

AtlanticRhodo

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May 2003



Rhododendron Society of Canada - Atlantic Region

Positions of Responsibility 2002 - 2003

President	Sheila Stevenson	479-3740	Director	Sandy Brown	683-2615
Vice-President	Anitra Laycock	852-2502	Newsletter	Mary Helleiner	429-0213
R.S.C. (National) Rep.	Ken Shannik	422-2413	Website	Tom Waters	429-3912
Secretary	Penny Gael	826-2440	Library	Shirley McIntyre	835-3673
Treasurer	Dexter Kaulbach	453-0380	Seed Exchange	Sharon Bryson	863-6307
Membership	Betty MacDonald	852-2779	Tissue Culture Sale	Audrey Fralic	683-2711
Past President	Ken Shannik	422-2413	May - Advance Plant Sale	Ken Shannik	422-2413
Director - Program	Jenny Sandison	624-9013	May - Mini Show	Jenny Sandison	624-9013
Director - Communications	Christine Curry	656-2513	May- Public Plant Sale	Duff & Donna Evers	835-2586



Membership

ARS/RSC District 12 (National) Membership fees for 2003 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!

AtlanticRhodo is the Newsletter of the Rhododendron Society of Canada - Atlantic Region. We welcome your comments, suggestions, articles, photos and other material for publication. Send all material to the editor.

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Cover Photo:

Un-named Craig - Kentville Seedling 96-3 (R. yakushmanum x R. 'Besse Howells'). [Photo Don Craig]



Calendar of Events

All R.S.C.A.R. meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, from September to May, at 7:30 p.m. in the Nova Scotia Museum Auditorium, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, unless otherwise noted. Paid Parking is available 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.

1 April **Meeting:** Jamie Ellison, co-owner of Bunchberry Nurseries and a faculty member of Kingstec, will be talking about rhododendrons and other ericaceous plants.

**Saturday
26 April** **Advance May Sale Pickup**
See Special Notices in this Newsletter

May 6 **Meeting:** Tree selection, establishment and formative care.
Tracey MacKenzie, an instructor at Nova Scotia Agricultural College and a certified arborist, will talk about this neglected side of our gardens.
Members' plant sale. See Special Notices in this Newsletter.

**Saturday
May 10** **RSCAR 2003 Workshop,** Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Truro

**Saturday &
Sunday
May 17 & 18** **Annual Rhododendron Show & Plant Sale**
Show: Saturday 10:00 - 4:00
Sunday 1:00 - 4:00
Sale: Sunday 1:30 - 3:00
See Special Notices in this Newsletter

**Saturday
June 14** **Garden Tours and Annual Potluck**
Halls Road, Boulderwood.
See Special Notices in this Newsletter

**Saturday
June 21** **Garden Tours, Mahone Bay and Bridgewater**
See map under Special Notices.

Please Note: Some members, who have environmental sensitivities, are asking their fellow members please to use no perfumes, scented soaps, etc., on the days or evenings of RSCAR events, in order to minimize the risk of allergic reactions.



A very warm welcome to our new and returning R.S.C. Atlantic Region members who have joined since the February 2003 Newsletter:

Karla Cherry
Ann & Jim Drysdale
Sandra Dumaresq
Paul Frauzel & Susanne Giffin
June MacDougall
Phillip MacDougall
G. R. MacLean
Lynn Morrison
Brian & Shelley Parker
Paul Shot

Ellershouse NS
Herring Cove NS
Chester NS
Head of St. Margarets NS
Ellershouse NS
Surrey BC
Halifax NS
Oakfield NS
Fredericton NB
Liverpool NS

Special Notices

2003 Advance May Sale Pickup

Plants preordered from the 2003 Advance May Sale list are to be picked up at 5 Sime Court, Halifax, on **Saturday, April 26, between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.** Plants not picked up on this day will be sold at the public sale.

Sime Court is in the Kingswood subdivision off the Hammonds Plains Road. Take Kingswood Drive (between Kearney Lake Road and Farmer Clem's) to Brenda Drive (the first street on the right) and follow it to the first left which is Sime Court. For more information contact Ken Shannik at (902) 422-2413 or InsigneGdn@aol.com or Duff or Donna Evers at (902) 835-2586 or devers1@attcanada.ca

Members' Plant Sale

**During Regular Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, 6 May 2003**

Members are encouraged to bring plant material to sell at the regular monthly meeting in May. Plants should be rare, unusual or hard to find varieties of perennials, annuals, shrubs, etc., that are not readily available commercially. Rhododendrons, either species or hybrids (seed grown or rooted cuttings) are especially encouraged. Members are required to price and sell their plants themselves. This is a great way to find homes for those surplus plants while recouping some of your expenses for pots and soil. Please participate, especially as a vendor!

Vendors are encouraged, but not required, to provide information about their plants. You may have great plants, but if the members don't know them and they don't look particularly spectacular at sale time, they are apt not to sell.

Anyone who has interesting material that they plan to sell should let Stephen Archibald know in advance (479-3740), so that enough space and tables are provided.

2003 May Plant Sale

**Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, Auditorium, Lower Level
1747 Summer Street, Halifax
Sunday 18 May 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

This sale is one of our major fund raisers and it relies heavily on donations from our members. In addition to the nursery stock we bring in, we hope to have a good selection of trees and shrub seedlings, rooted cuttings, perennials, annuals etc., donated by you. Please keep the sale in mind this spring when you are sowing seed, transplanting and dividing. Your donations are greatly appreciated. Members are requested to drop off donations between 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon.

Many varieties of rhododendrons that were not available for preordering in the advance sale will be offered. They include 'Bluenose', 'Karin Seleger', 'Patty Bee', 'Weston's Pink Diamond', *yakushmanum* 'Mist Maiden' and 'Ken Janek', *kiusianum* pink, Azalea 'Al's Picotee' and Azalea 'Weston's Innocence'.

Donors and sale volunteers will be able to select two plants prior to the sale opening. This will not include nursery grown stock. Plants must be selected, paid for and taken to your vehicle an hour prior to the sale opening. This rule will be strictly enforced! No exceptions!

Plan to attend and bring your friends. This event is always popular and the lineup to get in is usually long. For the best selection we recommend that you plan to arrive earlier than the 1:00 p.m. opening time. While you are waiting a handout with descriptions of nursery stock will be available.

For more information contact **Duff or Donna Evers (902) 835-2586 or devers1@attcanada.ca**

Special Notices

2003 Spring Show

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

Saturday May 17 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sunday May 18 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The May Show is a non-competitive exhibition of rhododendrons and other early spring blooming plants. It is held annually in conjunction with our May Sale. Thanks to the generosity of our members who bring in plant material, and especially the Show Chair, Jenny Sandison, the display is always spectacular. This 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 have not already volunteered and can assist either with your time or by lending plant material, please contact Jenny Sandison at (902) 624-9013.

Annual Potluck Supper

Saturday June 14 6:00 p.m.

At the residence of John Brett, 7 Hall's Road, Boulderwood

John has recently moved many rhodos from his former garden on Maynard Street in Halifax and his dad's property on Morris Island, Yarmouth county, to 7 Hall's Road. His new garden adds to the Hall's Road legacy.

PLEASE let John know that you're planning to come, (902) 475-3775 to ensure enough plates, wine, etc. this is a true potluck — bring whatever you wish. Keep in mind that it's a buffet, so easy to manage items that don't require heating or a knife work best. However John does have an oven and a microwave.

Plant and Garden Tours 2003

Saturday June 14

2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Garden of Wendy and John Cornwall, 479 Purcells Cove Road.

Those who visited this great garden last year will remember the wonderful woodland plantings of rhodos and other shrubs, as well as interesting herbaceous plants. It is only a few minutes down the Purcells Cove Road from Boulderwood.

4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Open gardens on Hall's Road, Boulderwood.

Hall's Road is off the Purcells Cove Road, about five minutes from the Armdale Rotary. Hosts: John Brett, the Basketts, Jane Shaw Law, Charlie Fowler, Robbie Robinson. If you do not know these gardens, check in at John Brett's, 7 Hall's Road, first. In the early days of the Rhododendron Society, members gathered annually at Hall's Road for a potluck at Barbara Hall's. She was a neighbour of Captain Steele's and the Robinsons. Captain Steele had begun his strategic practice of sharing rhodos with his neighbours. Today the Hall's Road gardens have become a legacy. We appreciate this opportunity to return to Hall's road to amble through this wonderful collection of mature rhodos and magnolias. Don't miss it.

