally. (Do not do this to an expensive bulb). The leaves are clever in as much as whilst the flower is developing and maturing, the leaves are still growing and when the flower has finished, the leaf is continuing to photosynthesise and produce the food starch for next year.

Leaf colour of snowdrops varies in 3 ways as they could be:

Light green

Mid-green

Dark green

The upper and lower parts of the leaf are usually the same. This difference in colour can help in snowdrop identification.

Right: *Galanthus*
'Grumpy'

Far Right: 'Poculiform'
Snowdrop

The Flower: The flower is usually a free-hanging pendant and most have only one flower but some do have 2 or even 3 flowers coming from one bulb. Again, they usually have 3 outer segments and 3 inner segments. The variety of named cultivars will show a wide range of markings, blotches or even faces (Such as *Galanthus* 'Grumpy') on the inner segments, or the utmost delicate brush strokes on the outer segments (As in *G.* 'Viridapice'). In most



cases, the outer segment is much larger than the inner, however, there can be the anomaly of both inner and outer segments of the same size. This type of snowdrop is called a 'poculiform' snowdrop.

There are a lot of snowdrops that are scented and more noticeable when the sun has got its hat on or if it is generally a warm day. The ovary, which if I remember from my plant school days, tell me that they are superior ovaries and their shape can vary as this too can help in identification.

Seed: Most snowdrops will produce a prominent roundish green seed pod which eventually produces the ripe seed within.

Where to see some snowdrop collections:

Across the length breadth of this Sceptred Isle of ours there is many a church yard, roadside verge and bank and large private garden where snowdrops thrive and increase to create their pure-white blooms which are a



testament to their tenacity. Do keep an eye out whilst driving past a copse or woodland for that darting flash of white which signifies a drift.

The National Garden Scheme in England and Wales holds a Snowdrop Festival and The Scottish Snowdrop Festival all have gardens and large estates which are open for all. The 8th Annual Snowdrop Gala held in Ireland also showcases some superb snowdrop collections.

If you get chance to see any of the collections and feel inspired or even a passion to create your own, then start by asking friends and family to buy you snowdrops for birthdays and Christmas.

To conclude, a garden in February without snowdrops is like a garden without rhododendrons. Let the first bulb be planted.

Air-Layering Techniques for Conservation of Rhododendrons and Azaleas

Some thoughts and suggestions for air-layering old, difficult-to-root, or storm-damaged plants

John M. Hammond

Introduction: This is a basic summary of a significantly more detailed presentation on the technique of air-layering. Many commentators have suggested that air-layering does not work, or at best the results are generally poor; however, I remain unconvinced that some of these commentators have actually carried out air-layering themselves, or have done other than trial run, as their comments and approach do not appear to add up to a viable methodology. The results that I have achieved over a long number of years have been good and the success rate is better than 90%. Given that the methodology is one of the oldest techniques of vegetative propagation and was successfully used in China more than 4000 years ago, this should not be a surprise. In reality, the technique has to perform well in the ‘real world’ away from the author’s garden. At the time of writing the technique is going through a second phase of field trials at remote locations in Scotland where the air-layers are left to their own devices for a year or more without receiving any attention. In the first trial a total of 20 layers were installed on plants in an Argyll garden on Scotland’s West Coast, and the success rate was 85%. There were 4 layers lost due to external causes beyond my control. A second trial of 20 air-layers also achieved good results, raising the overall success rate to around 95%. A further trial of 20 layers is currently two years into generating roots. This is six hours driving time away from my home on a good day; so, there is little, if any, opportunity for regular monitoring and interference!

1. Basic Requirements: This is a very simple, straightforward technique that any enthusiast or horticulturalist can use, so let’s begin by discussing the tools and materials required. Very few tools are needed; a pair of clean secateurs,



Tools

a **clean** sharp knife, a permanent felt-tipped pen, a few loop-labels, and both long and short cable ties. Very few materials are required; a supply of damp sphagnum moss, a supply of fine/medium chopped bark, a black polythene heavy-duty refuse sack [cleanliness counts, always use a new bag] and a two-gallon bucket. And, what you also need plenty of is a commodity that is not often readily available.... **patience!** Getting prepared is a straightforward process that only takes a few minutes. And, it only takes a few minutes to complete each air-layer once you are familiar with the methodology.

2. Branch Selection: Whilst air-layering is a relatively simple process, in my experience there are a number of pitfalls that need to be avoided if any degree of success is to be achieved. At the outset it is important to choose a branch, rather than a twig, to layer. I usually select as upright a branch as is practicable; 18 to 24 inches [45 to 60 cm] long, branched in two or three places and it also needs to be sturdy enough to support the layering materials. It is preferable to choose a branch that is out of full sun, not only to keep the layer a more even temperature, but to prevent the medium inside the wrapper from completely drying out. In overall terms the layering materials need to be as lightweight as practicable. Choosing too small a branch inevitably means that the branch is under stress throughout the layering process and some form of support is required; it also leads to a very small root-ball that does not have much of a chance in life when the branch is severed and potted-on.

3. Preparation of the Polythene Wrapper: Roll out the heavy-duty black polythene refuse-sack and, leaving the sack itself un-opened, make three approximately 11 inch [27 cm] wide double-thickness strips by cutting directly across the sack. Note: Avoid the use of large clear plastic sandwich bags for wrappers, or other clear/translucent plastic material, as excluding light from the wounded branch is extremely important when encouraging roots to start growing. We are aiming to replicate conditions underground and a double-thickness black polythene wrapper is ideal in this regard.

4. Preparation of the Growing Medium: Chop up a sufficient quantity of live sphagnum moss to loosely fill two-thirds of a two-gallon bucket. I find the wife's Kenwood Chef liquidiser is very good



Rooting Medium

for this task! Take one-third of a two-gallon bucket of medium or fine chopped bark and thoroughly mix together with the sphagnum moss. Add water to the mix until it is relatively wet. This volume of mix will provide sufficient medium for several air-layers. Avoid using sphagnum moss by itself as this leads to the plant generating what are sometimes called “water-roots” [fine white roots that are soft and easily broken] as it can be problematic getting these established and thriving in soil at a later stage in the process [sometimes referred to as ‘interface’].

5. Wounding the Branch: It is time to wound the selected branch in the area that the wrapper will be applied. I have experimented with four different types of wound and each has been successful. However, my time-tested method is to cut a 3 to 4 inch [10 cm] long wound on both sides of the stem to expose the cambium layer. Completely remove the tongue that you have cut, as this will give the wounded area a better chance of rooting.



Wounding the stem

6. Putting the Wrapper in Place: It is now time to put the wrapper in place. What we are seeking to achieve is a wrapper that looks like an enlarged Christmas cracker rather than a ball! So, keep it in mind that we are forming a cylinder, which will be secured at each end with a plastic cable tie. The cable ties need to be placed 1.5 inches [4 cm] in from each end of the wrapper.



Forming the air layer

Take a large handful of the sphagnum moss and bark mix [around one litre]; this needs to be wet but not completely saturated, so squeeze out any surplus water. With one hand form the mix into a cylinder around the wounded area of the branch, then with the other hand wrap it securely in place with the black polythene to create a tube. Avoid wrapping the mix too tightly as it is important that the mix remains wet, but it is equally important not to leave any large air pockets inside the wrap-

per once it has been sealed. Fix a plastic table tie securely 1.5 inches [4 cm] from lower end of the wrapper as this will prevent part of the mix from falling out of the wrapper, then check that the tie has secured the wrapper in place on the branch. Next, secure the top of the wrapper with a cable tie, then open-up the loose ends of the wrapper so that the finished product looks like a Christmas Cracker.



Quantity of rooting medium

Do not over-tighten the cable tie at either end of the wrapper, as it is important not to damage the bark. We are not seeking to make the layer air-tight, we just need to hold the wrapper securely in place. Contrary to the suggestions in some publications, it is not possible to create an air-tight seal by tightly wrapping tape or a tie around the branch of a plant. Tightly bound tape can lead to infection and rotting, whilst any ‘ringing’ of the bark caused by the tie being too tight is counter-productive and the branch will tend to die slowly before the layer has formed roots of its own. In practice, we need the upper end of the wrapper to be opened out to act as a rain collector to irrigate the layer; then we need the lower end of the wrapper to act as a drain and allow any surplus moisture, together with any salts generated during root production, to gradually leach away. Although the cable tie is tight it should still be able to be rotated when a little pressure is applied.



