



## RHS Plant Trials and Awards

### *Rhododendron yakushimanum* & hybrids

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# RHS Trial of *Rhododendron yakushimanum* and hybrids

## Background of the trial

The purpose of the trial was to highlight this group of rhododendrons as being good plants for the smaller, lime-free, garden. The plants were assessed over a 10 year period and the Award of Garden Merit was given to the best cultivars.

Rhododendrons have been assessed at RHS Garden Wisley for almost 100 years and the extensive collections of hardy hybrids and evergreen azaleas are the legacy of such trials. However, the first formal trial in a dedicated plot with 3 plants per entry started in 1996 and was for *R. yakushimanum* hybrids. Over the period of the trial 134 entries were judged for the Award of Garden Merit by the Woody Plant Trials Sub-committee. The trial encouraged the public to see and compare a large range of cultivars. In addition, identities of plants included in the trial were checked and herbarium specimens were made.

*Rhododendron yakushimanum* was first discovered in the early 1900s on Yakushima (Yaku island, *shima* being Japanese for island), a small windswept mountainous island off the south coast of Japan. It is an ideal plant for gardens on lime-free soil. It can be grown in many different situations including full sun, is fully hardy, has a round compact habit and, as it is relatively slow-growing, remains small over many years.

The emerging young leaves are silvery-white, initially clothed above by a thin layer of white hairs, and below by a soft felt that darkens to tawny brown. In its natural habitat, this covering of hairs, known as the indumentum, is important in reducing water loss and protecting against extremes of temperature. The indumentum is also thought to provide a barrier against insects and pathogens. Indeed, *R. yakushimanum* and its hybrids suffer relatively few pest and disease problems. The flower heads of the species typically have creamy-pink buds, opening to a pale apple-blossom pink that fades to white as the flowers mature.

No wonder that with so many desirable characteristics the breeders of rhododendrons were quick to cross *R. yakushimanum* with other cultivars and species. Now

there are numerous hybrids, often referred to collectively as 'yaks', with a greatly increased range of flower colour. Many have also departed from the original species in characters such as leaf, habit and cultivation requirements. Therefore it was decided that a trial of all those currently available would be useful to demonstrate the range and merits of individual cultivars.

## Breeding programmes

The first *R. yakushimanum* plants arrived in the UK in 1934, sent to Lionel de Rothschild by Koichiro Wada, a Japanese nurseryman, in response to a request for 'any plants of unusual character and quality'. Two plants were duly selected by Wada, both of which were planted out at Exbury. When the Exbury Head Gardener, Francis Hanger, became the Curator at Wisley, he brought one of these originals with him (and later used it to make new crosses such as 'Renoir'). It was from the Wisley plant that material exhibited at an RHS Show in 1947 received a RHS First Class Certificate (FCC).

Like all species, *R. yakushimanum* is variable in the wild. Some of the plants imported since 1934, as well as seedlings from the plants of the species in the UK, bear leaves that have little indumentum or are narrower or broader than the original FCC plant and for this reason the original selection has now been given the cultivar name 'Koichiro Wada'.

Breeding programmes carried out in the 1950s and 60s by Percy Wiseman and Gerald Pinkney at Waterers Nurseries, and by Arthur George at Hydon Nursery, crossed *Rhododendron yakushimanum* with a variety of hardy rhododendrons to produce compact, sun-tolerant hybrids that were hardy and free-flowering. The famous Seven Dwarfs Series were bred at Waterers, whilst 'Hydon Dawn', 'Hydon Hunter' and 'Silver Jubilee' are well-known cultivars produced at Hydon during this period. More recent breeding by Hans Hachmann in northern Germany has resulted in very floriferous, compact cultivars such as 'Fantastica' and 'Rendezvous'.



Front cover & right:  
*R. yakushimanum*  
'Koichiro Wada'

Left: Trial site in May  
2006

(Photos by Wendy  
Wesley)



### Award of Garden Merit (AGM) (H4)

<i>R.</i> 'Bashful'	1993
<i>R.</i> 'Caroline Allbrook'	1993
<i>R.</i> 'Crete'	2005
<i>R.</i> 'Dopey'	1993
<i>R.</i> 'Dreamland'	2002
<i>R.</i> 'Fantastica'	2002
<i>R.</i> 'Golden Torch'	1993
<i>R.</i> 'Hachmann's Marlis'	2002
<i>R.</i> 'Hachmann's Polaris'	2002
<i>R.</i> 'Hachmann's Porzellan'	2005
<i>R.</i> 'Hydon Dawn'	1993
<i>R.</i> 'Hydon Hunter'	1993
<i>R.</i> 'Ken Janeck'	2005
<i>R.</i> 'Lady Romsey'	2005
<i>R.</i> 'Marietta'	2005
<i>R.</i> 'Morning Cloud'	1993
<i>R.</i> 'Percy Wiseman'	1993
<i>R.</i> 'Pink Cherub'	1993
<i>R.</i> 'Rendezvous'	2002
<i>R.</i> 'Renoir'	1993
<i>R.</i> 'Schneekrone'	2005
<i>R.</i> 'Silberwolke'	2005
<i>R.</i> 'Silver Jubilee'	2005
<i>R.</i> 'Tatjana'	2002
<i>R.</i> 'Vintage Rosé'	1993
<i>R. yakushimanum</i> 'Edelweiss'	2005
<i>R. yakushimanum</i> 'Koichiro Wada'	1993
<i>R. yakushimanum</i> 'Schneekissen'	2005

(H4) = hardy throughout the UK  
(date after the name denotes year AGM was given)

### The Award of Garden Merit

To gain this award a plant must be:

- excellent for ordinary garden use
- generally available
- of good constitution
- reasonably easy to grow
- reasonably resistant to pests and diseases
- essentially stable in form and colour

# The trial

## The trial objectives:

- 1 To establish which cultivars, when grown in full sun, remained compact, had good foliage, and flowered well and consistently over a ten year period.

