

Rhododendrons International

The Online Journal of the World's Rhododendron Organizations



Vireyas



Rhododendrons



Azaleas

Volume 1 2016. Part 2 - European Rhododendron Organizations

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From the Editor

Dr. Glen Jamieson
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Welcome to the first issue of *Rhododendrons International* (RI). I am the editor of the *Journal American Rhododendron Society* and while attending the 70th International Rhododendron Conference in Dunedin, NZ, in 2014, I was fortunate to be able to meet with representatives from the Dunedin, Japanese, German, Australian and the host NZ Rhododendron societies, as well as representatives from the USA Rhododendron Species and Botanical Garden (RSBG) and the NZ Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust (PRT). While I personally was aware of many of the initiatives of these groups through our journal exchange programs, I know that most members of each rhododendron society are not aware of the many rhododendron-related activities or initiatives around the world that are being supported or discussed by rhododendron societies and organisations.

In an effort to increase awareness of activities involving rhododendrons on a scale larger than is occurring in each of our own individual societies or groups, I came up with the idea of producing a digital, on-line publication that would hopefully have content from as many rhododendron-related groups as possible. My idea was that issues of this journal would be made available to be distributed free by each rhododendron group to all its members. Initially, only one issue is being planned, but if it is well received and there is subsequent interest, perhaps this could become an on-going publication.

I am pleased to report that all the rhododendron societies and organisations world-wide that I know of have welcomed this idea and are participating in this first issue of *Rhododendrons International*. However, with 16 submissions in the first issue and many photos from each group, the resulting pdf document may be too large for convenient timely downloading if it was done as one large file. To remedy this, this first issue of *Rhododendrons International* has been divided into three smaller pdfs on a geographical basis, which should all be downloaded separately and then be read sequentially, since they are linked together text-wise. The three pdfs are “North America Rhododendron Organizations” (Part 1, “European Rhododendron Organizations” (Part 2, this pdf), and “Southern

Hemisphere and Asian Rhododendron Organizations” (Part 3). Issue file size may not be such a concern for future issues, as future issues, if produced, will likely have no more than 8-10 articles in each issue.

We welcome article submissions for future issues, but as indicated, when they might be produced will depend on the responses received to this issue. There is no remuneration for submitted material, and at present, I am willing to volunteer my own time to edit and coordinate submissions. However, at present I have no commitment for someone to do the layout, but this may change once we have a better idea of how much future work will be involved. Comments on any aspect of this new journal and future articles for consideration should be submitted in digital form to:

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Please put “Rhododendrons International” in the subject line.

Some guidelines for the future content. The content of RI should not interfere with possible article submissions to any existing journals of rhodo societies and organizations, but rather help disseminate more widely relevant rhododendron articles to a larger audience. Article submissions to RI should thus primarily be timely articles that have already been published in other rhodo journals when possible, but be modified so that they are not identical to what was previously published and hence incur possible copyright conflicts. Tweaks could include more images, additional text, and so on.

Other guidelines are the following:

- 1) **Language:** the language of RI will be entirely in English. I know this will cause problems for some groups that have many members that do not speak English, but unfortunately this is the most widely accepted language at present and most importantly, it is the only language with which I can competently edit articles.
- 2) **Content:** All articles will be reviewed and edited, and we reserve the right to refuse material deemed of questionable relevance or scientific credibility. Suggested content that could be considered of interest to the broader rhododendron community could include local or regional efforts in rhodo conservation, the habitats and characteristics of species occurring in your area in the wild, rhodo hybridization issues, challenges in local rhodo culture, preferred companion plants, challenges in keeping your society operational and so on. I am not suggesting that all these topics would be considered in a single article

or even RI issue, but am simply suggesting what type of content might initially be considered. I am sure that many readers will have other great ideas!

- 3) **Timeframe:** We are all busy people, so there is no rigid schedule for future issues. However, potentially one issue a year might initially be feasible, but again, this is not fixed, and since we are depending on volunteers for article submissions, it may be less frequent!
- 4) **Participation:** Article submissions are welcome from anyone.
- 5) **Format:** Being a digital publication, there is no cost for colour images and these can be located throughout an article, so high quality images (300+ dpi, i.e. large file sizes) are welcome. However, there is work involved in writing, editing and in layout, so writers should bear this in mind in determining individual article lengths and the number of photos submitted. However, rather than specifying limits at this time, lets see how it goes and if submissions should perhaps be made longer or shorter, as editor I will suggest that to specific writers for their consideration.

In summary, thanks to all the writers that have contributed to this first *Rhododendrons International* issue, and to you all for reading this material. I would particularly like to thank Sonja Nelson, Assistant Editor of the ARS journal for volunteering to do the layout and proofing of this first issue, as without her, this issue would not exist. I hope you enjoy it and find it useful.

Glen Jamieson

Editor, *Rhododendrons International*

Rhododendrons in Germany

Hartwig Schepker
Bremen, Germany



FOUNDED IN 1935, THE GERMAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY (DRG) has since then been a driving force for the introduction of rhododendrons and azaleas as garden plants in Germany. The founding members were mainly nursery owners like Luyken from the famous Hesse Nursery in Weener, Bruns from Bad Zwischenahn and Deus from Rastede, all from North-West Germany; joined by Seidel from Grüngräbchen in South-East Germany and garden architects and amateurs mostly working in or near Bremen. The society's connection to the Hanseatic city of Bremen is as old as the association itself. The founding ceremony took place on October 18th in the historic town hall of Bremen, today listed as an UNESCO heritage site. The society's president, a prestigious job rather than a functional one, has since then been primarily a Bremen merchant with good connections into politics and the economy. Except in its first years, the society's headquarter has been always in the Rhododendron-Park Bremen with the garden's director the executive director of the society.

From the beginning, the creation of a garden for trials and presentation purposes was a major goal of the association. In the late 1930s, imports of rhododendrons were greatly reduced, and there was a growing need in Germany to increase both propagation and cultivation approaches for rhododendrons and in their usages in landscaping. From 1937 onwards, this trial cultivation has been in Bremen, where it forms the basis of today's Rhododendron-Park and Botanic Garden Bremen, called the "Park of the German Rhododendron Society" in its first years.

The society's first annual booklet was published in 1939. Officially called the *Yearbook of the German Rhododendron Society*, it contained mostly articles written by rhododendron experts. Very important were reports about rhododendron propagation techniques and cultivation requirements, as well as maintaining breeding records. A second publication was introduced in 1961 called the



Fig. 1. Front pages of the last four volumes of *Rhododendron und Immergrüne*. Photo by Axel Oehler.

Immergrünen Blätter (= *Evergreen Leaves*) which reflected more the interests of amateurs in the society, with articles about personal experiences in cultivating certain hybrids or species, tips for using companion plants, descriptions of garden visits and news about activities within the society. In 2006, both publications were integrated into one single publication that served both amateurs and professionals, named *Rhododendrons and Evergreens* (*Rhododendron und Immergrüne*). The biannual production of this high-quality and attractive booklet with interesting reports from all fields of rhododendrons (Fig.1), including articles in German by both regular members and national and international rhododendron experts, is nowadays surely the biggest benefit of the membership in the German Rhododendron Society.