Finished air layer

7. Securing the Air Layer: If the main branch tends to bend significantly under the weight of the air layer, or if the branch is likely to be blown around in windy or stormy weather, then secure the air layered branch to another adjacent branch with a couple of long cable ties. Alternatively, if the air-layered branch is sufficiently low enough to the ground then, immediately below the branch, push a tall, thick bamboo cane well into the soil and secure the branch to it with a couple of cable ties.

8. Allow Sufficient Time for the Layer to Grow Roots: So, here comes the difficult bit! Leave the air-layers undisturbed for at least three full growing seasons, as recommended by the old traditional Head Gardeners. **There are no exceptions to this rule.** This really is a case of ‘patience is a virtue’. So, this is where many gardeners tend to fail, as their curiosity wins out. They have a look to see whether any progress is being made, and they break-off the very fragile root system before it has had time to mature.

9. Maintenance: Little maintenance is required, other than an occasional check to see that the cable ties are not too tight. Also find time to pour a small amount of water into the top of the wrapper if there is a long dry spell of weather or a drought. Remember that the air layered branch will continue to grow over the three-year period that the roots are being formed, so the branch will get significantly thicker as the months pass. Sometimes, if the cable tie is under extreme pressure it will snap, other times the leaves will start to droop, then die. I usually replace the cable ties, if they are tight, each spring to reduce the possibility of the cable tie ‘ringing’ the bark. This only takes a few minutes for a large number of layers, so it is not a time-consuming chore.

10. Unwrapping the Air Layer: After three full growth seasons lightly squeeze the body of the air-layer. If the body still feels soft and pliable, then leave it for another year to grow. If the body feels hard and firm, then cut the cable ties and carefully unwrap the black polythene taking care to support the new roots. Often the roots will grow partway into the layers of the polythene wrapper, so be aware of this and carefully release the thin brown roots as they tend to cling to the wrapper. If there are only a few roots, or the roots are immature, then re-wrap the layer, fit new cable ties, and leave it in-situ for a further year.



Rooted air layer

11. Severing and Growing-on the Air Layer: If the roots are mature then sever the rooted branch with a diagonal cut about 1 inch [3 cm] below the roots. Carefully tease and spread out the roots slightly, taking care not to damage any of the root system, then plant in a wide 10 litre plastic container. Position the bottom of the stem of the new plant against one side of the container, then hold the plant in place slightly diagonally so, as the container is filled, the upper part of the stem is centrally located in the

container when it exits the soil in the completely-filled pot. Get a piece of bamboo cane and insert this in the soil so it runs diagonally across the container and secure the main branch of the new plant to it with a cable tie; much in the same way as you would secure a newly planted young tree with a cross-stake. To minimise the ‘shock’ to the layer and ‘interface’ problems with the compost, grow it on in pure fine/medium chopped bark, as this is a relatively open and was a natural medium that was one of the main components of the “mix” in which the layer rooted. Then place the container in the shaded area of a cool greenhouse for a year. After this additional year’s growing season is over, I take the container out of the greenhouse, and find a home for the plant in a dappled–shade area of the garden, firmly securing the main branch in position with a diagonal cross stake to prevent wind damage to the relatively young root-ball.



Potted-up air layer

12. Using Air Layering for Conservation Purposes: Air layering is a useful technique that can be used for conservation purposes to propagate a wide range of difficult to root woody plants without resorting to specialised equipment or disturbing the parent plant unduly. The end products have cost you virtually nothing other than a minor investment of your time and a major investment of your patience. Many old rhododendron hybrids are notoriously difficult to root from cuttings, as are some modern hybrids with complex parentages. Similarly, Ghent azaleas can be problematic to propagate. Air-layering presents an easy alternative.

Over the years many of us have had the unfortunate experience of having large plants blown over on to their side by the wind. Sometimes the root-ball is lifted out of the ground, other times the roots are torn out. Either way, this damage presents a problem, particularly if there appears to be little hope of the plant being viable even if a means could be found to return it to the upright position. Providing that the fallen plant does not present a major hazard and that at least some of the roots are still in the ground, or the root-ball can be back-filled with soil, then it is well worth considering air-layering a few of the branches to provide a replacement plant. The technique is also particularly useful for propagating a replacement for an elderly upright plant that looks like it is ‘going back’ and may have a limited number of years ahead of

it. In instances of this type it is suggested that three or four air layers are attempted, each on a different branch, so there is an increased chance of a successful result.

In Conclusion: There is no substitute for getting your hands dirty and gaining some hands-on experience. If you do not have a go you have no opportunity of getting it right first time, second time, or at all. Air-layering is a particularly easy methodology to try your hand at. The cost is almost negligible, just a few basic tools are needed and few ordinary materials that are readily available to most gardeners. It goes without saying that difficult to root plants can be difficult to find

at a garden centre or can be costly at a specialist nursery. Many species and older hybrids are no longer commercially available and can be extremely difficult to source, so this air-laying technique is extremely useful for conservation purposes and is now used by horticulturalists and enthusiasts in the U.K. and in many other countries.



Grown on air layer

	<p>THE SCOTTISH ROCK GARDEN CLUB <i>For people who love plants</i></p>	<p>www.srgc.net</p> 
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A Global Conservation Consortium for Rhododendron

Alan Elliot

As we approach the end of the current Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (2011-2020) and with the world refocusing on the Biodiversity Crisis, Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) highlighted four genera of concern: *Acer*, *Quercus*, *Magnolia* and *Rhododendron*. Species in these genera are large, long-lived, slow to reproduce and have seeds that do not store effectively in seed banks. BGCI have fostered the development Global Conservation Consortia that aim to focus conservation efforts of these exceptional plants that are technically challenging to cultivate and manage in conservation collections.

After an initial meeting, initiated by BGCI, in early 2018 Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, along with 16 institutions from 13 countries, formed the Global Conservation Consortium for Rhododendron (GCCR). The consortium currently includes botanic gardens with diverse *Rhododendron* collections in Europe, the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, along with botanical institutions in the centres of *Rhododendron* diversity in China, India, Nepal, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. We are in the early days of working together to achieve the following objectives:

Establish and foster a network of experts

Identify and prioritise species of greatest conservation concern

Establish and manage coordinated ex situ collections of high conservation value

Undertake and facilitate applied research (e.g. conservation biology, population genetics, population structure, taxonomy)

Ensure that threatened species are conserved in situ

Build capacity to empower and mobilise in-country partners in diversity centres

Increase public awareness and engagement

The Updated Global Analysis for conservation of Rhododendrons published in 2018 reported that of the 1,386 *Rhododendron* taxa, 576 (41%) are highly threatened in their countries of origin and have little or no representation in ex-situ collections. Already two *Rhododendron* species are believed to be extinct, *R. retrorsipilum* from Papua New Guinea and *R. xiaoxidongense* from China and a number of other species are considered Extinct in the Wild, but are at least cultivated in ex-situ collections.

Maintenance of our Living Collection as an Ex-situ collection.

For several years now many of the heritage *Rhododendron* accessions in RBGE's Living Collection have been in a steep decline and a number of factors have all come

together to cause this. The mature age of these plants coupled with heavy infestations of cushion scale (*Pulvinaria floccifera*) have weakened some individuals. Edinburgh's changing climate has seen longer, drier spells causing further stress to these overly mature plants, more suited to monsoon soaked mountains. Finally, and most recently there have been outbreaks of *Phytophthora ramorum* on *Rhododendron* and other Ericaceae at Edinburgh, Logan and Benmore Botanic Gardens, which has led to serious restrictions on plant movement and what we can do with the collection in terms of propagation.

Since 2012 RBGE have been experimenting with and adapting protocols for micro-propagating our heritage lineages of *Rhododendron* that have been in serious decline. Micro-propagation also has the benefit of producing plants free from disease and viruses because of the sterile techniques used throughout the process, which is essential given the threat *Phytophthora* poses to Ericaceae and the wider natural environment.