The cultivars that met all these criteria were:

'Crete'; 'Dreamland'; 'Fantastica'; 'Golden Torch'; 'Hachmann's Marlis'; 'Hachmann's Polaris'; 'Hachmann's Porzellan'; 'Lady Romsey'; 'Marietta'; 'Ken Janeck'; 'Percy Wiseman'; 'Pink Cherub'; 'Rendezvous'; 'Schneekrone'; 'Silberwolke'; 'Silver Jubilee'; 'Tatjana'; 'Vintage Rosé'; *R. yakushmanum* 'Edelweiss'; *R. yakushmanum* 'Koichiro Wada'; *R. yakushmanum* 'Schneekissen'.

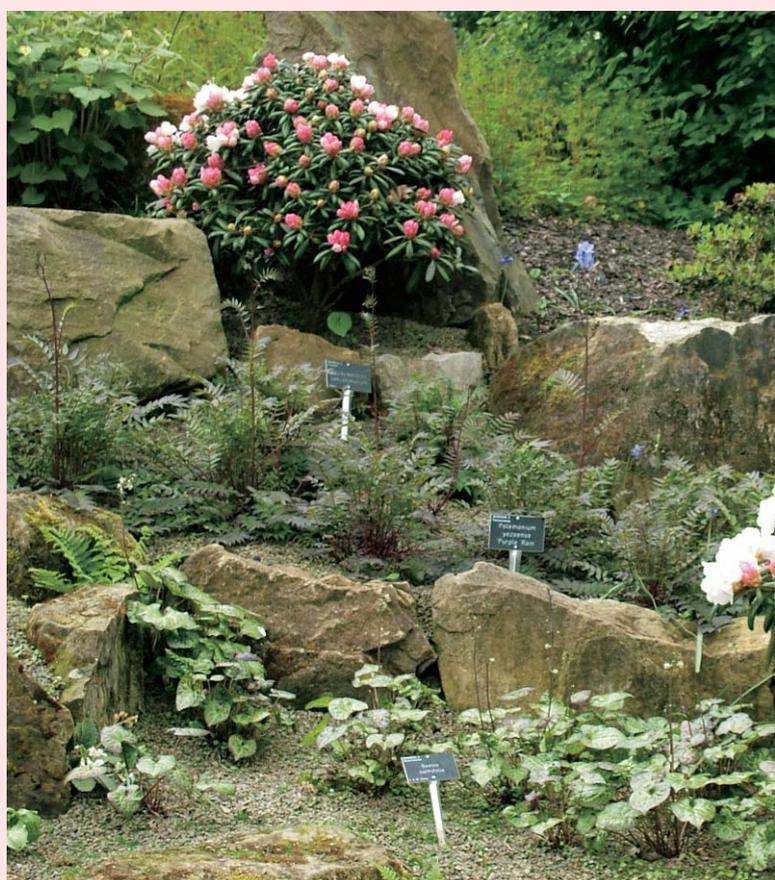
The other Award of Garden Merit cultivars that have *R. yakushmanum* in their breeding have retained the Award of Garden Merit even though they did not meet all the criteria of the trial. They are considered to be excellent plants but did not perform to their best in the exposed, full sun conditions of the trial:

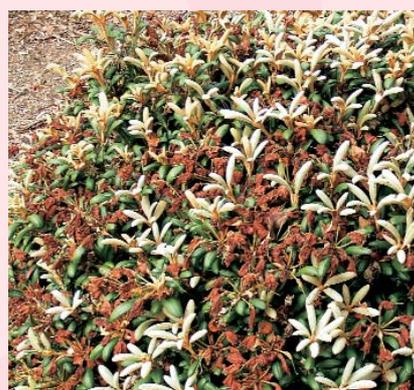
'Bashful'; 'Caroline Allbrook', 'Dopey', 'Hydon Dawn'. 'Hydon Hunter', 'Morning Cloud' and 'Renoir'.

- 2 To determine whether there was any difference in habit, growth or performance between plants that had been grafted, micropropagated or grown from cuttings.

All plants originating from the Hachmann nursery were grafted on to 'Cunningham's White' and most plants from UK nurseries were from cuttings. It was more difficult to obtain plants that had been micropropagated. Initially some instances of difference in vigour were found but overall there was no consistent pattern in habit, growth or performance between the methods of propagation.

The inconsistency is probably explained by the variation in vigour of the cultivars compared with 'Cunningham's White'. It is generally understood that 'Cunningham's White' has a stronger root system than many cultivars and is therefore more adaptable to difficult soils.





Above & right:  
*Rhododendron yakushimanum* not dead-headed and dead-headed

### 3 To investigate the effect on flowering if plants were not dead-headed.

In order to test the theory that more young growth and flower buds form when seed heads are removed soon after flowering, one of the three plants per entry was not dead-headed over a three year period. The results were mixed, but generally there was little effect on the amount of flower on most of the cultivars. It was, however, noted that the lack of dead-heading had a more obvious effect on the typical *R. yakushimanum* cultivars: their neat, compact appearance and attractive young leaf growth in July being greatly enhanced if the old seed heads were no longer present.

