

*Rhododendron Society of Canada*

# **ATLANTIC NEWSLETTER**

*www.AtlanticRhodo.org*

*Volume 25: Number 3*

*October 2001*

## **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year**

*This Issue is dedicated to the memory of Alex Muntz*

### **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.

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>4 September</b>  | <b>Meeting:</b> Jenny Sandison: "Some Famous Gardens of the U.K." The Annual General Meeting will follow this talk.   |
| <b>30 September</b> | <b>15th Annual Steele Lecture:</b> Kenneth Cox: "The Riddle of the Tsang Po Gorges" Nova Scotia Museum Auditorium, 3 pm.<br><br>Little explored and virtually inaccessible, the Tsang Po Gorge in south-east Tibet is the world's deepest gorge. This is the story of its exploration and the rich plant and animal life found there. Kenneth Cox, with friends, spent 10 years retracing the steps of Kingdon-Ward's 1924-25 expedition. |
| <b>2 October</b>    | <b>Meeting:</b> Kenneth Cox: "Hybridizing for cold and northern climates"<br>Kenneth Cox, from a family of writers, plant hunters, nurserymen and world experts on Rhododendrons, runs Glendoick Nursery near Perth, Scotland. His talk will include slides and discussion of the "bird" hybrids, "mammal" azaleas and other new developments.  |
| <b>6 November</b>   | <b>Meeting:</b> Jan Riddell and Dick Steele: "New Rhododendrons for Atlantic Canada"<br><br>Jan will present a short report on the activities of the Atlantic Plant Breeding Study Group. This group is seeking to document important hybrids which have been developed for Atlantic Canada by Joe Brueckner, Don Craig, and Dick Steele. Dick will present slides of what he feels are important hybrids that he has created.            |
| <b>4 December</b>   | <b>Meeting:</b> Christmas Party and members' slides. This is one of our favourite events. Please bring a few slides or photos of general interest from your gardening year. (See Special Notice in this Newsletter)   |

(The February Newsletter will be mailed in February)

## ATLANTIC NOTES

ARS/RSC District 12 (National) Membership fees for 2002 are due on December 1 and 'Local' membership fees are 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 May 2001 Newsletter:

**A. Blades  
Paul Bogaard  
George Cromwell  
Ann Lavers  
Marilyn Modler  
Tom and Theo Musial  
Markus and Sandra Stasiulis**

**Jorden Falls N.S.  
Westcock N.B  
Dartmouth N.S.  
Bedford N.S.  
Bedford N.S  
Lake of the Woods N.S.  
Dartmouth N.S**



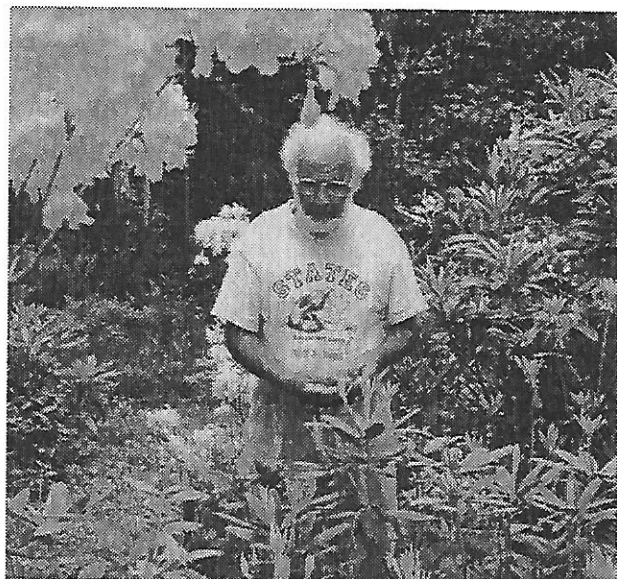
### 2000 R.S.C.A.R. SEED EXCHANGE

The deadline for submitting seed to the Seed Exchange is December 1, 2001. Members are encouraged to submit rhododendron and companion plant seed. All seed should be fresh, cleaned and properly labeled. Please give as much information as possible regarding variety, location, parent plants, and (if not a commonly grown variety) the expected hardiness.

Send your seed to: **Kathy Chute  
R.S.C.A.R. Seed Exchange  
Box 45  
Milton, Nova Scotia  
B0P1P 0**

## IN MEMORIAM

### Alex Muntz



Alex with some of his plants. [Photo Bob Pettipas]

The rhododendron world and Atlantic Chapter lost one of its most dedicated members on the 10th of July 2001. Alex Muntz, 80, passed away in Hendersonville, North Carolina, after a lengthy battle with cancer. Alex was a kind and gentle person who touched the hearts of all who met him. He was a social activist who had a profound interest in the welfare of the downtrodden and human rights for the oppressed. He was an advocate of peaceful solutions to problems.

His passion was hybridizing rhododendrons here in Nova Scotia. We all recall how Alex and his wife, Anne, would drive 3 hours to Halifax to bring trusses to RSC Atlantic's Annual Show - rain or shine. Their station wagon would be laden with trusses all neatly positioned for the trip. We could count on them every year and this was done for the public's enjoyment, not for the ribbons. Anne and Alex welcomed many members to stay at their home while visiting North Carolina.

Alex gardened in New Jersey and later North Carolina, during the winter months, as well as at his summer property in Clementsport near Digby, Nova Scotia. I recall first meeting him many

years ago and how excited he was to find rhododendrons so much easier to grow in the cool summer and mild winter area of Clementsport. His success with the very tender Dexter hybrids, Glendale and Gable azaleas astounded us all.

One of his favourite rhododendrons was 'Jock', (*williamsianum* x *griersonianum*). It grew like a weed for him at Clementsport but failed in his other gardens. It is now 4 feet high by nearly 7 feet across. This he crossed with Gable's *fortunei* and got a group of interesting, huge, lily-flowered and scented hybrids; the best he named after his wife, Anne Muntz. As well, he developed a group of stunning deciduous azalea hybrids. Some of which should be propagated and distributed.

Named hybrids that Alex thought were particularly good include Anne P. Muntz (Jock x *fortunei*) and Vulcan's Flame x Janet Blair (unnamed). And the following Exbury x japonicum crosses: Fundy Princess (large, clear pink with fragrance and a small golden flare), Goldeye (pale pink with a dark yellow flare & mildew resistance), Danny Muntz (double frilled red with an orange flare), Fundy Sunset (big pink, yellow flare, fragrant), James Gronquist (orange, hint of pink with a yellow flare, slight fragrance), Paula's Tangerine (a particular favourite, buds dark orange, fragrant, orange yellow flare), Sadie's Coral Reef (large coral pink, large golden flare, fragrant).

Before he passed away, in typical generous Alex style, he offered several members the big rhododendrons and azaleas in his woodland. It was thought that a fitting tribute to Alex would be to place these in a public area where everyone would have the chance to enjoy them. RSC Atlantic will be seeking suitable sites where proper maintenance in the future can be assured. The project will start early in the spring of 2002.