Some of the first successfully micro-propagated *Rhododendron* were transferred to Benmore and The Rhododendron Species Conservation Group, as we aim to spread the risk of losing these heritage lineages. The plants at Benmore are growing much more vigorously than traditional cuttings, which is heartening that these old lineages appear to have been rejuvenated.

The focus of micro-propagation has now shifted to species of serious conservation concern, many with poor representation in ex-situ cultivation collections. This year we aim to micro-propagate 54 accessions, which will bolster our own collections and distribute to other ex-situ conservation collections to secure their future in cultivation.



**Rhododendron
niveum collected
in Sikkim by
Pradhan, U.C.
RBGE Accession
19701316*B.
Photo Charlotte
McDonald.
Reproduced with
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Botanic Garden
Edinburgh**

Big-leaved Rhododendrons

Peter A. Cox

Big-leaved rhododendrons are amongst the most majestic plants that can be grown successfully in the British Isles. By big leaved in this case I mean only those taxa that belong to subsections Falconera and Grandia. The majority can be grown successfully in sheltered positions in a large part of the country but they always do best in the damper west coast areas from Cornwall to Sutherland and much of Ireland. The hot dry summer of 2018 did not suit them as they grow wild in summer monsoon areas of south-east Asia but I was pleasantly surprised how well most of them grew at Glendoick in the dry rain shadow east of Scotland. Admittedly we have given them some assistance by watering, especially where we have planted them under greedy trees like sycamores and conifers. Unlike much of the west, we were still dry in late October 2018 and had to get the hoses out again.

Subsection Falconera contains most of the hardiest taxa and ones that make their growth in what I would call a sensible time of year. This is important for all but the most favourable parts of the country. Some taxa make their growth or I would say attempt to grow horribly early and can get frosted year after year, even if planted under conifers and evergreen broad-leaved trees. I am pleasantly surprised how the popularity of these taxa in the way of our nursery orders has held up over the years despite the tendency of gardens getting smaller and adverse weather conditions. Most of these taxa ultimately grow big and most people plant them too close together for the size they eventually grow to. It might be fair to say that these should be treated as foliage plants with flowers considered as a bonus as most take many years to start flowering. Many can be very long-lived and can be considered as plants for the next generation. The ultimate species is probably *Rhododendron protistum* which can take forty to fifty years to start flowering. It is I think true to say that the most favourable gardens where these plants grow very rapidly may have shorter lives than those that grow slower in drier cooler conditions where they may live for 100 years or more.

Subsection Falconera:

This subsection differs from subsection Grandia in its absence of nectar pouches in the flowers and the presence of cup-shaped hairs which give a woolly indumentum in most. Personally I would amalgamate the two as there are some taxa that would fit into either.

(Footnote: I use the word taxon plural taxa for some species that have subspecies or varieties.)

Rhododendron arizelum is perhaps the most widespread species in the wild, occurring from central Arunachal Pradesh to the Shweli - Salween divide in western Yunnan. Naturally with that distribution, it is variable, including the depth and colour of its leaf indumentum which can be a quite striking thick brown to cinnamon and its flower colour, cream through pale pink and apricot to opening crimson, fading out. The bark is pink to reddish-brown. It has fine foliage with leaves lacking a winged petiole. Hardy enough for most gardens.



***Rhododendron arizelum* in Arunachal Pradesh**

Rhododendron basilicum is closely related to *R. arizelum* but has a winged petiole and has a much smaller distribution in the wild, just coming from the central Salween region. It is a handsome plant in both foliage and flowers which are mostly white to cream or flushed pink when first opened. There are apparently intermediate forms with this and *R. arizelum* in south-east Tibet. I saw the typical form on the Pianma pass near the Burmese frontier. *R. gratum* in my opinion is synonymous with *R. basilicum*.

Rhododendron coriaceum is one of the less inspiring of the big-leaved taxa with smallish leaves with pale indumentum while the flowers are white to flushed rose which are inclined to be on the small side. It can flower freely though, if a selected form, creating quite a show. One of the hardier species. Found on the Yunnan-Burma frontier where I saw one isolated population.



***Rhododendron falconeri* ssp. *falconeri* in Sikkim**

Rhododendron falconeri ssp. *falconeri* is undoubtedly one of the

grandest of all rhododendrons with large rugulose leaves with rusty-brown indumentum and large trusses of creamy-white to pale yellow long-lasting flowers, often for a full month. It is also capable of living to well over 100 years. Found wild in east Nepal to west Arunachal from 2,700-3,300m. Best in western gardens as it can be lost in the east to very cold winters.

Rhododendron falconeri ssp. *eximium* is also a magnificent foliage plant especially those clones with long-lasting rusty-brown indumentum on the leaf upper surface. Unfortunately the pink flowers can turn muddy with age. This subspecies takes the place of ssp. *falconeri* in eastern Bhutan and Arunachal. Further east *R. arizelum* takes over and the two can be confused though *R. arizelum* can grow at higher altitudes.

Rhododendron galactinum is very different from the rest of the subsection and might be better placed on its own. Its leaves are not so impressive and of a thinner texture and rather pale in cultivation. The buds are very distinctive with short-scales covered with tomentum. The flowers are white to pale rose with a blotch and spots. It is found further east than the rest of the subsection in central and west Sichuan resulting in it being hardier than most.

Rhododendron hodgsonii always grows at the highest elevation in areas where other big-leaved taxa occur, resulting in it being one of the hardiest. Those accompanying it from the lowest elevation upwards are *R. grande*, *R. falconeri* and *R. kesangiae* though sometimes one of these is missing. *R. hodgsonii* is grown for both its dark and leathery foliage and outstanding smooth, peeling, creamy to cinnamon bark. The buds are distinctive too being conical with long tailed scales. Its distribution is from east Nepal to Arunachal and neighbouring Tibet. The flowers in compact trusses vary from deep cherry red to pink but can fade out through rather unpleasant shades. I was lucky to see it in quantity in the wild where the deep-coloured flowers had just opened.



A good form of *Rhododendron hodgsonii* in Arunachal Pradesh

Rhododendron hodgsonii affinity I found on the east side of the Rudong La in central

Bhutan. It was an isolated population with little variation which probably originated as a cross between *R. hodgsonii* and *R. kesangiae* which stabilized with all characters similar to *R. hodgsonii* except the indumentum which is thick dark chocolate brown. It is hoped that this will have some botanical status soon. We find it slower-growing than typical *R. hodgsonii*.

Rhododendron preptum is probably a hybrid of *R. coriaceum* and *R. arizelum* with slightly narrower leaves, paler indumentum and a slightly winged petiole. It has no special merit and it is not often available. The flowers are creamy white, blotched. Found on the Yunnan-Burma border.

Rhododendron rex ssp. *rex* is one of the best taxa for colder gardens and one of the most handsome too. With large shiny leaves, it is widespread in western Sichuan and north-east Yunnan where it is capable of surviving the removal of its forest canopy. From what I have seen it is quite uniform in the wild with larger shiny leaves with paler indumentum and larger pale rose-coloured flowers than its close relative ssp. *fictolacteum*.

Rhododendron rex ssp. *fictolacteum* is another favourite for colder gardens which differs from ssp. *rex* in its smaller leaves with darker indumentum and smaller flowers with less pink in them. I have only seen this twice in the wild and I now believe it is less common than ssp. *rex*. Found further west. Recommended.

Var. *miniforme* is smaller in all parts than ssp. *fictolacteum*.

Ssp. *gratum*. This was formally made synonymous with *Rhododendron basilicum* with which it looked identical in the wild but Chinese botanists have classified it as a subspecies of *R. rex*. It is found wild in west Yunnan.

Rhododendron rothschildii is possibly a species that should never have been named and described. It is too closely related to *R. semnoides* and is undoubtedly the same hybrid of *R. arizelum* and *R. praestans*. Rather like *R. hodgsonii* aff., it has in one area near Weixi in west Yunnan established itself as a stable population. Its only moderately distinctive character is a granular indumentum which is roughish to the touch and the leaves have a tapering base and flattened petiole. The flowers are creamy white to pale pink.



