

Rhododendron Society of Canada

ATLANTIC NEWSLETTER

www.AtlanticRhodo.org

Volume 24: Number 2

May 2000

CALENDAR

All R.S.C.A.R. regular monthly meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, 7:30 p.m. at the Nova Scotia Museum Auditorium, Summer St., Halifax, unless otherwise noted. Parking provided in the Museum lot. Friends, guests and anyone interested in rhododendrons, azaleas or companion plants are always welcome at R.S.C.A.R. meetings or events.

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|----------------|---|
| 7 March | Meeting: Wendy Cornwall: "Gardens of Italy", with slides
Workshop: Roundtable on "Expectations for Making Rhodo Crosses" |
| 4 April | Meeting: Captain Dick Steele: "Magnolias".
Stephen Archibald: "The Morocco Garden of Yves Ste. Laurent" |
| 2 May | Meeting: Bernard Jackson: "Alpines and Their Growing Requirements" Members Plant Sale (see Special Notice in this Newsletter) |
| 21 May | Annual May Plant Sale and Mini-Show: Nova Scotia Museum
(see Special Notice in this Newsletter) |
| 3 June | RSC Annual General Meeting & Show: Floral Hall,
Edwards Gardens, Toronto |
| 3 June | RSCAR Annual Flower Show: Halifax Shopping Centre
(see Special Notice in this Newsletter) |
| 10 June | RSCAR Annual Potluck: (see Special Notice in this Newsletter) |

(The October Newsletter will be mailed in October)

ATLANTIC NOTES

ARS/RSC District 12 (National) Membership fees for 2000 were due on December 1 and 'Local' membership fees were due on January 1. If you have not renewed your membership please do so now. If you are not sure if you have renewed, please contact **Betty MacDonald** our **Membership Secretary, 902-852-2779**. The current dues structures are as follows:

1. R.S.C. - A.R.S. Membership (which includes Atlantic membership) \$42.00 Canadian for individual membership. Please make your cheque payable to - "Rhododendron Society of Canada" and send to **National Treasurer, Mr. Robert Dickhout, R.S.C. District 12 A.R. S., 5200 Timothy Crescent, Niagara Falls, Ontario L2E 5G3. Be sure to specify Atlantic Region.**

2. Atlantic Society only (which includes all privileges, mailings and activities of R.S.C. Atlantic only) \$15.00 for individual or family membership. Please make your cheque payable to "R.S.C. Atlantic Region" and send to **Atlantic Membership Secretary, Betty MacDonald, 534 Prospect Bay Road, Prospect Bay, Nova Scotia, B3T1Z8.**

When renewing your membership please include your telephone number. This will be used for RSCAR purposes only (co-ordination of potluck suppers and other events) and will be kept strictly confidential. Thanks!



A very warm welcome to our new and returning R.S.C. Atlantic Region members who have joined since the February 2000 Newsletter:

Doug Bamford	Halifax, NS
Roslyn Duffus	Waverley, NS
Jane Keeping	Boutiliers' Pt., NS
Tory LeBlanc	Halifax, NS
Sandy Lumgair	Lower Sackville, NS
Kenneth MacDonald	Charlottetown, PE
Peggy MacDonald	Dartmouth, NS
Barbara McLean	Chester Basin, NS
Mary Sparling	Halifax, NS



ADVANCE MAY PLANT SALE PICK-UP

Holland Residence, 12 Central St., Bedford, NS

Saturday, April 29, 2000 - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Members who ordered plants are reminded that they are to pick up their plants on the above date. If you are unable to pick up your order on this date, contact Ken Shannik to make alternate arrangements. The driveway to the Holland Residence is located around the corner on Gordon Street. For more information contact **Ken Shannik at (902) 422-2413. E-mail: InsigneGdn@aol.com**

Rhododendron Society of Canada - Atlantic Region

INTERIM Unaudited Financial Statement, 1 September 1998 - 31 August 1999

Income	1998-99	1997-98	1996-97
Tissue Culture Sale	7147.30	4219.00	4384.00
May Plant Sale	11602.88	11223.54	9896.74
Membership Dues	1112.31	1564.70	1350.00
Seed Exchange	499.17	295.58	308.35
Interest	36.43	88.30	184.41
Raffle	in May Sale	184.08	67.00
April Workshop	227.00	374.00	00.00
Niagara Plant Sale	00.00	1978.74	00.00
Miscellaneous	00.00	9.55	00.00
Bus Refund	00.00	00.00	555.33
National Meeting	2934.11	00.00	00.00
Labels	<u>153.00</u>	<u>00.00</u>	<u>00.00</u>
Total Income	\$24112.20	19,937.49	16,749.83
Expenses			
Tissue Culture Sale	5818.53	2325.50	3325.53
May Plant sale	8424.30	9225.07	7273.19
Speakers Honoraria	1460.50	301.00	337.59
Newsletter	1878.08	1794.10	1500.72
Social Expenses:coffee, pot luck, Christmas party	131.78	249.73	283.21
Steele Lecture	1049.99	8.00	13.66
Administration: postage, bank	59.62	507.92	64.04
Show	00.00	377.88	00.00
Library	407.48	168.20	00.00
Media/ Notices	404.56	538.43	205.02
Printing: brochures,etc.	147.20	170.80	179.58
Seed Exchange	4.48	113.18	18.24
April Workshop	114.98	370.00	00.00
Niagara Plant sale	00.00	873.37	00.00
Raffle	39.68	00.00	36.77
Donations	100.00	750.00	100.00
Miscellaneous:			
MNH Planting	394.34	823.76	
Adsum House talk		44.85	
Web project	603.74	218.49	
Barbara Hall Memorial		246.38	
Other	129.73	64.80	
Labels	980.06		
National Meeting	<u>1095.03</u>		
Total Expenses	\$23,244.08	19,171.46	13,468.55
Total Surplus	\$868.12	766.03	2556.10
Total Assets		\$15,859.89	15,083.86

SPECIAL NOTICES

MEMBERS' PLANT SALE

**During Regular Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, May 2, 2000**

Members may bring plant material to sell at the regular monthly meeting in May. Plants should be uncommon or unusual varieties of perennials, annuals, shrubs, etc. that are not readily available commercially or rhododendron species and hybrids - seed grown or rooted cuttings. You may bring a couple of plants or several hundred. Members will be required to price and sell their plants themselves. This is a great way to get rid of those surplus plants while recouping some of your expenses for pots and soil, etc.

2000 MAY PLANT SALE

**Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History - Auditorium - Lower Level
1747 Summer Street, Halifax**

Sunday, May 21 - 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

This Sale is one of our major fund-raisers and it relies heavily on donations from our members. We hope to have a good selection of tree and shrub seedlings and rooted cuttings, perennials, annuals, etc. Please keep it in mind this Spring when you are seed sowing, transplanting and dividing. Your donations are greatly appreciated. Members are requested to drop off any donations between 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

Prior to the Sale opening, donors and sale volunteers will be able to select two plants. This will not include nursery-grown stock. Plants must be selected, paid for, and taken to your vehicle a minimum of one hour prior to the Sale opening. This rule will be strictly enforced! No exceptions!

Plan to attend and bring or tell your friends. This event is always popular and the line-up to get in is usually long. For the best selection we recommend that you plan to arrive prior to the 1:30 p.m. opening time.

Volunteers are needed to help with the Sale. If you can help out please contact **Ken Shannik at (902) 422-2413. E-mail: InsigneGdn@aol.com**

2000 SPRING MINI-SHOW

**Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History - Main Level
1747 Summer Street, Halifax**

Saturday, May 20 - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 21 - 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The May Mini-Show is a non-competitive exhibition of rhododendrons, azaleas and any other early-spring blooming plants held annually in conjunction with our May Sale. The Show is an important opportunity to educate the general public and always draws many inquisitive visitors.