Our thoughts and sincere condolences go out to Anne and daughters Susan Gronquist and Anna Knudsen. ☾

John Weagle

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR WANTED

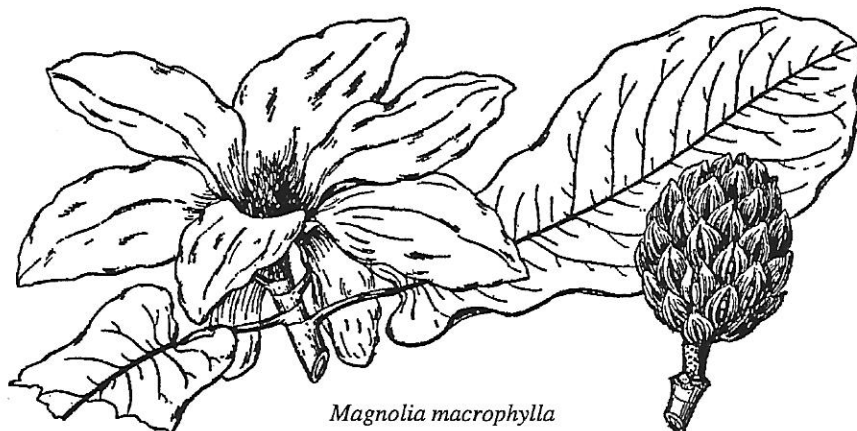
With the October 2002 issue, your right trusty RSCAR Atlantic Newsletter Editor will be retiring. That will make twenty years as Editor and a nice stopping place. The time has flown by, encompassing some 60 issues. I have worked with many interesting people and have been pleased with all the great contributions over those years. I now want to devote more time to personal projects which have been long postponed due to a constantly busy schedule. I especially hope to get better acquainted with my own library. I also want to devote more time to the expansion of our AtlanticRhodo website. As a future resource, most of our website, once it is built, will need very little maintenance and be of quite permanent value. But it needs several years of concentrated effort to bring this into being. We still have extensive plans for additions to the website.

If you are interested in taking on the position of Editor of the Newsletter, here is an overview of what is required. There are three issues published each year: February, May and October. The issues are mailed in those months, so preparation of each issue takes place during the preceding month. The Editor's position requires a person who is a self-starter and organized. The person needs a good knowledge of basic English usage and a certain sense of journalistic style. As well, an eye for detail and layout is a good quality to have. The Editor must co-ordinate the preparation of each issue, selecting and editing articles and soliciting contributions. Today, because of the convenience and rapid communication it makes possible, most of the co-ordination of details and assembly of articles takes place over the Internet. So the new Editor should be familiar with email and file transfer on the Internet. Please call or email me for more information if you are interested. There will be three more issues after this announcement, before I ride off into the sunset, in which the new Editor can see how the Newsletter is produced.

Happily, Sterling Levy, who does such great production work on the Newsletter, plans to continue in this largely behind-the-scenes role. Without Sterling's help, we would not have the high quality Newsletter we all enjoy.

Also, beginning with the next issue (February 2002), the RSCAR Atlantic Newsletter will get a face-lift, by recent (but long-discussed) decision of a small editorial committee, and take on a more modern look, featuring more photographs. We will go to electronic file format for printing purposes and for better quality photo illustrations. It will be called simply *AtlanticRhodo*. We hope you will like it!

Tom Waters  
STWaters43@aol.com  
(902) 429-3912



*Magnolia macrophylla*



## ***SPECIAL NOTICES***

### **15th ANNUAL STEELE LECTURE**

**Kenneth Cox**

Auditorium, Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History  
Sunday, September 30, 2001, 3:00 pm

#### **"The Riddle of the Tsang Po Gorges"**

Kenneth Cox and his father Peter are probably the world's leading authorities on the genus *Rhododendron*. Based in Perth, Scotland, they run Glendoick Gardens, the renowned nursery specializing in *rhododendron* species and hybrids. The nursery was started by Kenneth's grandfather Euan Cox, who accompanied Farrer on his last trip to the Orient in the early part of the 1900's. Both have led numerous expeditions to China, the Himalayas, Sikkim and other *rhododendron* centres in search of *rhododendrons*. Both Kenneth and Peter have made numerous trips to China to collect and observe *rhododendron* species in the wild. The duo has produced the best books on the genus *rhododendron*:

The Dwarf *Rhododendrons*, Peter Cox  
The Smaller *Rhododendrons*, Peter Cox  
The Larger Species of *Rhododendrons*, Peter Cox  
The Encyclopedia of *Rhododendron* Species, Peter & Kenneth Cox  
The Cultivation of *Rhododendrons*, Peter Cox  
*Rhododendrons*: A Care Manual, Kenneth Cox  
The Riddle of the Tsang Po Gorge, updated by Kenneth Cox and others.

They have also written numerous articles about *rhododendrons* and their plant hunting expeditions in many major horticultural journals.

They are breeding new and exciting *rhododendron* and azalea hybrids and many of the more dwarf types are proving to be excellent performers in coastal Nova Scotia. Their knowledge of all choice gardens plants is also legendary. We are fortunate indeed to have Kenneth Cox come to give the Annual Steele Lecture this year.



### **17<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL R.S.C.A.R. CHRISTMAS WINE & CHEESE PARTY**

**December 4, 2001  
N.S. Museum of Natural History  
Summer Street, Halifax**

Come out and enjoy an evening of good food, wine and conversation.

There will not be a speaker. Members are encouraged to bring in a few slides of their gardens, favourite plants, etc.

Members are requested to bring finger foods and sweets. R.S.C.A.R. will provide the wine due to Liquor License Board regulations.

## **RSCAR 2002 TISSUE CULTURE ADVANCE SALE**

It's time to order your tissue culture plants for spring 2002. This year we again have new varieties both of rhododendrons, azaleas and companion plants. The cost to you of these plants will be approximately \$4.75 to \$5.00. We try to keep the cost as low as possible.

*DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY WITH YOUR ORDER. YOU WILL BE BILLED WHEN YOUR ORDER IS PICKED UP OR SENT. (Special shipping charges may apply.)*

These plants will be available for pick-up in early April. The time and location will be announced at a later date. All members will be advised of the date and location once we receive confirmation of when the plants will arrive. In addition to your order you will be able to purchase additional plants at the time of pickup.

An order form is included with this newsletter. Please make sure your phone number is included on the form. If your order cannot be picked up in Halifax please indicate this on your order form. Sorry, this sale is only available to our members in the Atlantic region.

Orders that are not picked up in Halifax on the pick-up date will be sent collect by the method indicated on the order form. Where shipping options are limited, parcels will be shipped by Canada Post at your cost (payment in advance). Please remember to make a copy of your order.

The orders will be filled on a first in first filled basis. All orders should be in to me by mid-December, 2001. Please send your orders to:

**RSCAR  
c/o Audrey Fralic,  
RR 1  
Port Mouton, NS B0T 1T0**

Remember that these plants have not been hardened off. We recommend that you give them a good watering and then pot them up into 3" pots. You can use a mixture of one part commercial mix, one part peat and one part perlite. Do not overwater. Keep them inside under lights until all risk of frost is passed. In June, gradually place them outdoors. Do not leave them in their pots. Plant them in the ground in a coldframe or some other well protected area. We strongly suggest you use some mulch. Make sure they are kept watered

For their first winter provide some protection. Use a coldframe, burlap or conifer bows and make sure you use some mulch. Do not use clear plastic as it will cause burning and may even kill them.

Good luck with your plants and take notes on how they do. We would appreciate some feedback on their performance.

