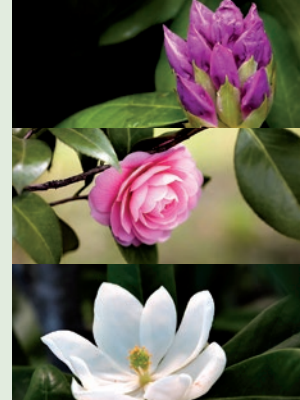


the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

Bulletin 125 / November 2017 / www.rhodogroup-rhs.org



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

At the last AGM, Alastair Stevenson finally stepped down from his Committee positions within the RCMG after serving for 29 years. He served as Treasurer for most of this time, followed by being one of the first Trustees of the new CIO which he helped to set up. This must be one of the most extraordinary contributions to the Group ever, and I am therefore delighted that the Management Committee voted unanimously to offer him our first Honorary Membership, as a very small token to acknowledge his years of dedicated service to the Group.

Although not yet finalised, I am sure members will be pleased to hear that we are about to have a new branch based at RHS Harlow Carr Gardens. The long established Harlow Carr Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group operated as an independent society, and have recently helped to organise the RHS late Rhododendron Show at Harlow Carr. However, they were not part of the main RCMG and this independence caused some confusion with visitors and those seeking information about which Group to join. At their recent AGM, this local Group voted to set their differences apart and to join the RCMG as the Harlow Carr branch of the RCMG. Thanks in particular to their Secretary Marlene Storah and Dr John Grimshaw, from the Yorkshire Arboretum for persuading their members to join us. We look forward to a closer working relationship between local members, the RHS at Harlow Carr and the committee of the RCMG. I also hope that members in neighbouring branches may now like to join in with activities at Harlow Carr, and vice versa, so that we can all enjoy our three genera together.

On a more disappointing note, nobody has come forward to offer their services to edit or even to help produce the Yearbook. The Yearbook is something that is clearly valued by the membership, as shown in the survey that we conducted a couple of years ago. I think we now face the options of paying an honorarium to somebody in the field of horticultural journalism to become editor of our esteemed yearbook, or we follow the example of the Heather Society and simply axe its production. Neither of these positions is ideal, and both would have implications to our membership fees in future years. In the meantime, we have agreed to produce a yearbook in 2018, and I would like to thank everyone who has renewed their membership for the coming year, especially those who pay by Direct Debit as this saves so much time for our Treasurer and Membership Secretary.

*28th April 2018 AGM at Westonbirt,
We are hoping to create a great programme for you!*



Pupils at Oshima High School harvesting *Camellia japonica* fruit. See p.5 Photo: Jennifer Trehane

Activities next spring are looking busy already, thanks to the planning by Branch Chairmen and our Events Co-ordinator Christopher Legrand. As I write, I understand that the tour to Northern Ireland next April is almost full, though do contact Christopher to see if there are still places available. I have no doubt that it will be a fantastic trip, with a combination of two superb National Trust gardens, visits to several really knowledgeable enthusiasts, and some great Irish 'craic'.

As well as Shows, we are busy planning our AGM event, which is booked for Saturday 28th April at Westonbirt, the National Arboretum, by kind permission of the Forestry Commission. The Friends of

Westonbirt were our first 'corporate' members a couple of years ago, and we are hoping that we can help them with their extensive collections of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias which should be looking good at the time of our visit. Save the date, we are hoping we can create a great programme for you!

Hasn't the weather been strange this summer! We had a heatwave in the South of England for nearly 4 weeks from mid-June to mid-July, followed by a very grey summer, with banks of rain in September, especially on the west coast of Scotland. How have our genera responded? Because of late frosts, I feared that growth would be late, and that budding up could be poor. The June heatwave corresponded with the time that the monsoon passes through the Himalayas and there is a moisture critical period when rhododendrons set

flower bud for the following spring. On our thin sandy soils, we had no option but to irrigate copiously, and thankfully we have been rewarded with good budding for next spring. The cooler, wetter summer also suited our plants, even if we didn't enjoy the summer ourselves. But when good growth is happening above ground, it does not necessarily mean that it has been so good below ground. Lately we have been investigating root development in container grown plants. Since the demise of open ground production, most plants are grown in containers placed on the ground where they experience greater variation in temperatures, both highs and lows, than ever before. What has been noticeable this season is the lack of root made during the early summer, and we can only presume it was too hot for the roots to grow. Roots have grown well lately, but initially they were found only on the North side of the container, away from the heat of the sun bearing down on a hot black plastic pot. I think there is probably a research project here, to understand the effects of temperature on root growth. For years, we have found the rooting of cuttings best before mid-July or after the beginning of September at ambient temperatures below about 25 °C. But now we can see the effects of temperature on larger plants too, so perhaps we shall have to experiment with trying to keep the roots cooler in summer and warmer in winter by plunging pots into soil or using clay pots to give more insulation. I remember Jennifer Trehane talking about plunging her Camellias into sawdust during the 1980's to prevent root death in winter. It seemed a labour intensive operation, but it worked, and this was such an established thing to do 30 years ago when winters were colder, especially in the North of the country. A summer heatwave, and a few milder winters, and we realise that we have forgotten one of the most basic plant requirements - root insulation! Now is great time to gather up those autumn leaves and add a good mulch to your plants.