Volunteers are needed to help supervise the display. You need not be an expert. If you can assist either with your time or by lending plant material, please contact **Jenny Sandison at (902) 624-9013.**

SPECIAL NOTICES

2000 RSCAR ANNUAL FLOWER SHOW

**Halifax Shopping Centre - Lower Level
Mumford Road, Halifax**

Saturday, June 3 - 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Entries will be received on Friday, June 2 from 9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and on Saturday, June 3 from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Please use the main entrance beside the former Eaton's. All members are encouraged to enter. If you do not know what class your entry falls in, there will be people on hand to assist you.

Volunteers are needed to assist with Set-up, Judging, Clerking, Supervision of the Displays, and Clean-up. If you have any questions or can help out either on Friday evening or Saturday please contact **Penny Gael at (902) 826-2440 (E-mail: Penny@axes.net)** or **Gwen Romanes at (902) 454-7618 (E-mail: romanescg@is2.dal.ca)**

NEW COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER NEEDED

We are currently looking for a new Communications Officer. The Communications Officer is responsible for e-mailing and mailing upcoming events to our members in Nova Scotia as well as distributing notices of events to various media outlets. This position requires that you have e-mail and a couple hours to spend every month or two. If you are interested in filling this position, please contact a member of the Executive.

Jan Riddell, our current Communications Officer, will be resigning at the end of May. Thank you Jan for a job well done!

ANNUAL RSCAR POTLUCK EVENT

**Saturday, June 10th.
at the home and garden of Bill Wilgenhof and Sharon Bryson
#407 Old Maryvale Road, Antigonish , NS**

RSVP to Sharon Bryson (902) 863-6307 or E-mail sbryson@ns.sympatico.ca

Plan to arrive in the early afternoon, around 1:30 PM, to tour, chat & dig. Bill is looking for homes in warmer parts of the region for some of his tender rhododendron seedlings, so you could go home with some interesting plants!

Mealtime: Approximately 3:30 PM. Please bring enough (for about 6 people) of something easy to eat on your lap - your choice of salad, casserole, dessert. RSCAR will supply juice, wine, bread, plates, cutlery, etc.

Suggested stops en route:

* Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Bible Hill: check out the various rhododendrons and other shrubs and trees.

*Levo's Gardens, Green Hill, Pictou County: operated by RSCAR member Carl Levo.

* Pleasant Valley Nurseries, on the TCH in Antigonish: have had nice woodland plants the last few years. NOTE that this is some way east of the exit to Maryvale. unless you're coming from Cape Breton.

Mrs. Berry's Bed Conclusion

By Alleyne Cook

The Quest

And *Primula cusickiana*; the finding of this rather insignificant little herb is one of my best bits of sleuthing and I don't mind taking credit, thank you. Gabrielson says it took him years to find it, Mrs. Berry said it took her six years. Bob, Jamie and Roy Davidson were at it for years. It took Ted Grieg and Cook two hours. Dead easy. First, Ed Lohbrunner, in a talk to the AGCBC, showed us the type of country in which it grew. Secondly, Gabrielson in *Western American Alpines* says it flowers behind the melting snow with Dodecatheons and Sisyrinchiums as companions. Thirdly, Mrs. B. mentioned the date that she collected it. So Ted and I went down to the Wallowas, found the forest ranger, explained our problem, and obtained from him a map on which we marked two likely spots with x's. The rest was simple.

Why all the fuss? Well actually not that simple. The snow is still melting and the fields are very wet. The plants of *Primula cusickiana* grow on raised mounds where their roots are above water. The side roads are forestry roads, hard clay in the summer, soft sticky gumbo in the spring. We had no chains so we took rope and bound it round all four tires. Then we slipped and slid into the country. When we found *Primula cusickiana*, I didn't bother to collect it.

Well, of all plants, there is a *Primula* for every occasion. Short or tall, easy, difficult to impossible to grow, in rock or bog, alpine house or greenhouse, they range through every colour, and, do you know, there is not one good book about them. Never has any genus been so neglected by a qualified horticulturist. Maybe no such person exists. This is the classic case of botanists being totally useless in the practical horticultural scene. These morticians of the plant world produce learned publications but are clueless on the ways and wherefores of the genus and how to grow them.

America is woefully short of primula and those they have are not first class. But yet the spell of *Primula cusickiana* is there, radiating from the violet scent (which I don't recall) and the small blue flowers as it sits on its mound above the ice cold water. It is only right that it and others should be difficult, if not impossible, to grow. Only those of great skill can coax such a reluctant successfully. It's too difficult for me to grow.

Aquilegia Jonseii

Mrs. Berry had spent years and \$500 looking for *Aquilegia jonesii*. That was back in the 1930's. She never did find it. Mind you, she did find a tremendous number of other genera, so her travels were never wasted. Ted, in the 1930's, had done a professional collecting trip to Montana, Wyoming and Colorado, first finding the alpines in flower and then returning later to collect the seed. I was very keen to find the same *Aquilegia* so I suggested to Ted that we cover the same country and revisit his locations.

We drove up to the high country of Montana, out of the wood and onto those wonderful flower-filled open meadows. I was flipping. When we stopped, Ted walked off across the meadows, stopped, and called that he had found it-and there it was. At least the plants were - tiny tufts of grey; the flowers were finished. We were to find it scattered over acres, but always needing the same soil conditions. In one place, among boulders the size of packing cases, we found two perfect specimens, one with 12 flowers, one with 16. Usually three and four flowers would be the average number.

Later we went over Teton Pass, but that is another story. Suffice to say we stayed in a dreadful motel that night in Boise and the next day, when we went on south, the conversation got to a comparison with Mrs. B.'s bed. The motel bed wasn't the problem it was the loving couple on one side and the drunks on the other.

The Medication

The first time the Lohbrunnners went with Mrs. B. on a trip, they spent the night in a hotel. Ethel decided to go Mrs. B.'s room. When she opened the door, she found Mrs. B. looking at a medicine bottle. "It says here four drops in a glass of water, I wonder if four drops in a glass of whiskey would be just as good?"

The Vancouver Trip

I had a foreman at Stanley Park called Jim Evans, whose father, Bill Evans, was considered in the 1930's to be the best gardener in Vancouver. This was because he was the gardener of a man called Ashton. Ashton was English and wealthy and remained so until the beginning of the war. The point is that Jim, the apprentice, confirmed Mrs. B.'s stories.

On the first night of a Vancouver visit, Ashton took Mrs. B. to her room when time came to retire and he carefully adjusted the window opening. When he had gone, Mrs. Berry looked at the opening and decided that that was not enough air so she opened the window wider. That set off all the burglar alarms and Mrs. B. heard nothing. Nor did she hear the police arrive.

At breakfast the next morning she was served bacon and eggs. The Americans have a funny way of eating, in that they continuously play with their knife and fork, cutting food, changing hands with every forkful. Canadians hold a fork in the left hand and the knife in the right hand and leave them there. So Mrs. B. tried to eat like Ashton but lost control and shot her eggs right across the snowy white tablecloth.

Mrs. B. went downtown and on the way back to Ashtons her horn jammed on. Totally oblivious to the noise, she thought as she drove up Granville Street that everyone was being very polite and getting out of her way. She arrived at Ashtons with police cars behind her. It was Jim who turned off the horn that had been blasting all the way back to the Ashton mansion. Mrs. B. laughed; it was a grand joke.

Ted Tests The Bed

Barbara and I had decided to have a holiday on our own and go down to the Siskiyous. It didn't work. There was always Ted, most of the time Donald Stryker and Roy Davidson, and, at one stage, there were five more. The freeway from Eugene to Portland was hot, very hot; I drove, B. and T. slept.

We arrived at Mrs. Berry's and she took one look at three exhausted objects, "Ladies to the right, gents to the left"; we cleaned up. Then tall whiskeys in the cool living room.

After a discussion on plants, Mrs. B. said "The answer is in the book upstairs beside my bed". Then Ted knew the answer to the bed, which was fortunate for he never saw her again. He went behind her and grinned at us, he went out of the room and up the stairs. Time went by. We heard him coming down stairs and reaching the door. We knew that when he opened that door we would all know the answer.