Happy Gardening,

**Audrey Fralic**

## RSCAR 2001 TISSUE CULTURE

### RHODODENDRONS (All rhododendrons are *elepidotes* unless noted otherwise)

| Variety            | Hybridizer         | Description  |
|--------------------|--------------------|--|
| 'Azurro'           | Hachmann           | An outstanding hybrid with deep purple flowers in dome shaped trusses. Each flower has a large black-purple blotch. Rich, deep green, glossy leaves. Compact-upright habit. To 6'(1.8m) x 4'(1.2m) wide in 10 years. ('Danamar' x 'Purple Splendour')  |
| 'Barmstedt'        | Hachmann           | Rosy red picotee-edged blooms with lighter centres appear late in the season and sit upon dark recurved leaves. New growth has silvery indumentum. A tough, compact plant. Grows to 3'(.9m) x 3'(.9m). Hardy to -15°F(-26°C). ('Sammetsglut' x yak 'Koichiro Wada')                              |
| 'Blue Baron'       | Mezitt             | Striking near-blue flowers cover this new <u>lepidote</u> hybrid. Shiny green, small elongated leaves turn bronze in winter. Compact mounded habit. Grows 2-3'(.6-.9m.) high. Zone 6. ('Starry Night' x 'Waltham')   |
| 'Bluenose'         | Breuckner          | A <u>lepidote</u> hybrid with bright blue flowers in abundance. Mid-May. Yellow new growth. Upright open habit. Grows to 4'(1.2m.) x 3'(.9m) wide in 10 years. Plant hardy to at least -30°F(-34°C), buds to -15°F(-26°C). ( <i>augustinii</i> hybrid x <i>dauricum</i> v. <i>sempervirens</i> ) |
| 'Catalina'         | Leach              | New. Distinctive flowers are strong, bright pure pink with a lighter center in dome-shaped trusses. Floriferous with a dense habit and excellent foliage. Grows to 5'(1.5m) x 5'(1.5m). Hardy to -20°F(-29°C).   |
| 'Cheer'            | Shammarello        | This early bloomer has pink buds which open to display distinctive shell-pink flowers with a red blotch. Glossy green leaves on a dense compact plant. Vigorous. Grows to 5'(1.5m.) x 6'(1.8m) wide in 10 years. Hardy to -15°F(-26°C). ('Cunningham's White' x red <i>catawbiense</i> seedling) |
| 'Firestorm'        | Vossberg/Mehlquist | Flowers are deep red and of heavy substance in dome-shaped trusses of 15-16 flowers. Dark green foliage. New foliage frosty lime green. Dense mounded habit to 5'(1.5m) high & twice as wide. Hardy to -25°F(-32°C). ('Vulcan' x 'Chocolate Soldier')  |
| 'Gustav Mehlquist' | Mehlquist          | Ball-shaped trusses with wavy edges open pink from dark pink buds. Grows to 3'(.9m) x 4'(1.2m) wide in 10 years. Hardy to -20°F(-29°C). ('Mrs. C.S. Sargent' x <i>yakushmanum</i> )  |

## RSCAR 2001 TISSUE CULTURE

### RHODODENDRONS (All rhododendrons are *elepidotes* unless noted otherwise)

| Variety             | Hybridizer          | Description   |
|---------------------|---------------------|---|
| Hachmann's Polaris' | Hachmann            | Ruffled ruby pink flowers with soft pink centers. Will tolerate lots of sun and poor soil. A profuse bloomer from a young age. Dense compact habit to 3'(.9m) x 4' (1.2m) wide. Hardy to -15°F(-26°C). ( <i>yakushimanum</i> 'Koichiro Wada' x 'Omega') |
| 'Hawaii'            | Leach               | Frilled flowers are deep rose pink with a very pale pink dorsal lobe. Dome-shaped trusses. An extra heavy bloomer. Compact mounding habit with dense foliage. Grows to 4' (1.2m) x 4' (1.2m) in 10 years. Hardy to -25°F(-32°C).                        |
| 'Karin Seleger'     | Breuckner           | A free flowering <i>lepidote</i> hybrid with purple-violet flowers in ball shaped trusses. Early. 30"(.8m) x 42"(1.0m) wide in 18 years. Bred in New Brunswick. Hardy to -25°F(-32°C). ( <i>impeditum</i> x <i>dauricum</i> )                           |
| 'Peppermint Twist'  | Thorton             | Red buds open to pink flowers with a white throat and a small area of red spotting on the dorsal lobe. Petals have wavy edges. Grows to 5' (1.5m) x 5' (1.5m). Hardy to -20°F(-29°C). An <i>R. hyperythrum</i> hybrid.                                  |
| 'Purple Passion'    | The Conrad-Pyle Co. | Deep, rich purple trusses and deep green foliage. Vase shaped habit. Very disease and pest resistant. Grows to 6' (1.8m) x 4' (1.2m) wide. Hardy to -20°F(-29°C).   |

### DECIDUOUS AZALEAS

| Variety          | Hybridizer       | Description   |
|------------------|------------------|---|
| 'Western Lights' | Brigg's Nursery  | Lush foliage with a slightly glaucous colouring. Large flowers of good, clear pink colouring. Very hardy to Zone 4. A polyploid form of A. 'Orchid Lights.'   |
| 'Snowbird'       | Biltmore Gardens | Powerfully fragrant white blooms appear with the rich glaucous blue-green foliage. A beautiful natural hybrid from Biltmore Gardens. Stoloniferous, compact plant to 4' (1.2m) high in 10 yrs. Zone 5. ( <i>atlanticum</i> x <i>canescens</i> ) |

## RSCAR 2001 TISSUE CULTURE

### COMPANION PLANTS

| Variety  | Description   |
|--|---|
| <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> 'Massachusetts' | (Kinnikinnick, Bearberry) Very hardy, prostrate groundcover. Thick, shiny, dark green leaves with the added bonus of light pink flowers in spring followed by red fruit in the fall. Does best in poor sandy soils in full sun or part-shade. Zone 5 or colder. |
| <i>Festuca glauca</i> 'Boulder Blue'           | The finest selection of Blue Fescue to date. Extremely narrow leaves of intense silver-blue form 8" clumps. Durable and drought-tolerant. Zone 4.   |
| Hosta 'Love Pat'                               | A most outstanding hosta. Huge, cupped blue leaves are thick and puckered. Pale lavender flowers in July.   |
| <i>Pieris japonica</i> 'Valley Valentine'      | A genus of evergreen shrubs allied to rhododendrons with panicles of white, lily-of-the-valley-like flowers in early spring. This is beautiful selection with rose-pink flowers. Slower growing than most to 4' (1.2m) high in 10 years. Zone 6b. ☞             |

### IN MEMORIAM

#### Augie Kehr

Dr. August E. Kehr, 87, of Mallard Point, Cedar Falls, Iowa, formerly of Hendersonville and Arden, NC, died Thursday, 27 September 2001 at his home. Augie was our Steele Lecturer several years ago and delighted our members with his warmth and knowledge. He was a well-known breeder of rhododendrons and was a pioneer in genetics and the breeding of magnolias. Probably no other person has done as much for the breeding and advancement of new magnolias and their study as Augie.

August retired from the USDA in March 1978, but did not retire from his research activities. He and his wife built a beautiful home on 8 acres of woodland and meadow in Hendersonville, NC. In the years of his retirement, August named and registered 9 azaleas, 12 rhododendrons and 31 magnolias. One of his many goals was to develop a yellow magnolia and a yellow azalea. He developed several yellow Magnolias. His fastigate yellow magnolia 'Sunspire' is featured on the cover of the Autumn 2001 Wayside Gardens catalogue.

In August 2000, August and Mary Louise reluctantly parted with their home in Hendersonville and moved into an apartment in Arden, NC. Since he could no longer grow his beloved Magnolias, August turned part of his time and energy to creating ceramic Magnolia as well as a host of other beautiful pieces.

In August 2001, they moved to Cedar Falls, Iowa, to be near their daughter and her family.

August was an active member in both the Magnolia Society and the American Rhododendron Society. Survivors include his wife, Mary Louise Kehr of Cedar Falls, IA and a daughter, Janet. Our condolences go out to them.

Memories of August almost always include the words intelligent, generous, kind, and gentle. He left behind a legacy of the plants he developed as well as a wealth of people whose lives he touched.