Special Notices

Plant and Garden Tours 2003

Saturday June 21

1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Mahone Bay and Bridgewater Visits

Jenny Sandison, 1510 Oakland Road, Mahone Bay. 902-624-9013

Half a mile down Oakland Road, on the north side of the harbour. See the article on this garden in this issue.

The Union House, 133 Edgewater Street, Mahone Bay

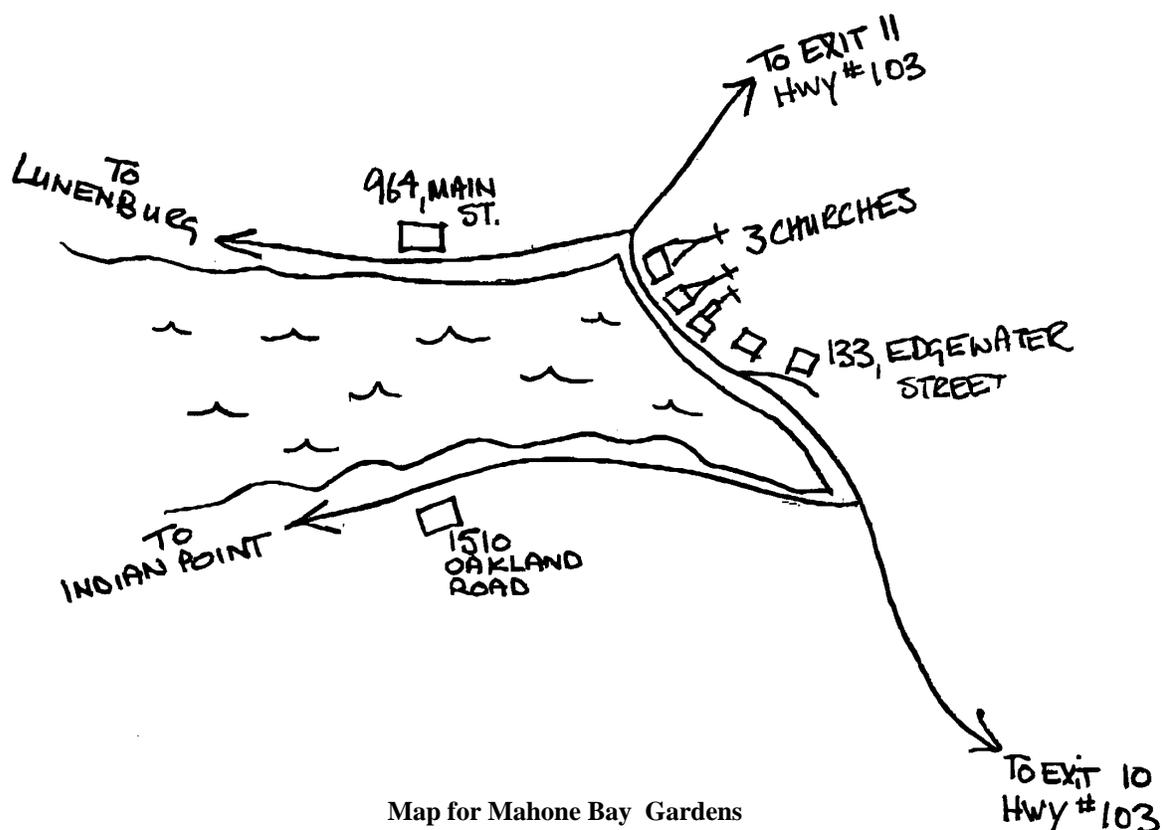
Cathy Gregoire's garden contains a large water garden, a great collection of grasses and all kinds of perennials, grouped around the old meeting house circa 1832. Just to the east side of the three churches.

Carnegy Hall, 964 Main Street, Mahone Bay

Jane Carnegy's garden is situated on the waterside along the coast road to Lunenburg. The garden has utilized the difficulties of a slope to great advantage. A rock garden and many different perennials all lead up to a charming pergola from where one appreciates the stunning views.

Dr. Fazal Rahman, 87 Aberdeen Road, Bridgewater 902-543-4006

Take the old road, route 325, from Mahone Bay to Bridgewater. You will be on Aberdeen Road as you enter town. Dr. Rahman describes his garden as an eclectic collection of plants, rather than a showplace garden. Of particular interest are a pendulous Camperdown elm, a 20 foot *Acer palmatum*, some *Cornus kousas*, magnolias, pieris, rock garden plants and daylilies. Rhododendrons include 'Janet Blair', 'PJM', 'Olga' and 'Scintillation'.



Map for Mahone Bay Gardens

To All Members

From Your Executive:

Proposed Bylaws - PLEASE give us your feedback

The executive is working on getting legal status for our organization. That means becoming incorporated as a society. We will be bringing a memorandum of association and bylaws for your approval at the next Annual Meeting of the society, Sept. 2, 2003.

We will talk about this at the May 6 monthly meeting. Please look at the rest of this material sometime before then. We want to know if you have suggestions or concerns about anything you see or don't see.

This is the (not complete) work-in-progress submission to the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, based on the template provided by the Registrar's office.

Please tell us if you have suggestions. For example, you may have an idea about the way we should keep our records and documents.

Send any and all comments to **Penny Gael**, Secretary, in writing, to

e mail: iclinton@axses.net

hard copy post: Penny Gael, Boutilliers Point. B0J 1G0. Canada

fax: 902-826-7274

or: bring them in writing to the May 6 meeting.

Thanks, from your executive, Sheila Stevenson, Ken Shannik, Anitra Laycock, Penny Gael, Jenny Sandison, Christine Curry, Sandy Brown, Betty MacDonald, Dexter Kaulback.

DRAFT Submission to the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies for the Registration of the Atlantic Rhododendron Horticultural Society

1. The name of the society is the Atlantic Rhododendron Horticultural Society.

2. The object of the Atlantic Rhododendron Horticultural Society is to support and promote the development and exchange of horticultural expertise and material relating to the practice of creating and maintaining year-round garden landscapes featuring Rhododendrons.

3. The activities of the society are to be carried on in Nova Scotia and in other areas of Atlantic Canada.

4. The registered office of the society is *How/where should we do this?*

- *the Museum of Natural History since we have a locker there, and meet there.*

- *the Secretary's address?*

- *other, but what?*

Names, Addresses, and Occupations of Subscribers

1. Sheila Stevenson or other proponent

2.

3.

Schedule B

1. Terms of admission of members and their rights and obligations

Membership, with all the benefits of the Society, is open to those who have paid the requisite fee.

2. Condition under which membership ceases

Membership ceases when fee no longer paid or upon death of a member.

3. Mode and time of calling general and special meetings

The ordinary or annual general meeting of the ARHS shall be held within 3 months of the end of each fiscal year of ARHS.

An extraordinary general meeting may be called by the chairperson or by the board members at any time, and shall be called if requested in writing by at least 25 % of the membership.

Notice of the meeting, specifying place, time, and date, as well as nature of business in the case of an extraordinary meeting, will be given at least 15 days before the meeting, by e-mail and/or through the post.

Number constituting a quorum

A minimum of 25 current members, i.e. not lapsed

Rights of voting

One vote per each paid membership.

4. Appointment and removal of directors and other officers

Do you expect only legal and ethical behaviour from the board as a group and each director individually?

5. Duties, Powers and remuneration of Directors and Officers

The executive is recommending that -

The governing body of the society or the board shall be the officers. The board will consist of not less than 5 nor more than 12 members

The Officers of the society will consist of:

The president, who shall have the general supervision of the activities of the ARHS, shall chair meetings, and perform other duties as may be assigned by the Board.

The vice-president, who shall perform the duties of the president as required and perform other duties as assigned by the Board.

The secretary, who shall keep the minutes of board meetings and perform other duties as assigned by the Board.

The treasurer, who shall be responsible for maintaining the financial records of the ARHS.

A report shall be presented at each board meeting and a statement shall be presented at the annual meeting each year. All ARHS funds shall be deposited in a chartered bank or trust company approved by the board.

The past president, who shall support the president and chair the Nominating Committee.

Managing Director, Education, who shall be responsible for the society's education program

Managing Director, Communication, who shall be responsible for the society's Communication program

Managing Director, Plant material/horticulture, who shall be responsible for the society's program in the area of Plant materials and horticulture

Managing Director, Social, who shall be responsible for the society's social events/needs.

Director-at-Large, who shall perform duties as assigned by the Board.

The term of office for all Directors/Officers shall be 2 years. They may re-offer for only one additional term in a position, but may offer for a different position at the end of any term.