The Close

For 25 years we had in this house a group of tiny mouse musicians made from a soft material. Mrs. Berry gave it to Briar when she was six. Twenty-five years later we sent them to New Zealand to join Briar's daughter, Alice.

The last time I saw Mrs. Berry was on the return journey from a visit to Dr. Bowman in Fort Bragg, California. On our arrival, Barbara, with our daughter Briar, went round to the back of the house and entered through the kitchen. After a time Briar, who was six, came out of the house. 'Aunt Jane (my sister) and Nigel, you have not met Mrs. Berry, please come with me.' I hadn't been invited and so I wandered around the garden for a time.

When I went into the house I found the two children playing with a drawer full of toys. Every year when the Christmas toys came into the stores Mrs. B. went shopping. There were three drawers to fill, the young, middle and older children. While the adults talked the children played. When we departed she loaded them up with toys including the mouse orchestra. As we departed, Mrs. B. gave Barbara a beautiful copper bowl. But I always remember, and so does Barbara, the long searching look those two sharp eyes gave Barbara the first time they met.

And we never saw her again. I've never gone back to her garden.

Editor's note. After Rae Selling Berry's death in 1976 her garden was purchased by the Portland Garden Club. The Berry Botanic Garden opened in 1979. The garden features collections of primulas, alpines, rhododendrons, lilies, Oregon native plants, a library and herbarium. Many plants are still in their original locations.

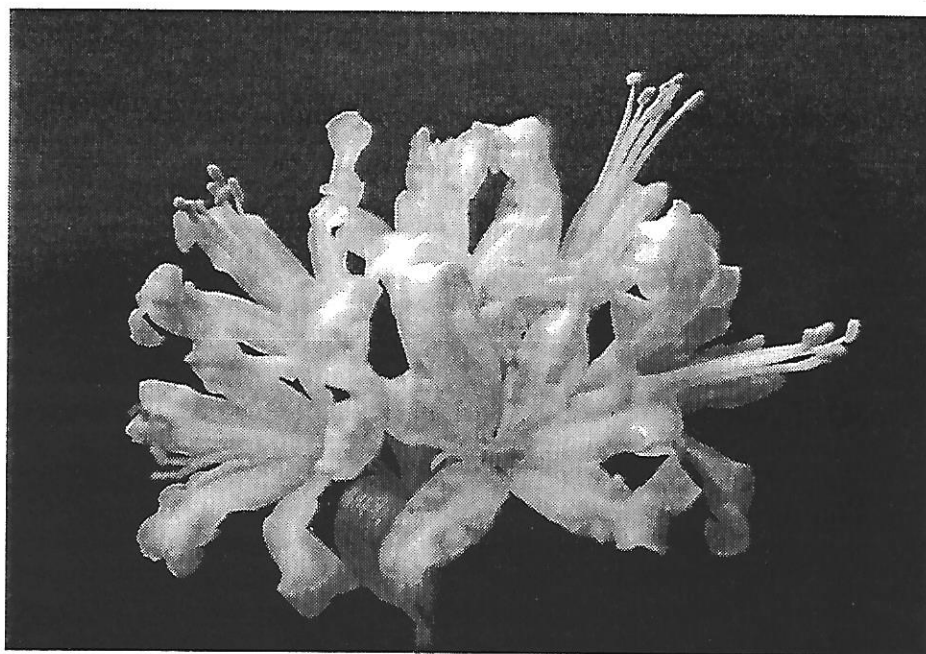
**The Berry Botanic Garden
11505 SW Summerville Ave.
Portland, Oregon
97219**



Cornus mas - Cheery yellow flowers brighten the Spring garden.

NERINES

By John K. Weagle



Nerine 'Salmon Supreme' - Photo by the Author

Just at the time of year when the autumn sun is diminishing greatly and the winter gloomies are at hand a group of easy-to-grow plants start to brighten the season and the spirits - the Nerines. Bulbous plants in the Amaryllidaceae family, Nerines are autumn flowerers native to South Africa. Most nerines flower just before their narrow leaves start to push up - the International Bulb Society's cultural sheet says this is sparked by a drop in temperature. The narrow petaled flowers are borne in umbels and the stamens stick straight out - reminiscent of *Lycoris radiata*, the spider lily. An added bonus is a remarkable iridescent sparkling quality of the flowers in bright light - golden on red-flowered plants and silver on pink and white-flowered ones. A few species are faintly fragrant.

The most familiar species is *Nerine bowdenii*, the aberrant one of the lot. It blooms first - September or October here in coastal Nova Scotia, again on the leafless bulb. The leaves do not develop until early spring. Since the leaves of ALL species are frost tender this is the hardiest of all and worth a try outdoors even here on the coast. Against a warm wall facing south it has persisted for nearly 10 years. This species and the others dislike summer wetness; upper New England and the cooler parts of the Pacific Northwest would be suitable places to try it outdoors. The flowers are a magenta-pink and quite magical seemingly appearing from nowhere. Panayoti Keladis of the Denver Botanical Garden and Jim & Jenny Archibald of Wales have collected seed of particularly high-altitude forms that may push the hardiness range of this handsome species.

All other species flower in the fall and early winter -- October to mid-January in my cold just frost-free greenhouse -- and the tender leaves are produced immediately thereafter. These species would only be hardy in the cool winter/dry summer areas like Northern California IF the area does NOT experience copious summer rainfall. The first species to bloom after *N. bowdenii* is *N. filifolia* - it has the smallest flowers in my collection but are the most charming, long lasting and perhaps my favorite. The wavy-margined pinkish flowers are freely produced.

Before we go on, *Nerine sarniensis* must be mentioned. This tender species is known as the Guernsey Lily as it is happily growing away on that Channel Island. Washed ashore from a shipwreck, it was originally thought that the ship and the bulb were from Japan but in fact the species is a South African as well. Many of the nerine hybrids are based on this species. Forms of this species 'Fothergillii Major' and 'Corusca Major' are the next to bloom for me and are a startling scarlet/orange. This is quickly followed by *N. flexuosa* 'Alba', a white. At this point we are into early December. Do keep in mind that the flowering sequence might be entirely different for you. As well there are many more species than those mentioned.

At this point a myriad of hybrids starts blooming and continues unabated until mid-January. The first of these hybrids were obtained in the early 1980's from Nerine Nurseries of Worcester, England. At the time it was the only source for named clones. Sadly it closed shortly after my first order. Luck quickly turned when I read an article by former British diplomat and plantsman extraordinaire, Sir Peter Smithers who gardens and hybridizes in retirement in Vico Morcote, Switzerland. In that remarkable climate he continues the nerine breeding projects started by the Clarkes of Borde Hill and the Rothschilds of Exbury, both in England. His hybrids knocked me over with their pure clean colors, large flowers and densely packed umbels. It was immediately obvious that he was a breeder with a remarkably critical and discerning eye combined with non-compromising high standards. His vastly superior plants were leagues ahead of those few circulating in nurseries. I boldly wrote to him about nerines and he quickly replied enclosing quite a few open-pollinated seeds. These we grew and one plant flowered in 18 months - a curious grey/mauve -- I liked it. A photo was duly sent off to Sir Peter and the timing was impeccable. He was amazed that we had flowered a plant so quickly from seed and again sent us a vast quantity of seed - this time it was 19 hand-pollinated crosses utilizing some of his best plants. These crosses produced hundreds of very good plants - whites, reds, striped, pinks, oranges, salmons, mauves, greys - which still have to be ruthlessly assessed. How do we do it when we have only our own plants to compare them with? Well Sir Peter's book *Adventures of A Gardener* not only proves he is a consummate photographer but in it he documents some of his best plants. This book is a horticultural and visual feast that will have you chasing rare plants for the rest of your life!