In 2016, the German Rhododendron Society has about 800 members with most of them understandably coming from Germany. Pleasantly, we have also international members from 22 countries, most of them living in neighboring countries like Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Luxemburg, Poland, Switzerland and The Netherlands. Included are about 40 associated members around the world, e.g., from rhododendron societies in the US, Canada, Australia or New Zealand, and from Botanic Gardens. A publication exchange with these associated gardens and other rhododendron societies ensures that members of the German Rhododendron Society always receive the latest news from major international rhododendron developments. All exchange publications, as well as general books about rhododendrons and azaleas, gardens, plant hunters and hybridizers, are stored in the society's own library, located in the Bremen Rhododendron-Park, but are usable by all society members.

Besides its biannual publication, membership in the DRG offers other benefits. There is a regular seed exchange for members and the society provides plant material from sought after (older) hybrids or rare species. The DRG also provides a website with a code word protected internal member's section. This "rhodo-forum" includes a discussion platform and an archive containing digitalized versions of all the old society's publications, a very useful research tool. Questions concerning the care of rhododendrons are answered by members of the DRG's board. Besides the publication *Rhododendron und Immergrüne*, highlights for many members are the annual meetings and excursions. Traditionally, many conventions have been held in northwestern Germany, and since reunification with Eastern Germany, in southeastern Germany, due to the concentration of rhododendron gardens and nurseries in these two areas. However, meetings can take place anywhere in Germany in May as long as interesting gardens or collections are available to be seen. This



Fig. 2. Participants of the 2014 DRG convention at the Jeddelloh Nursery in Edewecht, Ammerland, Germany. Photo by Georg Paulmann.

four to five day event includes talks, workshops, auctions, and many visits to private or public gardens, nurseries and research facilities (Fig. 2). Especially popular are convention tours organized to visit neighboring countries. In the last ten years, the DRG has visited gardens in Poland, Belgium and The Netherlands, and in 2017, the society will travel through Northern Italy to visit the magnificent gardens along Lake Como and Lake Maggiore. Only once has the society tour travelled beyond the Atlantic, when in 1990 destinations in Oregon, Washington State and British Columbia were visited.

One of the peculiarities characterizing the German Rhododendron Society is the potentially extremely long sitting terms of their board members. The society is run by a six-person managing board, consisting of a president, two vice-presidents, a secretary, a treasurer and an executive director. The DRG advisory board consists currently of 16 members, recruited from rhododendron growers, hybridizers, horticulturists and amateurs. Regularly meetings and intensive digital communication ensures the involvement of the advisory board in any major decisions. Members of both boards are elected without time-limitations, leading often to lengthy years of service. Since its foundation, only six presidents have headed the society, with Bernd-Adolf Crome serving for 22 years (Fig. 4). The same is true for many other board members, with Prof. Wolfgang Spethmann already having served for 32 years!



Fig. 3. The DRG's *Rhododendron Care Manual* of the German Rhododendron Society (*Deutsche Rhododendron-Gesellschaft e.V.* 2012).

Currently, Dr. André-Michael Schultz is the president, Sabine zu Jeddloh and Prof. Dr. Andree Kirchner are vice-presidents, Prof. Spethmann is the secretary, Erich Gebhardt is the treasurer and I am the executive director.

The statutes of the German Rhododendron Society list the promotion of scientific research as one of its major objectives. Many rhododendron projects have been financially supported over the last 80 years, ranging from taxonomic analyses to hybridization projects, and from publishing rhododendron care manuals to supporting excursions to the natural habitats of rhododendron species. Since the very beginning, the Rhododendron-Park Bremen has constantly been financially supported by the DRG, e.g., by financing propagation experiments on the grounds of the park in the early days, by funding educational equipment and by producing visitor information leaflets. DRG funds have also been used to build specially designed greenhouses to house non-hardy Indian azaleas. Three major print products of the society's funding have been the *Rhododendron-Bibliography* (Spethmann et al. 1992, 1996, 2002), the largest ever written compilation of rhododendron references,



Fig. 4. From left to right: Hartwig Schepker, former president Berndt-Adolf Crome (2nd from left) next to Hartwig Schepker (left), and former Dutch ARS Chapter president Dr. Lou Traas (and right) with present DRG-president Dr. André-Michael Schultz. (right). Photo by Hartwig Schepker.



Fig. 5. Field trials fields of new Japanese Azalea cultivars in Bad Zwischenahn, Lower Saxony, sponsored by the German Rhododendron Society. Photo by Hartwig Schepker.

containing thousands of listings from 1792 until modern times; the book *Rhododendron breeding in Germany* (Schmalscheidt 2002), a rhododendron care manual (*Deutsche Rhododendron-Gesellschaft e.V.* 2012) (Fig. 3). Several research institutions have received and are still receiving funds for executing cultivation trials or for performing specific experiments. The DRG has also funded a long-term project called the “German Genebank Rhododendron” which includes an open-access database containing information on all hybrids and species located in the 50 major rhododendron collections in Germany. Currently, significant financial support goes into the creation of a regional rhododendron collection in Zuschendorf in southeastern Germany, with hybrids created by Seidel and other hybridizers of Saxony. The DRG is also presently assisting in several propagation trials, e.g., one examining the performance of many new Japanese azaleas (Fig. 5) and another evaluating the most common rhododendron hybrids for their susceptibility to both the Andromeda lacebug (*Stephanitis takeyai*) and bud blast, two major problems in contemporary German rhododendron culture.

Probably one of the biggest highlights in the history of the DRG was its 75th anniversary in 2010, celebrated with an international rhododendron conference (Fig. 6). From May 19-25, more than 230 rhododendron enthusiasts from all

over the world gathered in Bremen to experience a mixture of talks (twelve international speakers from twelve countries), excursions, workshops and social events.

For those interested in meeting German rhododendron enthusiasts, to see the broad range of rhododendron gardens in Germany or to learn more about the German Rhododendron Society, the possibility of holding a joint DRG-American Rhododendron Society convention in May 2018 in Bremen is being considered. If this becomes a reality, all are very welcome to attend!

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Fig. 6. Participants of the International Rhododendron Conference 2010 in the Park of the Gardens, Bad Zwischenahn: From left to right: Kristian Thequist (Finland), Peter Cox (Scotland), Peter Norris (United States) and Marc Colombel (France). Photo by Hartwig Schepker.

Schmalscheidt, Walter. 2002. Rhododendron-Züchtung in Deutschland. 2. Aufl. Eigenverlag, 88 S.
Spethmann, Wolfgang, Manfred Oetting and Burkhard Walter. 1992. 1, Supplement 1996, 2. Supplement 2002. Rhododendron Bibliography. *Deutsche Rhododendron-Gesellschaft e.V.* und Abteilung Baumschule, Leibnitz Universität Hannover.

Hartwig Schepker is the executive director of the German Rhododendron Society.

Rhododendrons and the Royal Horticultural Society

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THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY (RHS) Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia (RCM) Group is a specialist plant group of the RHS, with independent charitable status since 2015. Once fully incorporated, it is now administratively separate from the main RHS, but as one of only four Partnership Groups (the others being the Lily, Fruit and Herb Groups), it retains very close operative links with the horticultural arm of the larger society. The RCM Group's role is to act as advisor to the RHS over matters relating to the three genera and to make recommendations to the various committees regarding awards to plants and people. It is closely involved with the Award of Garden Merit scheme for all three genera, which is now reviewed on an annual rather than an occasional basis. It is a highly regarded and respected organisation within the horticultural community in the UK.