***Rhododendron rex* ssp. *rex* in Sichuan showing good dark indumentum**

Rhododendron semnoides is obviously the same hybrid as *R. rothschildii* and where I saw it, varied from the one species *R. arizelum* to the other species *R. praestans* with both the likely parents present. Leaf shape and flowers similar to *R. rothschildii* but with less rough indumentum.

Rhododendron sinofalconeri has been recently introduced, 1992 from north Vietnam, 1995 from south-east Yunnan and despite the fact that it only grows to around 3,000m, has proved remarkably hardy. It is vigorous when young and is inclined to become leggy with age. Its foliage is not all that impressive with pale indumentum. But its flowers rival *R. macabeaenum* with fine trusses, cream to pale yellow and it is a frequent winner at shows. The Vietnamese plants have a more pointed, elliptic leaf shape and darker indumentum than those from Yunnan.

Rhododendron titapuriense was only discovered by my son Kenneth in central Arunachal as recently as 2001. It is a very distinct species growing in the wild to a 20m tree with handsome foliage with thick deep-coloured indumentum and large white flowers. It is undoubtedly rare in the wild and coming from a low elevation of only 2,300-2,500m in a populated area, it is threatened. It grows rather early and may prove to be only suitable for favourable gardens.

Subsection Grandia:

Rhododendron grande was one of the first big-leaved species to be named, hence the reason why *R. sinogrande*, now a much better known species in cultivation, came to be called “Chinese grande”. This is a tender species from low elevations. Plants we collected (in those days we were allowed to collect and import wild-collected plants) in 1965 from central Arunachal proved hopelessly tender with very early growth. It can make a fine plant in very favourable situations with white to pale pink flowers and leaves with silvery plastered indumentum.



Rhododendron grande new growth in Sikkim

Rhododendron kesangiae. This species which grows wild in Bhutan and west Arunachal, was until 1989 thought to be a hybrid between *R. hodgsonii* and *R. falconeri*! which was ridiculous, considering it is the commonest big-leaved species in those areas. It is a fine plant proving hardy with us in eastern Scotland. We found it prefer-

ring damp ground in the wild with *R. hodgsonii* on the drier ground above. In most of Bhutan it has shades of pink flowers while in Arunachal we saw pale pink to white (var. *album*).

Rhododendron macabeaenum is one of the finest big-leaved species but it is not one of the hardiest. It does have the ability of being able to sprout from the trunk after winter damage but in 2010-12 two of our plants were frosted back two years running with fatal results. Well-grown, it has very good foliage with whitish woolly indumentum. The flowers vary from a good pale yellow to cream and recent introductions tend to be the latter. In 2003 there was a collection from the mountain Saramati on the Burmese-Nagaland border at 3,700m and the resulting plants are quite compact with smaller leaves with darker, thicker indumentum. Unfortunately growth can come early which may be frosted. Slow to start flowering.



***Rhododendron kesangiae* in
Arunachal Pradesh**

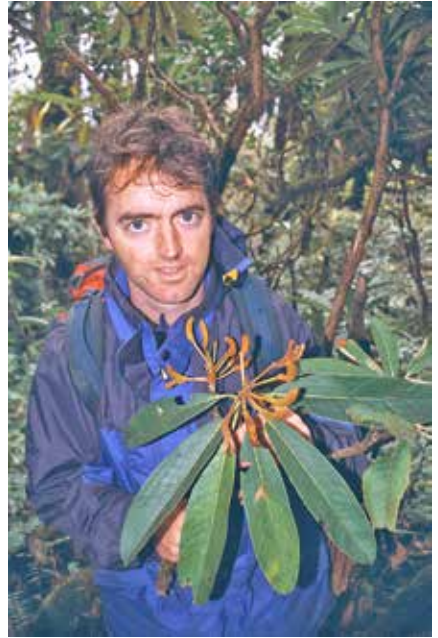
Rhododendron magnificum is very closely related to *R. protistum*. I saw a plant near the Salween valley amongst the latter species which would be hard to separate from *R. magnificum* but generally there are a few subtle differences. Slightly later flowering, with narrower leaves and much earlier development of the indumentum which is thin grey to fawn and is compacted. The flowers are rose to deep reddish-purple. Coming from the low elevations of 1,500-2,400m, it is tender, only being suitable for gardens like Mount Stewart in Northern Ireland and Brodick on the Isle of Arran.

Rhododendron mechukae was only discovered by us in 2002 on the Subansiri-Siyom divide in central Arunachal and was named by Indian botanists. As seen in the wild, it was a 13m tree with large dark green shiny leaves with continuous but relatively thin rufous indumentum. Large buds are similar to those of *Rhododendron protistum*. Alas it grows horribly early, leading to frosted young growth nearly every year. A plant at Glendoick has only reached 1.3m in 16 years. It is said to have pink flowers.



Rhododendron macabeaenum

Rhododendron montroseanum was only named in 1979. This was collected in the Yarlung Tsangpo gorge, south east Tibet by Kingdon Ward where he said it was common but there is no wild-collected herbarium specimen corresponding to his description of 6261 which belongs to *R. exasperatum* so is referred to as 6261a. It may be a natural hybrid of *R. lanigerum* x *R. sinogrande*. It is a fine plant, particularly in the clone 'Benmore' FCC, with excellent pink flowers, others are paler, but there is some confusion about which plant is the FCC clone! The leaves are dark green, rugulose with a silvery plastered indumentum.



Finding *Rhododendron mechukae* in 2002 with Kenneth Cox

Rhododendron praestans is easily identified by its flattened and winged petiole and plastered indumentum. While it may eventually make a large plant, it is one of the slowest growers of the big-leaved species and also one of the hardiest. The flowers are usually white to creamy pink but occasionally to magenta rose. It is common on the Salween-Mekong divide, Yunnan, often on its own over considerable areas, and also elsewhere.

Rhododendron protistum formerly known by the more appropriate name of *R. giganteum* and gigantic it can be, even reaching 30m in the wild, much less so far in cultivation. This is a plant very slow to mature with just a ring of indumentum around the leaf edge for may be 40-60 years and often no flowers for a similar period. Sadly it is only suitable for the mildest gardens as it comes into growth very early and gets clobbered by late frost. Also the flowers are very early, pale rose to crimson purple, fading with age. Does well at gardens like Brodick, Isle of Arran and particularly well in New Zealand at Pukeiti.

Rhododendron pudorosum has only been collected twice, once by Ludlow and Sheriff in 1936, the second by my son Kenneth in 1999, both from the Tsari valley in south Tibet. It is easily recognised by its persistent bud scales. Hardy but slow-growing and the leaves are often distorted due to somewhat early growth or drought. The flowers are a good shade of pink but rather early.

Rhododendron sidereum is one of the most widespread species and therefore the most variable, from Arunachal to west Yunnan. It has one of the smallest-leaves of the sub-

section and can be mistaken for a *R. arboreum* with silvery-white to fawn indumentum. I have seen it at both ends of its distribution and again in the middle. While the flowers are normally yellow and quite late in the season, what was collected on the Subansiri-Siyom divide in Arunachal in 2002 is a bit different with larger leaves and earlier cream-coloured flowers and at first we thought we had found something new. While this and others survived the 2010-12 winters at Glendoick, plants of two different introductions were cut to the ground but came again.



***Rhododendron sidereum* aff new growth from the 2002 collection in Arunachal Pradesh**

Rhododendron sinogrande is the monarch of the big-leaved species with the biggest leaves of all, sometimes as long as 90cm with a plastered silvery to fawn indumentum. It varies somewhat in hardiness, the best survivors we have grown came from the Cangshan in west Yunnan. It has a wide distribution from south-east Tibet to west Yunnan. Its leaves are invariably bigger in the wet west compared to the drier eastern gardens. We lost what plants we had in the 1970s but our 1981 Cangshan plants came through the 2010-12 winters. The cream-coloured flowers are also large. It is fast-growing and does sometimes prove to be somewhat short-lived but well-worth replacing.



Rhododendron sinogrande

Rhododendron suoilenhense probably has the largest leaves after *R. sinogrande* but tends to grow into a straggly plant which we find is liable to fall over. So far it has proved hardy with us as are several other rhododendron taxa from Vietnam where it grows 2,100-3,100m. It can flower as early as seven years old, a much younger age than *R. protistum* to which it was at first thought to be closely related. The flowers are creamy-white in March-May. First introduced in 1991.