The Board shall have the power to establish travel assistance and subsistence policies.

6. Exercise of borrowing powers

What are you comfortable with? Dexter and Chris also to look at this

7. Audit of accounts

Most of us felt that we didn't need an annual audit but that some internal scrutiny is a good idea. Does item 10 deal with this? Dexter and Chris to look at this

8. Custody and use of the seal of the society

9. Manner of making, altering and rescinding by-laws.

Can the board make, alter, and rescind bylaws without the approval of the membership?

10. Preparation and custody of minutes of the society and of the directors and other books and records of the society

Where should these be kept? What about the other records of the society? Do you feel that they have archival value and are worth keeping? Any ideas how this could work in a volunteer society?

11. Time and place at which the books and records of the society may be inspected by members

What degree of responsibility are you prepared, as a member, to take in making sure that our financial affairs are OK? Is this anything you care about? If yes, tell us what you would want to do or be able to do make sure our financial affairs are OK

12. Execution of contracts, deeds, bills of exchange and other instruments and documents on behalf of the society.

Fifty Years of Testing and Breeding Rhododendrons in Nova Scotia

By Donald L. Craig

A permanent printed record of the history of the Kentville Research Station's rhododendron breeding programme does not exist. As I am the only one that has the information I hope that this article will document its beginning in 1952 and step by step development up to my retirement in 1983. Over time our project revealed much new information about the diversity of the genus Rhododendron - its forms, habits, adaptability and great spectrum of colour. The endorsement of our work by the public and media was a source of inspiration. I hope that this report will be useful to the home gardener and anyone contemplating a similar programme, be it large or small. John Weagle's very generous contribution to the organization and presentation of this article is acknowledged with sincere thanks. Don L. Craig

Part I

Nova Scotia is a 544 km. long, 80 km. wide peninsula between the 43rd and 47th degree north latitudes. It is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and barely joined to New Brunswick and the rest of North America by a narrow isthmus. Kentville is located in the agriculturally rich Annapolis Valley, which is approximately 100 km. long and 16 km. wide. The south and north mountains running west to east protect the Valley, creating a pocket where tree fruits, berry crops and ornamentals thrive. The Bay of Fundy, 16 km. to the north, modifies the climate. Halifax, the provincial capital, is 107 km. east of Kentville on the Atlantic coast and has quite a different climate.

The Valley is in Plant Hardiness Zone 5b; the extreme western end of Nova Scotia and much of the coast Zone 6a, southern coastal area 6b (with a few parts perhaps even 7a or better); and the interior 5a. Weather data for Kentville for a 10-year period shows a minimum low of -23°C (-9°F), which occurred once in December, -24°C (-11°F) once in January, -27°C (-17°F) once in February and -20°C (-4°F) once in March. Winter temperatures can fluctuate from a low of -18°C (0°F) to above freezing in a 24-hour period. The climate is strictly maritime with snow, rain, wind, frost and moderate temperatures which can shift rapidly in winter. The Valley is considerably hotter and drier than coastal areas but can boast good deep soil.

The Beginning

In the beginning there were no plans to do anything more than make the vista more presentable when approaching the Kentville Research Station building complex. The approach to this view was over a pond and its large weeping willow. The banking behind the pond faces north forming a semi-amphitheatre some 30 meters high and 120 meters long. The banking was a mess of brambles and weed trees which when removed brought order out of chaos. The only gem was an old but small planting of "ironclad" rhododendrons (probably planted around 1920). They had grown well so the obvious thing was to plant more. Thus the search for plant material and knowledge had begun. We were starting from scratch.

Securing Plants

The first attempt to secure plants occurred in November 1952 when I took 200 cuttings from the Station's "ironclads" and to my surprise most of them rooted. In due time a listing of rhododendron species seed available from the Sweden's Gothenburg Botanical Garden came to my attention. At this point it dawned on me that this could serve as a starting point for a collection of species and cultivars. In April 1953 we received seed of species from B. Lindquist at Gothenburg who had just returned from Northern Japan, this thanks to our connection Dr. I. Granhall at the Balsgård Fruit Institute in Fjälkestad, Sweden. Presumably a few were collected in Northern Japan: *concinnum*, *fargesii*, *fauriei*, *fauriei* var. *rufescens*, *ferrugineum*, *flavum*, *hippophaeoides*, *hirsutum*, *insigne*, *intermedium*, *longesquamatum*, *luteum*, *poncticum*, *schlippenbachii*, *searsiae*, *smirnowii*, *tschonokii*, *vaseyi* and *viscosum* (as well as a *catawbiense* hybrid, *Gladiolus primulinus*, *G. palustris* and *Chrysanthemum cinerifolium*). And so we proceeded to produce plants. In terms of winter survival and plant quality *fauriei* and *schlippenbachii* were by far the best performers. Summer heat was a limiting factor for some while winter cold probably got the others. From then on we made many contacts for plants and information. The search extended to four nurseries on the U.S. west coast including Greer Gardens in Eugene, Oregon; Van Veen's and Bovee's Nurseries in Portland, Oregon. On the east coast we procured plants from Shamarello & Sons, Euclid, Ohio; Warren Baldsieffen in New Jersey; Tingle Nursery, Maryland and David Leach in Pennsylvania. In England the Knaphill Nursery, Surrey and the Goldsworth Nursery in Woking supplied material. In Sweden the Gothenburg Botanical Garden and in Canada Woodland Nursery, Mississauga, Ontario and later Bayport Plant Farm in Bayport, Nova Scotia topped off the collection. The core of the Research Station's plantings came from these sources and, with the exception of most of the species from Sweden, the survival rate and plant performance of most plants from these sources was very satisfactory. By 1955, 42 beds had been prepared and planted; by 1957, 545 rhododendrons and azaleas were in permanent positions and by 1975, 50 beds contained 1000 rhododendrons and azaleas.

My Position

My position at the Research Station was that of a research scientist heading up the “Crop Section”, which included ornamentals. My specific task was to develop a research programme for berry crops. Two years of graduate studies at the University of New Hampshire provided an opportunity to specialize in plant breeding. I am still involved in plant breeding as a hobby.

Why a Programme

Once involved with the initial Kentville rhododendron plantings, I had an opportunity over time to visit many of the world famous rhododendron gardens. My journeys took me from Seleger's Moor in Adliswil, Switzerland to the Dunedin Botanical Garden in New Zealand. Points in between included Kew, Exbury, Great Windsor Park, Savill, Wisley and Stourhead all in England. A transfer to the Scottish Horticultural Research Institute in Dundee in 1963 for a year's doctorate work enabled me to roam at will from the Cox garden at Glencarse to Inverewe in the north west with Brodick Castle, Crathes and Sherriffs in between. Of course the Edinburgh Botanical Garden was revisited several times. The Bodnant Garden in Wales was wonderful. In the US my visits included numerous East Coast, West Coast and Virginia gardens. In Canada, Vineland, Ontario and British Columbia beckoned me several times.

I pursued the Kentville programme because I wanted others to see and learn about these wonderful plants that I was privileged to see in so many of the world's best gardens. Each garden visited was an invitation for me to come back to Kentville and attempt to improve the plantings. Sufficient money and labour were in the end critical factors that could not be overcome.

George Swain

The rhododendron programme initiated in 1952 was nicely underway when the late George Swain joined the Station's staff in 1957. It was his gift of plant knowledge and landscaping that was mainly responsible for the numerous plantings, which became the Station's showpieces. The collaborative breeding of Swain and Craig produced 14 cultivars.

Swain resigned in 1967, the year of the Station's first Rhododendron Sunday. The rhododendron project reverted to my care and the tradition of having a Rhododendron Sunday has continued.

A conservative estimate of the number of people that viewed the plantings from 1967 to 1983 was in excess of 100,000.

The success of the Station in determining the adaptability and suitability of many rhododendron cultivars and species was a factor in the decision made in 1972 to form the

Rhododendron Society of Canada. By 1977 the Atlantic Chapter was formed by founding members Barbara Hall, Aileen Meagher, Walter Ostrom, Dick Steele, George Swain, John Weagle and myself and now numbers well over 200 members. Rhododendron Sunday created a surge in rhododendron plantings about the province. If success can be measured in awards, there can be no doubt about the achievements of the Station which prior to my retirement in 1983 accumulated 16 major and 200 first, second and third class ribbons at national and regional flower shows. The popularity of rhododendrons in the province still climbs to this day and the wide range of cultivars available in the province is astounding.