The RCM Group is currently enjoying its centenary, as the descendant of the first specialist society for rhododendrons to be set up in the world. The Rhododendron Society was actually formed in 1915 at an informal gathering at Lanarth House in Cornwall, England. The three individuals involved were all keen gardeners with a particular love for rhododendrons, new varieties of which were coming into the country in number from Asia, thanks to the efforts of the plant-hunters Wilson and Forrest. With so many new species and so little information about how to grow them, the three came together to share their experiences and pool the knowledge they gathered as the plants were established in their respective gardens. The three were Percival Dacre (PD) Williams of Lanarth and his guests, Charles Eley of East Bergholt Place in Suffolk and John Guille Millais of Compton's Brow in Surrey. Their first proper meeting was held at the Chelsea Flower Show in May of 2016, by which time several other members had joined, notably John Charles (JC) Williams of Caerhays Castle and George Johnstone of Trewithen, both in Cornwall.



Charles Eley. Photographer unknown.



John Guille Millais. Photographer unknown.

Undeniably elite, the Society established a set of rules, one of which was that each member must contribute an article each year to be published in a set of *Notes* whose circulation would be limited to their membership. Many more members swelled the number until almost all the large estates were included. Special membership status was awarded to FRS Balfour at RBG Edinburgh and to Wilson and Forrest, who contributed greatly to the understanding of how rhododendrons grow in the wild. The three volumes of *Rhododendron Society Notes* published between 1916 and 1931 remain sought after publications of great historic interest. In addition, the Rhododendron Society published John Barr Stevenson's great work *The Species of Rhododendron*.

With rhododendrons becoming more and more popular and the RHS taking a greater interest, the society undertook the first large-scale rhododendron competition in London, in association with the RHS. It soon became apparent that a less exclusive organisation was necessary to serve the growing numbers of enthusiasts. Lionel de Rothschild was the right individual to drive this forward, and he oversaw the formation of the Rhododendron Association with a much wider membership, extending worldwide and whose early membership lists included such people as Koichiro Wada and Halfdan Lem.



Denny Pratt Azalea Workshop at Millais Nurseries. Photo by Sally Hayward.

For the first time, hybrid rhododendrons and their parentage details began to appear in print alongside species lists, and qualitative assessments were introduced, all of which assisted growers and hybridisers. Lionel de Rothschild (Exbury), JJ Crosfield (Embley Park) and Lord Aberconway (Bodnant) were all major players in these years and the Rhododendron Association published its year book annually from 1929 to 1939, often having to produce a supplement to accommodate the many new species and varieties continuously being added.

The war brought operation of the Association to a halt, but it was resurrected in 1945 under the auspices of the RHS, becoming known as the Rhododendron Group of the RHS. Membership was offered free to paid-up RHS members and a specialist year book was published to provide current information on developments in the world of rhododendrons. Hardback editions were published from 1946, incorporating camellias from 1954, but by 1971 the economic fortunes of the RHS had changed and the decision was taken to end publication and effectively disband the Rhododendron Group.

Not to be discouraged, the leading members of the Group worked together in an effort to keep the organisation going, finding enough funding to self-publish the 1972 year book, albeit in a very poorly-produced paperback form. The Group became a subscription-only organisation from that point, with dues being used to publish the year book. Its relationship with the RHS was

re-established by 1973 and the RHS undertook publication of the yearbook once more, but on behalf of the Rhododendron Group and with no financial contribution.

Since that time the Rhododendron Group has fully embraced camellias and, more recently, magnolias, becoming known as the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group. The year book (now known as the yearbook) has continued throughout, and is supplemented with a four-colour newsletter called the *Bulletin* that is published three times a year.

The RCM Group Today

Currently, the RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group has nearly 700 members spread across 25 countries, including Chile and South Africa.

The Group is dedicated to spreading knowledge and love for its three genera. It was one of the first plant societies to establish a website for its members, and this has become a well-respected online resource used by rhododendron enthusiasts worldwide regardless of their membership status. Past editions of the *Bulletin* are available to download as is *The Rhododendron Story*, the 1996 book published by the Group to celebrate the fiftieth edition of the yearbook.

In the UK the Group is divided into regional branches which devise their own activities and visits; there are particularly active branches across the south of England, notably the southwest, although it is the northwest branch which



Group Seed Raising Workshop. Photo by Sally Hayward.



Centenary Show 2016. Photo by Sally Hayward.



Centenary Show 2016. Photo by Sally Hayward.

is unique in organising an annual tour for its members. The wider Group organises an annual tour, either to other parts of the UK or further afield, including memorable trips to the US, New Zealand, Germany and Yunnan. Inevitably, the state of the economy tends to determine the frequency of these more ambitious trips.

The Seed Exchange has been run for the benefit of members since 1988. Newly-collected wild seed was donated and offered to members until the ratification of the Nagoya Protocol by the UK in 2014. Regrettably, no wild-collected seed has been offered since 2015, a situation we are striving to remedy. The Group is working hard in collaboration with other organisations to steer a course through the Nagoya maze so that we can re-establish links with other countries for permitted access and benefit sharing.

One of the Group's principal driving forces in recent years has centred around the conservation of both species and hybrids. This was instigated largely because of the threat of *Phytophthora ramorum*, which stood to wipe out many of our historic collections. Financial support for the developing micropropagation process has reaped enormous rewards for rhododendron conservation and we can now count in hundreds the numbers of rhododendron species and hybrids whose future has been secured through this procedure. The recent launch of the Centenary Appeal to raise additional funding will ensure this project continues.

In addition, the Group has established planted reference collections of rhododendrons at gardens open to the public and will continue to add to them in the years to come. There are collections of species rhododendrons and Rustica Group deciduous azaleas at RHS Garden Wisley; large-leaved species rhododendrons at Abbotsbury Sub-tropical Gardens in Dorset; and the Group's extensive Hardy Hybrid Collection at Ramster Garden in Surrey.

Sponsorship of young professional gardeners is high on the list of priorities for the Group and we are proud to have supported many young people on their first trips to see rhododendrons in the wild. This can be a life-changing experience for the traveller but one which brings benefits to more than just the individuals concerned, as it helps colleagues and our members alike in bringing knowledge and new expertise from which the whole rhododendron community can share.

In the future, the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group hopes to spread the word about its chosen genera further and wider than ever, proving worthy of its charitable status and being yet more committed to its conservation aims.



Chelsea Flower Show Exhibit 2016. Photo by Sally Hayward.



Chelsea Flower Show Exhibit 2016. Photo by Sally Hayward.



RCM Group in Yunnan 2008. Photographer unknown.

We look forward to taking an active part in the *Rhododendrons International* enterprise and hope it has a long and productive future!

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Pam Hayward is the RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group Yearbook's Editor and Archivist.

Rhododendrons in France

Jacqueline Petton
Scaër, Brittany, France



THE SOCIETE BRETONNE DU RHODODENDRON (SBR) IS A SMALL ASSOCIATION OF around 140 members based in Brittany in the far west of France, where the acid soils and wet climate are particularly favorable to the culture of rhododendrons. Our society aims at the promotion of the genus *Rhododendron* in our Breton gardens and as we are the only rhodo society in France, we also have members outside Brittany, including a few foreigners too.

The SBR is an independent society and was created in 1993 by our ex-President, Marc Colombel. At first the Society was based in Fouesnant, Finistère, and its



Fig. 1. A Brittany truss show.



Fig. 2. The coloured hybrid truss show display.



Fig. 3. The species truss show display.