Dead-heading is best done immediately after the flowers begin to fade. Care must be taken not to break off the bud forming at the base of the flower-head. A sharp pair of secateurs is helpful.

### General cultivation

Rhododendrons require an acid soil of pH6 or below. In clay soils, the planting hole should be dug to two spade depths, the sub-soil broken up and coarse material, such as gravel chippings, incorporated. The top soil should have bark added into it, to give a good tilth. In free-draining, sandy soils, digging to one spade depth is sufficient and composted bark can be added.

The root system of rhododendrons spreads outwards, not far below the surface of the soil. It is therefore important not to plant too deep. If young plants are kept for any length of time in a pot or container, the roots circle round and become set in a dense root-ball. This will not disentangle itself in the ground and it is therefore important to carefully tease out the roots to form a fan. If this is not possible, severe action is necessary by scoring the root-ball into four sections with a sharp blade or spade.

If mulch is used, it should not be applied too deep, as this can suffocate the shallow roots. Rhododendrons do not need soils rich in nitrogen and therefore, in most garden situations, it is not necessary to add any fertiliser for the first two years.

Some *Rhododendron yakushimanum* hybrids can take up to five years to establish and flower well.



Above left: 'Hydon Hunter' and 'Hydon Dawn' (far left of picture), 40 year-old plants growing in partial shade on Battleston Hill.

Left: *Rhododendron yakushimanum* growing in full sun in the Rock Garden at Wisley

Far left: Buds of *R. 'Schneekrone'*

# RHS Award of Garden Merit Descriptions

Measurements were made on 10 year old plants.



## **R. 'Bashful'**

**AGM (H4) 1993**

*yakushimanum* × 'Doncaster'. Raised (1951), introduced and sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Low, spreading plant, 60cm high, 120cm spread. Silvery young growth becomes narrow, dark green foliage. Buds deep rose pink (58B). Loose truss of funnel-shaped flowers, light rose pink (62B), fading with age to near-white, with dense green spotting on upper lobe. Stigma light purple (78B).

*Light pink with prominent blotch. One of the Seven Dwarfs raised by Waterers Nurseries in Bagshot in the 1950s (The others were 'Grumpy', 'Doc', 'Dopey', 'Sleepy', 'Sneezy' and 'Hoppy' [sic]).*



## **R. 'Caroline Allbrook'**

**AGM (H4) 1993**

*yakushimanum* × 'Purple Splendour'. Raised (1963) by A F George, introduced and sent by Hydon Nurseries in Surrey.

Compact plant, 50cm high, 100cm spread. Narrow, convex leaves. Rounded truss of large, funnel-shaped, frilly, flowers that are lavender-pink (76A) fading to a lighter shade towards the centre with some olive-green (144B) spotting on upper lobe. Pink style.

*Pretty, frilled flower with distinctive pale lilac colour.*



## **R. 'Crete'**

**AGM (H4) 2005**

*smirnowii* × *yakushimanum*. Raised (1962) by B F Lancaster, introduced by D G Leach, sent by Morleys Nurseries.

Compact, domed plant, 60cm high, 100cm spread. Leaves narrow, dark green with dense indumentum on underside. Buds purplish pink (67C/D); truss 10cm diameter, of small (4cm wide) flowers with wavy edges, very pale purple (73D) fading to pure white. Stigma bright pink.

*Flowers early and profusely, pale purple flowers from bright pink buds; dark green healthy foliage and neat habit.*

## **R. 'Dopey'**

**AGM (H4) 1993**

(*facetum* hybrid × Fabia Group) × (*yakushimanum* × 'Fabia Tangerine'). Raised (1951), introduced and sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Large, compact, tight plant 100cm high, 120cm spread. Rounded truss of large, strong red (53B), bell to funnel-shaped flowers.

*Considered to be one of the best 'yak' reds, but did not perform to its best in the trial, probably needs some shade. One of the Seven Dwarfs raised by Waterers.*



## **R. 'Dreamland'**

**AGM (H4) 2002**

Complex parentage. Raised (1958), introduced and sent by Waterers Nurseries, also sent by Osberton Grange Nurseries.

Spreading, dense, low plant, 80cm high, 120cm spread. Buds pink (55B) flushed apricot (38B); truss 15cm diameter; bell to funnel-shaped flowers, pale apricot (36D) flushed and streaked pink (55C) with frilly margins and white calyces.

*Pink bud opening to pinkish cream flower. Excellent neat, matt, dark green foliage.*



## **R. 'Fantastica'**

**AGM (H4) 2002**

'Mars' × *yakushimanum* 'Koichiro Wada'. Raised (1968), introduced and sent by H Hachmann.

Large, compact, spreading plant, 100cm high, 200cm spread. New foliage light green with honey-tinged indumentum. Compact truss, 13cm diameter, held clear of the foliage. Bud red (53C/D); flowers, 6cm wide, round, bell-shaped, edged dark pink (63A/B) fading through very pale pink to white centre.

*Flower an eye-catching picotee, deep rose-pink margins with paper-white centre.*





**R. 'Golden Torch'**  
AGM (H4) 1993

Complex parentage. Raised (1958), introduced and sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Rounded mound, 70cm high, 120cm spread. Neat, smallish, matt, green leaves. Buds dusky pink (51A); truss conical, fairly loose, 12cm diameter; flowers, 4cm wide, opening through salmon pink (49A) to pale yellow (158A). Narrow, reflexed, creamy yellow calyx lobes. Stigma salmon pink.