Dick Steele

For many years Dick Steele, acknowledged as Canada's foremost rhododendron and azalea authority, has very generously given of his talents and knowledge of rhododendrons through the regional and national societies and through public speaking, radio, TV and the media. His firm belief in so doing is that the world can be a more beautiful world for humanity if more people can be encouraged to become involved in the culture of ornamental plants. To this end, the Kentville Research Station, my own garden and those of many others have been the beneficiary of his philosophy and generosity.

During the 1953 to 1983 period the Kentville plantings progressed from a small to a large collection of display beds containing some 1000 rhododendrons and azaleas. In addition to assisting in this part of the programme he encouraged and assisted the breeding programme with planting material, pollen, knowledge and advice.

Capt. Steele's contributions helped in making the Kentville plantings a major attraction for the public. The display of many cultivars and species became the largest in Eastern Canada affording the public an opportunity to see at first hand the diversity of plant form, flower and foliage quality and colour.



Rhododendron Sunday at the Kentville Research Station June 1974. [Photo S. Levy]



Dick Steele, Don Craig, Robert Seleger, discussing rhododendron breeding Kentville Research Station

Radcliffe Pike

Another notable contributor to the Kentville programme was the late Radcliffe Pike of Lubec, Maine whom I met in 1951 at the University of New Hampshire graduate school. His knowledge of plants was amazing and his enthusiasm knew no bounds. I am certain that much of my enthusiasm for rhododendrons came via Rad.

I recall memorable trips with Rad to the Arboretum at Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts and to the Reefer Point Garden in Bar Harbor. It was at Reefer Point that I was to view the hardiest and best *R. fortunei* specimen that he knew. Rad crossed this *fortunei* with a superior selection of *R. smirnowii*. Pike's records of the New Hampshire rhododendron and azalea breeding programme state that this *smirnowii* came via "Reefer Point Gardens, Bar Harbour, Maine. Second generation in Maine came from plants from Edinburgh Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh Scotland. The *fortunei* from seed from Edinburgh Botanic Gardens." At a later date Rad sent a number of the seedlings of his *fortunei* x *smirnowii* cross to Kentville where they developed into very large and beautiful showpieces.

Leslie Hancock

The late Leslie Hancock of Mississauga, Ontario, the very well known nurseryman and plant breeder, was also a wonderful supporter of the Kentville programme. Like Pike, he was a book of plant knowledge and acknowledged as one of Canada's foremost rhododendron authorities. Through his tireless efforts, the Rhododendron Society of Canada came into being in 1972. It was indeed an honour to have been asked to serve as a founding director of the Canadian Society and to serve as President (1984-85).

Leslie sent many plants to Kentville including seedlings from *R. fortunei* crossed with *R. smirnowii*. They were planted with the Pike plants where they have performed wonderfully well.

Cultivar Testing and Breeding

I firmly believe that cultivar evaluation is absolutely necessary as an adjunct to breeding for improvement. In the Research Station strawberry breeding programme (1952-83) many cultivars were evaluated. We made many crosses utilizing cultivars from Germany, England, New York state, California, and Canada for their desirable genetic traits, as well as the wide genetic base they provided. Thousands of seedlings were fruited from which eight outstanding selections were chosen for naming and release. Their acceptance has been phenomenal.

Using the same approach for rhododendrons we had by 1975 evaluated 81 species and 170 rhododendron and azalea cultivars. "Evaluation" means a yearly rating of winter hardiness, bloom date, colour, plant and flower quality. We used the hardiness rating system developed by the American Rhododendron Society where H₁ is hardy to -32°C (-26°F), H₂ to -26°C (-15°F), H₃ to -21°C (-6°F).

By 1983, 234 parental combinations had been made, 15,500 seedlings produced and flowered, 94 selections made and 14 of the 94 named and registered.

The breeding philosophy was the same as that used for the strawberry; mainly that a relatively small number (approx. 100) of seedlings will reveal the value of a specific cross. Parents vary greatly in how well they combine with one another. It is called "specific combining ability". If they combine well the cross can be repeated on a larger scale; many selections have been made from 100 to 200 seedlings or less. Superior parental appearance does not guarantee superior combining ability. Parents must be tested first.

Over the years many of the Kentville seedlings were grown in the Station's fields where they were exposed to all of the weather stresses such as wind, cold, no shade and no

irrigation. Some were also grown in ground beds, others in ground beds under a lath shade canopy. With the exception of the very early crosses, which were made in a glasshouse, crosses were made on plants growing outdoors.

First Crosses Made 1958

That Swain and I should become involved in a rhododendron breeding programme was inevitable. George had success in breeding commercial snapdragons in Ontario and I was fresh from graduate school where the University of New Hampshire Dept. of Horticulture was strongly focused on plant breeding. I was also very much involved with Kentville's strawberry and red raspberry breeding programme.

Swain made the first crosses in 1958. Parents involved were 'Dr. Dresselhuys', *R. smirnowii* and *R. catawbiense album* Glass. Inter-crossing the three in a glasshouse with their reciprocals produced 537 seedlings. These seedlings were

grown in an open station field fully exposed to the elements. They grew well, flowered and were all pink, as one would expect. They were also very winter hardy. Fifteen were selected and one was named Gabriel ('Dr. Dresselhuys' by *R. smirnowii*). Several were sent to the Fredericton, New Brunswick Research Station (Zone 5A) where they performed very well in that very cold climate.

After this first year of crossing we set out our breeding objectives which were to produce rhododendrons sufficiently hardy for the colder regions of Atlantic Canada, compact enough to be useful for landscaping modern homes, a good range of flower colours, and early, mid and late season flowering. Tolerance to mildew infection was a criterion for azaleas. Many of the azalea cultivars now available are mildew susceptible while others are not. We crossed tolerant cultivars and had good results in terms of producing tolerant seedlings. "Generous in saving, quick to discard" is a breeding mantra which should be recited daily by the aspiring breeder. ☩

Kentville Rhododendron Cultivars

*Royal Horticultural Society Certificate of International Registration.

Cultivar - 'Cornwallis' (Syn. Acadia) (R*)

Parentage - *R. fortunei*, open-pollinated
Breeder - seed via Schumacher, Sandwich, Massachusetts.
Introduced - 1973, Registered - 1977, D.L. Craig
Habit - large upright, Colour - dawn pink, Exposure - light shade
Hardiness - zone 5b, Bloom time - mid-season

Large deep pink flowers borne in compact trusses well above the foliage are pleasantly scented. The throat is flecked oxblood.

Cultivar - 'Fundy' (Syn. Evangeline) (R*)

Parentage - *R. fortunei* x *R. smirnowii*
Breeder - Hancock, Mississauga, Ontario.
Introduced - 1973, Registered - 1977, D.L. Craig
Habit - very large, upright, Colour - neyron rose
Exposure - light shade, Hardiness - zone 5b
Bloom time - mid-season

A very large rhododendron and at 40 years old the plant is over 14 feet high. Large rose opal flowers borne in large trusses above the foliage are pleasantly scented. An outstanding rhododendron that comes into its own in 8-10 years. Can exhibit yellowish foliage in excessive sun even on the Scotian coast.

Cultivar - 'Gabriel' (R*)

Parentage - 'Dr. Dresselhuys' x *R. smirnowii*
Breeder - George Swain
Introduced - 1973, Registered - 1977, D.L. Craig
Habit - tall, Colour - rhodamine pink, Exposure - light shade
Hardiness - zone 5a, Bloom time - mid-season

The hardiest Research Station introduction, performing well as far north as Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Cultivar - 'Minas Grand Pré' (Syn. Grand Pré) (R*)

Parentage - *R. catawbiense* var. *compactum* x *R. williamsianum*
Breeder - George Swain
Introduced - 1973, Registered - 1996, D.L. Craig
Habit - semi-dwarf, compact, Colour - phlox pink, Exposure - light shade
Hardiness - zone 5b, Bloom time - mid-season

An outstanding semi-dwarf plant with small attractive roundish leaves which flush a copper colour similar to that of its pollen parent. Loose attractive clusters of attractive bell-shaped pink flowers. A must for every garden in hardiness zone 5b or milder. It seems very happy in the garden of Peter Cox in Glencarse, Scotland.

Cultivar - 'Bellefontaine' (R*)

Parentage - *R. fortunei* x *R. smirnowii*
Breeder - R. Pike, Lubec, Maine
Introduced - 1975, Registered - 1977, D.L. Craig
Habit - very large upright, Colour - rose opal, Exposure - light shade
Hardiness - zone 5b, Bloom time - mid-season

Judged by many as the Research Station's outstanding introduction. A seedling from the same cross that produced Fundy. Very tall (14+ feet) in 40 years. Pleasantly scented rose-opal flowers are borne in large trusses above the foliage. Very good plant form but only comes into its own after 8 to 10 years.