Fig. 4. A show display: a map showing the distribution of rhododendron species on the different continents (back right), live Himalayan species (front), and information about the different elevations where species occur found in the wild (back left).”



Fig. 5. Visit to Hachmann Nurseries, Germany, in 2010.

members met three times a year: in March, September and December. Four bulletins were published every year as well as special issues, and in 1995 a seed bank was created. Since then, more and more members have started pollinating, hybridizing and sowing the resulting seeds. In 1998, 2002 and 2005, tours of the most prestigious parks of rhododendrons in the south of England were organised

by Marc Colombel, allowing 40 or so participants to observe rhododendrons in some spectacular, mature gardens. In 2000 in Fouesnant, the SBR held its first flower show, presenting hundreds of trusses and hosting workshops. This show was followed by two others, held in 2003 and 2006, again in Fouesnant. Two famous American hybridizers have also crossed the Atlantic for a friendly visit to our young association: Jim Barlup in 1999 and Frank Fujioka in 2006.

At the end of 2007, Marc Colombel chose to leave the chairmanship of the SBR and I have been its President since that time. The Society is now based in Scaër, 35 kms (22 miles) north of Quimper, Finistère.

To sum up our present activities, we meet three times a year for presentations, demonstrations, debates, and so on; produce three bulletins a year, each around 20 pages; and since 2009, have a rhodo library that allows our members to borrow books about rhododendrons. The SBR and the Société du Rhododendron Québécoise in Quebec, Canada, have been exchanging their respective [French] bulletins for the past few years, which has encouraged the sharing of rhodo information with the maximum number of French-speaking rhododendron enthusiasts. We also receive American Rhododendron Society publications and those of the Scottish Rhododendron Society, thanks to annual subscriptions, and members can borrow them from our library at any time.

We now have a yearly rhododendron show in the spring at different places, and in 2014, we had a very knowledgeable guest in the person of Kenneth Cox, who gave a lecture. Our most recent “Rhodos en Fête” took place in Scaër, Finistère department of Brittany, on April 24, 2016, with a display of about 300 trusses, workshops, hybrid rhodo sale by commercial growers and the sale of rare young plants by passionate SBR members.

We organize a tour around rhodo European gardens for members almost every year, with past tours being in England, France, Cornwall, Germany, Scotland, and Wales.

Some members are greatly interested in hybridization, and some of their creations have been listed by Alan Leslie in different RHS Yearbooks, while others are more interested in searching for rhododendrons species in the wild, such as in China, Arunachal Pradesh, and Vietnam, with some of their reports having been published in French and in foreign reviews.

A visit to our website www.societebretonnedurhododendron.com gives a more precise description of what is being done or has been done by our association. Members are encouraged to participate in its different topic columns, and by sending monthly photos of their rhodos throughout the seasons.

Our on-line seed bank opens every year on December 1, and since 2008, only



Fig. 6. Society members and guides on an expedition to Arunachal Pradesh, India, in 2009.



Fig. 7. Society members on an expedition to Sichuan, China, in 2012.



Fig. 8. Society members on an expedition to Vietnam in 2014.



Fig. 9. *R. 'Mi Amor'*.



Fig. 10. 'Michael's Pride'.

hand-pollinated or wild collected seeds have been distributed.

We also help in maintaining and enriching a local private garden in Elliant, Finistère, called the “*Collection Nationale de rhododendrons botaniques*” by the Conservatoire des Collections Végétales Spécialisées (CCVS), where we are allowed by the owners of the park to plant rhododendrons grown from seed.

Thanks to the active participation by a majority of really passionate members whose skills are extremely diverse, the SBR, although a small association, remains quite active in spite of the ongoing difficulty in gaining younger members, as young people today often live and work in towns and can't afford large gardens. In summary, the SBR, yet probably one of the youngest national rhododendron societies, being only 22 years old, shares many of the same concerns as do other rhododendron societies.

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Rhododendron Culture in Norway

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NORWAY IS OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH SNOW AND FROST, AND FOR PARTS OF THE country this is true for up to five months of the year or more. However, other parts of Norway normally have mild winters with more rain than snow and temperatures around 0° C (32° F). South-western parts of the country are highly influenced by the Gulf Stream current and throughout the year, it brings warm seawater from the Gulf of Mexico across the Atlantic to our west coast. This gives a climate one would normally not expect, considering our latitude. Parts of Norway's west coast is situated as far north as Southampton Island, north of Hudson Bay in North America, and yet western coastal Norwegian



Fig. 1. *Musehagen*, a famous public park in the center of Bergen, the *Rhododendron* town of Norway.

gardens contain hundreds of rhododendron species, magnolias and other relatively exotic plants.

In 1997, the Norwegian Rhododendron Society, Den Norske Rhododendronforening, was founded, and this society now has around 400 members. The society's magazine, *Lapprosen* (Norwegian name for one of our two native species, *Rhododendron lapponicum*) has three editions a year. The Norwegian Rhododendron Society is presently a growing organization, with its number of members still increasing and its three local branches with many activities through of the year. The Society hosted a great Rhododendron Conference in Bergen in 2003, with speakers attending from all over the world.



Fig. 2. The front page of a book about Norwegian Rhododendron gardens, published by the Norwegian Rhododendron Society in 2014.



Fig. 3. Entering path to Ingvald Austrheim's big woodland garden, one of the finest collections in Norway.