Nerine culture could not be easier. The plants as mentioned are grown in full sun in a cold greenhouse, fully ventilating when temperatures get above freezing in winter. Temperatures of 1°C have caused no damage whatsoever. I pot in a fast-draining peat-based compost with very little nutrients. Fertilizer, especially nitrogen is not to their liking and with me at least seems to cause basal rot. I have even grown them in pure sand with no fertilizer. The bulb should be planted with the top half of the bulb exposed. In hot summer climates, it might be wise to plant with just the neck exposed.

In the fall they are watered once just after the flower spike emerges. They are watered copiously after the leaves are half developed and kept moist until the leaves die down in April/May here; perfect timing as bench space is sorely needed at this time of year. They are repotted every 5 years or so just after the leaves die down. Crowding is tolerated but I think they would perform and flower better if they were only slightly pot bound. Do not overpot.

Nerines appear to be immune to most pests. Typical greenhouse pests such as aphids, mites and mealy bugs do not seem to bother with them.

Named hybrids are slowly becoming available in better garden centers, usually found at the same time the colchicums and fall-blooming crocus arrive, August here. Seeds are an easy means of propagation; in fact they will occasionally sprout roots before they drop from the plant. Try these magical easily grown plants, they really brighten dark wintry days. ❀

FARGESIA MURIELAE

The Umbrella Bamboo

By Ken Shannik

It is said that this bamboo is the most beautiful and elegant of all bamboo. It has bright green new canes, which age to yellow. The partially evergreen lush leaves are a fresh pea green. Unlike many, it is not an invasive spreading variety but a clumper - this is highly unusual for most other clumping bamboo are tropical. Fortunately for us in Nova Scotia, this high altitude species does best in a cool summer climate and is very hardy as well. The Umbrella Bamboo and Fountain Bamboo (*F. nitida*) are the hardiest for cold climates and when established easily tolerate winter lows of -25 to -30°C.

F. murielae sends up new canes called culms from late May to late June and these reach their full size in just a couple of weeks. These canes live for 4 or more years and eventually die out. As the clump becomes established, and with good growing conditions, new canes should reach 3-4 meters high (9-12 feet). The oldest plant locally (in Dartmouth) was 12 feet high and about 6 feet across after 15 years. As with most other Umbrella Bamboos, it flowered in 1998 and is near death. The next flowering for this species is estimated to be around the year 2085.

In fall, the older lower leaves will turn bright yellow and drop. The newer ones will be retained. In all but our worst winters the foliage has stayed remarkably evergreen through the winter. It is a wonderful winter sight to see the leaves dusted with snow. Heavy wet snow loads can flatten the canes but they pop right back up when the snow melts. By March the leaves gets pretty tattered looking but the new leaves produced in May quickly push the tired old ones off.

All Bamboo of the same genus and species generally flower worldwide over a period of about five or more years after a given time period and then die. Because bamboo, as with most other plants, are given names and classified into genus and species based on their flowers it comes as no surprise that the names can be highly confusing. Ernest Wilson introduced the Umbrella Bamboo from China in 1913. The local Chinese could not recall that this bamboo had flowered in recent memory. Therefore you will find this plant mistakenly listed in the past under many names - *Arundinaria murielae*, *Sinoarundinaria murielae*, *Sinarundinaria murielae*, *Fargesia spathecus* and most recently and only until it flowered as *Thamnocalamus spathecus*. In about 1995, *Fargesia murielae* started flowering and in Nova Scotia most plants flowered heavily in 1998 producing vast quantities of seed. Its flowering cycle is presumed to be approximately once every 92 years. Since it is a slow and expensive process to divide bamboo we are fortunate to now have that solved with many seedlings about despite the fact that the germination rate was not great.

Cultural Requirements

This bamboo does best in bright shade to partial shade. In full sun the leaves will roll, turn yellow and burn in winter. Choose a spot that will allow the bamboo to spread in time and allow for the eventual height. The site should be protected from wind especially in the winter, as the leaves can be evergreen as mentioned. Bamboo looks especially good where they can be viewed from the house in winter.

Bamboos demand good drainage and contrary to popular belief they are NOT water plants for bog or swampy soil. If water sits in the area the site is too wet and the plants will die rapidly. Instead the soil should be evenly moist and never get bone dry - if it feels like a freshly baked moist cake it is perfect. An ACID loam is perfect but poor soils can be improved with the addition of peat, very well-rotted cow or sheep manure and a bit of garden fertilizer. Plant the new bamboo no deeper than it was growing in the pot, mulch with pine bark mulch or pine needles and water heavily once a week heavily for the first summer.

Fertilize every year with lawn fertilizer or 6-12-12 before the new canes come up. Keep the mulch replenished every year. Compost or well-rotted cow/sheep manure will get the plants in high gear. Once every few years the older less vigorous canes only should be removed just below soil level to keep the grove looking fresh. Do not leave a stub above ground, as these can be brutally dangerous to children, pets, feet and knees. The old canes make perfect garden stakes when dried under cover for a few weeks. ❖

The Leach Hybrids: A Personal Appraisal

By Dick Brooks
Concord, MA

With the passing of David Leach in April 1998, the genus *Rhododendron* lost one of its principal champions, and rhododendron enthusiasts everywhere lost a real friend and mentor. David would be remembered for his monumental book *Rhododendrons of the World* alone, but his boundless energy and enthusiasm found outlets also in an outpouring of articles, many of them for the Society's *Quarterly Bulletin and Journal*, in a major testing and evaluation program at his garden in Ohio, in many research projects, in a lecture circuit worldwide, and in extensive breeding activity, which resulted in a bewildering array of rhododendron cultivar introductions.

It has become fashionable among some rhododendron cognoscenti to express disdain, or even outright contempt, for the Leach introductions. Various reasons are cited: faults in plant habit, mediocre performance, lack of flower quality, and so on. In the case of certain cultivars, some criticism may indeed be justified. But it must be remembered that David was breeding and selecting plants for his own area of the Midwest, not for New England. I have seen magnificent specimens in his Ohio garden, while the same cultivar here in my Massachusetts garden languishes or develops a rangy habit.

I have been growing some fifty-seven of the Leach hybrids in my Zone 5b garden, some for as long as 30 years, and in my opinion there are many first-rate plants among them. What follows is a personal assessment of all the Leach plants that I have grown, based on my own experience with them. For purposes of comparison, I've grouped these into several categories, based on plant and flower characteristics. I have also given a numerical rating to each cultivar, using the old ARS rating designation, in which the flower, plant/foliage, and overall performance are rated by a number from 1 (poor) to 5 (superior). It should be emphasized that these ratings are by no means "official", but simply my own evaluation of the plants' appearance and performance in my own garden.

Full Size Plants with White Flowers

'Lodestar' A.E. and 'Swansdown' A.E. are among the earliest introductions (1965-1966) from David's breeding program, and are from the same parents ('Belle Heller' and white *R. catawbiense*). They form tall, wide-spreading, rangy plants; 'Swansdown' has somewhat more regular branching, resulting in a denser habit. Both are dependably floriferous year after year, budding at almost every terminal. The flowers, opening from pale lilac-colored buds, are white with a bold yellowish-green dorsal flare. They have the typical *catawbiense* form, but are considerably larger than the familiar "ironclad" hybrids, and the trusses of 15 to 20 flowers are quite impressive. My ratings: 'Lodestar' 3/2/4; 'Swansdown' 3/3/4

Another pair of siblings is 'Applause' and 'Finlandia' [*catawbiense* 'Catalgla' x ('Adrian Koster' x *williamsianum*)], introduced in 1972-1974. These are medium tall growers, forming well-branched, fairly dense plants. 'Finlandia' has uniquely shaped leaves, convex with a pronounced downward turn, that give it a "what's-that-strange-looking-plant" appearance. Both varieties have good-sized, wide open, pure white flowers, with a slight shading of ivory in the center, in trusses of 10 to 12 flowers. My ratings: 'Applause' 4/3/3; 'Finlandia' 3/3/3.

Introduced about the same time, but from quite a different line of breeding [white *catawbiense* x *fortunei* x (*arboreum* x *griffithianum*)] is 'Dolly Madison'. As might be expected from its pedigree, this is a lusty, vigorous plant that can easily reach 5 or 6 feet at 10 years of age. The very large flowers open the palest of pinks and quickly fade to white. My rating: 4/3/3.