*Colour of flowers changes from opening pink to maturing pale yellow.*

**R. 'Hachmann's Porzellan'**  
AGM (H4) 2005

'Mrs J G Millais' × *yakushimanum* 'Koichiro Wada'. Raised (1970), introduced and sent by H Hachmann.

Large, spreading plant, 100cm high, 200cm spread. Leaves matt with dense tan indumentum on underside. Truss 16cm diameter, flowers large (7cm wide), slightly wavy margins, white with dense spotting of yellowish-green (151A) on upper lobe.

*Clean, handsome, white flowers with yellowish-green blotch. Porzellan is German for porcelain.*



**R. 'Hachmann's Marlis'**  
AGM (H4) 2002

'Mars' × *yakushimanum* 'Koichiro Wada'. Raised (1970), introduced and sent by H Hachmann, also sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Upright, spreading plant, 90cm high, 150cm spread. New foliage with pale whitish-green indumentum. Buds purplish-red (58B); truss, 15cm diameter, compact dome; flowers large (7cm wide), frilly, funnel-shaped, mid-pink (62A) with white eye.

*Young silvery foliage very attractive. Very large trusses of frilly mid-pink flowers. Sister seedling to 'Fantastica' which has darker pink, smaller flowers, that are less frilly.*

**R. 'Hydon Dawn'**  
AGM (H4) 1993

*yakushimanum* × 'Springbok'. Raised (1968) by A F George, introduced and sent by Hydon Nurseries.

Short plant of compact habit. Tight trusses of funnel-shaped, frilled, flowers pale pink with dark pink centres.

*Known to be a consistent and generous flowerer, but did not perform well in the trial conditions.*



**R. 'Hachmann's Polaris'**  
AGM (H4) 2002

*yakushimanum* 'Koichiro Wada' × 'Omega'. Raised (1963), introduced and sent by H Hachmann, also sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Compact mound, 80cm high, 140cm spread. Narrow, matt, dark green leaves with thin tan indumentum on underside. Buds reddish-pink (57B); flowers, funnel-shaped, frilly, white flushed purplish-pink (62C), edges darker purplish-pink (67C).

*Attractive, frilly, soft pink flowers that fade to pure white.*

**R. 'Hydon Hunter'**  
AGM (H4) 1993

*yakushimanum* × 'Springbok'. Raised (1970) by A F George, introduced and sent by Hydon Nurseries.

Tall plant of upright habit. Compact trusses of bell-shaped flowers bright pinkish-red with pale pink centres, spotted orange inside.

*Known to be a very floriferous and vigorous plant, but did not perform well in the trial conditions.*



# RHS Award of Garden Merit Descriptions



## **R. 'Ken Janeck'**

**AGM (H4) 2005**

Seedling of *R. yakushimanum* selected and introduced by Mr and Mrs K Janeck and sent by Millais Nurseries.

Compact, spreading dome, 80cm high, 180cm spread. Leaves with dense indumentum on underside. Loose, domed truss, 15cm diameter. Buds bright pink (57C); flowers, 6cm wide, with frilly margins, opening pink and fading to white with small olive-green spots on upper lobe. Stigma powder-pink.

*Has all the positive characteristics of the species but with larger, and frillier, flowers.*



## **R. 'Lady Romsey'**

**AGM (H4) 2005**

*yakushimanum* subsp. *yakushimanum* × Elizabeth de Rothschild Group. Raised (1965) and introduced by E de Rothschild and sent by Millais Nurseries.

Fairly dense, uneven mound, 90cm high, 100cm spread. Buds buff (164D) suffused with coral (180D); flowers, 8cm wide, bell-shaped, pale lemon-yellow on opening becoming pure white with dense maroon (173A) spotting at base of upper lobe.

*Large flower trusses bearing very good quality flowers - iridescent white with reddish eye. Does best with some shade.*



## **R. 'Marietta'**

**AGM (H4) 2005**

(*litiense* × *wardii*) × *yakushimanum* 'Koichiro Wada'. Raised (1968), introduced and sent by H Hachmann.

Compact mound, 60cm high, 100cm spread. Leaves very neat, flat, very dark green, with yellow pedicels. Buds yellow, flushed pink; flowers fairly small (4cm wide), bell-shaped with wavy margins, creamy yellow (157B) with distinct maroon spotting on upper lobe. Stigma pink.

*Attractive, dark green, neat foliage, combines well with the frilled creamy-yellow flowers.*

## **R. 'Morning Cloud'**

**AGM (H4) 1993**

*yakushimanum* × 'Springbok'. Raised (1962) by A F George, introduced and sent by Hydon Nurseries.

Compact plant, 60cm high, 120cm spread. Dark green leaves with buff indumentum on underside. Dense rounded trusses of frilly white flowers flushed pink.

*Known to be a good plant, but did not perform well in the trial.*



## **R. 'Percy Wiseman'**

**AGM (H4) 1993**

*yakushimanum* × 'Fabia Tangerine'. Raised (1958), introduced and sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Small, rounded plant, 90cm high, 150cm spread, with glossy, dark green foliage and rounded trusses of cream flowers flushed pink, fading to creamy-white with a yellow throat. Narrow reflexed calyx lobes.

*One of the best of Waterer's hybrids and named for one of their main breeders. Still excellent for habit and consistent flowering.*



## **R. 'Pink Cherub'**

**AGM (H4) 1993**

*yakushimanum* × 'Doncaster'. Raised (1959), introduced and sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Medium-sized spreading plant, 65cm high, 150cm spread. Clean, mid-green, matt foliage. Flowers large (6cm diameter), purplish-pink (62B/C), paler pink (63B/C) in centre and darker pink (63B/C) edges, with greenish-yellow spotting on upper lobe.