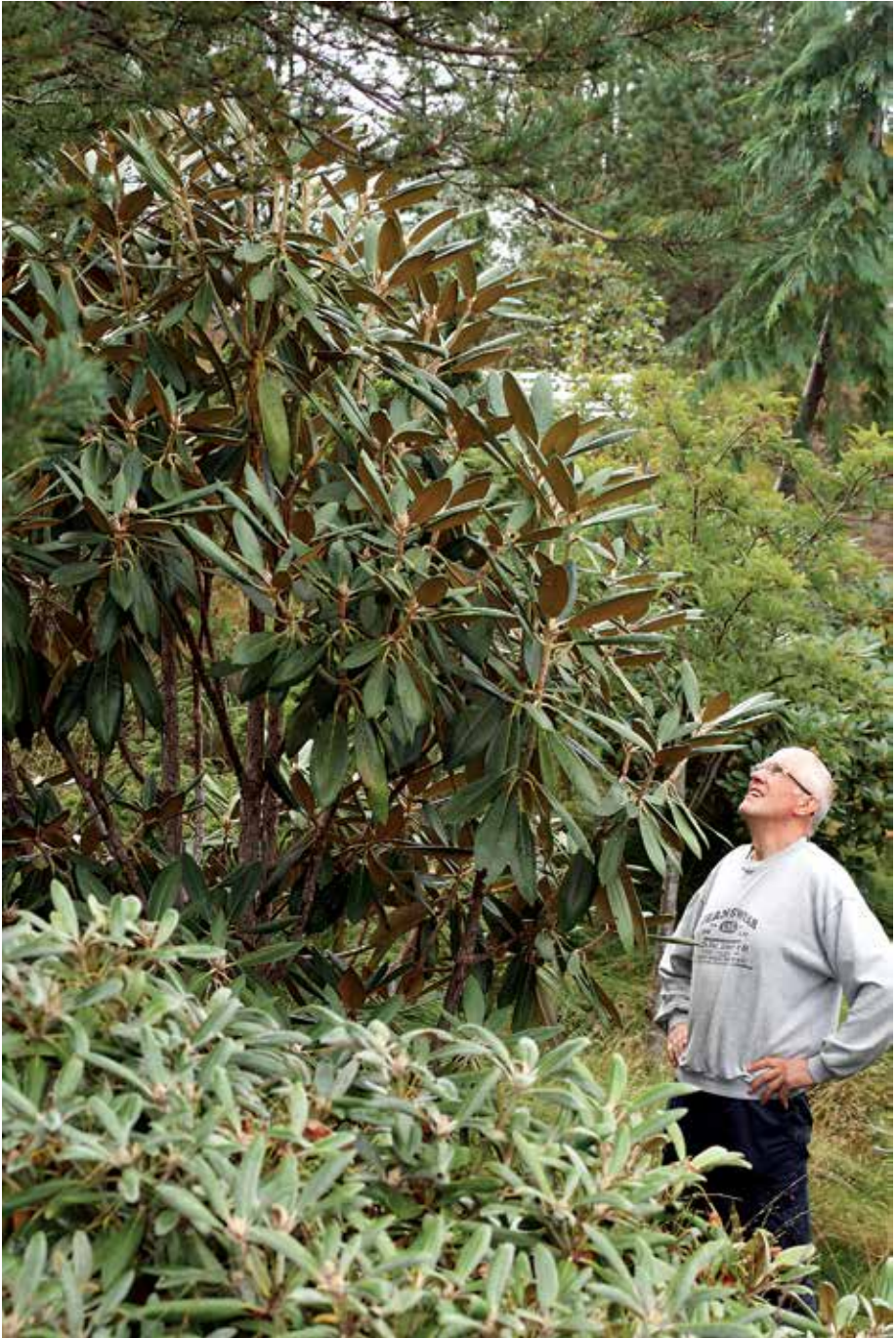


Fig. 4. Harald Kårtveit, the leader of the Norwegian Rhododendron Society with *R. rex* subsp. *fictolacteum* in his garden at the mild west coast.



Fig. 5. *Rhododendron* species and hybrids in Dagfinn Brønlund Hansen's garden in Tromsø, far north of the Arctic Circle.

Up until a few decades ago, *Rhododendron* species were more or less unknown in Norwegian gardens. Rhododendrons as ornamental shrubs had been popular for a long time and have been planted in gardens for more than a hundred years, but the garden centers initially offered only mostly ironclads like 'Grandiflorum', 'Cunningham's White', 'English Roseum' and some other well-known older hybrids.

Things slowly began to change near the end of the 1900s. In 1971, a botanical garden, Det Norske Arboretet (the Milde Arboretum and Botanical Garden), at Milde close to Bergen was opened, and over the next few years, it started to build a collection of *Rhododendron* hybrids and species. The leading authority for this work was professor Per Magnus Jørgensen, then the only Norwegian expert on rhododendrons, now retired.

The collection at Milde has been an important inspiration for gardeners around Bergen and elsewhere, and Bergen is now called "the Rhododendron Town of Norway" because thousands of rhododendrons have been planted in public parks and along major roads in and out of town, mostly donated by local wealthy well doers.

In the early 1990s, three books on *Rhododendron* in Norwegian were released (Gilberg 1993, Jørgensen 1996 and Lønø and Ringstad 1994). These were the first books on the subject in our language, and they inspired a new and growing interest in rhododendron species. Another book was written after 2000 (Larsen 2011), and the Norwegian Rhododendron Society published a book (Larsen



Fig. 6. Many new species have entered Norwegian gardens over the last years, Here the rare *R. oligocarpum* in a garden near Bergen.

(Ed.) 2014) that described 29 Norwegian rhododendron gardens, written by the owners themselves. Most of the photos in this article are selected from that book.

Today many gardeners have started rhododendron species collections, and rhododendron species are far more available than just twenty years ago. The Norwegian Rhododendron Society arranges plant imports from Scotland as a service to the members every year, but members themselves also propagate plants for sale. Small backyard nurseries have grown up here and there, and some of them also offer plants by mail order. Unfortunately the big garden centers chains still stick to mostly hybrids with just a few species, often even wrongly labeled. Import of rhododendrons to Norway is very restricted now due to concern about *Phytophthora ramorum* and other diseases. These regulations have made our own home rhododendron production even more important.

Rhododendrons that can be Grown in Norway

The full potential for *Rhododendron* species culture in Norway is not yet known. The most important long time test work has been done at the Arboretum and

Botanical Garden at Milde over the last 35 years. The efforts of private enthusiasts have also done much to widen our knowledge and to encourage us to push the culture limits for rhododendron species survival in Norway, first by planting new species and varieties, and second by trying rhododendrons in places where they have not been planted before. The best thing about amateurs is that they do not believe in limits. They grab what they can get and plant it out in their gardens, often trying species no serious rhododendron grower would even dream about spending money on. Most of these “wild” plantings end up in the compost bin, but occasionally they survive both



Fig. 7. *R. macabeanum* flowering in Egil Valderhaug's garden near Ålesund, close to the Atlantic Ocean.



Fig. 8. Else Helen and Kjell Kristoffersen, senior collectors who have been gardening together for more than 50 years.

the first and second winters, and after a few more years will maybe yield a new understanding of where specific species can be successfully grown. Today the big leaved species in subsections *Falconera* and *Grandia* have become increasingly popular and are planted in several mild Norwegian gardens, and even some of the more hardy *Maddenias* are thriving. Over the last years, these efforts have been influenced by climate change, which has turned previously cold winters into just a few weeks of snow and very little frost in the most favorable parts of Norway.

The Future

First of all, I am certain that the interest in *Rhododendron* species is now permanent. The founding of the Norwegian Rhododendron Society has been very important, as its meetings and its magazine have definitely inspired many gardeners to start collections of rhododendron species. This interest is growing rapidly, and hundreds of new plants are planted out every year. Many Norwegians have also joined rhododendron societies abroad, and tours to England and Scotland to study rhododendrons are popular.

The last decades have showed that the west coast of Norway is the best area for rhododendron culture in Scandinavia, mostly due to its mild winters and wet summers. Still, there is a lot of testing to be done to find out what species can actually survive, and the new popularity in big leaf species has already changed our way of thinking.

Potential Problems

The impact of *Phytophthora ramorum* is a big unknown. I have a feeling that every time a new disease turns up, everyone panics, but a few years later it is often recognized as not a catastrophe, either because there are new chemical treatments available or because gardeners have learnt to deal with it. So, I prefer to be optimistic and feel that problem situations will be resolved over time.

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Rhododendron Culture in Sweden

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THE SWEDISH RHODODENDRON GROUP COMBINES THE WEST AND EAST DIVISIONS of the Swedish Rhododendron Society with the South Swedish Society, which is an American Rhododendron Society chapter. Started in 2015, we are now publishing together as a joint project the quarterly magazine *Rhododendronbladet*. Previously the Swedish and South Swedish Societies produced one magazine each. This year, the RHS Rhododendron, Camelia and Magnolia Group will be celebrating 100 years. The Swedish societies are much younger, with the Swedish Rhododendron Society formed in 1970 and the South Swedish Society in 1985. Together we are now successfully managing many of our combined interests, involving 300 members in the West-East and 300 members in the South.

We arrange standard activities such as members meetings with lectures, plant markets and travels. Members have visited gardens in England, Scotland, Germany, Norway, Denmark and Poland in recent years. We presently have no Flower Shows, but perhaps this will come in the future.