John Weagle



# DEL AND RAY JAMES AND THE BARTO MYTH

By  
Alleyne Cook

## Conclusion

### Selecting

One day Del and I were in his greenhouse looking over flats of one inch seedlings. From a half flat he selected three seedlings, from the other six. He claimed that even this early he could detect the best of the lot and I think he was right. When grown in Hendrick's Park or elsewhere it appears that his selections were well chosen. He taught me that dark foliage gives dark flowers and his initial choices were the darkest he could see. Unfortunately I can't remember where he grew any of his seedlings to a larger size. It is recorded that in 1956 he had 300 seedlings of various sizes. At the same time Prentice of Seattle had 40,000 (a gross exaggeration) and Rudolph Henny 20,000. The fact was, Del's method allowed him to do a great number of worthwhile crosses and grow them to flowering size, all in a very limited area.

As time went by more and more of Del's seedlings were planted in Hendrick's Park. Del died in 1963 and the garden was moved to Hendrick's Park. After some time, the Eugene Park Commission offered 300, 4-8 foot plants, to anyone who would give them a good home. His named hybrids were given to a nurseryman who caused them to die. Because Del was never generous with material, the only chance of a hybrid being in existence, was someone coming into the garden and stealing a cutting. And this was done. For years I had letters from Ray on how she had been out searching for these named hybrids. Find some she did but it was a sorrowful period. She had lost both Del and their life's work. In the late 1970's, she and several others in the Eugene, Oregon, area gave names to the James' seedlings that now grew in Hendrick's Park. 'Cookie' was named in that period. I have always found it strange that they never visited other Eugene gardens. Never once during the 7-8 years we visited and stayed did we ever visit another rhododendron garden. Members of the Society would wander in but the James' never wandered out.

It also seemed strange that with all the friends Del had in Oregon, when he was presented with the Gold Medal at the Portland Conference, he asked me to sit with Ray and him. Other club members also made sure that I did. I wasn't flattered, just very puzzled.

It was Charlie Raffill who was responsible for R. 'Esquire', one of the first hybrids that Del registered. If one lived in England, New Zealand or Oz and wrote a letter to a man one personally respected, the prefix "Mr." would be dropped and "Esq." would be placed after the name. When Raffill wrote to Del he addressed the envelopes "D. W. James Esq.". Del was so amused that he used "Esquire" for a plant that came from James Barto, that mysterious and mythical man of the West Coast rhododendron world.

## The Last Trip

In a letter I sent to New Zealand, dated 24 May 1963, there is a description of the last time we stayed at the "Happy House on the Hill".

Ray, knowing we were coming, asked us to come south to the Portland Chapter Show where she was judging. She had a ring made by Del for me, from New Zealand jade.

On the way back from California we stayed with her. The garden now was a mud-filled with only the area close to the house intact. She had offered the plants to the Portland Test Garden, Golden Gate Park and Eugene Park. It pleased her that each stated that they had certain sums of money and would like material to that value. Portland took 300 plants and the same number went to Golden Gate. Eugene took over 900 with six men digging and two planting over a two month period. When we stayed, 200 rhodos were waiting for the Fall before being moved. Golden Gate had taken all the tender species, including the only specimen of *R. 'Grierdal'* I have ever seen. For years it was a feature in the rhododendron world, being the only known cross between a lepidote (*R. dalhousiae*) and elepidote (*R. griersonianum*). Its large red trumpet was an attractive flower but on quite an untidy bushy.

### James Barto

As previously mentioned, the James' interest in rhododendrons went back to their association with James Barto. He had lived during the period when vast quantities of seed was pouring in from Asia collected by Rock, Forrest and Ward. Unfortunately for Barto no one in the U.S.A. was interested and his work and his expenses were, in many ways, in vain.

The only other pre-war collections were those of the Simpsons at Cowichan Lake, B.C.. Their small collection went to the Greigs of Royston on Vancouver Island. That was the start of the most comprehensive species collection. Then there was the collection of Mrs. Berry, some of it, maybe all of it, paid for by herself.

Barto worked in Junction City, Oregon during the week and returned home to an isolated valley on the weekends. Mrs. Berry visited him just once, and to quote Mrs. Berry, "his personal hygiene was so poor that after giving him a ride back to Junction City I never went near him again". The story goes that for 15 years he toiled away from home, solely to earn money to buy shares in plant collector's expeditions. The work at the homestead was left to his wife and his increasingly disgruntled family. Is it any wonder that soon after his death, they sold everything saleable? Personally, I think that he earned money to feed his family, not to invest in expensive plant collecting expeditions.

In 1939 all of his records were lost in a house fire. When we visited in 1957 a ruined shadehouse still had the outline of beds and amongst the weeds were some unrecognizable and struggling remnants of plants. A very small number of specimens were, I believe, moved to Hendrick's Park. And yet it was here, in this isolated valley, that the finest collection imaginable had grown.

Very little is known about Barto although he has the reputation of being a tremendous correspondent. Only 5 letters written to Joe Gable of Stewartstown, Pennsylvania, dated 1930-32, are in existence. Mr. Gable never disposed of any letters and to receive so few from another American rhododendron enthusiast at that time does not indicate extensive correspondence.

Then there is the list of rhododendrons growing at the homestead. On it are 340 names or collector's numbers; 39 are hybrids, 13 species under George Forrest numbers from the 1930-31 expedition, 35 numbers from the Joseph Rock 1929, and 11 from the Ward 1927 expeditions. The remainder have no collector numbers but are named species and azaleas.

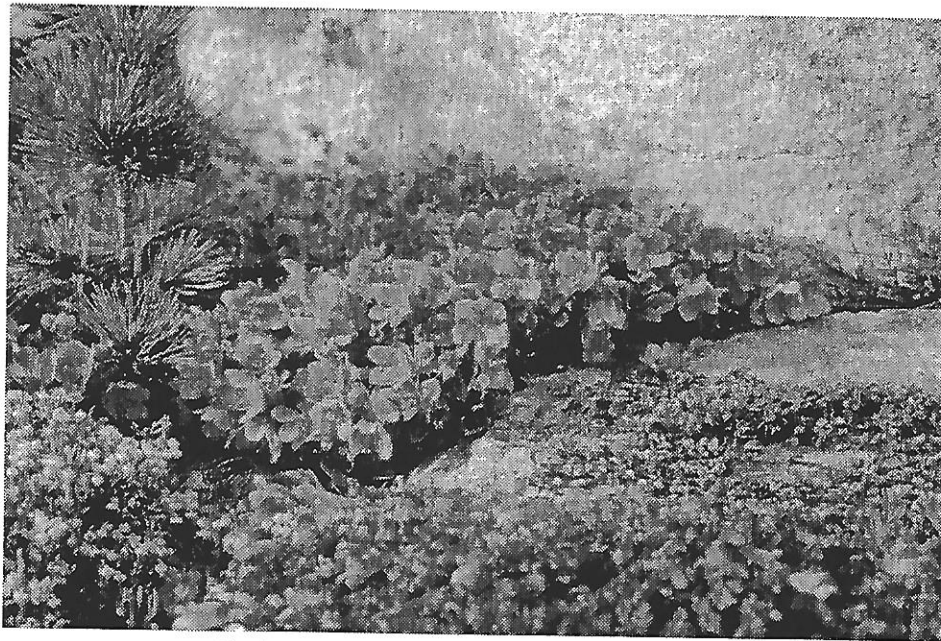
What is odd is the small number of packets of seed received with collector numbers. In 1929 Rock collected 170, Forrest in 1930-31 collected 80 and Ward 80 as well in 1927. We know that it cost Mrs. A.U.C. Berry \$500 for a half share in a Forrest expedition and it took 1200 pans to accommodate all of the seeds. Therefore I would suspect that the seeds grown by Barto were gifts from people who also had subscribed. Where would Barto, with a family to raise, have acquired such sums of money to subscribe to the collectors during the worst period of the depression?