*Very attractive combination of rich pink-coloured buds and paler pink flowers. Sister seedling to 'Bashful'.*





**R. 'Rendezvous'**  
AGM (H4) 2002

'Marinus Koster' × *yakushmanum* 'Koichiro Wada'. Raised (1968), introduced and sent by H Hachmann, also sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Fairly dense mound, 60cm high, 150cm spread. Large, semi-glossy leaves, held semi-erect; pale grey when young. Buds strong red (53C/D); truss 14cm diameter; flowers, 6cm wide, with frilly margins, purplish-pink (55B), fading to white at centre; some dark red spotting on upper lobe.

*Large, tight, pink trusses of flowers contrasting well with strong red buds.*

**R. 'Silberwolke'**  
AGM (H4) 2005

*yakushmanum* 'Koichiro Wada' × 'Album Novum'. Raised (1963), introduced and sent by H Hachmann, also sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Large, compact, but spreading plant, 90cm high, 200cm spread, with dark green semi-erect leaves. Buds bright purplish-pink (66C); truss, 15cm diameter, flowers, 5cm wide, with frilly margins, white flushed pink. Stigma bright pink.

*Good tight habit and semi-erect, matt, dark green leaves. Name is German for Silver Cloud*



**R. 'Renoir'**  
AGM (H4) 1993

'Pauline' × *yakushmanum*. Raised by F E W Hanger (1951), introduced by the RHS and sent by Hydon Nurseries.

Small, upright plant, 75cm high, 140cm spread, with narrow, dark green leaves. Truss 16cm diameter; flowers large, 8cm wide, bright rose-pink (58C), almost white in throat with some dark crimson spotting that forms a distinct flare, on upper lobe. Stigma maroon.

*One of the earliest to flower, lively colour. Did not thrive in conditions of the trial.*

**R. 'Silver Jubilee'**  
AGM (H4) 2005

*yakushmanum* × 'Coronation Day'. Raised (1967) by A F George. Introduced and sent by Hydon Nurseries.

Open, upright to spreading plant, 90cm high, 180cm spread, with medium green to glossy, slightly drooping leaves. Buds pink (58B); truss 15cm diameter, flowers clear white with dark purplish-red (60A) blotch in centre. Stigma dusky pink.

*Striking white flower with red eye.*



**R. 'Schneekrone'**  
AGM (H4) 2005

'Humboldt' × *yakushmanum* 'Koichiro Wada'. Raised (1968), introduced and sent by H Hachmann, also sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Low, spreading plant, 60cm high, 150cm spread. Buds pale pinkish-purple (75A/77C); truss 10cm diameter; flowers, with wavy margin, white flushed pink fading to white, some maroon (184B) spotting on upper lobe. Stigma pink.

*Very floriferous and aptly named Crown of Snow.*

**R. 'Tatjana'**  
AGM (H4) 2002

('Nova Zembla' × 'Mars') × ('Mars' × *yakushmanum* 'Koichiro Wada'). Raised (1969), introduced and sent by H Hachmann, also sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Medium-sized, domed plant, 70cm high, 160cm spread. Bud rich magenta (61B/C); truss 15cm diameter, compact and tight; flowers, large (7cm wide), very frilly, pale purplish-pink (70D), becoming darker pink (67C) at edges. Stigma bright pink.

*Very striking. Distinctive, frilly, very bright pink flower that does not fade in sun.*



# RHS Award of Garden Merit Descriptions



## **R. 'Vintage Rosé'**

**AGM (H4) 1993**

(*yakushimanum* × 'Jalisco Eclipse') × Fusilier Group. Raised (1958), introduced and sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Compact, upright plant, 70cm high, 130cm spread, with dark green leaves, thickly felted on underside and held erect. Flowers, 6cm wide, slightly fleshy, rose-pink with deeper pink centre. Stigma white.

*Distinctive, vase-shaped plant. The semi-erect leaves appear to hold the loose trusses of pink flowers.*



## **R. yakushimanum 'Koichiro Wada'**

**AGM (H4) 1993**

A selection from *R. yakushimanum*, named and introduced by the RHS in 1947. Sent by Waterers Nurseries.

Dense, compact, domed plant, 60cm high, 130cm spread. Young leaves silvery becoming glossy, recurved, with thick, tan indumentum on the underside. Buds apple-blossom pink (58C/D); flowers quite stiff and waxy, 4cm wide, white with some light green spots in throat.

*This is the parent of many hybrids and was the benchmark for the trial.*



## **R. yakushimanum 'Edelweiss'**

**AGM (H4) 2005**

Selected (1981) by Wuestemeyer, introduced by J Wieting and sent by H Hachmann.

Medium, compact mound, 80cm high, 180cm spread. Leaves with indumentum thick, greenish-white, retained on the upper surface and thick, tan (164A) on the underside. Truss dome-shaped and loose. Bud pink (67D), flower 4cm wide, opens to white with some yellowish-green (151C) spots in the throat.

*Similar to 'Koichiro Wada', but larger. One of the best for silvery young foliage. Very pretty, a marvellous plant.*



## **R. yakushimanum 'Schneekissen'**

**AGM (H4) 2005**

Selected, introduced (1995) and sent by H Hachmann.

Small, compact and spreading plant, 50cm high, 130cm spread. Young growth silvery becoming dark and glossy, recurved, with thick, tan indumentum on underside. Truss somewhat lax, buds medium pink (62A); flowers, 3cm wide, bell-shaped, opening to pure white, slight spotting of lime-green (144B) spotting in throat.