Also dating from 1972 is 'Nepal' [white catawbiense x (wightii x fortunei)]. Although this is reported to reach an ultimate height of 15 feet, my plant, now 12 years old, has tended to be more spreading in habit: less than 5 feet tall but close to 7 feet across. It has impressive, substantial foliage now, but in its earlier years here the leaves tended to be somewhat chlorotic. I suspect this was a juvenile characteristic, now outgrown, because I have neither fertilized the plant nor attempted to correct the soil pH. The large fortunei-type flowers open from pink buds. My rating: 4/3/4.

Yet another mating of white catawbiense, this time with the pale yellow-flowered 'Goldfort', resulted in 'Luxor' A.E., introduced in 1973. A medium sized plant, 'Luxor' bears flowers sometimes described as yellow; they are actually ivory or cream-colored, presented in a full truss. My rating: 4/3/3.

Of all the Leach hybrids in the white-flowered category, my vote for the "best in class" goes to 'Edmond Amateis' (white catawbiense x Dexter seedling), introduced in 1969. This is a big, vigorous, well-branched, well-foliaged shrub, of almost ironclad hardiness. Unlike the ironclads, however, it bears large (3 ½ inch) flowers of classic fortunei form, held in upright trusses of impeccable bearing. They are a snowy white, whose purity is emphasized by a small flash of red in the center of each flower. About the only desirable feature it lacks is fragrance. My rating: 5/4/4.

From the same parents as 'Dolly Madison' came 'Bravo!', introduced in 1974. A similarly robust plant, 'Bravo!' was described by Leach himself as "a huge, blowsy, Rubenesque sort of rhododendron with buxom trusses of not very distinguished carriage". Despite that assessment, 'Bravo!' is of ironclad hardiness, and the light pink trusses are indeed huge for a hardy rhododendron. After 15 years in my garden, the sturdy, well-branched plant is towering over its neighbors, at 10 feet in height and spread. My rating: 3/3/4.



Rhododendron 'Cyprus' - A floriferous specimen with a close-up of the flower truss. Photos by John Weagle

A trio of popular cultivars resulted from the cross of 'Mrs. Furnival' x white catawbiense: 'Cyprus', 'Persia' A.E. and 'Party Pink' S.P.A. Introduced from 1973 to 1983, all three are vigorous, floriferous plants; the two latter grow taller than 'Cyprus' and tend to become somewhat leggy with age. The blossoms of 'Cyprus' open almost white from pink buds, with a strong reddish flare that dissolves into speckling at its margins. 'Persia' has flowers of very pale pink with a greenish-yellow flare. The deepest colored of the three, 'Party Pink', sports cotton-candy pink trusses with less conspicuous coppery speckling; this is one of the very few plants to have received the coveted Superior Plant Award from the ARS. My ratings: 'Cyprus' 3/3/3; 'Persia' 3/3/3; 'Party Pink' 4/3/3.

From a cross by Tony Shammarello ('Cunningham's White' x red catawbiense hybrid), Leach raised 'Vernus' and introduced it in 1957. Notable for being one of the earliest flowering elepidotes, 'Vernus' blooms here in early May, and in late April in milder climates. The blossoms are a clean light pink, without purple overtones, and of typical catawbiense form. However, the plant habit leaves something to be desired, rather open and leggy. Perhaps a sunnier spot than I had for it would produce a shapelier plant. My rating: 3/2/3.

Perhaps the hardiest rated (-30°F) of all the Leach elepidote introductions is 'Pink Flourish' [white catawbiense x {(decorum x griffithianum) x catawbiense hybrid}]. Introduced in 1962, this is another vigorous but somewhat leggy plant that looks well in a woodland setting but less so in a more formal shrub border. It is dependably floriferous, year after year, with trusses of large flowers that open a vivid purplish-pink, and age gracefully to a more subdued light pink with deeper edges. My rating: 3/2/3

'Ballad' and 'Madrid' are both from the cross Dexter #1 x 'America', but were introduced eleven years apart, 1972 and 1983, respectively. As might be expected from the pedigree, 'Madrid' forms a rather open, leggy plant; my plant of 'Ballad' is still too young to evaluate. The flowers of the two siblings are similar in form: large, open and fortunei-shaped, but quite distinct in color. Those of 'Ballad' are a light purplish-pink, edged slightly deeper, while those of 'Madrid' are a more intense deep pink, still on the purplish side. Both have a prominent reddish flare in the throat. My rating for 'Madrid': 3/3/3.

Curiously unlike its parents in both habit and flower color is 'Rio', introduced in 1983. Its putative pedigree is 'Newburyport Beauty' x 'Newburyport Belle'; both parents are Dexter hybrids, and have the typical Dexter vigor and open habit, and both have flowers in undistinguished shades of lavender pink. Yet this offspring forms a neat, compact plant, only 4 feet tall and 5 feet wide after 9 years in my garden, and even more surprising, the blossoms are an ingratiating shade of salmon-pink, seemingly lit from within by a golden glow in the center. My rating: 4/4/3.

Possibly the most popular (and deservedly so) of all David's introductions is 'Janet Blair', introduced in 1962. Of unknown parentage, but probably including some Dexter blood, this has proven to be a star performer through large areas of eastern North America. It forms a vigorous, well-branched plant with superb foliage; a mature specimen will need plenty of space, but is well worth the area devoted to it. The very large, ruffled flowers are a pale pink ("negligee pink", according to one nurseryman) with a prominent yellowish flare. 'Janet Blair' is just one of those happy garden subjects that knows its job and proceeds to perform it in a thorough and enthusiastic manner. My rating: 5/4/5.

I give 'Bali' similar high marks, although it is quite different in stature and flower from 'Janet Blair'. From the cross [white catawbiense x {(neriiflorum x dichroanthum) x fortunei ssp. discolor}], 'Bali' was introduced in 1974. My plant, now 12 years old, is a dense mound of deep green foliage, 4 ½ feet tall and 7 or 8 feet wide. The flowers, elegantly simple in form and held in trusses of about 15, are a delicate light pink with a deeper reverse. A suffusion of pale yellow in the center of each flower gives the impression that the truss is illuminated from within. 'Bali' is altogether a superb plant, among the best in my garden. My rating: 5/5/5.

Plants with Flowers in Pastel Blends

From the same cross as 'Bali' is 'Nuance', introduced in 1968. It makes a similarly dense, well-foliaged plant, but more upright in habit. It has been a shy bloomer for me, setting just a few buds for the first time after 11 years in the garden. The flowers open a light pink with a suffusion of yellow in the center; they fade to almost white, with the barest hint of pink at the petal margins, but retain the yellow shading. My rating: 4/4/2 (the low third figure only because of the paucity of bloom).

A trio of cultivars, 'Bangkok', 'Duet' and 'Monaco' resulted from a single 1952 cross [white catawbiense x {dichroanthum x (griffithianum x auriculatum)}]. Introduced, respectively, in 1972, 1961 and 1984, all three offer flowers in a similar palette: pale yellow centers with broad edging of light pink. All three age considerably paler, 'Duet' in particular ending up almost white. 'Monaco', showing the auriculatum influence, is supposedly the latest to bloom, but this past spring (1998, an unusually early season, to be sure) it was in full flower for me the third week in May. Plant habit in all three is reasonably dense and well-behaved. My ratings: 'Bangkok' 3/3/3, 'Duet' 3/4/3, 'Monaco' 3/3/3.

'Hindustan' is a 1983 introduction from the cross [(maximum x 'Goldsworth Orange') x ('America' x 'Gertrud Schale')]. It is a prime example of a handsome flower (if and when it decides to bloom) on a perfectly terrible plant. Gangling and awkward, my plant at 12 years old had reached mature dimensions of 7 feet high and as wide, but still exhibited awkward adolescence in habit, and it had not yet favored the garden with a single blossom. Finally in 1996 this leggy monster deigned to set a grand total of 3 buds. Indeed, the flowers are rather spectacular, a luminescent shade of soft orange which on closer examination is seen to be made up of a buff-yellow background suffused throughout with pale pink. Perhaps a heavy flowering, with trusses on every terminal, would suffice to forgive the plant its wayward tendencies, but until that happens, my rating is 4/1/2.