David Millais

Honorary membership for Alastair Stevenson

Alastair comes from a long line of dedicated horticulturalists. His great grandfather was Head of Bournemouth Parks, and replanted the Chine gardens around 1900. Alastair's grandfather was a sweet pea, carnation and chrysanthemum specialist, and a member of the RHS Floral A Committee. Alastair's father, Jack Stevenson became a chrysanthemum nurseryman near Heathrow, and was also on Floral A for 40 years as well as being Chairman of the National Chrysanthemum Society.



Alastair first joined the RCMG Committee in 1988, and throughout that time he took on the roles that nobody else wanted! Perhaps best known as our diligent Treasurer for many years, a role he served twice. Having handed over the Treasurer's position, he was persuaded back a few years later when his replacement was struggling. Although not trained in accounts, Alastair always produced a good set of reports, and carefully explained all the figures to Committee and at AGMs.

More recently he was a member of the small team which managed the difficult change from one of the RHS specialist plant groups, into an independent Partner Group, and then into the CIO charity that we are now. Alastair was at the forefront of ensuring the smooth changeover through three constitutions in about the same number of years, and became one of our founder Trustees of the new CIO.

In retiring as a Trustee, Alastair expressed regret that he had not served another year to make it 30 years! That's dedication, and why we are delighted to make him our first ever Honorary member.

David Millais

Subscriptions

Subscriptions were due on 1st November, and by now you should have received a renewal notice either by email or by post. Thank you for your continued support of the RCMG, we hope you have enjoyed your year of membership, and are looking forward to the next year. Keep up to date by looking at the Events page at the back of each bulletin, click on www.rhodogroup-rhs.org and 'like' us on Facebook.

We really appreciate UK members who pay by Direct Debit as this saves us a lot of time, and it's a reduced subscription! Your £20.00 payment will appear on your bank statement as 'Easycollect' with or without the reference RCMG, so please don't cancel it by mistake.

If you would like to save money and pay by Direct Debit, or are able to make a Gift Aid declaration, or have recently changed address, please contact our Membership Secretary.

Correction

The last Bulletin incorrectly named the Keeper of the Herbarium at RHS Wisley. The caption to a photograph of her and others on p.10 should have named her Yvette Harvey.

2017 Members' Photograph Competition

This is your last reminder to search your photo collection to see if you have anything worthy of entering in this year's competition. The closing date is the 31st December; prizes will be awarded for entries in the following classes:

- Group of plants from one or more of our three genera in a garden setting
- View from a garden visit with RCMG members visible
- Macro of a diagnostic feature e.g.: leaf bud, flower part, indumentum, scales
- Amusing glimpse of plant collector/ gardener with their plants

Please make sure you identify which class you are entering when sending me your entries!

Stephen Lyus

Editor's Note

Copy date for the next Bulletin (number 126) will be February 2nd. While looking through your photos and digital images for the photographic competition you may find some which prompt you to pen a note for the next bulletin. Short or longer items are always welcome and should be sent to me at peterfurneaux@gmail.com or Lucton Court, Lucton, Herefordshire, HR6 9PQ, UK

Peter Furneaux

Notes from Members

Creating a Garden in the Pacific Northwest Rainforest

Do you know any large garden within a metropolitan area on land that has never ever been cultivated? A young Margaret Charlton began gardening on such a place. It was the mountainside forest immediately above the family summer cottage at Woodlands in the District of North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Woodlands is located on Indian Arm, a 25 mile long inlet cut in the mountains off Vancouver's harbour. 4750ft. high Mt Seymour towers above it. The forest had been logged in the 19th century and new growth was now well established. Most of the secondary forest on the several acres of family property beyond the house had been rough cleared but some new growth remained as well as tall red alder (*Alnus rubra*). Beneath these trees was a tangle of salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), red huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*), short mahonia (*Berberis aquifolium*), salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) amongst others.

Margaret started the new garden when her landscaping around the family summer cottage was complete. It seemed a natural thing to do - an extension of the old garden. It was no small task. Thin soil lay over hard packed gravel and rock. There were huge boulders and sharp drop-offs. The average incline was about 45 degrees. Then there were the remnants of the secondary forest to battle. It was a challenge to find path routes up the steep mountainside. The undeveloped property stopped where the now tall dense and dark new forest of mainly Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), and Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*) began. These giants were already approaching 100ft.

What natural soil we have is acidic. Aside from being short of magnesium and having minimal organic matter, it is well suited for rhododendrons. Our winters are mild but occasionally an Arctic cold front sweeps in from the north-east. Temperatures can drop to around -12C, although this is seldom, and never for long. We are blessed with a high cliff land spur that sits on the windward edge of the garden, deflecting any rare but brutal arctic outflow wind back out over Indian Arm and sucking in milder air at the same time. Beneath this cliff we grow *Rhododendron sinogrande*.