The Ray and Del James' collecting list indicates what Barto had for sale but not once is there any mention of any collector numbers. In 1947 and 1948 they purchased 43 and 33 species respectively. In 1950, the year they went to England, there were only 11 purchased. "They were all tiny plants" said Ray, "that's all we could afford." Ray would not fail to use the collector's numbers. Why, if they bought tiny seedlings in 1947, were there 8-10 foot specimens of the Triflora growing around their shade house in 1955? These must have been 20 years old and surely were purchased from Barto back in the 1930's, before Ray's lists started.

The following story of Del's was repeated several times. Barto could not afford to pay the doctor so he would present him with rhododendron species. The doctor, Carl Phetteplace, planted them at his summer home up the MacKenzie River. At that period he wasn't interested in plants but he finished up with a wonderful collection. Several of these were also moved to Hendrick's Park. Phetteplace wrote about Barto in an article in the A.R.S. Journal and he did not mention the fact that he was Barto's doctor or how his collection came into being.

On 11 November 1955 a terrible freeze struck the Pacific Coast. That afternoon I was in Victoria digging plants. The afternoon temperature was 65°F.; by midnight it was 5°F. We had had a wet Summer and Fall and the plant material was soft. The entire West Coast was devastated. In the James' garden *R. cinnabarinum* 'Roylei', bought from Barto years before was killed outright. Early in 1956, I was visiting and Del found a stunted but rooted shoot under the dead winter grass. It was Barto's 'Roylei'. So it came about that an original Barto plant came to Vancouver and from it a lot of propagations were, in time, taken and distributed, a fitting reminder of the legend. This species had the usual dark red flowers but I have had several flowering in my garden and have noticed that over the dark red is a skin of a different colour. It can be a purple shade or, in Barto's plant, an orange overlay.

There is only one known photo of Barto. There are no records or letters, just the marvellous myth. By 1960, only three people in Eugene could remember him and his valley was quickly returning to nature. The great flume that carried water across the valley was gone, the house was burnt down, the shade house in ruins; it was all very sad. His story is indicative of a man who had lived too soon. ▣



*Rhododendron camtschaticum* [Photo John Weagle]

## RHODODENDRON CAMTSCHATICUM

By John Weagle

After a first look at this rarely grown, dwarf, deciduous shrub, you might have a hard time deciding what genus it belongs to--though Rhododendron would surely come to mind. This very curious and beautiful rhododendron has obovate leaves with bristly margins and leafs out perilously early, if it is being grown in a place prone to late frost. The plants in my garden are nearly prostrate, rising no higher than about 7cm (3 in.) and forming a mat about 50cm (20 in.) across after more than 20 years. It is mildly stoloniferous, a strange habit for a rhododendron. A bonus is its good fall foliage color in shades of orange, red, and clear yellow.

Plants with no flower buds apparent in fall shock and confound us with an eruption of bloom the following spring. The clever buds were there all along, neatly tucked away inside the woody stems and embedded in spring's first green shoots. The flowers, flat and as much as 5 cm (2 in.) across, are reminiscent of pansies, dancing above the mat on stout little pedicels--quite a magical effect.

*The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species* by Peter A. Cox and Kenneth N.E. Cox shows some nice forms. The typical color is purplish pink, but the Coxes at Glendoick Gardens in Perth, Scotland, and the Danes -- those superb growers of everything difficult or rare -- have selected good dark purple, clear pink, and red forms. These we have acquired and are slowly getting established. The extremely rare white form has been lost here on three occasions by both myself and Walter Ostrom. Kind souls have given us more plants, and we will certainly not be repeating our previous mistakes.

Walter's garden near Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia, probably provides the closest thing to perfect conditions for this maritime species: cool foggy summers, absence of damaging late frosts, and plenty of wind. In a peat bed heavily laced with sharp masonry sand and mulched with granite gravel, it grows lustily and even seeds itself about. Miraculously, several white seedlings appeared in his beds, though they too parted company after unfortunately drying out.

This species cannot tolerate extended periods of hot, humid weather, or dryness combined with blistering sunshine. The white form -- the very mention of which causes involuntary nail-biting -- is even less tolerant. (If you want a real challenge, try its close relative *R. redowskianum*, reminiscent of clouds of tiny butterflies, a humbling plant for those with delusions of lofty plantsmanship.)

*Rhododendron camtschaticum* is placed in subgenus *Therorhodion*. It is bone hardy, as one would expect of a native to chilly coastal regions in northern Japan, Sakhalin, Kamchatka, the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk, the Kurile and Aleutian Islands, and Alaska. In the wild, it grows in gravelly, peaty soils and seems happiest where moisture and organic matter collects at the base of cliffs, though its soil must never be stagnant. If you have a nice cool but sunny spot in a peaty section of the rock garden, you may find it rewarding indeed. ☞

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## F IS FOR FORTUNEI

By Norman Todd

There is a hoary, lichen-covered story about a rhododendron gardener reminiscing on his long past experiences. He sighs: 'I don't remember the name of the town; I don't remember the name of the wine; I don't even remember the name of the girl. But the tree we sat under was *Rhododendron Fortunei*.'

No doubt in our reminiscer's memory, it was the heady, sweet aroma that was stimulating his synapses. However, *R. Fortunei* is prized for more than its fragrance. It has the stature of a small tree; it is Clintonesque hardy and has been used extensively in hybridizing, being one of the parents of such beauties as the 'Loderis'. It has a big truss.

The name commemorates Robert Fortune, a man who broke a lacuna of horticultural exploration in south-east Asia, and particularly China, in the early-to-mid 1800's. This lack of activity was due, in part, to the death of Joseph Banks in 1820 and the consequent loss of his aggressive leadership at Kew. The first Opium War of 1839-42, despite its floral origins, did not help in the peaceful study of Chinese plants. Then, with the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, Hong Kong was ceded to Great Britain and the Royal Horticultural Society woke up to the huge potential of the Chinese flora. Accordingly, Fortune, a gardener with the Royal Botanic Garden at Edinburgh and the Horticultural Society's Gardens at Chiswick was appointed as the Society's 'Collector in China'.

His travels extended over nineteen years. His instructions for his first expedition were extensive. Of primary interest were 'the peaches of Pekin', and tea. Far down on the list was a reference to 'The azalea from Lo-fou-shan, a mountain in the province of Canton'. His salary was 100 pounds a year. He experienced many difficulties, including being beset by pirates on several occasions. Once he had to strafe an attacking junk with his big double-barreled fowling piece. On another occasion he relates: "From their manner I suspected that their intentions were not good... My poor plants were flying about in all directions... I felt there was no denying we were in dangerous company".

He traveled disguised as a native 'from a distant province'. I find it difficult to believe the Chinese were duped by his mimicry but then he seems to have been totally devoid of humour and was completely obsessed by his sense of mission. A large part of his time was spent on tea plants and getting them to India. His contention that green and black tea came from the same plant (a fact), did not seem to have been accepted by his superiors. One of the biggest ironies in his struggles to

get tea established in India is that few of Fortune's Chinese plants survive there. The tea plants that were later found native in Assam are the source of modern crops.