Cultivar - 'Minas Peace' (R*)

Parentage - [(*R. catawbiense* var. *album* 'Glass' x *R. degronianum*) x *R. yakushimanum*]
Breeder - D.L. Craig, Introduced - 1982, Registered - 1998, D.L. Craig
Habit - medium tall, Colour - white suffused pink, Exposure - light shade
Hardiness - zone 5b, Bloom time - mid-season

This is one of my favourite rhododendrons. The excellent foliage has a thick covering of attractive grey-orange indumentum on the leaf undersides. This habit is semi-compact. The flower buds, rose pink, open to a suffused pink, striped a deeper pink on the reverse of each petal. Flower trusses compact and above the foliage. A plant for all year round.

Cultivar - 'Minas Maid' (R*)

Parentage - 'Nova Zembla' x *R. yakushimanum*
Breeder - George Swain
Introduced - 1979, Registered - 1979, D.L. Craig
Habit - medium tall, compact, Colour - red-purple
Exposure - light shade, Hardiness - zone 5b
Bloom time - early mid-season

This most reliable rhododendron possesses a very good level of winter hardiness. Compact growth habit. Basic colour is red-purple. The ball-shaped truss is held above the foliage. Foliage quality is very good. Very floriferous.

Cultivar - 'Minas Snow' (R*)

Parentage - 'Cunninghams' White' x *R. yakushimanum*
Breeder - George Swain
Introduced - 1981, Registered - 1998, D.L. Craig
Habit - medium tall, Colour - white
Exposure - full light, Hardiness - zone 5b (plant), 6a (flower buds)
Bloom time - mid-season

Compact growth habit and dark green foliage. Underside lightly covered with a tan coloured indumentum. Flower quality is outstanding. Flower and bud pure white. Flower trusses held well above the foliage. Minas Snow is highly regarded as an excellent white on the West Coast and eastern seaboard of the USA. Inexplicably it sometimes exhibits bud damage in early December on the Scotian coast.

Cultivar - 'Minas Rose Dawn' (R*)

Parentage - ('Nova Zembla' x *R. yakushimanum*) x (*R. catawbiense* var. album 'Glass' x 'Elizabeth')
Breeder - D.L. Craig
Introduced - Ag. Research Station, 1982, Registered - 1997, A.R. Brooks
Habit - medium height, wider than tall, Colour - red-purple
Exposure - light shade, Hardiness - zone 5a, Bloom time - mid-season

Flower trusses compact and above the foliage. Buds red-purple, very attractive, open funnel shape. The petal edges are wavy and darker than the main body; extensive red-purple spotting on inside of dorsal petal. Very floriferous.

Cultivar - 'George Swain' (R*)

Parentage - 'Goldsworth Yellow' x (*R. catawbiense* var. album 'Glass' x 'Theresa')
Breeder - D.L. Craig, Introduced - 1988, Registered - 1998, D.L. Craig
Habit - medium tall, compact, Colour - ivory yellow
Exposure - light shade, Hardiness - zone 5b, Bloom time - early

Early flowering, ivory yellow of value because of its earliness and good semi-compact habit. Globular dome-shaped truss held well above the foliage.

Cultivar - 'Mary Craig'

Parentage - 'Goldsworth Yellow' x *R. degronianum*
Breeder - George Swain, Introduced - 1981
Habit - semi-dwarf, compact, Colour - pink, buds dark pink
Exposure - light shade, Hardiness - zone 5b
Bloom time - early

A good semi-dwarf compact plant. Flower buds dark pink opening light pink. Flower trusses held above the foliage.

Cultivar - 'Sue Gunn' (R*)

Parentage - ('Nova Zembla' x *R. yakushimanum*) x (*R. catawbiense* var. album 'Glass' x 'Elizabeth')
Breeder - D.L. Craig, Introduced - 1992, Registered - 1992, D.L. Craig
Habit - medium tall, compact, Colour - red-purple
Exposure - light-medium shade, Hardiness - zone 5a
Bloom time - mid-season

Spectacular in terms of its bright showy colour which is purplish-red. Wavy flower margins. Black spotting on the dorsal lobe. Very floriferous with a dense growth habit; it puts on a good show even from a distance.

Cultivar - 'Minas Princess' (R*)

Parentage - open-pollinated Ghent azalea hybrid
Selected by D.L. Craig from seed via Schumacher, Sandwich, Massachusetts
Introduced - 1982, Registered - 1998, D.L. Craig
Habit - upright, tall, Colour - pink, scented
Exposure - full sun to light shade, Hardiness - zone 5a
Bloom time - mid-season

This is an excellent azalea. The flowers are very attractive, the scent very pleasant.

Cultivar 'Minas Flame' (R*)

Parentage - 'Gibraltar' x 'Balzac'
Breeder - George Swain, Selected by - D.L. Craig
Introduced - 1982, Registered - 1998, D.L. Craig
Habit - upright, tall, Colour - orange - red
Exposure - full sun - light shade, Hardiness - zone 5b
Bloom time - mid-season

This hybrid has the appearance of most Knaphill azalea cultivars and is a strong growing plant. It has a good level of mildew resistance. Its orange-red flowers are attractive.

N.B. Many of these hybrids may require more sun on the Scotia coast where fog is prevalent.

In 1980 I selected and named a seedling azalea Minas Gold because it was mildew resistant at the time and for a period afterwards. It later, however, proved that this resistance was not present and so I discarded it. Perhaps Minas Gold was an escape or another strain of mildew caught up with it. Goldflake, for example, is a vastly superior cultivar.

N.B. The Kentville hybrids as well as a few important breeding plants can be viewed on the Chapter Website at: http://www.atlanticrhodo.org/hybrids/f_hyb.html

(The concluding part of this article will appear in the October issue of AtlanticRhodo.)

Hybrid Portraits

The Offspring of *R. fortunei* and *R. calophytum*

By Bruce Clyburn

Bruce Clyburn gardens and hybridizes in New Waterford, Cape Breton, NS

I started to assemble a collection of rhododendron species and hybrids fifteen years ago. In Cape Breton we are limited in what can be purchased at local garden centers. The only selections you can be sure of obtaining are the Catawba hybrids: *catawbiense album*, 'Roseum Elegans', 'Nova Zembla' and the lepidote 'PJM'. Most of my plants have come from tissue culture sales, have been raised from seed or cuttings or imported from mail order specialty gardens. I would like to report on the hybrids of two species that contributed in a big way to the diversity of plant form and length of bloom. They are hybrids of *RR. fortunei* and *calophytum*, both of the Fortunei Series.

Rhododendron fortunei

The species has many arresting features including petioles in shades of purple, bluish or red. New growth is accompanied by a flush of scarlet leaf bracts and of course it is the hardiest scented species that can be grown in our area. In favoured sites it can grow in excess of 10 feet in time. Over the years I have grown on at least a dozen seed selections from various seed exchanges trying to select the forms that will perform best here. The species does increase in hardiness after reaching a meter in height. Some of the most attractive forms I grew appeared to be *R. decorum* and those have been unacceptably tender. It was suggested that the Lushan form might have an edge in hardiness but I have received conflicting reports. Most seedlings were vigorous in their youth putting on two or three flushes of growth when *R. catawbiense* only makes one. As a result they didn't harden off well going into winter. With age their youthful exuberance has diminished and most pass the winter better.

Hybrids

Dexters – Perhaps the most striking development of beautiful hybrids hardy for the Northeast was made by Charles O. Dexter, who carried on a massive breeding program at his estate in Sandwich, Mass. Making extensive use of the Chinese species *Rhododendron fortunei*, Dexter produced a remarkable number of hybrids characterized by dense foliage, large stature, and flowers of superior size and colour, many of which are fragrant. This is even more remarkable when we consider he didn't start his monumental breeding program until he was in his sixties. The book *Hybrids & Hybridizers* inspired an early interest in Dexter rhododendrons along with an article prepared for the *Journal of the American Rhododendron Society*, Fall 1989 issue, by Dr. Jon Valigorsky simply entitled "Hardy Dexter Rhododendrons". I later corresponded with Jon and he provided details of the plants which succeeded in his Berkshire garden of Western Massachusetts (USA zone 4a). When I sought a mail order source for Dexter plants Jon put me in touch with Briarwood Gardens and proprietor Jonathan Leonard. This was a small nursery near the former Charles Dexter Estate in Sandwich, Mass. that specialized



One of the Bayport 'Fortcat' (*R. fortunei* x *R. 'Catalgla'*) hybrids. [Photo John Brett]

in Dexter rhododendrons. Jonathan is a wealth of knowledge when it comes to the Dexter "clan" and his customer services were second-to-none (Briarwood closed in 1998).