Rhododendron watsonii is the most remote geographically of the big-leaved species coming only from west and north Sichuan. It also has smaller leaves than most and

undramatic flowers, white or flushed pink. The leaves are easily identified by their yellow midrib and silvery-white plastered indumentum and are attractive in their own right. It is very hardy.



***Rhododendron watsonii* in Sichuan**

Species Nova collected by Kenneth under two different numbers KC 0132 and APA 35 which seem to be the same taxa which were collected on both sides of the same valley in Arunachal. While evidently close to *Rhododendron sinogrande*, the leaves are smaller and more rugulose with some brown indumentum when young, a somewhat tapering leaf blade towards the petiole and it seems to be a slower grower.

Which are my favourites? It depends on where you live. For areas colder than Glendoick, one is somewhat restricted, *R. arizelum*, *R. hodgsonii*, *R. rex* and ssp. *fictolacteam*, *R. kesangiae*, *R. pudorosum*. For Glendoick add *R. falconeri* and ssp. *eximium*, *R. sinofalconeri* (potential hardiness not yet known but it seems promising), *R. macabeanum* and *R. sinogrande*. These can suffer in our coldest winters. For really mild west coast gardens: *R. grande*, *R. magnificum* and *R. protistum*. These include the best plants for foliage and/or flowers.

Using large leaves for cushioning under tents at a jungle camp in Arunachal Pradesh with Anong Tayeng



All pictures in this article by John Roy

Sichuan 2019

John Roy

After all the excitement of my travels and treks in Yunnan in 2017 (SRS Yearbook No 19), I decided an easier trip would suit my advancing age. When good friend and fellow explorer Hartwig Schepker invited me to join six German and one Chinese botanists on a trip he was organising to Sichuan, I readily agreed. Sichuan's tourist industry has taken off in a huge way, with new roads and cable cars now ascending a lot of the best known mountain areas.

So on Wednesday 29th May I boarded a KLM flight from Edinburgh to Schiphol, Amsterdam, to connect with a direct flight then to Chengdu, the provincial capital of Sichuan. Five of my German counterparts were also booked on the Chengdu flight. However, my flight sat on the tarmac for nearly an hour before taking off leaving me with a ridiculously short connection time of twenty minutes at Schiphol. As I ran between terminals I thought even if I managed to catch the flight, my luggage probably wouldn't.

And so it was. Hartwig Schepker, Bodo Lammers, Frank Snupper, Nils Koester, Robert Gliniars and myself landed at Chengdu, but while the others collected their baggage from the carousel, mine was nowhere to be seen. We were met by our tour guide, "Dennis", from Lijiang who helped me report the lost bag.

There was a free afternoon to do a bit of sightseeing. The news on the luggage was that it would probably arrive in Chengdu on the next flight in two days by which time we would be elsewhere. Meanwhile I only had what I was wearing. That evening Ulrich Pietzarka and Liu Ming arrived from Shanghai. I had been trekking before with Frank, Ulrich and Hartwig.

Next day we drove south stopping at Leshan for a short boat trip to view the enormous Buddha carved into the sandstone cliff. Then, gaining altitude up the lower slopes of Emei Shan, making a comfort stop at a small roadside pull-in, I saw coats for sale. We would be staying at 2,400 meters for the next two nights, walking to the top of Emei Shan at 3,000 meters. I felt I would be vulnerable with no protective clothing so I bought the largest coat I could find and a bag to carry extras. After booking into our accommodation at Lei Dong Ping there was time for an exploration.

Concrete steps have been built all the way from a cable car station at 1,200 meters

to the top. Immediately out of the village we spotted rhododendrons. *R. wiltonii*, *R. calophyllum*, *R. argyrophyllum* and *R. ambiguum* were easily found without leaving the trail. Also *Arisaema wilsonii* and *A. elephas* with lots of variants between the two. One plant that caught my eye was nettle relative *Meehania fargesii* with pretty pink flowers.



Rhododendron wiltonii clinging to gulleys

The following day was the start of June. Our intention was to walk down the steps to the lower cable car station. We looked down into gulleys that were decorated with the pink to white flowers of *Rhododendron wiltonii*. The lovely patterned stems of *Arisaema lobatum* stood out, flowering finished. Huge amounts of *A. wilsonii*, *A. elephas* and *R. pachytrichum* could be seen. This rhododendron could easily be mistaken for *R. strigillosum* in the wild when out of flower. At Wannian Temple after a lunch stop, we continued down. The weather was fine and the views outstanding. Looking at the cliffs in the distance we wondered if Ernest Wilson had found

R. williamsianum somewhere out there. It has only been found on Emei Shan and Wawu Shan. I was fortunate to spot another rarity out of reach in a bamboo thicket. *Podophyllum delavayi* with its attractive mottled leaves is endemic to this mountain.



Tourists visiting the giant Buddha

The descent was hard on the leg muscles and by the time we had descended 1,000 metres we had had enough and boarded a cable car to go down to where we could board a bus back up to Lei Dong Ping. The good news was my luggage had arrived at Chengdu airport and KLM were going to deliver it to where we had left our bus further down the mountain.

Next day we climbed to the top where an enormous golden statue has been built honouring



Table mountain Wawu Shan in the distance

Buddha. There were thousands of people up there, most having gone up by cable car. We scanned the abundant *Abies fabri* for the epiphytic *Rhododendron dendrocharis* but could not spot any. The views however were stunning. Taking the cable car back to Lei Dong Ping was the best option for our still aching leg muscles, then a bus trip back to collect our own bus where I was reunited with my luggage. I have great praise for KLM and Dennis for co-ordinating this.

From the top of Emei Shan we could clearly see the flat topped Wawu Shan in the distance and this was our next destination. This mountain, although slightly less than 3,000 metres, has a microclimate of rain and fog that ensures abundant moisture for its plants.

But when we arrived at the hotel the locals said the cable car was closed for maintenance for two days. Next day we found this was true and no amount of persuasion was going to allow us to walk. Disappointed, we would try to visit again later in the trip. Meanwhile we drove south to Mianning which Steve Hootman had mentioned in an article about his travels in this area. He had accessed a mountain called Ling Shan which had interesting plants.

After a comfortable night in a hotel, back in the bus to drive to 2,600 metres. *Rhododendron augustinii* was plentiful and as we ascended Ling Shan “scenic area” *R. floribundum* and *R. rex* ssp. *rex* grew. Some of the *R. rex* had very beautiful chocolate brown indumentum. The flora here was very rich and relatively undisturbed. Although there was a good trail and evidence of work to construct a cable car we did not meet anyone. The beautiful red-spotted flower of a single *Nomocharis pardanthina* grew beside the river bed. From the trail itself grew a tiny pink flowered *Roscoea*. One of the *Rhododendron rex* had the parasitic plant *Taxillus delavayi* growing on it and the red flowers were dropping on to the ground. Gaining in height I spotted a *R. wardii* just off the trail. Very



Nomocharis pardanthina

often when you go “off piste” to view something, another plant will catch your eye and so was another yellow flowered rhododendron but a dwarf and further into the thicket. Fighting off various stems and branches I came to a straggly small shrub with a single truss of two yellow flowers. It was a bit of a puzzle until Hartwig came up with the recently described *R. mianningense*. Also at this spot grew a lovely *Pleione bulbocodioides*.



Rhododendron mianningense

Rhododendrons from subsection Taliensia were to loom large on this trip and some confusion started on this mountain. Abundant was a rhododendron that looked a lot like *R. bureavii* but with a discontinuous spotted indumentum. We would see a lot more of these confusing plants later in the trip.

We came off the mountain in good time so we could drive to Xichang, further south. From there we could easily access Luoji Shan, a mountain well documented from previous expeditions. Here the cable car took us to 3,500 metres. Stepping out of the top station I spotted a very dark *Arisaema elephas*. This species was abundant and some very nice foliage and spathe variations. The dark purple spadix appendages curve down then up, reminding one of an elephant’s trunk. Concrete steps and wooden walkways have been built to make circular walks from the cable car. We intended to walk as far as possible. Initially there were lots of people arriving. Giggling girls who wanted to have their photos taken with these tall Europeans! Considering the altitude many were not suitably dressed and did not venture far, so the more we walked the quieter it became.