Sweden is situated approximately between latitudes 55°N and 69°N. 55°N is at the same latitude as Edinburgh, Scotland, while Bergen, Norway, is at 60°N, the same as Stockholm, Sweden. However, although Stockholm and Bergen are at the same latitude, there are great differences between them when it comes

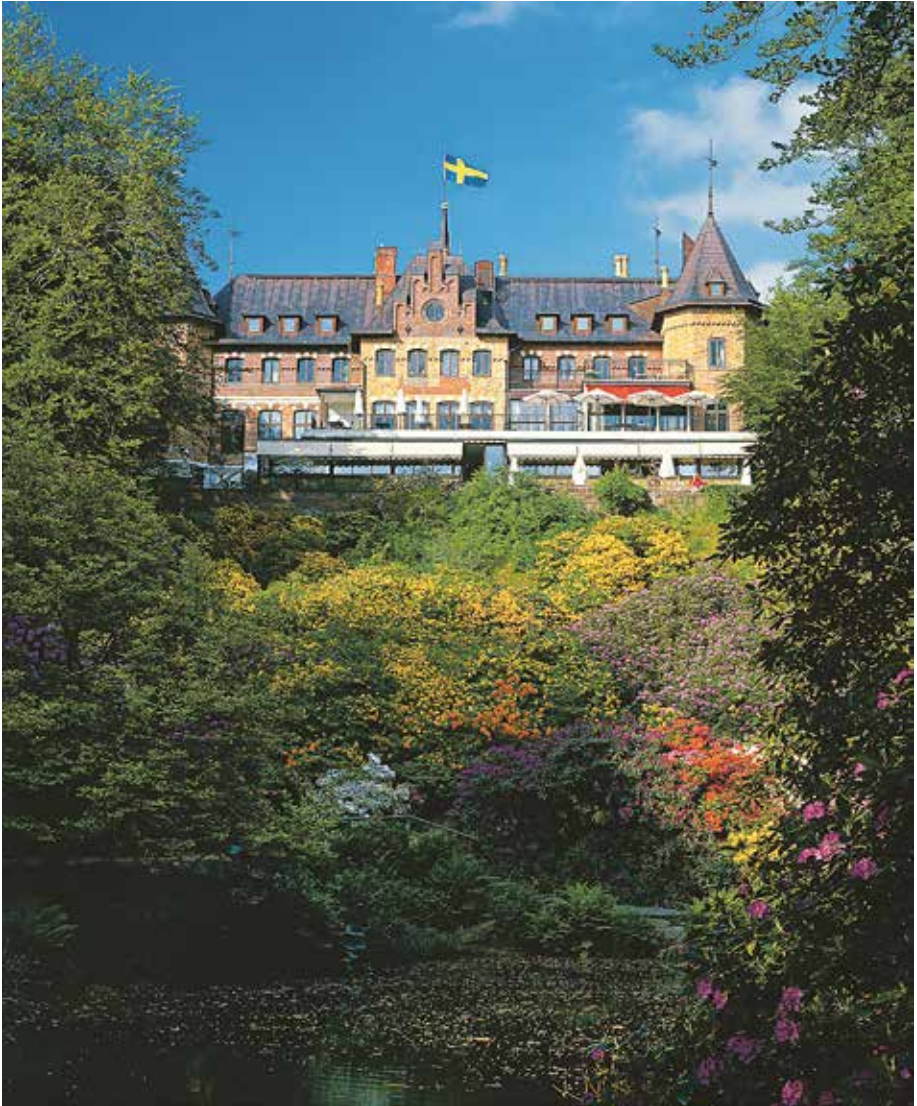


Fig. 1. Sofiero Castle, located in Helsingborg in the south of Sweden. Photo by Jorgen Schwartzkopf.

to rhododendron growing conditions. With respect to precipitation, Bergen, on the Atlantic coast has a rainfall of 2200 mm (86.6 in) while Stockholm, situated on the Swedish eastern Baltic coast has a rainfall of only 500 mm (19.7 in), but more sunshine.

From the south of Sweden to the north, the climate also differs greatly. Using the USDA plant hardiness zones, most of southern Sweden would be Zone 7.

On the Baltic coast around Stockholm, it's Zone 6 but further north, it is Zones 5 and 4. Rainfall on the Swedish west coast is about 700 mm (27.5 in). The ground is frozen to varying depths throughout the country every winter. Nevertheless, practically everywhere, it is possible to find sites where gardeners have managed to create nice rhododendron gardens. However, because of a more favorable climate, members of the rhododendron societies in Sweden are concentrated in the southern parts of the country.

Several members in Sweden have taken part in botanical expeditions to observe rhododendrons growing in the wild, which has increased our knowledge of rhododendrons. We also have members growing species and creating new hybrids that are suitable for a northern climate.

We are excited about what will become of the Rhododendron International initiative and are hoping to make future contributions according to our abilities.



Fig. 2 Sofiero Castle Garden azaleas. Photo courtesy of Sofiero.



Fig. 3 Sofiero Castle Garden, the Rhododendron Valley. Photo by Arne Juhlin.



Fig. 4A. Gothenburg Botanical Garden on Sweden's west coast, the Korea Valley. Photo by Björn Aldén.



Fig. 4B. Gothenburg Botanical Garden on Sweden's west coast, the Korea Valley. *R. yedoense* var. *poukhanense*. Photo by Björn Aldén .



Fig. 5A. Gothenburg Botanical Garden. *Rhododendron fulgens*.
Photo by Stefan Salomonsson.



5. B. Gothenburg Botanical Garden. Smaller rhododendrons. Photo by Stefan Salomonsson.



Fig. 5C. Gothenburg Botanical Garden. Photo by Stefan Salomonsson.



Fig. 5D. Gothenburg Botanical Garden. Photo by Stefan Salomonsson.



Fig. 6A. Gothenburg Botanical Garden. *R. argyrophyllum*. Björn Aldén.



Fig. 6B. Gothenburg Botanical Garden. *R. aureodorsale*. Björn Aldén.



Fig. 6C. Gothenburg Botanical Garden. *R. cumberlandense*. Björn Aldén.



Fig. 6D. Gothenburg Botanical Garden. *R. galactinum*. Björn Aldén.



Fig. 6D. Gothenburg Botanical Garden. *R. lacteum*. Björn Aldén.



Fig. 6D. Gothenburg Botanical Garden. *R. orbiculare*. Björn Aldén.

Rhododendron Culture in Latvia

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R. Kondratovičs



U. Kondratovičs



G. Riekstiņa

RHODODENDRONS AS ORNAMENTAL PLANTS WERE FIRST INTRODUCED INTO LATVIA in the 19th century but have only become generally popular towards the end of the 20th century. This is largely explained by the Latvian climate, which is much harsher and more variable than in central and western Europe. The Latvian climate is greatly influenced by the Baltic Sea and the prevailing



Fig. 1. Rhododendrons at the Riga opera house.



Fig. 2. Rhododendrons in Rīga.



Fig. 3. Rhododendrons in Rīga.

southern, southwestern and western winds. The average annual temperature is 5.9°C (42.6°F), with the warmest month being July when the average temperature is 17.0°C (62.6°F). The coldest months are January and February, when the average temperature is -4.6°C (23.7°F). The highest observed temperature has been 36.4°C (97.5°F) and the lowest -43.2°C (-45.7°F). Average annual rainfall is 667 mm (26.3 in).