We are also blessed with a great many intact but nicely broken down stumps. These are an excellent home for *Maddenia* rhododendrons in particular. Some stumps are quite high - up to 7 or 8 ft - giving a plant great air drainage.

R. johnstoneanum AC5532 really enjoys such a site and is a delight to see in flower.

In time Margaret married and had four children. As a wedding present she had been given title to the upper land, but time at Woodlands was severely curtailed. Not until the youngest of her children was two was there was an opportunity to do serious pioneering work on her "garden". The nineteen sixties were the years of major building. Husband George was not a gardener. He stayed home when every weekend possible Margaret was out to Woodlands with the children. With the help of her father and the children paths were built and beds created and planted. There was now access to the relatively flat ground above the central cliff where first they tented and later erected a one room cabin. Here too a 25' x 100' rock garden was built. Soil for planting was somehow found. To build the driveway to this area the large rocks blocking the way had to be removed. This was done by heating them with fires and then pouring on water to fracture the stone. This gave fill for the low spots and rock for a dry stacked retaining wall on the uphill side. Margaret, her father, and the children did it all. The first tree, *Prunus* 'Van', was planted in 1960 atop a huge rock face at the foot of the driveway. Margaret has yet to taste one of its fruits. She soon discovered the reality of a fruit tree close by a wild forest. Birds and beasts still get every cherry. Our forest has a thriving population of squirrel, racoon, skunk, deer, black bear, and cougar. Bears are frequent visitors when berries are ripe. During this period George died, still a young man in his thirties.

As clearing progressed more shrubs and trees found homes. Steep banks were cut back, dry stacked walls built with the larger stones excavated and any finer material used as back fill. In the 1960's the first camellia was planted - 'Julia Drayton'. Almost 60 years later it is a huge and magnificent plant. An *Arbutus menziesii*, best started when very small, was planted. Although this tree wants dry conditions Margaret's has done well having been given sharp drainage. A red form of *Rosa moysii* 'Eddie's Jewel' went in at this time. It now covers *Prunus* 'Van', redeeming this tree for giving us no fruit. A good selection of evergreen Japanese azaleas was planted too along with a wide variety of herbaceous plants.

The nineteen seventies brought significant changes. Margaret decided to live permanently at Woodlands. She had a house of three levels designed to fit the cliff. The lowest level, the living room and a conservatory, projected over the cliff, making a roof for her working greenhouse below at ground level. The next level was living quarters, and a third floor had space for two rooms. Tree and shrub planting now started in earnest. The rhododendrons included 'Sir Charles Lemon', now a magnificent tree, 'Leo', 'Mayday', 'Medusa', 'Princess Anne', 'Puck', and 'Rosepoint'. *Camellia x williamsii* 'Mary Christian' was added. The large rock garden had been reduced to make room for the new house and was now modified to suit. The first magnolia, *M. kobus*, went in. The early flowering *Prunus* 'Accolade' did extremely well. In time it spread far and wide, so much so that it was taken back to a low trunk a few years ago. Within two years it had put out a new head without losing a single flowering season.



Rhododendron iodes at Woodlands. Photo source unknown.

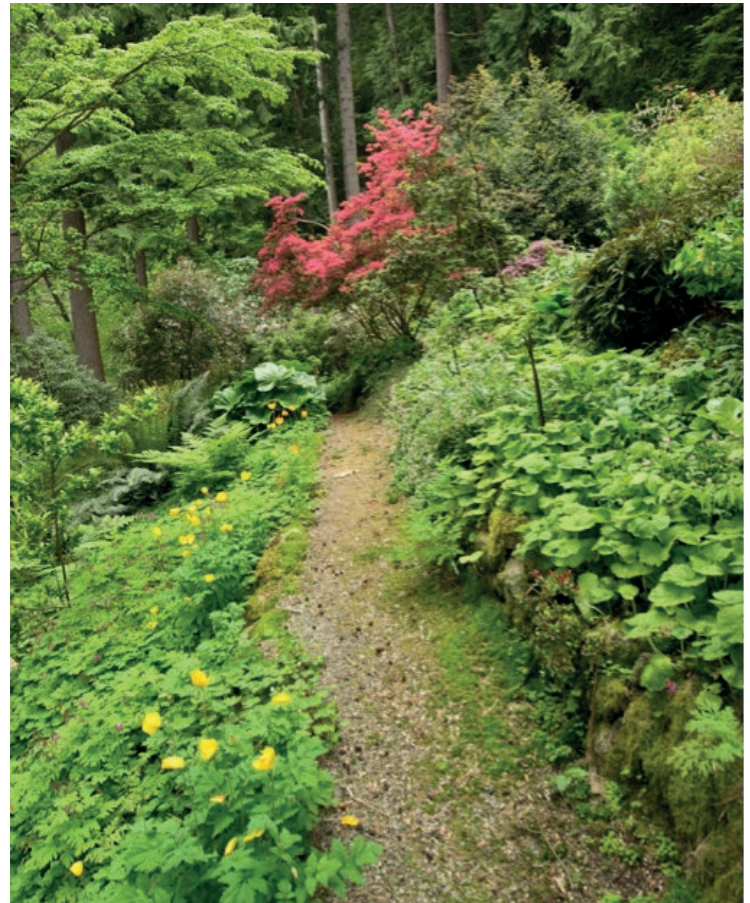


A path near the house. Photo: Tom Nosella

It was a time too for testing the suitability of the site for supposedly 'difficult' plants for this area. Among these was the Chilean Lantern Tree, *Crinodendron hookerianum*. It was planted on a very steep slope for good drainage with overhead protection from a 100ft hemlock. Irrigation provides the water it needs during our dry summers. During the forty years it has been in the garden it has frozen to the ground three times. In every case it has sprung back the following year. Our *C. patagua* is much the same but not as handsome a plant.