However, returning to the matter of *R. Fortunei*, and recalling its 1855 discovery, Fortune writes: "In a romantic glen through which we passed on our journey I came upon a remarkably fine-looking rhododendron... All the Chinese in that part agreed in stating that the flowers of this species are large and beautiful, but as all rhododendrons have this character, it is impossible to predict what this one may turn out to be..." He collected a goodly amount of seed and it grew vigorously at Chiswick and was soon prized in its own right and pressed into service as a stud in Europe and latterly in Eastern North America.

Some of the seeds' progeny proved to be remarkably cold hardy. Hybridizers in the New England States, such as Dexter and Gable, found it to be a great parent. The Arnold Arboretum in Boston, along with notables like Pierre S. du Pont, used the *Fortunei* hybrids to great effect in their gardens. It is still an essential genetic component of the large-flowered rhododendrons grown in the East and in our less harsh Western climate. Fragrance and stature make it an essential species in all rhododendron collections.

Nowadays, however, even to an acolyte like myself, I hesitate to recommend *Fortunei* for smaller gardens. It holds its leaves for two years at most, and its height usually means that the flowers are high above the nose. In its favour, some of the recently introduced forms have intense purple petioles and bright red leaf bracts. Combined, these make a statement at any time of year, but *orbiculare* and *decorum* are more useable in the average garden. *Fortunei* has good kin and a majority of them are smelly. They are remarkable in their range of flowering time - from February with *oreodoxa* - to July with *Hemsleyanum*. The newly introduced *glanduliferum* (1995) is causing sweaty palms among the in-group.

Robert Fortune is well remembered. He deserves to be. The linguistic purists pronounce the penultimate vowel - the 'e' - in the name of the plant. I don't think the stolid Robert Fortune would appreciate the botanical probity of pronouncing the 'e' at the end of his name. His name was 'Fortune', and if you stick an 'i' at the end that is good enough for me. And I think it would have been good enough for him.α

Reprinted from *The Victoria Rhododendron Society Newsletter*, April 2001.



# OH BLAST!

By Matthew Hilgerdenaar

"The buds on my Rhododendrons won't open, they turn brown and just die"

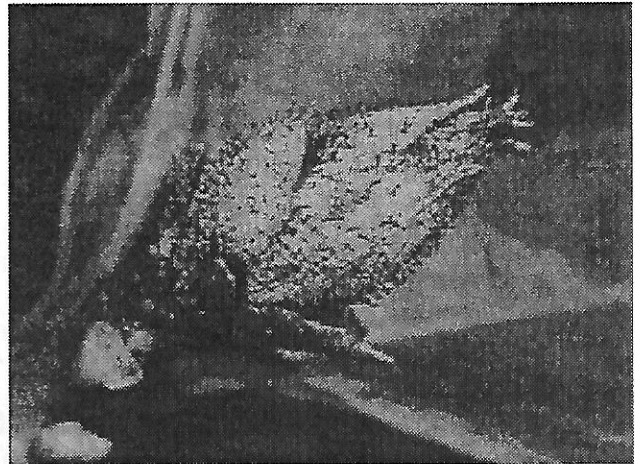
This seems to be a fairly commonly heard statement. The most likely cause is frost damage occurring on plants which are either not fully hardy in your area, or, when hardy, are exposed to full sun and wind, especially during the cold winter months. The winter sun will warm up the buds to above freezing while the air temperature remains well below freezing. When the sun sets, rapid cooling at rates of 6 degrees Celsius per minute down to a low freezing temperature of say -20°C or more may cause super-cooled cell water to suddenly freeze. The formed ice-crystals, which have a larger volume than the water, rupture and burst the cell wall thus killing it (like a frozen water bottle).

At normal freezing rates of 1-2 degrees Celsius per hour, cells prevent ice crystal formation inside their cells, by diffusing water vapour to the spaces between cells (extra-cellular spaces). The super-cooled water of below freezing temperature condenses onto the growing extra-cellular ice crystals. During warming spells (sun heating of leaves and of flower buds) the water diffusion process is reversed from the extra-cellular ice crystals back to the super-cooled interior of the cell. By dehydrating during decreasing temperatures below 0°C, flower buds of very hardy deciduous azaleas could withstand temperatures down to -43°C before being killed in midwinter. *R. brachycarpum* and *R. maximum* were reported as leaf hardy to -60°C and bud hardy to -30°C.

Buds are usually less hardy, by about 5 degrees Celsius, than foliage which has the amazing ability to decrease their surface area by "curling-up" in freezing weather to look like cigars, to conserve moisture.

To correct these possible problems, move plants to a more sheltered location and/or put up windscreens as protection from excessive sun and wind.

Another reason for Rhododendron buds dying is what is called **Bud-blast**, which is a disease caused by the black fungus *Pycnostysanus azaleae* visible in the form of black pinheads covering the whole bud.

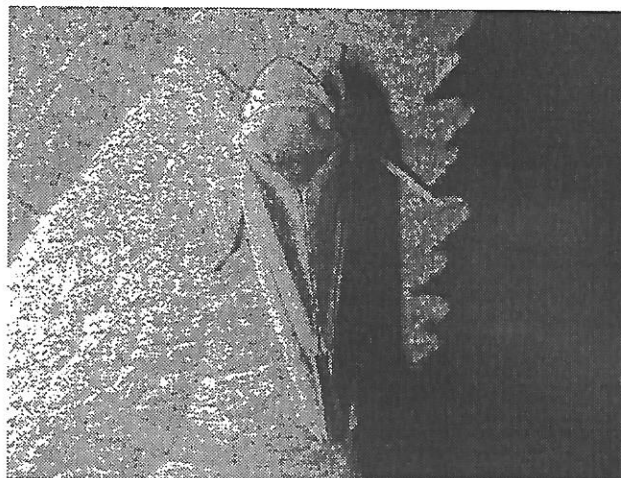
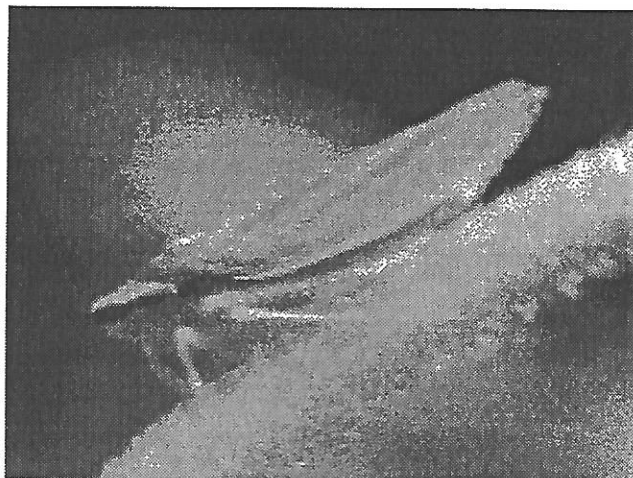


Bud showing typical black pinheads of bud-blast fungus

The outbreak of the disease is set in motion by the activity of the beautiful Rhododendron leafhopper *Graphocephala fennahi*, a creature less than 10 mm long which in itself is harmless.

They lay their eggs in the buds of the rhododendrons and so, by wounding the bud, act as a vector to make way for the infection by the fungus *Pycnostysanus azaleae*.

The life cycle of the *Graphocephala fennahi* is one generation per year. From early September until the end of October the eggs are deposited between the sepals and petals of the flower buds where they over-winter. In early Spring the larvae emerge and go through five larval phases which overlap each other. Immediately after emerging from the eggs, the larvae attach themselves on the underside of the leaves with a preference for the youngest leaves. The leafhoppers appear at the beginning of August. They are light-green and have two striking red stripes on the side of their wings.



Rhododendron leafhopper *Graphocephala fennahi*. A harmless creature which is less than 10 mm. long.