Table I lists 26 Dexters I've grown. Plants bloom about one to two weeks before the Catawbas and all show good resistance to insects. Note that the temperatures under the second column represent the lowest encountered (in my garden) after which there was a full truss. *This is not necessarily the plant's ultimate hardiness.* The minimum temperature in the past fifteen years was -28°C during the winter of 1994-95.

Table II lists some crosses by other hybridizers and are well suited to Nova Scotia.

Table I Dexter *fortunei* Crosses

Hybrid	Colour	Min. C°	Comments
Accomplishment	red	-26	Red & white bi-colour. Roots well.
Avondale	red	-27	One of few hardier reds
Ben Mosely	pink	-27	Old reliable
Betty Arrington	pink	-25	Blooms late
Betty Hume	pink	-23	Nice scent; leaf burn & blown pips in bad winters
Bosely Dexter 1016	pink	-28	Very hardy; will get leggy in shade
Brown Eyes	pink	-24	Brown blotch
Champagne	pink	-25	Nice scent, will get leggy even in sun, roots well
Dexter's Spice	white		Not hardy. Died in winter 1995-96
Gigi	red		Not hardy. Died back severely 2000-01
Glenda Farrell	red		Struggles to survive. No buds yet
Gloxineum	pink	-27	Plant was stolen
Great Eastern	pink	-28	One of the best, nice scent. Roots well
Lavender Princess	lav	-28	One of the best, black green leaves
Merley Cream	yellow	-28	Very hardy, should be used to cross for yellows
Newburyport Beauty	pink	-25	Nice, plant was badly damaged by snow load
Parker's Pink	pink	-27	My favourite! Roots well
Sagamore Bayside	pink		Struggled and died
Sand. Appleblossom	pink	-27	Second favourite. Pink and white bi-colour
Scintillation	pink	-27	Is all it's claimed to be in protected spot
Victoria	pink	-28	Very tough. Truss is smaller
Wareham	pink		Leaf burn in bad winters. No buds yet
Westbury	pink	-27	Very prostrate when young but grows out of this
Weston	pink		Hardy but no bloom yet
Wyandanch Pink	pink	-28	Very hardy, plant stolen
Zanzibar	pink		Sibling to Champagne, no bloom yet

Table II Other *fortunei* Crosses

Hybrid	Colour	Min. C°	Comments
Smirfort x <i>fortunei</i>			K. Voitk. surprised it does poorly (12 seedlings)
Acadia	pink	-25	KRS. Leaf burn frequently
Beaufort	white	-26	J. Gable. Cuttings from Boulderwood, scented
Bellefontaine	pink	-28	KRS. Wouldn't be without, super foliage, Scented
Bravo	pink	-28	D. Leach. Does well
Forecat 87-C	pink	-28	R.M. Steele. Large grower, scented
Forecat, smaller pink	pink	-28	R.M.Steele. Large grower, scentedf
<i>fortunei</i> x Honeydew			Most are dead
Gable's Smirfort	pink		J. Gable. Yet to bud
Goldfort	yellow		Leaf burn most winters, has yet to bud
Hinton's Smirfort	pink	-25	D. Hinton. Scented
Janet Blair	pink	-28	D. Leach, an excellent plant
Scintillation	pink		May be dead

Rhododendron calophytum

The small plant of the species that I purchased ten years ago by mail from a British Columbia nursery failed to survive beyond two winters. I have two more grown from RSF seed that are treated as 'tub plants' taken out so I can enjoy the foliage in summer but positioned in heavy shelter for winter. *Calophytum* can take years to set buds and I don't think it will be reliable here. Fortunately there is an ample selection of its hardy hybrids to which it has sired its large (to 12") attractive (*calophytum* means beautiful plant) leaves. Most of these plants bloom early but aren't usually frosted here; several have inherited a prominent blotch from *calo*. I don't have the same length of experience with these as with the *fortunei* hybrids and won't report on hardiness ratings in detail just yet.

Hybrids

Table III shows a number of hardier hybrids of *calophytum*; most are not easy to obtain for different reasons. In addressing a 1980 Breeders' Roundtable, David Leach, reporting on weaknesses in his hybrids, said "Now the next one has two strikes against it, not just one. It's not only hard to root, but the leaves are too large. If it ever gets distributed at all, 'Spellbinder' will always be a hobbyist's hybrid". When I gaze on the proportions of this friendly giant blooming a few weeks after *mucronulatum*, I'm grateful I was able to obtain it years ago. Today it is getting difficult to find. Anybody wishing to share experience with other *calo* hybrids, please e-mail me at bclyburn@ns.sympatico.ca

Table III Available Hardy *calophytum* Crosses (Still Under Evaluation)

Hybrid	Colour	Comments	Growing
Andrew Paton	white/b	Bob Furman (<i>Scintillation</i> x <i>calo</i>) Dick Brooks' favourite	N
Assaye	pink	J. Williams (<i>calo</i> x <i>sutchuense</i>)	N
Babylon	white/b	Reuthe (<i>calo</i> x <i>praevernum</i>), hardy last 3 years	Y
Calfort	white/b	C. Ingram (<i>calo</i> x <i>fortunei</i>)	N
Calsap x <i>calo</i>		B. Clyburn, 2001 seedlings	Y
Cloud Nine x <i>calo</i>		B. Weinz, 1999 seedlings	Y
Conn. Yankee x <i>calo</i>		B. Clyburn, 2001 seedlings	Y
Great Day	white/b	O.S.Pride, (<i>Catalgla</i> x <i>calo</i>)	N
March Madness	purple	G. Mehlquist (<i>Purpureum Elegans</i> x <i>calo</i>)	N
<i>maximum</i> x <i>calo</i>	pink	A. Kehr, yet to bud, vegetatively hardy	Y
Spellbinder	pink	D. Leach, (<i>Russell Harmon</i> x <i>Robin Hood</i>) Reliable	Y
Spellbinder x <i>calo</i>		J. Weagle, 2002 seedlings	Y
Spellbinder x <i>calo</i>		B. Weinz 1999 seedlings	Y
Tipoff	white/b	G. Mehlquist (<i>chionides</i>) x <i>calo</i>)	N

Note: /b signifies a blotch. The last column indicates what I'm growing.



R. 'Mist Maiden' [Photo Don Craig]

Some Experiences with Meconopsis

By Sterling Levy

I saw my first "blue poppies" in a photo of an English garden in the mid-seventies and immediately fell in love. Could I grow them here in Nova Scotia? Where could I get them? It wasn't until we moved from Dartmouth to Fall River in 1977 and had a new vacant lot on which to build a garden, that I started seriously to look for a source of *Meconopsis betonicifolia*.

My first seeds came from a Thompson & Morgan seed catalog. I planted them along with my annuals, put them in a nice warm spot and waited for them to grow. Nothing happened! I assumed that the seed was bad.

Around 1980 I started to join plant societies; The American Primrose Society, The Royal Horticultural Society, as well as various Alpine and Rock Garden Clubs. Their bulletins and newsletters contained information about all kinds of wonderful new plants and they offered seed including meconopsis. It is from these seed exchanges that I still get much of the seed I plant. From the articles in their publications I learned about stratification, planting mixes, plant sources, specialty books, and growing conditions in the wild as well as in the garden. And my list of 'wanted plants' got very long. By this time I had also learned that Fall River is often significantly colder in the winter than the coast. We were no longer in zone 6.

In 1982 I decided to make a serious effort to establish meconopsis in my garden. I ordered seed of the perennial blue types from all the seed lists. Armed with my newly-found information, I managed, by trial and a lot of error, to germinate and grow many of the resulting seedlings. That Fall I had 250 small plants that I stored carefully in my cold frames. The next Spring there were 25 survivors! These were planted in various areas of the garden where they grew very well but only 10 survived the next winter in the open. However, a new crop of seedlings was on the way.

I continued to plant more seed and gradually appeared to be making some progress. The "breakthrough" happened when my surviving plants started to bloom and I could save and grow my locally grown seed. The local seedlings seemed to be more robust and grew better. In the next 10 years I slowly built up a collection of about 30 clumps including a couple of good white forms. When self-sown seedlings started appearing in the garden I thought I had achieved success so stopped the annual sowing of seed.