*Very late-flowering. Tight bushy habit, very healthy. Excellent silvery new growth. Name is German for Snow Cushion.*



## Trial entries

The main contributor to the trial was Hans Hachmann, a breeder of rhododendrons in northern Germany, who submitted over 100 plants (34 cultivars of his own breeding). Arthur George of Hydon Nurseries, breeder of many rhododendron RHS award winners, sent 20 cultivars of his own breeding. Notcutt's (owners of Waterers Nurseries) sent many cultivars from the Waterers' breeding programme of the 50s and 60s and Peter Drayson sent cultivars from his breeding programme, all of which have the prefix "Harkwood".

## Cultivation in trial

Three 3-year old plants of each entry were requested for autumn 1994. In spring 1995 it was realised that the pH of the proposed site at RHS Garden Wisley was still too high, so a new site was found beyond the Pinetum where the pH was between 4.6 and 5.7. The trial was postponed until 1996 while the site was prepared.

The trial was planted on 25 March 1996. Due to the plants having been kept in containers for an extra year, many of them had become root-bound. Problems with establishment became apparent in early spring 1997. In order to encourage root development, all the flower buds, once they had elongated, were removed. Plants were irrigated by drip-feed lines. For the first three years, because of poor soil, the trial was top-dressed with dried blood, and from April to July sprayed with a general foliar feed.

The plants in the trial were tested with a series of very severe frosts in April 1999 and 2002, as well as drought conditions in 2003.

**Pests and Diseases** – Preventative spraying took place against rhododendron powdery mildew, a relatively new disease of rhododendrons in the UK. There were instances of bud blast and leaf spot in the trial. (RHS Advisory Leaflet No.48 on Diseases, Disorders and Pests of Rhododendrons is available to RHS members from RHS Garden Wisley, Surrey GU23 6QB (SAE) or email: [advisory@rhs.org.uk](mailto:advisory@rhs.org.uk))

**The Sub-committee** assessed the trial on 26 occasions over the period of the trial, along with members of the RHS Rhododendron and Camellia Committee, specialist nurserymen and plantsmen. All their comments and recommendations contributed to the final decisions contained in this report.

## Judging

The AGM in Woody Plant Trials is recommended only after assessment of the plants growing in the trial and includes the knowledge and experience of the members as to their worthiness for garden decoration. The AGM requires a minimum of 6 votes, with 3 times as many votes for, as against.

## Visitor votes

Each day in May during the trial, visitors to Wisley garden were invited to take the walk down to the trial and many thousands did. From 2002 to 2005 the public voted for their favourites, 1,476 voting forms were completed.

**Top Ten:** 'Pink Cherub'; 'Babette'; 'Loch Rannoch'; *R. yakushimanum* 'Schneekissen'; 'Rendezvous'; *R. yakushimanum* 'Koichiro Wada'; 'Marietta'; 'Golden Torch'; 'Hoppy'; 'Festivo'.



Photo by Mike Sleight

## Nomenclatural Standards at the RHS Herbarium

Nomenclatural Standards are the definitive reference points for the correct application of cultivar names. They are specimens or photographs of plants which are known to represent the original cultivars. They usually come from the breeders themselves. The RHS Herbarium (WSY) held at Wisley is one of the major repositories for these Standards, many of which come directly from the Trials. All AGM plants mentioned in this bulletin have standards at Wisley except: *R.* 'Hydon Dawn'; *R.* 'Ken Janeck'; *R.* 'Morning Cloud'; *R.* 'Renoir'; *R.* 'Vintage Rosé'; *R. yakushimanum* 'Edelweiss'.



## Botanical note

The botanical name for *Rhododendron yakushimanum* Nakai has varied over the years. Originally described as a species, it was reduced to a subspecies of *R. degronianum* Carrière in 1986, and this was followed in the *RHS Rhododendron Handbook* (1998). There continues to be some uncertainty about the interrelationships of the Japanese species in Subsection *Pontica*, with other works still recognizing this plant at species level, such as in James Cullen's book (*Hardy Rhododendron Species: A Guide to Identification*, 2006). The RHS has adopted the approach that, while this uncertainty remains unresolved, for horticultural purposes it is better to continue to treat *R. yakushimanum* as a species, as reflected in the *RHS Plant Finder*.

## Woody Plant Trials Sub-committee

**Chairman:** Peter Catt

**Vice Chairman:** John Hillier

**Members:** Chris Brickell      David Clark  
Maurice Foster      John Gallagher  
Michael Hickson      John Humphris  
Roy Lancaster      Chris Lane  
David Masters      Chris Sanders  
Harvey Stephens      Archie Skinner

The founding Chairman John Bond and Vice Chairman Alan Hardy, who both contributed greatly to the Sub-committee, sadly died before this trial was completed.

## Senders of plants to the trial

Bridgemere Nurseries Ltd., Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 7QB  
Mr R J Drayson, Dorset

Glendoick Gardens Ltd, Glencarse, Perth PH2 7NS  
Hachmann Baumschule, Brunnenstrasse 68, 25355

Barmstedt, Germany  
Hydon Nurseries, Hydon Heath, Nr Godalming, Surrey  
GU8 4AZ

Lea Rhododendron Gardens Ltd, Lea, Matlock, Derbyshire  
DE4 5GH

Millais Nurseries, Crosswater Lane, Churt, Farnham, Surrey  
GU10 2JN

Morley Nurseries Ltd, Mill Lane, Morley, Wymondham,  
Norfolk NR18 9TN

Osberton Grange Nurseries, Scofton Village, Worksop,  
Nottinghamshire S81 0UE

Waterers Nurseries, (part of the Notcutts Group), Bagshot,  
Surrey GU19 5DG

## Acknowledgements

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Mike Grant, formerly Senior Botanist at Wisley, now Editor of *The Plantsman*, for his help and guidance.