With a plant habit just as straggling, and a flower far less comely, 'Shanghai' has even less to commend it. Introduced in 1973, 'Shanghai' [(Mrs. Furnival' x white catawbiense) x an unnamed seedling, mauve with gold blotch] in my garden is now a mature 16 years old, but has not outgrown its bad adolescent habits. The flowers are white flushed pink at the edges, which might be attractive if it stopped there, but the effect is spoiled by a large and prominent greenish blotch. Not surprisingly, my rating is 2/1/2.

It's a relief to report that the next plant in this category is, at least in an early evaluation, a winner. 'Casanova' ['Newburyport Belle' x (white catawbiense x wardii)], introduced in 1985, is proving, after 7 years in my garden, to be a neat, well-mannered plant with an exceptional floral display. Widely touted as a hardy yellow, growers who acquire it and watch expectantly for the first flower are quite sure they have been sent the wrong plant, for the expanding buds are a vivid coral-red. The perplexing pigment rapidly dissipates after the flowers open, however, leaving a unique shade of buff-yellow highlighted with prominent coppery speckling on the upper lobe. (The story goes that David had not initially planned to release 'Casanova', but simply regarded it as a stepping-stone for further breeding; he used its pollen on a vast harem of other plants, thus earning it its name!) My rating (tentative): 5/4/4.

Another plant with a good deal of promise is 'Trinidad' ('Calcutta' x 'Tahiti'), introduced in 1982. After 8 years in the garden here, the plant is still only 2 feet tall, a slow, dense grower. It is not yet what I would call generous in bloom, but the flower is so unique it is well worth waiting for. From reddish buds, the developing flowers lose the red coloration, turning a pale ivory or cream except for a sharply defined edging of the same cherry red; a real show-stopper. My rating (tentative): 4/4/3.

Finally, a relatively new introduction, 'Santa Fe', provides a color accent virtually unknown until now in colder climates. From the cross ['Limelight' x {'(King of Shrubs' x smirnowii) x 'Limelight'}], 'Santa Fe' blooms in a unique shade of orange-pink with cream shading and a center of deep red. The plant habit seems full and dense. Although I have had the plant for only a year, I'm ready to assign a tentative rating of 4/4/3.

"YAK" Hybrids

Like so many other hybridizers, David was keenly aware of the benefits of introducing genes from *R. yakushmanum* (now properly *R. degonianum* ssp. *yakushmanum*) into his breeding program. Its dense, compact plant habit, excellent foliage and foliage retention, and hardiness are all desirable traits to be passed on to its progeny. Among his earliest introductions (early 1960's) are several siblings from the cross (white *catawbiense* x *yakushmanum*). 'Anna H. Hall' has graced my garden for a quarter century, and although it is now leggy from being shaded out by taller plants around it, in its early years it did maintain a fine, compact habit. The abundant flowers are typical "yak" in color, pink buds opening white. I rate this and the very similar 'Spring Frolic' at 3/4/4.

From a 1962 cross (*smirnowii* x *yakushmanum*) by Ben Lancaster of Camas, Washington, Leach in 1976 introduced 'Crete'. Like other plants from this cross, 'Crete' is a good, vigorous grower that maintains a dense, well-branched habit and superb, heavily indumented foliage. Bright magenta-rose buds give promise of a colorful display, but the "yak" influence predominates and the flowers quickly turn white shortly after opening. I understand from some growers that fall bloom is a problem with this cultivar, but this has not so far been the case with my plant. My rating: 3/4/4.

Full Size Plants with Red Flowers

One of the first to be introduced (1976) in this category was 'Fiji', from an unlikely cross of 'Russell Harmon' x 'Goldsworth Orange'. The plant habit is low and spreading; I might say almost sprawling; and the flower is an interesting shade of light red ("claret-rose", according to one description). Its late flowering (early June for me) is a plus. My rating: 3/2/3.

'Burma' is one of those plants that I saw putting on a splendid show in David's own garden in Ohio, but for me has been a dismal failure. Unable to hold up their heads, the new shoots flop over, and wind up creeping along the ground. This might be a virtue if I were looking for a ground cover plant. But the plant is deplorably stingy with bloom: in the ten years I have owned it, it has bloomed only once, and with only a single truss, albeit of a good dark red. Understandably, my rating is 2/1/2.

Two plants still too young to evaluate are 'Bikini Island' and 'Samoa'. Neither has yet bloomed. 'Bikini Island' at five years old seems destined to become a narrow, upright plant. Look for a full report in a couple of years.

Low Growing Plants with Red Flowers

As a group, these have been less than successful for me. At least four of them, 'Flamenco', 'Rangoon', 'Singapore' and 'Small Wonder' are siblings, from the cross 'Fanfare' x 'Gertrud Schfile'. Another, 'Sumatra', is from the cross 'America' x 'Gertrud Schale'. Yet another, 'Ravenna', from the cross ['Scarlet Blast' x {(white *catawbiense* x *yakushmanum*) x ('Fanfare' x 'Gertrud Schale')}], is still too young to evaluate. All feature flowers in shades of clear red, largely free from the purple cast which flaws so many hardy reds.

Probably the best of the group in my garden is 'Small Wonder'. It blooms reliably, with medium-sized tresses of a fairly dark red. My plant's habit is open and somewhat leggy, but this I attribute to its being overshadowed by a huge overgrown *Ilex crenata* for the first seven years of its life. 'Singapore' is almost as good, although it has a tendency to produce a late flush of growth which features unattractive congested foliage around the flower buds. My rating for both: 4/3/3

'Flamenco' and 'Sumatra' are a different story. Both developed into weak, spindly, sprawling specimens, with an inordinate attraction for vine weevils. Eventually the situation got so bad that both were consigned to the brush pile.

'Rangoon', although it has been here nine years, has yet to flower. At least it has made a presentable plant, low and spreading. A rating will have to wait until it blooms, but I would downgrade it in any event, for its stinginess of bloom.

The "Yellows"

Probably more effort has been expended by Eastern hybridizers toward developing hardy yellow-flowered elepidotes, with less success, than on all other breeding pursuits combined. The goal of the luminous color of 'Crest' combined with Zone 5 hardiness has been elusive. David's early attempts in this area were lackluster, but at least one recent introduction holds promise of being a real breakthrough.

One of the earliest in this group to be introduced (1973) was 'Nile'. A hybrid of white *catawbiense* x *wardii*, 'Nile' in my garden presents an attractive plant with nice glossy foliage (albeit somewhat susceptible to leaf spot), but is now budded for the first time in 9 years. A long wait; I hope the flower is worth it. My rating: ?/3/2.

Of a similar pedigree (*catawbiense* 'Catalpa' x 'Crest') is 'Hong Kong', introduced in 1974. This is a similarly attractive plant, again clad in glossy leaves with the same leaf spot problem. Unfortunately, it has been similarly stingy with bloom for me. The flowers, when the plant deigns to favor us, are pale yellow, in some seasons almost cream-colored, with a tiny reddish flare. My rating: 3/3/2.

'Peking', introduced in 1973, represents the next generation of this breeding line: (white *catawbiense* x 'Hawk') x (*catawbiense* 'LaBar's White' x 'Crest'). Although this has been freer flowering than the two preceding, the blossoms are smallish and the color still from the standard set by 'Crest'. Nor is the foliage as good as 'Nile' or 'Hong Kong'. My rating: 3/2/2.

The introduction of *R. yakushmanum* into the breeding lines resulted in a more compact plant than the preceding: 'Golden Gala' ('Great Lakes' x 'Good Hope'), introduced in 1981. It has reasonably good habit and foliage, but the flower color, a cream or ivory, could only be termed yellow by a myopic optimist wearing gold-tinted glasses. My rating: 3/3/3.