Arisaema elephas

Rhododendrons were represented by the fading yellow flowers of *R. lacteum*, the shell pink of *R. souliei* and the splendid darker pink of *R. heliolepis*. Across a bouldery stream I could see dark blue-purple flowers on a dwarf rhododendron. Grow-



Rhododendron amunsdenianum

“Kingdon” Snupper.

A larger group of the dwarf rhododendron with the deep blue-purple flowers grew on boulders beside a lake and we could get a closer look. This was *R. amunsdenianum*, a species only recently discovered. This was to be voted plant of the trip later. Then there was that Taliensia subsection rhododendron with the spotted indumentum again and lots of it. As we made our way back down the mountain there was only one visible specimen of what I would call *R. bureavii* with a lovely reddish indumentum. There was much discussion but no conclusions were reached.

Back to the hotel in Xichang then next day we were back up the cable car to walk down Luoji Shan to where the mountain bus dropped us. It started foggy but gradually cleared. Lots of the same plants greeted us but as we descended we came to more *Rhododendron rex* with the chocolate brown indumentum, some *R. decorum* with scented white flowers and *R. floribundum*. *Arisaema lobatum* also grew at this lower altitude. The descent, on wooden and concrete steps, was hard on the leg muscles still aching after Emei Shan.

A long bus journey awaited us on the following day as we drove north to Moxi. This is a pleasant town

ing right beside a lake were straggly sickly looking *R. roxieanum* var. *cucullatum*. Many branches had died but there were sporadic areas of new growth. Two similar Taliensia subsection rhododendrons dominated the forest now. One had finished flowering, flat leaves and rough tomentose stems. The other was still in flower, convex leaves with thicker woollier indumentum and smooth green stems. Frank sorted these into *R. sphaeroblastum* for the first and *R. clementinae* for the second. We were impressed and he became Frank



Hartwig Schepker and Frank “Kingdon” Snupper admire the foliage of *Rhododendron bureavii*

with an old sector “tourist” area. It has history in Mao Zedong’s long march as he requisitioned the Catholic Church built by French missionaries as a base. There is a museum describing the long march and the privations suffered by those involved. We stayed in the Long March International Hotel.



Rhododendron prattii

We set off to explore the east flank of Gongga Shan next day. True to form this involved a shuttle bus and cable car. The cable car took us over the remains of a glacier, in retreat like so many worldwide. It was a cold drizzly day and when we exited the cable car visibility was very poor. We found *Rhododendron prattii* usually with a green margin around the underside leaf indumentum. Others that looked very similar had indumentum over the whole underside. We walked round the wooden boardwalks that prevented closer inspection of many plants, but *R. watsonii* was easily recognised with its bright green leaves and short very winged petioles. Some *R. ambiguum* had pretty pink tinged flowers.

We descended the cable car to walk some of the way rather than take the bus. Soon into the forest were great *Arisaema dilatatum* recognisable from *A. elephas* by its verrucose petioles and green/yellow spadix appendages, swollen and reaching out. Some under the forest canopy were all of 80 cm across the foliage. *Rhododendron moupinense* was spotted growing in the fork of a tree, long since finished flowering. As we walked down the side of a fast moving river we spotted *R. concinnum* Pseudoyanthinum Group. Beautiful dark purple flowers contrasted with the light pink of *R. orbiculare*.



Arisaema dilatatum

Leaving Moxi we had a long drive north over a high pass to Kangding. Stopping briefly, we got a taster of the rich flora to be investigated the following day. So retracing

*Primula secundiflora**Primula cockburniana**Primula blinnii*

our steps back up the Ya Jia Jeng we stopped the bus at a small lake bedecked with prayer flags. Round the lake grew many primulas. *P sikkimensis* yellow flowers mixed with *P. secundiflora* purple flowers. *Rhododendron phaeochrysum* grew with patches of Lapponica subsection rhododendrons. *R. nitidulum* was sorted from *R. intricatum*. *R. primuliflorum* also joined the mix. More primulas were identified. Bright orange flowers of *P. cockburniana* combined with bright pink of *P. blinii* and the tiny *P. fasciculata*.

*Rhododendron rufescens*

The flora really was good on this pass, the road going to 4,000 metres. Tall yellow flowers of *Meconopsis integrifolia* and tall yellow bracts of *Rheum alexandrae* contrasted with beautiful purple slipper orchid *Cypripedium tibeticum*. Pink fragrant flowers on *Daphne tangutica* had a dwarf *Euphorbia* mixed up in its roots. Our bus took us to the top of the pass where it was misty and drizzly, but time for some more botanising. Here *Arisaema elephas* was tiny compared to those lower down. Hartwig had read a report that *Rhododendron rufescens*, a rare and choice member of section Pogonanthum, had been found here. Exploring the banks of the river, growing among boulders, he found it, easily identifiable by its bright white flowers and very dark reddish undersides to the leaves.

Another night in Kangding then a bus trip north to Muge Tso. Once more a shuttle bus took us to a busy tourist attraction. A beautiful lake extended into the distance, but we walked the other way, immediately into meadows of *Primula sikkimensis* and *P. secundiflora*. Another member of subsection Lapponica was found: *Rhododendron websterianum*, small upright shrubs with light blue saucer shaped flowers, red calices and grey leaves. Hartwig gave me a lesson in identification to distinguish between the *R. nivale* and *R.*



Rhododendron websterianum

telmateum. A tall, yellow flowered primula was *P. orbicularis*. *Incarvillea compacta* drew attention with pink flowers at ground level. Lovely pink *Rhododendron primuliflorum* grew among boulders with *Iris*, *Lloydia*, *Fritillaria* and *Cypripedium*. We dragged ourselves away so that we would have time to explore downstream from the lake.

The cliff faces at the edge of the river were painted with Buddhist images. On the tops of the cliffs and boulders grew *Rhododendron phaeochrysum*. Lovely light pink flowers of *R. bureavioides* contrasted with darker pink of *R. concinnum*. Two terrestrial orchids were spotted: a *Cephalanthera* with a spike of white flowers and an *Oreorchis* with dark red flowers. Lower down grew *Podophyllum hexandrum* with lovely marbled leaves.



Meconopsis integrifolia

Leaving Kangding next morning, we got a good view of Gongga Shan. We were heading west over Zheduo Shan to Tagong. It was a busy road and a relief to pull in and botanise. *Primula monroi* had bunches of lovely scented pink flowers alongside a wonderful blue *Corydalis*. Reaching the top our bus pulled into a very popular tourist spot. The view was spectacular and while the others joined the throngs of people making their way up stone steps to a chorten, I went in the other direction for a quieter walk. *Meconopsis integrifolia* grew prolifically up there, especially where the ground had been disturbed helping seed germination, also the



Pedicularis variegata

smaller dark blue *M. henrici*. Alpine flora was superb at this altitude of 4,300 metres. Two beautiful *Pedicularis* caught my eye. *P. variegata* had yellow and pink flowers while *P. siphonantha* had bright pink. The usual subsection Laponica rhododendrons carpeted the ground.

After another comfortable hotel stay we visited the local Lhagang Monastery and did some sightseeing. Then all aboard the bus again to head further north and a town called Jia Ju. Our journey took us past Moshi Park

Stone Forest, a curious area where outcrops of

a bedrock called Mylonite occurred. This is a soft grey rock, high in minerals, that movement of the Earth's crust has metamorphosed from its original crystallized structure. Meadows of *Stellera chamaejasme* obviously enjoyed the situation. Jia Ju and nearby Danba is a very historical area with strong ties to ethnic Tibet. Our hotel was along a steep hillside above the town and with great views. In the distance we could see the tall stone towers, some up to 1,000 years old, that historically had been used as fortresses.

Unfortunately, many of us started to feel ill with gastro-intestinal problems, myself included. The next morning was spent sight-seeing, so those of us who did not feel well could stay behind. Then what seemed like a long rough bus ride to Rilong to the east, with others going down with the bug.