RHS Curatorial staff: Jim England, Rob Fitzmaurice and Emma Cox.

Photographs by Wendy Wesley

## Further reading

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George, A. F. (1981) The hybrids of *Rhododendron yakushimanum*. *The Garden* 106: 262-264

Leslie, A. C. (comp.) (2004) *The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist*, 2nd ed. London: The Royal Horticultural Society

Cox, K. (2005) *Rhododendrons and azaleas: a colour guide*. Marlborough: The Crowood Press Ltd.

# Guide to *Rhododendron yakushimanum* and hybrids



Name	Flower colour	Notes
R. 'Bambino'	pink	Distinct. Large, pink, double flowers. John Bond: "sugar plum fairy in boots".
R. 'Babette' (1)	cream	Round habit. Small, dark green leaves. Coral buds, cream flower with red blotch. Of the 9 plants in the trial only 3 flowered well. (No.2 in the public votes)
R. 'Bambi'	pink	Neat foliage and habit, good rock garden plant.
R. 'Barmstedt' (2)	pale & dark red	Good, silvery, young foliage and low spreading habit. Picotee flowers, of pale centres and dark edges, do not fade in sun.
R. 'Bashful' 🏆	light pink	Low plant. Flower light pink with blotch. Did not perform well in the trial.
R. 'Blankenese' (3)	white	Pink bud, white flower. Flower not as good as 'Porzellan', but better habit.
R. 'Blurettia' (4)	mauve/white	Rich purple and white, frilly flowers. Distinct.
R. 'Caroline Allbrook' 🏆	lavender	Lovely lilac flower. Did not perform well in trial. <b>Late</b>
R. 'Crete' 🏆	pale lilac	Good contrast of pale flowers fading to white and dark green foliage.
R. 'Cupcake' (5)	deep pink	Very compact plant with relatively large deep pink flowers. <b>Early</b>
R. 'Daniela' (6)	pink/red	Big, bright, bold flowers of unusual colour.
R. 'Dopey' 🏆	dark red	Considered to be best 'yak' red, but did not perform well in trial.
R. 'Dreamland' 🏆	pink/cream	Masses of fairly small, frilly, apricot-blushed pink flowers.
R. 'Emanuela' (7)	pink/white	Flowers white with candy-pink, frilly edges.
R. 'Ernest Inman' (8)	mauve	Deep mauve. Distinct colour. Did not perform well in trial.
R. 'Fantastica' 🏆	pale/dark pink	One of the best. Flowers with rose-pink edges and white centres. Neat trusses give a pink and white honeycomb effect.
R. 'Festivo' (9)	cream/orange	Unusual coloured flowers of orange and cream. <b>Early</b>
R. 'Fred Peste'	rich red	Popular red cultivar, but was not vigorous in the trial.





Name	Flower colour	Notes
R. 'Golden Torch' 🏆	pink to yellow	Flower buds salmon pink open to pale yellow.
R. 'Golden Wedding'	golden yellow	Matt dark green foliage contrasts well with bright flower. Slightly scented. Did not flower consistently in trial.
R. 'Hachmann's Belona'	pink to lilac pink	Rather open habit. Healthy but coarse foliage. Flowers rich pink fading to soft lilac pink.
R. 'Hachmann 's Marlis' 🏆	pink	Pale jade/silver young foliage. Large, frilly, mid-pink flower with white eye.
R. 'Hachmann's Polaris' 🏆	pink	Good dense heads of frilly purplish pink, edged magenta, flowers.
R. 'Hachmann's Porzellan' 🏆	white	Excellent white flower with prominent greenish blotch on upper lobe.
R. 'Harkwood Moonlight'	cream	Clear, luminous, pale yellow flowers, but poor habit in the trial.
R. 'Harkwood Premiere'	white	Striking flower, white with maroon blotch, but poor habit in the trial.
R. 'Hoppy'	white	Frilly, pale lilac flowers that fade to white.
R. 'Hydon Dawn' 🏆	pink	Frilly, purplish-pink flowers that fades toward the edges. Known to be good, but did not perform well in trial.
R. 'Hydon Hunter' 🏆	pink	Frilly deep pink flowers that fade to almost white centre. Known to be good, but did not perform well in trial.
R. 'Kalinka'	lilac pink	Lots of frilly, purplish-pink flowers.
R. 'Kantilene' (10)	rich pink	Well-shaped plant. Bright, rich pink, frilly flowers.
R. 'Ken Janeck' 🏆	pink to white	Very good silvery new foliage, excellent, robust, bright pink flowers that turn white. <b>Early</b>
R. 'Lady Romsey' 🏆	white	Stunning flower heads. Scented. Better with some shade. <b>Late</b>
R. 'Loch Rannoch'	yellow	Deepest of the yellows in the trial. Outstanding, distinct cultivar, did not perform well in trial though came in No.3 in the public votes.
R. 'Lumina'	mauve	Strong flower colour contrasts well with good foliage. <b>Late</b>
R. 'Marietta' 🏆	pale yellow	Outstanding plant, fairly small, flat, dark green leaves, masses of cream, frilly, bell-shaped flowers. Excellent dense habit.
R. 'Morning Cloud' 🏆	pale pink	Frilly, pale pink flowers. Did not perform well in the trial.
R. 'Nicoletta'	pink to white	Pretty flower with maroon eye. Poor foliage in the trial.
R. 'Ninotschka'	pink	Very similar to sister seedling 'Fantastica' attractive corolla shape.
R. 'Percy Wiseman' 🏆	pink/cream	Very distinct. Very floriferous with subtle colour changes as flower ages.