Meconopsis tend not to be long-lived plants. They are heavy feeders, quickly exhausting the soil nutrients and needing to be divided and replanted in fresh compost. They dislike heat and drought. The recent trend toward hot dry summers puts a strain on the plants. (We get our water supply from a well and cannot water heavily.)

Cold temperatures with little or no snow cover and our open winters with their freeze-thaw cycles are bad for meconopsis. If the dormant crowns are kept too wet they often rot away at the soil line. These stresses along with neglect on my part eventually reduced my collection. By the Summer of 2001 there were only 2 plants left in the garden. Time to start the production line again.

What have I learned about growing these spectacular plants?

1. Meconopsis seed germinates best at cool temperatures so it is a good idea to stratify the seed. Stratification is exposing the seed to a period of cool moist conditions which help initiate germination.
2. Seedlings need cool, well ventilated growing conditions. If they get too warm they collapse and die (looks like damping off).
3. In my garden small plants often are heaved out of the ground by frosts so it is best to keep seedlings in a cold frame for their first winter.
4. In the garden, they need shade from the hot sun and a rich, moist soil during the growing season.
5. When dormant, they prefer to be relatively dry around the crown soil line. Planting on a slope can help excess moisture drain away. A gravel mulch around the plant may help.

My seed starting method

Container - All my seed is started in standard three (3) inch plastic pots. They must be clean! I soak and scrub used pots in hot soapy water with a bit of bleach added.

Medium - A standard commercial seeding mix (e.g. Pro Mix). It should be moist but not too wet, loose with no clumps. Fill the pot to the brim, tamp it slightly to level the surface without compacting the mix.

I sprinkle the seed on top of the mix and water it gently with a fine spray just enough to settle the seed into the medium. Then a thin cover of coarse white silica sand is sprinkled over the entire pot. This helps to trap moisture, slows down growth of moss and allows light to penetrate. (Some seed needs light for germination.)

The pots are put in plastic fish boxes each with a lid. Any translucent container will do. It traps humidity, allows light to enter, keeps out rain and any critters who might dig up the seed. The boxes are left at room temperature for 24 hours to allow the seed to start absorbing moisture and then



Plastic 'fish box' with lid removed to show seed pots ready for cold treatment. [Photo S. Levy]

are put outdoors in a bright area with no direct sun. The seed is subjected to winter conditions from mid-February onward. Germination usually starts by late April.

I try to keep the seedlings growing in bright light and cool conditions away from direct sunlight. When they get their first set of leaves they are carefully separated into single pots or flats. When they have recovered from the initial transplant shock and start growing they are fed regularly with a commercial plant food mixed at 30% recommended strength. I often use a tomato food. You will need to keep a lookout for the usual critters that like to feast on choice seedlings.

Although the literature tells us that meconopsis do not like pot culture I find that I get a better survival rate if I keep potted seedlings in a frame for their first winter. When planting in the garden I dig a big hole, fill it with the richest soil available, and then put in the plants. Water them well.

Plants will bloom the second or third summer in the garden. Some growers recommend that you pick off the first blooms to force the plant to produce multiple crowns but some of them will die anyway. Don't be surprised if some of your plants turn out to be a colour other than the lovely blue we

see in photos. Much of the seed is from garden collected seed and may not be true and the colours do vary from year to year especially in young plants.

Although my efforts have been concentrated on the perennial blue meconopsis I have grown and successfully flowered some of the monocarpic types. *Meconopsis napaulensis* can be especially spectacular with a flower stem up to five feet tall and a mass of yellow or red flowers. Other seed lots labelled as *M. horridula* and *M. regia* have flowered here. All these types die after flowering.

As I write this (February 2003) I have sixteen seed lots of various meconopsis planted. With a bit of luck there may be seedlings on the door prize table at the Fall meetings. Look for the styrofoam cups. ☺

Plant Societies with seed lists:

Alpine Garden Club of B.C.
c/o Moya Drummond,
3307 W. 6th Ave.
Vancouver, BC, V6R1T2
\$25.00/year

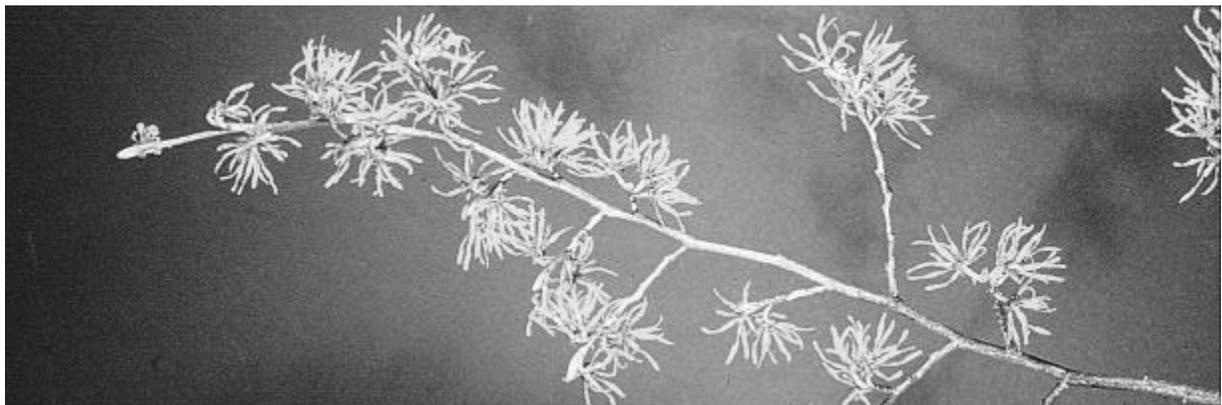
North American Rock Garden Society
c/o Jacques Mommens
Box 67, Millwood, New York, 10546 USA
\$25.00 USD/year

Ontario Rock Garden Society
c/o Andrew Osyany
Box 146, Shelburne, ON, L0N1S0
\$17.50/year

Recommended Reading:

Meconopsis by James L. S. Cobb
Timber Press - (1989)
ISBN 0-88192-151-3

Poppies: The Poppy Family In The Wild And In Cultivation
By Christopher Grey-Wilson
Timber Press - Revised Edition (2000)
ISBN 0-88192-503-9



Hamamelis 'Arnold Promise' [Photo Chris Helleiner]

Our Garden on Mahone Bay

By Jenny Sandison



John and I fell in love with this property when scouting for a retirement home. It stands on Mahone Bay harbour, a delightful old cape, on a piece of land which isn't large, just over half an acre. We settled on building an extension and returned to Montreal. When we came to take up residence construction was still underway and at the rear of the house we were confronted with a huge pile of dirt fifteen feet high. John took one look and said "You've bitten off more than you can chew this time, Jenny."

This is our second garden. Our first, at the cottage in northern Vermont, was a haphazard affair, but I learned a lot about perennials and became interested in design. This new property was pretty much a blank slate as it had been neglected for many years and consisted of mostly rough grass. The house used to sit beside the gravel road above a bank that had been stabilized

with split granite boulders. In the 60s the front garden acquired another 50 feet when the road was moved away onto reclaimed land, but the resulting space had only ever been used as a parking lot. The land slopes up from the water with the perimeter marked by a line of pine trees and some wonderful old ash trees. The new extension necessitated digging into the hillside, hence the pile of dirt. But it is amazing what a backhoe can do. Never underestimate the ease with which large equipment can impose your wishes on the landscape.

Planning

While dreaming of our new property I had resorted to making plans. (I have always been fascinated with maps). I envisaged two terraces to take care of the change in level and planned garden doors at the rear of our house to give a good view up the garden. This soon happened.

Outside the garden doors is a paved patio area where we eat in summer. I have big colourful pots here and the hard surface makes getting out easy on a rainy day or a dewy morning. Then there is a three foot retaining wall to hold the slope with steps up through it immediately opposite the garden doors. I was very disappointed ten years ago that there was no good wall building stone available here, so the wall is made of railway ties. This has never been my favourite material but has served us well and is quietly rotting and one day will be replaced with the stone that is now readily available.

The top of the wall is a great place to grow alpine plants. The red form of *Pulsatilla* does well here as does a dwarf gorse, *Genista dalmatica*. The steps lead up to a typical rectangular English lawn carved out of the slope and surrounded by a bank that is

covered with mugho pine, day lilies, Siberian iris; all easy stuff to hold the soil. It's always fun to have paths that get you around a garden so one of my first projects was a sinuous trail up the bank with the usual log steps and boulders anchoring them. It still works well. A dwarf Alberta spruce marks the last curve. Halfway down is a rhododendron, a yak that John Weagle thrust into my hands that first summer.