From 1980 on, with most paths now in place throughout the lower and mid-garden, bed preparation and planting was in full swing. The children were either on their own or in the process. Of trees, the superb *Acer griseum* was added as were magnolias. These included *M. campbellii* ssp. *mollicomata* planted in 1981 in mid-garden. It is now 75ft high. It is magnificent in full flower when viewed from the upper paths. *M. macrophylla* ssp. *ashei* with its huge leaves is also a particular favourite. In all we now have 18 magnolias well spaced through the garden. *Nothofagus dombeyi* proved a winner though it needs shaping from time to time. Sorbus are a favourite too. *S. commixta* has glorious fall colour and *S. caloneura* PW 15 (1994) is the first deciduous woody plant to show leaves in spring - a bright bronze. Among the many rhododendron additions were *R. aberconwayi* 'His Lordship', *R. cinnabarinum* 'Conroy', *R. orbiculare* ssp. *orbiculare*, a big leaf form of *R. thomsonii* with beautiful peeling bark, and *Camellia x williamsii* 'Mary Christian'. During this period Margaret had chosen to use the magnificent pallet of rhododendron leaf colour and shape we have available to lighten and soften the dark background of the native

forest. This is particularly important during our long rainy winter season. During the 1980's Margaret also started her collection of *Stewartia* with *S. serrata*. Also added were *Camellia* 'Cornish Snow', the fine *Enkianthus E. perulatus* (more attractive in our opinion than *E. campanulatus*), and lovely *Escallonia* 'Iveyi'. About this time Margaret began installing automatic irrigation in some herbaceous beds to stem her losses. Hand watering was becoming too burdensome. Although Vancouver City has an annual rainfall of about 60", here, at the foot of the mountain, our rainfall average is 3m (120") annually although summer can be bone dry. The average is 5.5" total for July and August but it can be as low as 1"



A woodland path in Margaret and Charlie's garden. Photo: Tom Nosella

In 1992 Margaret and I met in Argentinean Patagonia. We were part of a group of nine exploring the wonders of this area. Our mutual interest in plants and exploration led to an ongoing friendship that brought us together in 1993. It also marked an acceleration in the completion of the garden to its upper forest boundary. Paths that were dead ends were joined and the third of the garden that was untamed was cleared. At the forest edge we made the transition to the garden as seamless as possible. Threads of salal were allowed to wander amongst the shrubs and herbaceous plants. To soften the look of the huge trees that still lived in the garden we planted many iterations of climbing hydrangea. Islands of mostly mahonia and salal were allowed to remain in particularly rough spaces. Native shrubs such as huckleberry were allowed throughout the garden when not intrusive. The irrigation lines were expanded and many battery operated timers installed. Eventually these were all replaced with a hard-wired computer driven system operating over 30 individually programmed valves. The 1/2" or 3/4"

irrigation lines are up to 100ft long and have up to forty 12” risers with mist heads. Drip systems don’t work here. The coverage is too difficult. Sprayers with a 30ft arc are impossible too on our steep wandering slopes. The mist coverage is tailored to match the requirements of the individual beds. We expanded our mulching program and began chipping all woody material for the garden except firewood for heating the house. Only the nastiest green material goes to a commercial composting facility.

We both enjoy trying the new and the almost impossible. Our collection of hydrangea never stops expanding. We now have more than fifty. We became members of the board of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden which definitely resulted in vastly more rhododendrons finding a home here. We were already very active at the University of British Columbia Botanical Garden which also meant many more plants *Camellia x williamsii* coming home. Over the years 610 accessions of woody plants are no longer with us having either perished or been turfed out. Today we have 230 accessions of species rhododendrons and 140 of hybrids. We have 480 other woody shrubs or climbers, 110 trees not including 35 conifers.

Although we are now long in the tooth, gardening remains an extraordinary pleasure.

Charlie Sale

It’s Harvest Time on Oshima

No, it’s not the harvest of wheat, maize or apples, its camellia seeds and I went to investigate on a favourite Japanese island. In late September 2017 I returned to Oshima because I wanted to follow the story of the harvesting of camellia seeds from forest to the bottles of oil given to me on my previous two visits to the island.

Oshima is the largest of the Izu archipelago, a string of islands in the Pacific, south and east of Tokyo. With about 8000 inhabitants and only 90 minutes by jetfoil or 35 minutes in a 19 seater plane it is relatively easily accessed from Tokyo and popular as a summer holiday destination but it was camellias that drew me there. Specifically it was Mr Hihara’s camellia oil factory which he invited me to visit in 2009.