**Flowering** peak flowering for most of the plants was in the middle of May  
**Early** = very early into flower, last week of April, and can be caught by late frosts  
**Late** = in flower in late May/early June

Name	Flower colour	Notes
R. 'Pink Cherub' 🏆	pink	Rich pink buds and paler pink flowers. Very floriferous. (No.1 in public votes) <b>Late</b>
R. 'Queen Alice'	pale pink	Flower clean, fresh pink. Corolla unusual shape with prominent lobes.
R. 'Rendezvous' 🏆	pink	Good silvery young leaves. Bright red buds opening to pink flowers with white centre.
R. 'Renoir' 🏆	rose pink	Light pink with white centre and crimson blotch.
R. 'Schneekrone' 🏆	pink to white	Floriferous. Good white with tinge of pink.
R. 'Silberglanz' (11)	lilac to white	Tall plant (1m after 10 years). Soft, distinctive lilac flowers fading to white. <b>Early</b>
R. 'Silberwolke' 🏆	pink & white	Excellent combination of frilly pink and white flowers with dark green semi-erect leaves.
R. 'Silver Jubilee' 🏆	white	Very pretty, white flowers with small, red eye.
R. 'Tatjana' 🏆	carmine pink	Good strong colour, frilly flowers.
R. 'Vintage Rosé' 🏆	pink	Neat upright habit. Semi-erect leaves and slightly fleshy flowers.
R. 'Yaku Princess'	white	Very floriferous, but flowers of poor shape. <b>Early</b>
R. <i>yakushmanum</i> 'Edelweiss' 🏆	pink to white	Slightly taller (70cm after 10 years) than 'Koichiro Wada'.
R. <i>yakushmanum</i> 'Koichiro Wada' 🏆 (12)	pink to white	Has got everything. Hard to beat for the small garden.
R. <i>yakushmanum</i> 'Schneekissen' 🏆	pink to white	Tight habit. Slightly shorter (50cm high after 10 years) than 'Koichiro Wada'. <b>Late</b>
<b>Good foliage plants</b>		
R. 'Dusty Miller' (13)	pink/cream	Perfect dome of very good silvery young foliage. A mass of creamy pink flowers in May.
R. 'Hydon Velvet' (14)	white	Excellent, distinctive foliage with thick bronze indumentum. <b>Early</b>
R. 'Teddy Bear' (15)	white	Rich brown indumentum. <b>Early</b>
R. <i>yakushmanum</i> × R. <i>lanatum</i> (16)	pink to white	Excellent dwarf habit (40cm high after 10 years), foliage looks good all year round, but very shy to flower.



## The Royal Horticultural Society

The RHS is the UK's leading gardening charity dedicated to advancing horticulture and promoting good gardening. Its charitable work includes providing expert advice and information, advancing horticulture, training the next generation of gardeners, helping school children learn about plants, and conducting research into plants, pests and environmental issues affecting gardeners. The RHS AGM plant trial scheme is an important part of this work.

The RHS receives no government grants and for every pound received from members' subscriptions we need to raise more than twice as much again to fund our charitable work. We also rely on donations and sponsorship to supplement income from our garden operations, flower shows, shops and plant centres.

## RHS Plant Trials

With so many different types of gardener and so many different cultivars available to them in each group of plants, it is important that a system of recommendation is in place to help with selection at point of sale. These recommendations must be clear and reliable to ensure that of the thousands of plants available in the UK, a proportion are known to be excellent garden plants. The RHS provides this information through its extensive programme of plant trials held at RHS gardens in the UK. The RHS Award of Garden Merit 🏆 signifies the selection of the best cultivars for general garden use.

RHS plant trials serve the professional gardener who wants to know the range of plants available, including the latest breeding and selection programmes, with their distinctive characteristics and provenance. They also serve the amateur who wants to know which plants will grow and perform well in a particular garden situation.

The RHS has an unrivalled resource of knowledge and expertise and is therefore best placed to conduct plant trials for the UK gardening market.

## RHS Herbarium

The RHS Herbarium keeps a record of trial cultivars as dried specimens with detailed descriptions and photographic images. This forms an important reference for the horticultural industry. Any new cultivars are highlighted and a Standard specimen is preserved and described.

The RHS Herbarium, stored at RHS Garden Wisley, is the largest active horticultural herbarium in the world. At present the collection contains about 80,000 herbarium specimens and over 30,000 images of plants. Material is actively collected from a wide spectrum of sources including RHS plant trials.

## RHS Bulletins

**Canna:** September 2003  
**Daisies** (yellow perennial): September 2004  
**Delphinium:** June 2004  
**Fuchsia** (hardy): December 2005  
**Geraniums** (hardy) Stage 1: June 2005  
**Hyacinthaceae** (little blue bulbs): September 2005  
**Lavenders** (hardy): July 2003  
**Miscanthus:** October 2004  
**Potentilla** (shrubby): July 2002  
**Salad Potatoes** (salad): November 2004  
**Saxifrages** (silver): May 2005  
**Spiraea japonica** (with coloured leaves): November 2003

These bulletins can be viewed at a larger size on the RHS Website:

[www.rhs.org.uk/plants/trials\\_bulletins.asp](http://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/trials_bulletins.asp)

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