'Canary Islands', with a complex pedigree, [(white *catawbiense* x *fortunei* ssp. *discolor* x 'Fabia')] x 'Mary Belle' x 'Peking', was registered in 1985. It has been touted as the "deepest yellow of all" but for me has fallen far short of the advertising hype. Even more parsimonious with its flowers than 'Hong Kong', it has borne exactly ONE truss in the ten years it has occupied a prime site in my garden. The flower color is recognizably yellow, but certainly not the daffodil color illustrated in the nursery catalog. The plant is reasonably presentable, bushy and dense with acceptable foliage that so far has shown resistance to leaf spot. My rating: 3/3/2.

A recent introduction (1991) from the cross [white *catawbiense* x (*dichroanthum* ssp. *apodectum* x 'Loderi White Diamond')] is 'Borneo'. My plant is still too young to evaluate, and has not yet flowered.

Stay tuned! The most promising of this group, in my opinion, is 'Capistrano', introduced in 1994. This advanced generation hybrid again has a complex pedigree: [{white catawbiense x (fortunei ssp. discolor x 'Fabia')}] x {'Russell Harmon' x 'Goldsworth Orange'}] x 'Golden Gala'. From its yakushimanum ancestor it has inherited a neat, mounding habit and deep green foliage. The full truss of flowers, opening from yellow buds (rather than the peachy-colored buds of 'Hong Kong' and 'Golden Gala') are yellow enough to make the "yellows" of David's earlier efforts look insipid by comparison. Although I have only had the plant for two years, I'm willing to assign it a rating of 4/4/4.

Season Extenders: Early and Late

'Spellbinder', a 1975 introduction, resulted from a cross of 'Russell Harmon' x (calophytum x sutchuenense), an attempt to combine the large, early flowers of the pollen parent with the hardiness of the seed parent. From the pollen parent it has also inherited huge leaves (9 to 10 inches long) and a stocky, vigorous habit, with new stems the diameter of a man's finger. Considering its pedigree, the plant is surprisingly dense. My eight-year-old specimen has still not flowered, but again considering the pedigree this is not unexpected; my plant of R. sutchuenense took 14 years to first flowering! My tentative rating: ?/4/3.

To extend the blooming season in the other direction, David developed several late-flowering hybrids. 'Summer Snow' [maximum x (ungernii x auriculatum)], introduced in 1970, is the only one of these to flower for me so far; it bears somewhat loose trusses of very large, widely funnel-shaped flowers of sparkling white, about the third week in June. The large leaves are a good foil for the blossoms. As might be expected from its ancestry, the plant is husky and vigorous, and has already made clear its intention to become a tree. My rating: 4/3/3.

With a plant very similar to 'Summer Snow' in appearance, 'Summer Summit' [maximum x (auriculatum x fortunei ssp. discolor)], introduced in 1984, seems headed in the same direction. The flowers, not yet produced on my seven-year-old plant, promise to add a touch of pink to the summer scene. My rating: ?/3/3.

'Summer Glow' ('Summer Snow' x 'Scarlet Blast'), introduced in 1985, at six years old presents a reasonably good-looking, if not densely foliated plant. The flower is described as deep pink shading to a paler center. And 'Red River' [maximum 'Mount Mitchell' x ('Mars' x 'Fanfare')], introduced in 1984, should carry the summer color palette into the red range. My ratings for both: ?/3/3.

A Caveat

I'm certain that some of the plants that I have downgraded in the foregoing pages are thriving and rendering good accounts of themselves in other New England gardens. A great deal depends on environmental factors: soil, sun/shade, moisture, root competition, etc. So do not hesitate to experiment with those to which I have assigned low ratings. Who knows, some day you might be able to take me by the hand and point with pride to a neat, compact plant of 'Hindustan' smothered in blossoms! On the other hand, I find it difficult to imagine that winners like 'Janet Blair', 'Bali', 'Casanova' and 'Malta' will be anything less than sensational in your gardens, as they have been in mine.

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Video Review

By Bruce Clyburn

The Realm of the Rhododendron

Tom Garbutt and Russell Garbutt, Wild South Enterprises, Dunedin, New Zealand 1996. U.S.\$38.50 (incl. p.&p.) 90 minutes

The Realm of the Rhododendron is a video tour through a series of individual New Zealand gardens. There are a few brief sojourns to Sikkim and Nepal to view the genus in its native habitat. The New Zealand climate stretches from sub-tropic to sub-antarctic with a wide range of soil types that will support virtually all species and hybrids. While we are at the height of our bloom in mid June the land down under is in the dead of winter. New Zealand's peak bloom occurs much later in mid October.

Tom Garbutt is a man who has a deep passion and immense affinity for the genus rhododendron. In his town of Oamaru, Tom is known as "Mr. Gardening" and is well known for his talkback gardening show on Radio Waitaki. He has 60 years gardening experience and has been breeding rhododendrons for the past 25. Tom makes random cameo appearances to cover topics of propagation, culture, and pest/disease problems.

Our tour begins in Betty More's garden in Dunedin, South Island. Noteworthy is a fine specimen of *R. Sir Charles Lemon* with leaves bearing rich cinnamon brown indumentum. On to North Island and the Taranaki Mountains where we travel the Puketti Gardens with Curator Graham Smith. You'll be amazed by *R. protistum* var. *giganteum* "Puketti". Grown from Frank Kingdom Ward seed collected in Burma, this plant took 21 years to bloom. It has 22 inch indumented leaves with a deep green, glossy surface. Next to Christchurch and the Ilam Gardens where Edgar Stead produced his famous Ilam azaleas, only a small part of his breeding program. His work was carried on by Mollie Coker and we view many of her creations in husband, Ron's gardens. Back again to Dunedin Botanic Gardens for the Rhododendron Festival. A four hectare rhododendron "dell" is planted with hundreds of species and hybrids (Lem's Cameo is very popular). Well known U.S. plantsman Britt Smith (SM numbered *R. occidentale* collection) guides us around pointing out a *R. cinnabarium* hybrid "R. Trewithen Orange" and a super specimen of *R. macabeaeanum*. Plants that will not winter back home in Seattle. This is why Dunedin is the self-proclaimed "Rhododendron Capital of the World". 700 mm of rain per year, 8-16°C average temperature and liberal sunshine. A short excursion to Lanach Castle and Margaret Barker's species collection. *R. edgeworthii* flourishes outside here. We move on to Blue Garden Nursery, South Island and Denis Hughes shows us his azalea crosses between Ghent hybrids and Ilams which yield huge double flowered trusses, superbly scented. Now the menu changes for we are off to Auckland on North Island and the topic is vireyas. We visit the famous hybridizer Felix Jury and see many of his vireya hybrids and a 34 years old species grown from seed collected in New Guinea. At the Rita Watson garden she shows us how to grow vireyas in special pots made from hollow pandan tree logs and sunk in the earth. Most interesting is a stop at Kimbolton where Rodney Wilson of Crosshills describes his procedures for creating *R. yakushmanum* standards, top- grafted on *Roseum Elgans* (ARS Journal, Vol. 50 No.4, pg. 207)

Well at this point you can appreciate that the action is non-stop for a full 90 minutes and a fine job was coordinated by Tom Garbutt through TVNZ's Natural History Unit. I can recommend the video to true enthusiasts of the genus or greenhouse owners since few plants other than the deciduous azaleas will winter in our climate. To those just joining RSCAR, before you spend this amount of money, beg, steal or borrow a taping of CBC-TV's "Land and Sea" series aired in March 1988 entitled **The Adventures of Captain Steele**. This 30 min. film ranks well even when compared to world standards.

Sources to obtain **The Realm of the Rhododendron**:

Wild South Enterprises
P.O. Box 474
Dunedin, New Zealand
US \$38.50 (incl. p&p.)