It has been estimated that the ancestors of Oshima’s current forest of approximately 3 million wild *Camellia japonica* (Tsubaki) trees date back about 5000 years. Evidence for this is a fossilised camellia leaf in the Information Centre and museum at Oshima Park.



Oshima camellia forest



Camellia leaves in lava, Oshima Park Museum

Much of the forest today is protected and has camellia trees towering overhead, many drawn tall by overcrowding, with a continuous canopy high above.

From January through February into March their red flowers can only be appreciated from above or after falling to the forest floor below, and their seeds harvested by scrabbling around in the leaf litter. Traditionally this was how the oil producers always gathered their seeds. Now that camellia oil is more appreciated and sales are buoyant, steps are taken to make harvesting the crop more reliable.



Camellia fruit with seeds on the forest floor

Some areas of the forest are privately owned and trees have been pruned with scions grafted onto the cut branches so that resultant growth is lower and the fruits bearing seeds more easily accessed for picking. In others old or dying trees have been cleared and selected clones known to produce good crops of seeds are grafted onto stock plants of moderate vigour, and some are even planted in rows as in the Oshima High School’s garden. It’s rather like farming apples.

Harvest time is from mid to late September when the majority of the capsules have begun to split. Each capsule has 3 chambers that may hold about 9 seeds in total. I watched as pupils from the school’s Agriculture Club harvested the last of this year’s crop. Some of the boys climbed to reach the fruit capsules; others used their modern long armed harvesting tools, whilst others scrambled to gather the fruits on the ground into canvas buckets (see photo on p.1)

Oshima has five small camellia oil factories. Mr Hihara's 'Tubaki Oil Co' is the most modern, Mr Okada's 'Oshima Tsubaki oil' is rapidly modernising and the others such Mr Takata's are still using traditional wooden equipment—and proud to do so.



Mr Hihara is using his cold pressed camellia oil in a variety of products.



Mr Hihara's unique cold press has squeezed oil from the camellia seeds, leaving a cake of seed husks.

Photos: Jennifer Trehane

In the factories all trash is taken out and seeds are sorted, with small or damaged ones removed. The remaining seeds are clean and dry, ready to be pressed. Traditionally seeds are heated by steaming to extract a maximum volume of oil. Oil for cooking is filtered once and is quite yellow in colour whilst oil for cosmetic use, for hair or massage is much clearer and has no smell or residue on the skin. Mr Hihara's factory uses a cold pressing method and his premium 'Japoneira' oil is filtered three times making it completely colourless, tasteless and odourless.

Camellia (Tsubaki) oil is bottled and packaged into attractive small bottles, with much of it sold to tourists visiting the island and some available in outlets on the mainland and on the internet.

The seed husks are used as mulch for nursery plants. In typical Japanese style 'nothing is wasted'.

Jennifer Trehane

Not quite a rainbow of colours, but pretty close

Some of the most garden-worthy species of rhododendron are to be found amongst members of Subsection *Triflora* and I am surprised that they are not seen more often in cultivation.

There are around 20 species within this subsection and between them they encompass a range of colour that is possibly unequalled by any other group within the genus. Forms of *Rhododendron conncinum* can be a rich, glowing, reddish-purple; a deep primrose-yellow is found in *R. lutescens* and *R. ambiguum*; the lilacs, lavender, pinks and whites in *R. oreotrephes*, *R. davidsonianum*, *R. yunnanense* and their kin; while perhaps the closest to a true blue in any rhododendron is to be seen in the best clones of *R. augustinii*. Even within the individual species there can be a wide range of colour, not just of the flowers themselves, but also in the spotting or flare on their upper petals and occasionally in the colour of their stamens. So great can this variability be that some forms are inevitably considered superior and more desirable than others. It is therefore wise to look for named clones of the species or see the plant in flower.

As the name of the subsection suggests, the flowers are not borne in large trusses, normally between three and six per truss, yet such is their size relative to their leaves that, when in full bloom, they can completely obscure the foliage. When seen from a distance, a single bush of *R. yunnanense* flowering in woodland can give the impression of myriad resting butterflies. They are definitely among the most reliably floriferous species in the genus and it is indeed a very poor year when the 'Trifloras' do not put on a good show.

Although variable in stature, they are for the most part medium sized shrubs, with a twiggy and smallness of leaf that can bring an airy grace to plantings, contrasting well with the often ponderous, rounded forms of larger leaved rhododendrons. As they rarely form a dense canopy of foliage, the filtered sunlight that reaches the ground allows them to be quite closely under planted with choice herbaceous plants, such as *Roscoea*, *Uvularia*, *Tiarella*, *Trillium* and many others.

Rhododendron yunnanense, in all its forms, is a charming plant and as reliable as any in the wealth and beauty of its flowers. It occurs in every shade between rose-pink and white, while the spotting on its petals can be green, brown, orange or red.