Sigunian Shan was the destination for the following day and ascending Shuangqioa valley. A shuttle bus took us to 3,800 metres. Still feeling unwell, many of us did not have the energy to go far, but immediately we spotted *Podophyllum hexandrum* emerging with deep pink flowers. Along with *Primula monroi* was growing another pink flowered primula but with deeply cut leaves. This was *P. palmata*. Other plants we had already encountered included *Cypripedium tibeticum*, *Primula sikkimensis* and *Rhododendron phaeochrysum*. A



Primula palmata

yellow flowering poppy with more open flowers could have been *Meconopsis pseudointegrifolia*. A *Fritillaria cirrhosa* with purple patterning in the flower was stunning. *Primula chionantha* ssp. *sinopurpurea* and *Omphalogramma vinciflorum* added purple and blue to the spectrum. As we waited for the bus back down, some still felt the bad effects of the bug.



Omphalogramma vinciflorum

Saturday 15th June 2019, my sixty-sixth birthday. Not the first I had spent on trek. After some medication we were all feeling better. Dennis described us as being back to “eight tigers” ready for trek. Just as well because this involved an overnight stay in Changpingquo valley, still in Sigunian Shan. Our camping equipment and overnight luggage was taken on by ponies, while we boarded shuttle buses. The now familiar boardwalk guided us further up the mountain alongside river and lake. The jagged peaks beckoned us on. After a lunch stop the boardwalk petered out and we were on a rough trail. There was almost no-one but ourselves.

Plants were much of what we had seen on previous treks. Meadows of *Primula sikkiensis*, *Primula monroi* and *Primula palmata*, which seemed to favour a slightly drier spot. Blue flower spikes of *P. muscarioides* were opening. A trifoliolate *Arisaema* with green striped spathe and short fine spadix appendage remains unidentified. Just below our camp, a tiny beautiful *Lilium lophophorum* grew on a log, with its yellow petals still joined at the tips.



Lilium lophophorum

That evening, the heavens opened with thunder rattling around the valley. Our small leaky tents looked rather unattractive and some decided to pay to sleep in the wooden hostel on site. The river level had risen considerable overnight with primulas now under water. A short walk upstream revealed *Rhododendron trichostomum*. If Hartwig had not spotted it, I would have missed it. Retracing our steps back down the valley to the shuttle bus, we arrived back for another night in Rilong.

Balang Shan beckoned next day with a drive



Meconopsis punicea

east to Wolong. There is now a tunnel through the top of the mountain, but the old road over the pass still exists and is relatively quiet. Balang Shan has been well documented botanically as a very rich area. Our first joy was the drooping red flowers of *Meconopsis punicea*. Confusion persisted around a lot of the primulas that resembled *P. chionantha* with some that had one sided heads of flowers in a beautiful blue. On return home consulting John Richards book, he lumps a few into *P. chionantha* and other experts are confused. It could be the subject of a whole new article!

Another unknown for me was a primula that resembled *P. monroi* but with some farina and remarkably thick leaves with striking red petioles. This was possibly *P. gemmifera*. Continuing up the pass, rhododendrons in section Pogonanthum were in evidence in the form of nice pink flowered *R. primuliflorum* and near the top, yellow flowered *R. sargentianum*. The blue nodding flowers of *Primula amethystina* were dotted everywhere and a beautiful clump of pink flowered *P. dryadifolia*. Over the top and down the east side, after a lunch

stop we started a search for *Rhododendron balangense*. This member of subsection Taliensia is endemic to this mountain. We started up the steep stony side of a stream but the terrain was too rough and I retreated to the road. Others persevered, and Frank “Kingdon” Snupper located a fine specimen. Meanwhile as I walked back to the bus I spotted some seedlings growing at the edge of an old landslide so it is reproducing in the wild but it is rightly in the red list. A short stop on our journey down to Wolong and we found *Rhododendron galactinum* but flowering finished.

Wolong was on our original itinerary but we also wanted to go up Wawu Shan and did not have time for both. Wawu won the day but our driver had to make a security check in Chengdu before, so it made a long day in the bus. Next day we had better luck with shuttle buses and cable cars running to the top of the mountain. In the bottom station some enlarged pictures of rhododendrons on Wawu Shan were on display and notably *Rhododendron williamsianum* was on one of the boards. The top of the mountain was busy with tourists and the



Rhododendron sargentianum

weather damp and drizzly. Looking up into *Abies fabri* we could see *Rhododendron dendrocharis* growing in moss on the trunks, but long since finished flowering. Most rhododendron flowers had passed their best but we could see a few on *R. wiltonii*, *R. ambiguum* and *R. orbiculare*. There was no sign of *R. williamsianum*. A big statue of Ernest Wilson dominated one area.



Primula amethystina

On our way back down the mountain Ming was finding out who had taken the photo of *Rhododendron williamsianum* and set up a meeting. So on our drive back to Chengdu we visited a publishing office and met the photographer, Lijun Luo, Marketing Department Director of Wawushan Investment Co Ltd. The picture had been taken in 2000 when the mountain was closed to tourists and he had been able to access the cliffs around the summit, one of the few times this rare plant has been seen in the wild.

In conclusion, this was a most enjoyable trip with so many good plants seen, mostly without the severe effort of walking long distances over rough terrain with the rain trickling down your back. The downside was the noise and throngs of people at some of the sites.



Plant explorers E. H. Wilson and Frank “Kingdon” Snupper on Wawu Shan

All pictures in this article by John Roy

The Scottish Rhododendron Society Timeline

Highlights

Part 3

Willie Campbell

Newsletter no. 15, November 1988

Hamish Gunn – Gardening on a postage Stamp: The President writes about his garden in Edinburgh, notes sometimes gardening is pleasing and at others is almost a source of despair. Hamish goes on to describe having light soil, sandy and granular and with only 30 inches of rain dries out quickly. Hamish was friendly with H. H. Davidian who helped with advice and encouragement as well as the odd one or two plants. Hamish records in detail the rhododendron gardening year, listing the plants in his garden with *R. mucronulatum* in mid January, describing in detail his various hardy species through to his tender rhododendrons later in spring.

This is a wonderful article from a very modest gardener who clearly had a super garden.

Autumn Meet report SW Scotland – George Smith, Peter Bland and Philip Lord:

The group of 12 were met at Logan Botanic Garden by David Knott and Barry Unwin to guide us round the gardens on a fine morning. Logan garden is a very attractive outpost of the RBGE where tender plants can be grown and displayed to great effect. Although rhododendrons were not flowering, the garden was still full of colour. The garden has that exotic feel about it with the tree ferns growing in the lawns, drifts of bright magenta salvias in full flower and *Crinodendron hookerianum* with its red pendent bells.

The group then left the main garden, through a small gate to Logan House Garden and were given a guided tour by Martin College. The group were amazed at the large leafed rhododendrons on show: groves of *R. arizelum*, *R. hodgsonii*, *R. sinogrande*, *R. grande* and *R. magnificum*. We were shown one of the original Hooker introductions of *R. grande*. This was rhododendron heaven.

Next morning the party arrived at Garlieston House but with the absence of a guide the party disappeared in different directions and at times were unable to identify many of the extensive collection of plants. A return to this garden in autumn was a must.

Having enjoyed the two days the group parted for home with many photos and memories.

Notes from a beginner part 2 – J. Westhead: The garden at Preston was started 5 years ago and as a novice but infatuated rhododendron grower the writer now has over 130 species and hybrid rhododendrons from various outlets around the UK. They go

on to name the plants bought, conditions they like and if flowering.

(This is a garden and name I have not come across before, anyone remember them?)

Our Best Day in Bhutan – Peter Cox: Peter tells us it was his turn to sleep alone or a tent to himself, which he regrets as they were camping on the Rudong La at 13,600 ft. Keith Rushforth was leading the trip, it was autumn and this area had only been visited before by Ludlow and Sherriff.

Peter goes on to describe trekking through *Abies densa* forest, with *Rhododendron hodgsonii*, *R. wightii*, *R. flinckii*, *R. lanatum* and the most common plant *R. campanulatum* ssp. *aeruginosum* with its glaucous foliage. Peter thinks this plant deserves full species status.