There is a milder climate in the western part of the country along the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Rīga, where wet and warm air masses from the

Atlantic Ocean often result in cloudy and rainy weather. This climate is generally suitable for growing rhododendrons, but in some years, unfavorable winter conditions for rhododendrons occur. Rhododendrons are particularly badly affected by sudden temperature changes during the winter, when after warm weather thawing, there is a sharp temperature drop. Temperature fluctuations between the day and night sometimes reach 15-20⁰ C (27-36⁰ F) and such circumstances can cause bud damage. In addition, after very severe winters when the ground is deeply frozen, spring desiccation of evergreen rhododendron



Fig. 4. Rhododendrons in RĪga.



Fig. 5. Rhododendrons in RĪga.



Fig. 6. The Experimental Rhododendron Nursery “Babīte” at the University of Latvia, Rīga.



Fig. 7. The Experimental Rhododendron Nursery “Babīte” at the University of Latvia, Rīga.

leaves can occur because the roots cannot then supply water due to the deeply frozen soil. The flowers and new leaves of early flowering rhododendrons can also be damaged by spring frosts.

Latvia’s soil is suitable for growing rhododendrons because half its area is acidic podzols (the typical soils of coniferous, or boreal forests), swampy soil and marshes. Sandy soil, improved by organic material such as leaf humus, compost or sphagnum peat moss, is an ideal substrate for rhododendron cultivation, and pine forests give moderate shade for rhododendrons.



Fig. 8. The Experimental Rhododendron Nursery “Babīte” at the University of Latvia, Rīga.

The first published record of rhododendrons in Latvia was in the 1820s, when the K. Wagner horticultural firm offered its clients two rhododendron species—*Rhododendron catawbiense* and *R. luteum*. In 1847, the J. Cigra nursery offered 48 rhododendrons, including *R. arboreum*, *R. ferrugineum*, *R. hirsutum*, *R. maximum*, *R. monstrosum* and some varieties of *R. simsii*. In the C.W. Schoch gardening company’s 1861 annual catalog, only four evergreen rhododendron species, *R. arboreum*, *R. catawbiense*, *R. maximum*, and *R. ponticum*; and some *R. simsii* cultivars, were listed. This is also when Latvia’s oldest known rhododendron (name unknown) was planted in the Ķīļi Cemetery, Tukums. In 2005, almost 150 years later, it had reached 2.5 m (8.2 ft) in height and flowers annually. However, a pine fell in a storm that year and damaged it, with the result that the local authority sawed its trunk down to 30 cm (one foot). The next year, dormant trunk buds developed new shoots, and there is now once again a handsome, bushy shrub. In 1871, C. W. Schoch offered its customers more than 100 different rhododendron species and varieties, including *R. simsii* cultivars. Initially rhododendrons were offered exclusively for cultivation in greenhouses and cool glass houses but later, nurseries indicated that *R. luteum* could also be cultivated outdoors if in the autumn its roots were covered by a thick layer of fallen leaves. Now it can be grown in Latvia without any cover. In the University of Latvia’s (UL) experimental rhododendron breeding nursery

Table 1: List of registered Latvian rhododendron cultivars (breeder, Professor Rihads Kondratovičs, University of Latvia.

1999

Deciduous rhododendrons

1. 'Rubīns',
2. 'Rīta Zvaigzne',
3. 'Polārzvaigzne'
4. 'Pasaciņa',
5. 'Mazais Jefiņš',
6. 'Babītes Līva',
7. 'Babītes Indra',
8. 'Babītes Inga' (Fig. 9),
9. 'Babītes Astra'.

2000

Deciduous rhododendrons

10. 'Babītes Anita' (Fig. 10),
11. 'Babītes Laura',
12. 'Uguns',
13. 'Babītes Alīna'.

Elepidote rhododendrons

14. 'Irina' (Fig. 11),
15. 'Babītes Lavanda',
16. 'Līta' (Fig. 12),
17. 'Līgo',
18. 'Sprīdītis',
19. 'Uldis'.

2001

Deciduous rhododendrons

20. 'Ilze' (Fig. 13),
21. 'Liene',
22. 'Liesma',
23. 'Skaidrīte',
24. 'Teika'.

Elepidote rhododendrons

25. 'Dace',
26. 'Eduards Smilģis',
27. 'Emīls',
28. 'Babītes Ginta',
29. 'Jānis',
30. 'Kārlis'.

2002

Deciduous rhododendrons

31. 'Saule',
32. 'Madame Debene',
33. 'Austra',
34. 'Lorija',
35. 'Ina'.

2003

Deciduous rhododendrons

36. 'Francisa',
37. 'Polonia',
38. 'Rīga'.

Elepidote rhododendrons

39. 'Zinātņu Akadēmija',
40. 'Alma Mater' (Fig. 14),
41. 'Babītes Baltais',
42. 'Emeritus',
43. 'Babītes Kristīne'.

2005

Deciduous rhododendrons

44. 'Dzintra',
45. 'Babītes Lidija',
46. 'Arta'.

Elepidote rhododendrons

47. 'Agris' (Fig. 15),
48. 'Feja' (Fig. 16),
49. 'LU Rolands'.

2007

Deciduous rhododendrons

50. 'Pērīte',
51. 'Vija'.

Elepidote rhododendrons

52. 'Kārlis Ulmanis',
53. 'Robis',
54. 'Rudīte'.

2009

Elepidote rhododendrons

55. 'Atis',
56. 'Aivars Lasis' (Fig. 17),
57. 'Ilma'.

2010

Deciduous rhododendrons

58. 'Dita Krenberga',
59. 'Rasma' (Fig. 18).

Elepidote rhododendrons

60. 'Viesturs',
61. 'Sofija',
62. 'Egons',
63. 'Toms',
64. 'Andris',
65. 'Miks',
66. 'Imants',

67. 'Biruta',
68. 'Babītes Sarkanais' (Fig. 19),
69. 'Tālavija'.

2012

Deciduous rhododendrons

70. 'Ance',
71. 'Baiba',
72. 'Selga',
73. 'TTT'.

Elepidote rhododendrons

74. 'Babītes Kompaktais' (Fig. 20),
75. 'Bulduri',
76. 'Jānis Sproģis' (Fig. 21),
77. 'Vilhelmine Petkevičs',
78. 'Vizma'.

2013

Deciduous rhododendrons

79. 'Latvijas Itera',
80. 'LU Solveiga',
81. 'Rīngla',
82. 'Santa'.

Elepidote rhododendrons

83. 'Doktors Babarikins' (Fig. 22),
84. 'Dzidra',
85. 'Indriķis',
86. 'Valdis'.

2014

Deciduous rhododendrons

87. 'Ausma',
88. 'Ināra',

Elepidote rhododendrons

89. 'Babītes Antons',
90. 'Babītes Elīta',
91. 'Elza Radziņa',
92. 'Kristaps Morbergs',
93. 'Ogre's White Dream'.

2015

Elepidote rhododendrons

94. 'Aldonis Vēriņš',
95. 'Babītes Aiga',
96. 'Ilgonis',
97. 'Mammadaba',
98. 'Māra',
99. 'Rektors',
100. 'Teterevi Latvijai'.



Fig. 9. 'Babītes Inga'.



Fig. 10. 'Babītes Anita'.



Fig. 11. 'Irina'.



Fig. 12. 'Lita'.



Fig. 13. 'Ilze'.



Fig. 14. 'Alma Mater'.



Fig. 15. 'Agris'.



Fig. 16. 'Feja'.