Rhododendron yunnanense KW 4974

The plant illustrated here is a fine form that was collected on

Kingdon Ward's expedition to Sichuan and Yunnan in 1921. Several other species, including *Rhododendron rigidum*, *R. pleistanthum*, *R. tatsienense* and *R. davidsonianum* also come from this area and intergrade or hybridise with *R. yunnanense* in the wild. They are separated by minute differences such as the density and size of the scales on the underside of their leaves and the presence or otherwise of bristles on the margins and petioles. Consequently, unless they are markedly distinct clones, there is often confusion about a plant's identity in cultivation, which can lead to some interesting discussions when studying them in gardens.

R. davidsonianum has produced several named clones with strong pink flowers that are well worth looking out for. Two of the best are 'Caerhays Pink', selected in 1984 and having a well-marked red flare and 'Ruth Lyons', registered in 1961, a clear pink, no markings within the flower and, frequently, up to seven lobes.



Rhododendron davidsonianum 'Caerhays Pink'

Rhododendron triflorum, on which this subsection is based, does not rank with the finest for its flowers, which are of a pale yellow that can sometimes get lost among the leaves. As the plant matures, however, it develops a framework of shining mahogany-coloured branches from which the bark unfurls in papery sheets, not dissimilar to the peeling bark of *Acer griseum*. It can be an arresting site when it is caught in the slanting rays of an early morning sun.

Scent is found in *R. lutescens*, which has somewhat deeper yellow flowers that are borne relatively early in the season. Whilst the first blooms can often be lost in frosty weather, they tend to open in succession over a long period and there are normally some that escape damage. The new growth of this species is most attractive: the young willow-like leaves have a bronze coloration that slowly becomes green as the season advances.



Rhododendron lutescens at Bowood House

Another yellow, which is amongst the hardiest in this group,

R. ambiguum has survived -18C with no ill effects. Its habit is somewhat denser and more compact than many in this group but it is worth growing.

The pale-yellow-flowered *R. keiskei* is perhaps the most variable species in size and ranges from a shrub of more than 2m in height to dwarf, almost prostrate, plants. The latter forms include its variety *ozawae* and the cultivars 'Yaku Fairy' and 'Ebino'. These low-growing clones are eminently suited to cultivation in peat beds, rather than the open woodland conditions in which the larger species thrive.

Although its flowers can embrace a range of colours from lilac through to a pale purple, the best forms of *Rhododendron augustinii* and its subspecies *chasmanthum* can fulfil any quest for a blue flowered rhododendron. However, the filaments of its stamens are frequently of a purplish hue and can spoil the effect. The cultivar 'Electra', a cross between these two subspecies, is among the best, having a very pale throat with yellowish markings and white filaments.



Rhododendron augustinii subsp. *augustinii*

To complete the extremes of the *Triflora* Subsection's colour spectrum, *Rhododendron concinnum* needs to be included. This species has a wide range of colours from pale rosy-lilac to a strong reddish-purple, this darker form is probably the most sought after by collectors. Like *R. ambiguum*, its habit is somewhat dense and compact; out of flower it is often difficult to tell the difference between these two species, as the glaucous under surfaces and shape of their leaves are almost identical.



Rhododendron concinnum Tower Court Form Photos: Ivor Stokes

It is unusual for the leaves of any of these species to reach more than 100mm in length, even on strong-growing,

young shoots. Yet, despite their relative smallness, they themselves frequently add to the appeal of the species. Those found on *Rhododendron oreotrephes* are often almost orbicular and of a stunning greyish green which complements the clusters of its pink flowers and, as already mentioned, the new foliage of *R. lutescens* is a rich bronze. Several species such as *R. searsiae*, have a greyish or silvery underside to their leaves, with perhaps the finest, an almost shining white, being found on *R. zaleucum*.

Whilst almost all the species in this subsection are to be found in Western China, the eastern Himalaya and Burma, *Rhododendron keiskei* hails from over 1000 miles to the east in Japan; one wonders if there are other delightful species to be discovered growing in the highlands between these locations.

Ivor Stokes

Two exceptional *Magnolia grandiflora* cultivars

Magnolia *grandiflora* is a beautiful ornamental hardy tree coming originally from North America. It is a very resistant plant to the cold and the heat and adapts itself well to a various range of climates. There aren't a lot of new evergreen magnolia varieties but among the latest ones, two of them come from the very heart of South-West of France in a nursery named Engandou. *M. grandiflora* 'Purpan'® and *M. grandiflora* 'Mont Blanc' were both developed in the 1990's and have an amazing flowering capacity and pruning tolerance. Let's have a closer look at them.