They are mature enough to lay their eggs again in September-October And so the infection of *Pycnostysanus azaleae* begins again in the Fall. This fungus is also Saprophytic (being able to live on dead matter), so disposing of infected buds is most important.

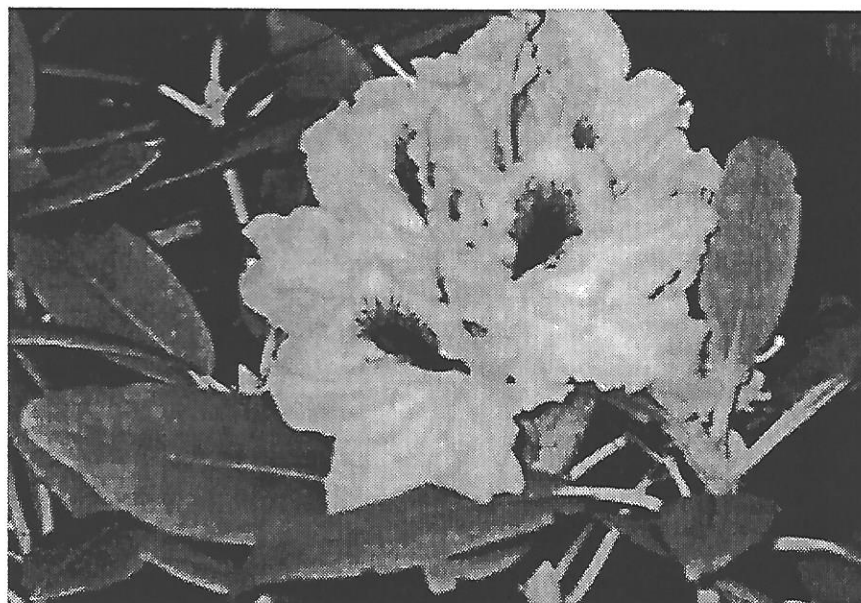
This article is meant to show you the damage done between "frost" which shows clear brown buds, and *P. azaleae* fungus which shows black hairy pincushion type buds.

#### References

Salisbury, F.B. and Ross, C.W. *Textbook of Plant Physiology*, 2nd edition, Wadsworth

Sakai, A., Fuchigami, L. and Weiser, C.J.1986: "Cold hardiness in the Genus *Rhododendron* I generation per year". *J. Amer. Soc. Hort. Sci.* 111 (2): 273-280

*Reprinted from the Rhododendron Society of Canada - Toronto Newsletter, March 2001*



This seedling from RSCAR seed, AR 96-61 - [(Janet Blair x Sham's Candy) X unknown white with dark blotch] donated by Erling Alstrop and grown by Bill Wilgenhoff, flowered in 2001. [Photo Sharon Bryson]

# SUMMER GRAFTING OF LARGE LEAVED RHODODENDRONS

This technique was created and illustrated by Mark Colombel, President of Societe Bretonne du Rhododendron.

Compiled by Laura Grant

Grafting, like rooting of cuttings, hybridizing rhododendrons, and creating rhododendron show-gardens, is one of several activities that our group promotes for challenge, fun and satisfaction. Before micro-propagation of rhododendrons, some nurseries grafted difficult-to-root rhododendrons during the winter in heated greenhouses.

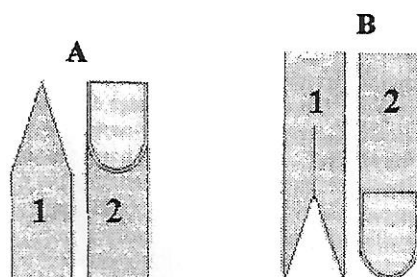
Summer grafting, in contrast, can be done from June 15th to the end of July, without a greenhouse. It is fast, because of active cell growth. The graft-union is established in two to three weeks, whereas with winter grafting it takes months inside a green house.

Summer grafting can be done outside after the main spring flowering show of your garden. It is an easy method for beginners, because the new and softer wood of the scion can be gently pressed against the cut of the understock resulting in a close and tight matching of the two parts grafted together. Winter grafting requires much greater skill in slicing the harder wood (wood working skill) to prevent air pockets between poorly shaped grafting faces of scion and understock.

Summer grafting is ideal for members who created a hybrid, which they want to propagate for trials, without having to resort to spending a thousand dollars or so, through micro-propagation. Even if the hybrid can be rooted, large leaf elepidote rhododendrons would take one to two years to root. These are then the reasons why Mark Colombel created this technique for the home gardener or hobby nursery grower.

## The understock and scion

Various understock plants can be selected for grafting such as 'Cunningham's White' for average diameter of understock. In other areas, 'White Pearl' is used as a large diameter understock and 'Golden Gate' as a small diameter stock. Other easy to root cultivar-rootstock can be used, even seedlings; the important thing is that the understock has to be cold hardy in your area, and the understock must be compatible with the scion. The understock is incompatible if the scion is rejected (won't grow together). If you produced a hybrid between *R. brachycarpum* and *R. maximum*, for example, you could grow seedlings from the mother brachycarpum plant for a good compatible graft union. When the understock has grown to a diameter that will match your scion (the shoot with leaves), you remove the top of the understock to about one inch above the soil/root collar, and follow the steps outlined in the figures.



**Understock**

1 is profile

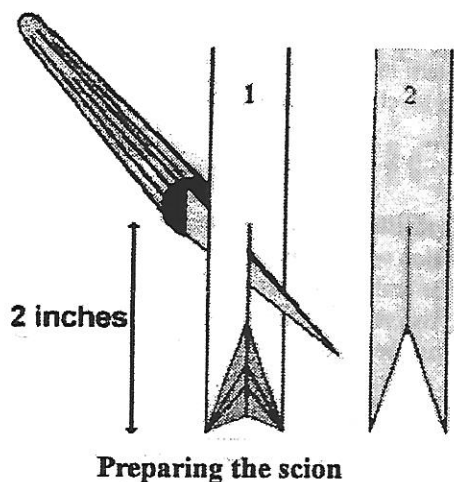
**Scion**

2 is face view

The scion is the new shoot with leaves, cut from the desired donor rhododendron. The scion is placed on the understock with a matching "V" cut.

Select a straight-stemmed rootstock of about pencil thickness and cut it back to within 2 in. (5 cm) of the base, making a straight cut across the stem with pruners. Then using a knife, make two slanting cuts to make an upside-down V wound on the top of the stock.

The scion selected, a 2-5 in. (5-13 cm) long, one-year-old shoot, from the plant to be propagated, should be about the same diameter as the stock. Prepare it by making two corresponding angled cuts so



that its base (the saddle) will fit snugly onto the apex of the rootstock. Cut the scion in the middle to about 1 inch (2.5 cm.). Invert the cutter and take away the wood, with the grain, slice by slice, to form the same V shape as the stock.

The scion will be kept in this position by the use of two or three clothespins. For clarity, in the photograph the clothespins are on the same side but in effect are opposite each other, mainly for balance.

As the wood of the scion is soft the clothespins gently squeeze the scion against the harder wood of the stock, so there is no space is between them and solid contact is made.

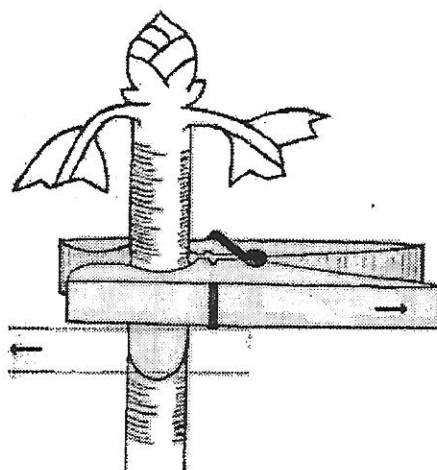
Success of this method of grafting rests mainly on proper timing. After the end of July, usually, the wood is too hard, depending on your area and variety of rhododendron used.