Rhododendron bhutanense the most western of the Taliensia SS proved to be a common plant climbing the steep slopes to the pass. High up on the pass *R. anthopogan* and *R. setosum* were growing on the rocks at the top.

Peter, Keith with Ted and Romy Millais ventured down the east side of the pass finding more *Rhododendron bhutanense*, *R. flinckii*, *R. campanulatum* ssp. *aeruginosum*, *R. thomsonii*, and *R. succothii*. Peter was delighted to find *R. fulgens* with rather thin indumentum and smooth purplish bark.

Peter was a very fit man in these days and it was getting late, retracing their steps the guides had left two ponies for them, “I rather daringly mounted one having only been on one horse in my life”.

And the most unusual day – Sir Peter Hutchinson: It was Wednesday 6th October, having driven down to the Phuntsholing, a humid border town, more like the Indian Plains than Bhutan, the hotel had been double booked and we ended up in the Paradise Hotel. Anything but Paradise Peter explains “It was obviously a second home for the local Bengali bicycle salesman and in the gloom of the bar downstairs gentlemen in white dhotis stared at the foreigners while Indian music wailed from a wireless” and goes on to say “Bedrooms were uncarpeted concrete boxes, taps did not work but at least the overhead fans did and we keep ours going, it was like being under a helicopter but at least the mosquitoes were propelled away into the darkness”

Peter goes on to describe further adventures about the trip to Bhutan.

John Basford reported on the International Conference in Australia 1988.

Looking ahead the Annual Show was to be held in the Corran Halls in Oban 6th May 1989 and next year’s Spring Meeting would be held in Perthshire visiting at least 5 local gardens.

End piece – after 4 years Mike Thornley handed over the Editor’s job to Bill Davidson. Mike thanked the many contributors, Sue Thornley and Amanda Clark.

Newsletter no. 16. President Hamish Gunn, Vice President Peter Cox, Secretary Hubert Andrew.

Thank you – Thornleys: Hamish Gunn the President thanks Mike and Sue Thorley for the last 4 years of editing the Newsletters. Bill Davidson from Jedburgh takes over.

Garden Survey of Scottish Gardens: Although not many survey forms were returned (30 forms returned) Mervyn Kessell still thought the idea was good. It also asked members for ideas what they may wish the Committee to pursue. **(This is interesting I think).**

Outing Spring/Summer maybe two in spring.

Exchange visits East and West

Hold Meetings in England.

Open an English Chapter.

Plant Exchange scheme/plant sales

Summary of survey/follow up

Publish a membership list/Members Handbook.

More talks, teach-ins and discussion. Major one day conferences.

Plant register

Introductory Data Pack.

Help with pests and diseases.

Seed Exchange Scheme

Plant Portraits with photos

Plant sales

Use of media to promote the Society.

(Today many of the above are a reality).

Rhododendron albiflorum: Roger Woodhouse describes this attractive rhododendron from North America extremely rare in cultivation, pretty white flowers, in **Sub-genus Candidastrum.**

Book Reviews: The Rhododendron Species Vol. 2 by HH Davidian and the Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Hybrids by Peter and Kenneth Cox.

Newsletter No. 17, July 1989:

Show Report: The show was held in the Corran Halls in Oban on Saturday 6th May. The most prolific exhibitors were Arduaine, Glendoick, Glenarn and Blackhills. Judges were John Basford and Dr David Chamberlain. **The show was opened by Mrs Frances Shand-Kydd.**

The spring meeting was held at Pitlochry and visited the following gardens **Cluny** (Mr & Mrs J Mattingley), **Tiriach** (Jean & Tom Scott) just outside Pitlochry, **Meikleour**

(The Marquis of Lansdowne), **Gowranes** (Mr & Mrs Park) and **Branklyn** (NTS Scotland).

It is reported that there was a good attendance and most enjoyable two days.

Newsletter No. 18, November 1989:

Obituary: The Late Archie Kenneth, The society has lost a great plantsman and founder member, (Ilay Campbell writes). Archie lived at Stronachullin in Argyll (**a garden we visited some years back and we were shown some of Archie's garden records**).

Peter In Pandaland: Peter Cox describes his travels in the Sichuan county of Wolong. Having negotiated with the University of Sichuan for over a year the party return to Heros Gorge where Peter first visited in 1986. Peter describes some of the rhododendrons found including *R. galactinum*, *R. wiltonii*, *R. calophytum*, *R. orbiculare*, *R. longesquamatum* along with the epiphytic *R. dendrocharis*. *R. moupinense* with lovely rose pink flowers perched on the trees and cliffs around the gorge.

Society Accounts 31.3.1989: £733.55 was in capital account Hubert Andrew Treasurer reported.

Autumn Meeting: 36 Members attended the Autumn Conference at the RBG Edinburgh.

Tailpiece: A friend “asked what conditions do Yaks like”? Any comments please.

Newsletter 19 March 1990:

New members to the Society: Oliver Miller, Langbank, and Ian Sinclair Benmore Botanic Gardens were among the 14 to be welcomed.

An interesting article by Peter Cox on **Rhododendrons of Sabah**, particularly on Mt. Kinabalu some 13,455 ft. The senior author was Dr. George Argent a Senior Taxonomist RBGE who specialises in Vireya Rhododendrons. RBGE has the largest collection of these plants in the world. (**Still does I think?**).

The newsletter concludes with a long article on taking rhododendron cuttings by Dr I Simpson Hall.

A membership list was circulated with this Newsletter. Great to see many are still active today, I still send seeds to Jose Almadoz, San Sebastian, Spain today.

Newsletter No. 20, August 1990:

Our current President – John Hammond and his wife Margaret join the Society.

Spring Meeting – centred on Ambleside in the Lake District visiting gardens as follows:

Stagshaw Bank – NTS garden east side of Lake Windermere although had interesting plants seemed to lack any real form.

Holehird - just a short distance south of Stagshaw is now managed by the Lakeland Horticultural Group, the gardens are cared for by the members' voluntary labour. Mostly alpine in character with beds of dwarf rhododendrons and azaleas.

Fellside – Near Keswick on the North West side of Derwentwater. The garden is has been carved out of a steep bank with stream running through it and had a good selection of species and hybrid rhododendrons.

Lingholm – Lord Rochdale and Head Gardener Mike Swift guided the party around the garden in a very natural setting of colourful woodland.

Muncaster Castle – Sunday morning the party was met by Patrick Gordon-Duff-Pennington. This is a big garden and as always takes time to view the rhododendrons, many unnamed and the many fine trees planted around the estate. After a super lunch in the Castle the party headed off in all directions.

Rescue of Wentworth Castle Gardens – writes Derek Rodgers. The Wentworth Castle was home to the Earls of Stafford, now an education college. The gardens were overgrown full of brambles, self-sown holly, sycamore, ash and elderberry. Many rhododendrons were dead or diseased, so much clearing work had to be done. Hybrids on *R. ponticum* root stock had suckered and invaded everywhere where there was space and light.

New species and hybrid rhododendrons were introduced, along with *Camellia*, *Magnolia*, *Acer*, *Sorbus*, *Pieris*, *Kalmia*, Asiatic *Primula*, *Meconopsis* etc. The hope was to open the garden to the general public and guided tours for parties.

(The society visited this garden a few years back but now we hear the garden is in trouble again).

The newsletter editor was Bill Davidson from Jedburgh.

Newsletter No. 21, November 1990

This was a short newsletter mainly Hubert Andrew, Treasurer, Secretary and Membership Secretary giving details of forthcoming events, Hubert also welcomed 10 new members including Maurice & Val Jeffrey. **(Maurice had his 100th birthday in January 2019.)**

Autumn Meeting was held at Glendoick where Peter and Patricia Cox were hosts to 26 members attended an interesting talk on rhododendron propagation followed by a tour of the nursery and the wild garden in the Dell.

Finally Powdery Mildew less of a topic last summer mainly due to the warm dry weather.

That completes the timeline for the Society's first 8 years and I do hope you have enjoyed these notes. Please just ask if you would like more information, I would be delighted to copy full articles and send them to you.

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The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the SRS committee. The committee, however, support the right to freedom of speech.

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International Rock
Garden Conference

2021

Perth

Scotland

8 - 11 May