Greer Gardens
1280 Goodpasture Island Rd.
Eugene, OR 97401-1794 U.S.A.
US \$44.95

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MAY 2000 PLANT SALE

ADVANCE PLANT SALE FOR MEMBERS

ADDENDA

We have on order the following additional rhododendrons to augment the limited selection on the Advance Plant Sale list found in this newsletter. Most are small one year old rooted cuttings and will need some special care. Please see the second paragraph of the main list. Be sure to provide them with excellent drainage and bright shade initially. Do not let them dry out and do not overwater!. Species in the Taliensia subsection should be shaded during very hot periods until well established and always have a cool root-run. Prices are approximate and are dependant on shipping costs. **The deadline for ordering has been extended to April 4, 2000.**

LEPIDOTE RHODODENDRONS

X46. R. 'Airy Fairy' (*lutescens* x *mucronulatum* 'Cornell Pink') Flowers are pale pink with a yellow centre fading to peachish in trusses of 3. Open, upright, willowy habit. Floriferous. Very early. Semi-deciduous. To 4' high in 10 years but will get much bigger. Should be hardy in Zone 6b. (1 Yr. - Price A)

X47. R. 'Alice Swift' [(*racemosum* x *mucronulatum*) x *carolinianum*] Lavender-pink to clear-pink frost resistant flowers. Similar to 'PJM' but less dense, pinker, slightly later and has green winter foliage. To 3' high in 10 years. Zone 5. (1 Yr. - Price A)

X48. R. *hippophaeoides* - This is one of the showiest species in the Laponica subsection. Flowers range in colour from dark blue to pale lilac. Small glaucous green leaves. Habit is spreading-upright and open. To 3'h. in 10 yrs. Very hardy. Zone 5. (1 Yr. - Price A)

X49. R. *keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' - Creamy yellow flowers in profusion. Very early. A dwarf selection with a very dense habit. Forms a perfect dome to 1' high in full sun. Wine-red winter foliage. Selected by Barry Starling and widely used in hybridizing. Zone 5b. Sold out quickly last year. These will be very small plants. (2 Yr. - Price D)

X50. R. 'Maricee' (*sargentianum* selection or hybrid) A dwarf lepidote rhododendron hybrid from the Pogonanthum Section with loose trusses of small, creamy-white daphne-like tubular flowers. Free-flowering. Tiny, dark shiny green leaves on a dense mounded plant to 2' high. Beautiful peeling white bark on mature plants. Resents drought. Zone 6, possibly colder. Seldom available. (1 Yr. - Price C)

X51. R. 'Mother Greer' (*hippophaeoides* x a Triflorum series) Brilliant lavender-blue flowers are similar to *R. hippophaeoides* but much larger in size. Foliage and habit resembles that of its mother but it is more compact. Zone 6. (1 Yr. - Price B)

X52. R. *primuliflorum* 'Pink Form' - A dwarf lepidote species from the Pogonanthum Section with small trusses of pale-pink daphne-like tubular flowers. Tiny, dark shiny green leaves on a dense mounded plant to 3' high. Foliage has a highly aromatic strawberry scent. Resents drought. Zone 6. Seldom available. (1 Yr. - Price A)

X53. R. 'Russautinii' (*russatum* x *augustinii*) This hybrid is very similar to the more common R. 'Bluenose'. Deep lavender-blue flowers. Pale green foliage. Habit open and upright. To 5' high in 10 years. Zone 6. (1 Yr. - Price A)

ELEPIDOTE RHODODENDRONS

X54. R. 'Bengal' ('Essex Scarlet' x *forrestii* Repens Group) To 3' high in 10 years. This hybrid is one of many of this cross named by Hobbie - others include 'Scarlet Wonder', 'Elisabeth Hobbie', 'Baden Baden', etc. This is purported to be one of the better ones. Dark red flowers are darker than those of Scarlet Wonder. Dark green foliage. Dense low spreading habit. Zone 6b. Protect with boughs in winter to avoid foliage burn. (1 Yr. - Price A)

X55. R. *bureavii* 'Award of Merit Form' A species with spectacular foliage. New leaves and stems are covered in rusty red hairs. Mature leaves are shiny green with thick rusty red indumentum. Frilled flowers open pink and quickly fade to white. Compact and shapely in sun, upright in shade. Mid-season. To 5' high in 10 years. Requires very good drainage. Zone 6. (1 Yr. - Price D)

X56. R. *campanulatum* v. *aeriginosum* This species has incredible foliage with thick, smooth fawn-coloured indumentum. Leaves open glaucous silvery-green and age to a soft blue-green. Flowers are strong purplish-pink. Rounded, compact, dense habit to 3' h. in 10 yrs. Slow growing. Zone 6. (1 Yr. - Price D)

X57. *R. forrestii* Repens Group A prostrate growing species with leathery dark green deeply veined leaves. Its dark red flowers are born solitarily and lay on the foliage. Extremely early. Only for the mildest areas in Zone 6b and even then will appreciate some winter protection. A few only. (1 Yr. - Price D)

X58. R. 'Luxor' (white *catawbiense* x 'Goldfort') Flowers open light pink and fade to pale yellow in rounded trusses of 15 florets. Dark green foliage. Broader than tall and well-branched. To 6' high in 10 years. Zone 5. (1 Yr. - Price A)

X59. R. 'Small Wonder' ('Fanfare' x 'Gertrude Schale') Scarlet red 2" flowers are held in globular trusses on this very hardy Leach hybrid. Dwarf, fairly compact, spreading habit. To 18" high in 10 years. Reported to be doing very well in Sydney and St. John's. Zone 6, probably colder. (1 Yr. - Price A)

X60. R. 'Sumatra' ('America' x 'Gertrude Schale') Another hardy cardinal red Leach hybrid. Dense, spreading, dome-shaped habit to 2' high in 10 years. Zone 6. (1 Yr. - Price A)

X61. 'R. 'Summer Summit' [*maximum* x (*auriculatum* x *fortunei* ssp. *discolor*)] This rhodie is one in a series of late-blooming, large-leaved hybrids by Leach. Flowers are white with pale pink basal shading. Dense foliage is long and dark green. Vigourous. To 10' tall or more. (1 Yr. - Price A)

DECIDUOUS AZALEAS

10. Azalea 'Wallowa Red' - Sorry this azalea on the main list will not be available.

X62. R. *schlippenbachii* - The 'Royal Azalea of Japan'. Elegant, flat, soft pink flowers to 3.5-4.5" across adorn this species. Distinctive deciduous foliage has excellent fall colour. Requires sun for best results but needs protection from the mid-day sun. Avoid frost pockets. Appreciates a bit of lime or bonemeal occasionally. Zone 5b. (1 Yr. - Price B)

EVERGREEN AZALEAS

X63 Azalea 'May Belle' ('Helen Curtis' x 'Hino Red') Deep pink to strong purplish pink semi-double flowers. Broad, semi-dwarf habit to 1.5'h. x 3'w. in 12 years. Zone 6. (1 Yr. - Price A)

SHRUBS

27. *Viburnum plicatum* v. *tomentosum* 'Mariesii' - Sorry this plant on the main list will not be available.

PRICE CODES

PRICE A - APPROX \$9.00

PRICE B - APPROX \$9.00

PRICE C - APPROX \$12.00

PRICE D - APPROX \$15.00

ARE YOU A SPECIES NUT?

Don't miss the Silent Auction of rare and uncommon species to be held at the May 2, 2000 monthly meeting. We hope to have the following species (and hybrids) to auction:

LEPIDOTES:

calostrotum ssp. *keleticum* Radicans Group
campylogynum v. *myrtilloides*
'Razorbill' - a *spinuliferum* hybrid

ELEPIDOTES

adenogynum
brachycarpum Dwarf Form
'Brigitte' - an *insigne* hybrid
campanulatum 'Roland Cooper'
degronianum
globigerum
insigne
principis (*vellereum*)
proteoides
pseudochrusanthum
roxianum v. *oreonastes*
soulei White Form
sphaeroblastum
traillianum

DECIDUOUS AZALEAS

atlanticum