Fig. 17. 'Aivars Lasis'



Fig. 18. 'Rasma'.



Fig. 19. 'Babītes Sarkanais'



Fig. 20. 'Babītes Kompaktais'.



Fig. 21. 'Jānis Sproģis'.



Fig. 22. 'Doktors Babarikins'.

“Babīte,” natural seedlings of *R. luteum*, *R. catawbiense* and *R. ledebourii* have been observed, indicating that some rhododendron species can naturally propagate in Latvia.

In the late 1800s, forester Friedrich Maximilian Oscar Freiherr von Sivers created the Skrīveri arboretum, which had eight rhododendron species: *R. caucasicum*, *R. luteum*, *R. smirnowii*, *R. ungenii*, *R. hirsutum*, *R. molle*, *R. dauricum* and *R. canadense*.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Rīga city parks director Georg Friedrich Ferdinand Kuphaldt began to use rhododendrons in public landscapes, parks and gardens using seven rhododendron species and cultivars: *R. brachycarpum*, *R. catawbiense*, *R. caucasicum*, *R. camtschaticum*, *R. hirsutum*, *R. intermedium* and *R. ‘Cunningham’s White’*. Unfortunately, none of the rhododendrons from the plantings in both the Skrīveri Arboretum and Rīga’s parks survive today.

In the 1920s, use of rhododendrons in private gardens began, and a few *R. catawbiense* and *R. japonicum* are still present in Jūrmala City, Melluži. The plants were imported in 1924 from Scotland and in later years, were used for obtaining seeds for propagation.

In the 1930s, extensive outdoor rhododendron collections were created by the UL Botanical Garden from plants purchased from Germany. A similar outdoor collection of rhododendrons was established at the Bulduri Gardening School where rhododendron seedlings were brought from Belgium. Most of these rhododendrons, especially cultivars that were grown in the mild climate of Western Europe, were severely damaged or killed during the rough winters of 1939/1940 and 1940/1941. Only plants of the hardiest species such as *R. catawbiense*, *R. luteum* and *R. japonicum* survived, and thus their seeds were used in the 1950s for mass generative propagation of these species.

As mentioned earlier, interest in Latvia in rhododendrons as valuable ornamental plants began in the middle of the 20th century. Jūrmala gardening manager J. Andersons began mass cultivation of *R. catawbiense*, *R. luteum* and *R. japonicum* from locally produced seeds for use in Rīga. In 1958, several thousand rhododendrons were exhibited in Rīga City, and several hundred rhododendrons were exhibited in Jūrmala. However, most of these planted rhododendrons unfortunately died because of inappropriate planting, improper preparation of the soil, and inadequate subsequent care.

Nevertheless, interest in growing rhododendrons outdoors continued to increase. To expand the assortment of rhododendrons in Latvia with the best of Western European cultivars, in 1960, the Botanic Garden of the Academy

of Sciences of Latvia (Salaspils City) brought in twelve Dutch rhododendron cultivars. At present, the National Botanic Gardens collection maintains 80 rhododendron species and 90 cultivars.

In 1957, research on rhododendron introduction and acclimatization was also included in Botanical Garden, UL, research work plans by the director of the garden, Rihards Kondratovičs. The main research objective was to study winter hardiness and durability in Latvian climatic conditions for as many rhododendron species and cultivars as possible. During the next seven years, hardiness of 100 wild species in Latvia was tested and about 76 species were found to be suitable. Rhododendron seed for the developing collection came from Bremen (Germany), Gothenburg (Sweden), Bergen (Norway), Washington (USA), Vladivostok and Irkutsk (Russia) and other places, and they were collected during expeditions in the Far East, the Caucasus and the Carpathians. Cultivars were imported from the United Kingdom, Germany and the former Czechoslovakia. In addition to wild species, about 20 Western European outdoor cultivars have been introduced, but most of them were found to be unsuitable for cultivation in Latvia because of poor winter hardiness. However, they were useful later in breeding new local rhododendron cultivars.

Using the established species and cultivars collection, various rhododendron physiological and biochemical processes and their changes during their acclimatization were also studied, and the rich collection of species and cultivars was used to develop new, locally bred cultivars.

At the same time, there was extensive public promotional work carried out by presenting rhododendron growing and propagation techniques and their practical application in plantings to horticulturists and others interested. For this purpose the mass media, i.e., radio, TV and the press, was used; various seminars, courses, demonstrations and lectures were organized; and books and brochures were written.

The result was expanded planting of rhododendrons in Latvia, creating beautiful greenery in Rīga (Figs. 1–5) and other cities and a rapid increase in the use of rhododendrons in private gardens. In 1962, V. Bērziņš began growing rhododendrons in the Talsi City regional community and in 1974, mass production of rhododendrons began in Tukums City by *R. simsii* expert Kārlis Bauers. Design of the plantation at the Kalsnava Forest Research station focused on growing 20 of the most hardy rhododendron species. In 2014 and 2015, this collection was expanded to include 35 Latvian bred outdoor rhododendron cultivars. This was facilitated by nursery production of rhododendrons, and currently, rhododendrons are grown in 15 nurseries in Latvia, offering to customers about 150 rhododendron cultivars.

The rhododendron species and cultivars collection established in the Botanical Garden, UL, during the 1960s thus enabled the launch of new outdoor rhododendron breeding programs. During the first years, the most interesting and ornamental hybrids from open pollination seeds were grown and selected. In 1971, an ambitious and intense outdoor rhododendron breeding work was started. To date, about 653 crosses of species to species, species to cultivars, cultivars to species and cultivars to cultivars have been made. Since the main Latvian breeders' task is to create durable outdoor and winter-hardy rhododendron cultivars, crossings mostly involved the hardy wild rhododendron species: *R. catawbiense*, *R. caucasicum*, *R. smirnowii*, *R. japonicum*, *R. luteum*, *R. roseum*, *R. arborescens* and *R. yakushimanum*. These species were crossed with decorative, but rather weather-sensitive cultivars such as 'Mrs P.O. Williams', 'Britannia', 'Mrs. Furnival', 'Purple Splendour', 'Scandinavia', 'Mrs Philip Martineau', 'A. Silva Tarouca', 'Mrs R.G. Shaw', and so on. As a result, tens of thousands of hybrid seedlings were produced, but their cultivation to flowering required a large land area. Thus, in 1976 the State Government provided to the University of Latvia 12.1 hectares (29.9 acres) of pine forest for a rhododendron nursery. In 1980, the experimental rhododendron breeding nursery "Babīte" was established at the University of Latvia (Figs. 6-8), with creation and management of the nursery entrusted to Rihards Kondratovičs.

The aim of the nursery was to create ornamental and winter-hardy rhododendrons. The nursery's master plan was developed by landscape architect Kārlis Barons, and envisaged dividing the entire area into 600 m² (717 yd²) blocks to provide easy access to the plantations. Along the perimeter of the nursery an asphalt road was built to allow farm visitors to get acquainted with the unique collection of rhododendrons, which included 76 species and 255 cultivars, including 100 cultivars from local breedings. In May and June, the nursery is now visited by more than 19,000 people. The nursery markets annually several thousand rhododendrons, including locally bred cultivars.

Cultivar registration began in 1999, with nine deciduous rhododendrons registered (Table 1). Hybrid new Latvian bred outdoor rhododendron cultivars continue to be registered in the International Rhododendron Register and Checklist by Rihards Kondratovičs (Table 1).

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