1) *M. grandiflora* 'Mont Blanc'

M. grandiflora 'Mont Blanc' is an evergreen variety characterized by a bushy base and large white flowers of 25 to 40cm in diameter (twice as large as the usual varieties). It flowers remarkably on young plants from 3 years old from June to September (which is also a longer flowering season than the usual varieties). This variety is also appreciated for its large, ovoid and slightly twisted leaves. These are shiny and dark green on the upper face which makes the plant an even more interesting one for ornamental use. It grows fast (80cm/year on average) and can reach 20m high. However hard pruning doesn't harm the plant at all: this variety tolerates intense pruning and is easy to shape. *M. grandiflora* 'Mont Blanc' was selected by the grower Alain Delevers, founder of Engandou nurseries, in the early 1990's. It comes from a mass selection done in the field. From 1990 to 1999 Alain Delevers worked hard to test the variety and check the stability of its characteristics. He also developed the process of propagation suitable for commercial production. Engandou nurseries started to sell its first *M. grandiflora* 'Mont Blanc' in the early 2000's. In 2012 the plant was chosen by the French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault for Matignon's garden, the Prime Minister's residence.



Vanessa Penn, Events Co-ordinator at RHS Wisley and a flower of *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Mont Blanc'. Photo: RHS



Magnolia grandiflora 'Mont Blanc' Photo: Les Pépinières de France

2) *M. grandiflora* 'Purpan'® (protected variety from Engandou nurseries)

M. grandiflora 'Purpan'® is a vigorous and heavy-blooming evergreen variety with a characteristic upright and narrow form. The white and strongly scented flowers begin in June and continue until early August. It has the advantage of flowering on young plants from 3 years old whereas 'Galissioniensis' flowers only on plants from 6 years old. The leaves are also unique: rather small, very much elongated and with a slightly wavy margin. They are dark green on the upper surface, russet and fuzzy on the lower surface. It grows particularly well in a pot and therefore is highly recommended for urban plantations.



Magnolia grandiflora 'Purpan' Photo: Les Pépinières de France

The variety comes from a unique specimen planted between 1735 and 1780 by the religious Sisters Du Barry at the Château de Purpan near Toulouse (this Château is nowadays the location of the Horticultural College of Toulouse). This variety is considered to be one of the most beautiful magnolias in Europe. In the early 1990's this variety was rediscovered by Alain Delevers (see above). He started to do leaf cuttings and spent some years observing the growth of the new young trees. As the results were promising, he decided to increase the production and first sold plants in 1995. In 2015 Engandou nurseries supplied the Sorbonne University which was a great opportunity to promote the many advantages of this plant: an upright form with good development in pots and a good tolerance of intense pruning. An easy plant to grow, we could say.



Magnolia grandiflora 'Purpan' flower and bud showing also the wavy leaf margin. Photo: Les Pépinières de France

The nursery has now been taken over by Laure Delevers (Alain Delevers's daughter) and is a member of the export group SAS Les Pépinières de France. For more information you can contact us anytime by email: sales@lespepinieresdefrance.com or mob: +33(0)752 653 552 (Cecile Duval) ; visit our website: www.lespepinieresdefrance.com ; follow us on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Cécile Duval

BRANCH REPORTS

The New Forest Group

Members of the New Forest group gathered in early May to pay a visit to Koirin Azalea Centre near Verwood in Dorset. The owners Mark and Lorraine Jackson are members of the Group and welcomed us for a behind the scenes look at the nursery. Mark led us on a guided tour of the propagation area where cuttings of evergreen azaleas were being raised in modules under mist. Then we went into the polytunnels to see regimented rows of young rhododendrons growing on. It was interesting to hear that spacing of the plants was quite critical to avoid them becoming lop sided. The mains water is quite hard in this part of Dorset so the pH is lowered by injecting very small quantities of acid into the irrigation water. The compost used is mixed on site and different formulations are made up together with slow release fertiliser to suit the different plants. Mark and Lorraine grow mostly hybrid rhododendrons and azaleas with just a few species.

There was a large stock of rhododendrons in the poly tunnels, including Viscy, Polar Bear, and Jean Marie de Montague ranging in size up to 160 litres.



View inside a polytunnel at Koirin Azaleas. Photo: Robin Whiting

We were privileged to be shown round on a normal working day with occasional interruptions to deal with customers. Nevertheless Lorraine kept us supplied with tea, coffee and delicious cakes.

I think most of the members of our group set out determined that they would not succumb to the temptation to buy any more rhododendrons or azaleas. However it was obvious at the end of the visit that many of the members were as weak willed as the writer and came away laden with irresistible treasures.



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www.rhododendron.org.nz or

contact the Secretary:

Chris Wilson

secretary@rhododendron.org.nz

North West England and North Wales Branch

For our second visit we were very fortunate to receive an invitation from Lady Judith Coleman to walk round the arboretum at Malshanger, a large estate not far from Basingstoke. It was originally planned for a day in early June but the government decided to call an election for that day so the visit was rescheduled for later in the month. Lady Coleman welcomed us on our arrival and gave us a brief history of Malshanger from the Tudor period. William Wareham who became Archbishop of Canterbury was born here and had the distinction of marrying King Henry the eighth to Catherine of Aragon.