### Use of clothespins

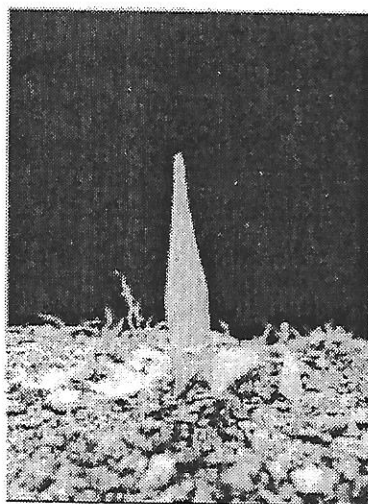
Gently clamping the graft union with two or more clothespins is a relatively easy way to assemble the two parts of the graft, without much risk of the assemblage breaking apart.

With this method you don't use wax and elastic bands, which simplifies the skill needed to assemble the graft, and it takes much less time.

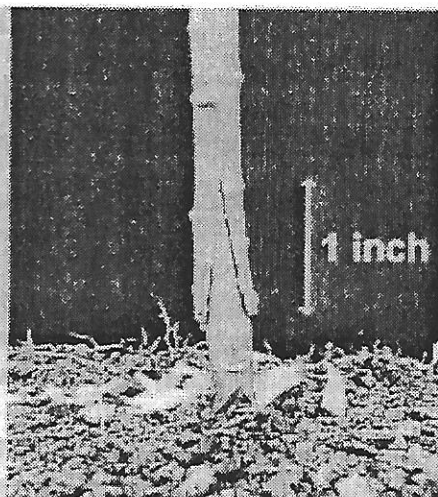
Using clothespins allows you to oversee the work in progress. You can also take off one clothespin at a time to check progress of the callusing, that is the growing together of the scion and understock.



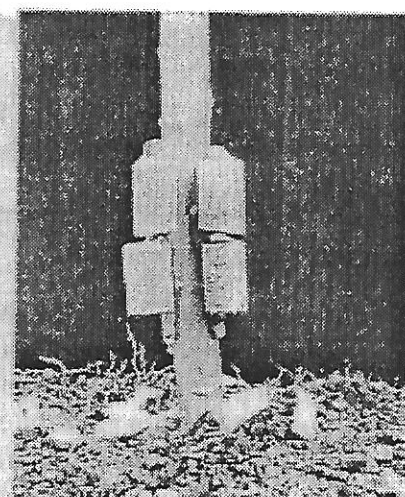
**Scion placed on understock and clamped with clothespins**



Rootstock or Understock



Rootstock and scion



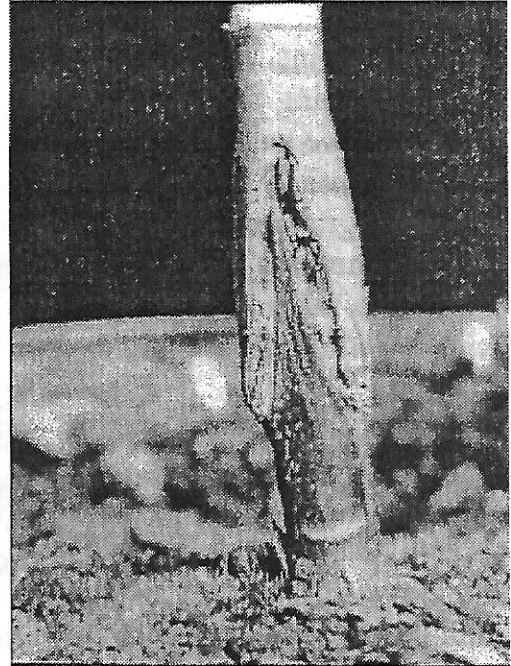
Clothespins holding scion to stock



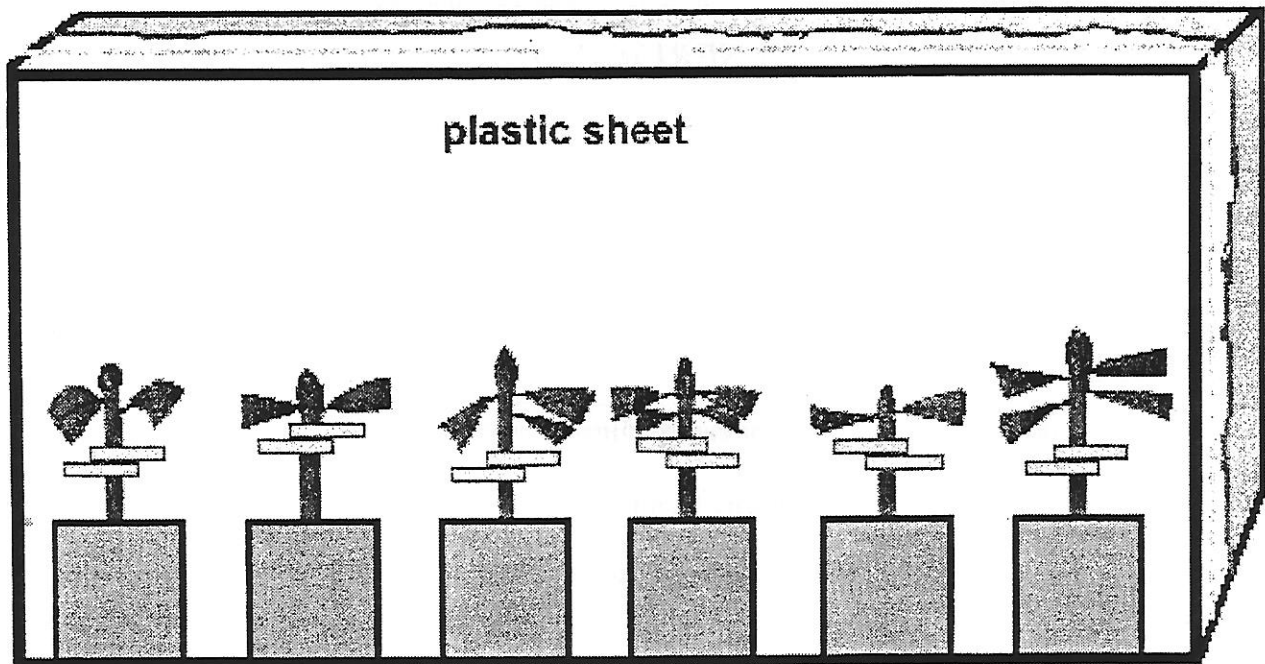
## Aftercare

You place the grafted plants either under a mist system, or you can place them in a crate lying on its side and closed with plastic sheet held in position with a bungee cord or any other convenient method to hold the plastic sheet tightly against the crate. The crate must be kept in the shade with the opening and plastic sheet facing north. You should water the foliage lightly in the morning and in the evening at first, especially during hot periods.

In summary, summer grafting is an easy and fast method of propagation for difficult-to-root large leaf rhododendrons, requiring no winter greenhouse facilities, or the expenditure of producing a batch of cloned offspring through commercial micro propagation. It is an ideal method for the hobby rhododendron hybridizer, or the home rhododendron propagator. ☐



Scion and understock grown together with callus-growth visible. Callusing occurs quickly: between 10 and 15 days. Sometimes there are flowers a few weeks later.



*Reprinted from The Rhododendron Society of Canada - Toronto Newsletter, May 2001.*



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