The arboretum of over 80 acres has many fine trees including Beech and Ash, some more than 200 years old. Lady Coleman has been adding to the collection since 1961. Early on she had the benefit of a visit from Sir Harold Hillier who marked down in his catalogue the plants he would recommend to plant. Significantly, magnolias were not marked. Despite this over forty magnolias have been planted and are thriving. The soil is on the limey side of neutral so perhaps not ideal. The lateness of our visit coupled with a heat wave preceding it meant that few magnolias were still flowering. We were however rewarded with flowers on the beautifully scented *Magnolia x wieseneri* and Lady Coleman's favourite, *Magnolia sieboldii*. Many trees have also been added to the collection including *Tilia oliveri* and *Tilia neglecta*.



Tilia neglecta above and below at Malshanger.
Photos: Robin Whiting



At the end of our visit we enjoyed a very welcome cup of tea and lovely cakes. As a thank you for this most enjoyable visit we presented Lady Coleman with *Magnolia* 'Summer Solstice'.

Robin Whiting

Steve Lyus arranged a visit by the NW Branch to the Liverpool Museum Herbarium. This outing was additional to our normal winter talks and followed on from a talk given to us by the Curator of the Herbarium, Donna Young. It may sound rather dry and dusty but was a fascinating afternoon, taking us back 200 years and returning to the present day. The collection included much material gathered when Liverpool was the second city in the Empire, with world-wide connections and eminent botanic gardens. The two genera of plants named after Liverpoolians were produced (*Roscoea* and *Shepherdia*). It was the first time I had seen a *Shepherdia* - dead or alive. All the many type specimens held in the herbarium were enclosed in red folders, so that in the event of fire or flood they can be rescued first.

The afternoon was far more enjoyable than it might sound and taught us much about the specimens themselves and their bold collectors. Those in other regions may find such a visit informative and most enjoyable.

Ted Brabin

South West Branch

Our very enjoyable South West Branch Summer outing to Killerton National Trust garden near Exeter in July, ended with a presentation of *Magnolia laevifolia* 'Summer snowflake' to Ashley and Cameron in appreciation for organising and looking after us so well.



Ashley has sent us this photograph of Cameron planting the Magnolia. It looks as if it will have a prominent place in the garden, and it should do well.

John Marston

MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

We welcome our new members and hope they will enjoy all the benefits of membership of the Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group.

UK

Miss Rachel Tonks South Zeal, Devon
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Europe

drs Leon Teeven Eersel, Netherlands



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the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group forthcoming events



NOVEMBER 2017

4th

New Forest Branch

Sir Harold Hillier Gardens,
Jermyn's Lane, Ampfield
SO51 0QA

10.00am
AGM and talk by Russell
Beeson entitled The
Mountains and Valleys
of Yunnan Cost £7
(refreshments extra)

Martin Gates
mgates@talktalk.net
023 8025 2543

FEBRUARY 2018

10th

North West England & North Wales Branch

Ness Botanical Gardens

2pm
John Rippin, Head Gardener
Bodnant Gardens presents
"Bodnant through the ages".

Ted Brabin
angela.brabin@btinternet.com
0151 353 1193

APRIL 2018

7-8th

RHS

Savill Gardens
Windsor Great Park

Early Rhododendron,
Main Camellia and
Spring Ornamental Plant
Competitions

Georgina Barter
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk
020 7821 3142

APRIL 2018

28th

RCM Group

Westonbirt Arboretum

RCM Group AGM and visit
to Arboretum
Full details including timing
will be available in due
course

Christopher Legrand
clegrand@pir ltd.org.uk
01202 873344

11th

North West England & North Wales Branch

Ness Botanical Gardens

2pm
Marcus Chilton - Jones,
Curator "The new RHS
Garden at Bridgewater,
Salford".

Ted Brabin
angela.brabin@btinternet.com
0151 353 1193

MARCH 2018

10-11th

RHS

RHS Rosemoor Garden,
Torrington

Early RHS Rosemoor Show

Georgina Barter
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk
020 7821 3142

10-13th

RCM Group Committee

Bangor
Northern Ireland

Spring Tour of Northern
Ireland

Christopher Legrand
clegrand@pir ltd.org.uk
01202 873344

MAY 2018

5-6th

RHS Harlow Carr

RHS Harlow Carr
Crag Lane, Beckwithshaw,
Harrogate HG3 1QB

RHS Harlow Carr
Rhododendron Show

Georgina Barter
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk
020 7821 3142

JANUARY 2018

13th

North West England & North Wales Branch

Ness Botanical Gardens

2pm
Tim Baxter, Botanist, Ness
Botanic Gardens "Magnolias
of Central America"
followed by annual social.

Ted Brabin
angela.brabin@btinternet.com
0151 353 1193

22nd

New Forest Branch

Exbury Gardens
Exbury SO45 1AZ

10.30am
Conducted tour of Exbury
Gardens with Head
Gardener, Tom Clarke

Martin Gates
mgates@talktalk.net
023 8025 2543

21-22nd

RHS

RHS Rosemoor Garden,
Torrington

Main RHS Rosemoor Show

Georgina Barter
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk
020 7821 3142

MAY 2018

6-7th

North West England & North Wales Branch

Ness Botanical Gardens

Branch Show, Bulley Room,
Ness Gardens

Ted Brabin
angela.brabin@btinternet.com
0151 353 1193

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Event updates to Christopher Legrand please:
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