Beyond this first part of the garden I thought I would experiment with a grassy diagonal axis rather than keeping everything lined up. I have made a long mixed border on the far side of the diagonal which contains a Chinese dogwood and a golden form of the locust tree. These two small trees have become a real feature looking up the garden but should never outgrow their space. At the top of the diagonal I have a small square pergola under the pines that looks down the

wide grassy path to the sea. This was almost a stroke of genius! I see this as my Japanese garden and have limited the planting around to rhodies, a *Pieris* 'Brower's Beauty', a magnolia and the 'Golden Full Moon' Japanese maple.

A Work in Progress

The top of the garden is a work in progress. It gets wilder towards the back and I see it generally as mixed shrubs that will grow together and be a woodland style garden. Meanwhile the front garden has undergone a transformation. The first year I painstakingly pickaxed away at the old gravel roadbed, added compost, planted roses, a 'Leonard Messel' magnolia, spireas and summer flowers. John wanted instant grass so we had sod laid. Beware! I felt it was a mistake at the time. It is a hot sunny spot and every summer the grass went brown for six weeks. It's just too dry.

I'm a great believer in using plants suitable to an area, so two years ago I had the sod up and laid a series of gravel paths, amended the soil in the beds and started an experiment in what will flourish in hot/dry conditions. Roses at the base of the wall do well, catmint billows across the gravel, Russian sage makes airy blue masses in the fall and red valerian blooms all summer. Because this garden is beside the Oakland road I try to have it colourful and get a great kick out of seeing my neighbours with their noses in things.

"A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot."

Mine gives me constant pleasure, vigorous workouts, a place to sit (sometimes!), a source of never failing interest, great friends, and sadly, while John is no longer with me, he lives in the things we did together. ☘

Slides from the 1950s on Disk

By John Weagle
Project Co-Ordinator

Sterling Levy of the Atlantic Chapter (RSCAR) has just completed transferring colour slides taken in England during 1952 and 1953 to eight CD disks. These slides were taken by Alleyne Cook during the rhododendron flowering season and include as well many rare slides of RHS Flower Shows, famous gardens and plants. They are of great historical significance and Sterling's patience and technical wizardry deserve hearty thanks for preserving what could very well have been lost.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's the use of 35mm film was not common, the use of colour film less so and horticultural subjects rare indeed. Miss Vine, Picture Librarian of the Royal Horticultural Society, Lindley Library wrote on receiving a copy of the first disk of the Chelsea Flower Show of 1952 "we have a paucity of images from the 1950's, especially those in colour".

Three sets of disks were created. The first has been retained by the Atlantic Chapter on the insistence of the photographer. The

second set was sent to Miss Vine at the RHS Lindley Library. The third was sent to the ARS Vancouver Chapter.

The slides have now been returned to the photographer. As is to be expected from slides 50 years old there has been some loss of colour and detail. However considering that there are no known slides of these establishments taken so long ago this collection can be considered historically unique.

Consider the fact that Mike Flanagan, Keeper of Windsor Great Park, found himself looking at the scans of his gardens taken fifteen years before he was born. In one a man is standing in front of a six foot *Rhododendron sinogrande*. Today it is a tree over 40 feet high. Those early conditions were new to him. A border of *R. forrestii* Repens Group 100 yards long has been overgrown by other shrubs.

In one ancient slide the background shows a small three foot magnolia. When visiting

the Savill Gardens today, if you walk down the fence past the great wall, towering maybe 50 feet high is *Magnolia* 'Peter Veitch', the same little three foot plant but now much more mature.

The CD's are as follows:

- #1 Chelsea Flower Show - 45 scans
- #2 Windsor Great Park - 48 scans
- #3 Exbury Gardens - 36 scans
- #4 Tower Court and Stonefield Castle - 20 & 13 scans respectively
- #5 Wisley, Knap Hill, Bloems Bulbs - 31, 7 & 12 scans respectively
- #6 & #7 Sunningdale Nurseries - 59 scans
- #8 Constance Spry and Winkfield 33 scans

These scans will eventually be posted on the Atlantic Website.

www.atlanticrhodo.org

Our sincere thanks go to our very generous Honorary Life Member of the Atlantic Chapter Alleyne Cook of North Vancouver, BC -- plantsman, writer and photographer extraordinaire. ☘

Grow Rhododendrons for their Leaves

By Todd Boland

Todd Boland gardens in St. John's, Newfoundland. He has written many articles on horticultural subjects.

With so many hundreds of species and thousands of hybrids, it's not surprising that there are many rhododendrons which may be grown for their foliage as well as their flowers (sometimes the foliage is the best part!). As a teacher of landscape horticulture, I'm always trying to impress upon my students the value of foliage. So many people simply look at the flowers provided by a given plant, but fail to look at the 'full package' that a plant may offer. Too many plants look good for a week or so, but are less than impressive for the rest of the season. Lilacs immediately come to mind; a couple of weeks of bloom and for the rest of the season you have a blasé shrub that is a host for leaf miners and blight disease.

Rhododendrons are one group of shrubs that can provide a good year-round 'package'. A well-grown rhododendron can be stunning when in full bloom, and while simply green for the rest of the season (assuming it's an evergreen lepidote or elepidote), that greenery can be quite welcome in the landscape during the dreary months of December to March. The foliage of some lepidotes, such as many PJM types, turns a lovely glossy purple in are relatively small for the size of the plant (some in the St. John's area are now nearly six feet tall) and have dark pink buds opening to pink-flushed white flowers that eventually fade to nearly pure white. In fact, most of the Taliensia rhododendrons have a similar floral display. Thankfully, the foliage more than makes up for average-looking flowers.

Several gardeners in the St. John's area are growing rhododendrons from the Taliensia subsection. The most bizarre yet spectacular is *R. roxieanum* var. *oreonastes*. I saw my first specimen of this in Walter Ostrom's garden near Peggy's Cove. It immediately went on my 'want' list. The super-narrow leaves emerge covered in reddish-brown indumentum. The entire plant was quite small (three to four



R. 'Mist Maiden' [Photo Todd Boland]

feet) and fairly slow-growing. The spiky leaves and upright, yet dense, compact growth makes for an alien-looking plant. I bought one from the RSCAR sale four years ago and the plant is still under a foot tall. Other Taliensia rhododendrons that are growing locally in St. John's include *R. taliense*, *R. globigerum*, *R. sphaeroblastum*, *R. wasonii* and *R. proteoides*.

Perhaps the most popular indumented rhododendron growing in St. John's is *R. yakushmanum* (commonly referred to as a yak). This tough plant is a must in any rhododendron collection. This species has silvery-white new foliage whose upper surface becomes smooth and medium green by mid-summer. The lower indumentum is cream to tawny-coloured. Its flowers also emerge from deep pink buds that open to light pink flowers that fade to white. However, the trusses are generally larger than the Taliensia rhododendrons. While most of the Taliensia rhododendrons growing locally are in reasonably sheltered sites, *R. yakushmanum* seems to be quite tolerant to exposure. The best plants, such as the selection 'Mist Maiden', have a mounded habit and will be around four to five feet. 'Yaku Angel' is another locally grown selection of the species, but this one is more dwarf. Closely related to *R. yakushmanum* are *R. degonianum* and *R. makinoi*, both which are also growing locally.



R. 'Crete' [Photo Todd Boland]

There are many hybrids on the market that have used *R. yakushmanum* as a parent. Many of these have equally beautiful, indumented foliage. R. 'Crete' (*smirnowii* X *yakushmanum*) is a popular 'yak' look-alike. Other locally-grown 'yak' hybrids with notable indumented foliage include 'Yaku King', 'Yaku Prince', 'Yaku Princess' (these three being 'King Tut' X *yakushmanum* 'Koichiro Wada'), 'Ken Janeck' and 'Teddy Bear' (*yakushmanum* X *bureavii*). This last hybrid looks very much like *R. bureavii*.



R. pachysanthum [Photo Todd Boland]

The 'creme-de-la-creme' of indumented rhododendrons has to be *R. pachysanthum*. I saw my first plant in Jamie Ellison's garden and like *R. roxieanum*, it immediately went on the want list. I managed to track down a young plant five years ago. It's a stunner! The new foliage emerges golden-blond then the upper surface turns silvery while the lower surface becomes a rich cinnamon-rust. The upper indumentum lasts nearly all summer. My plant is fairly slow growing and is nearly a foot tall and two feet wide. It has yet to bloom and from what John Weagle tells me, it won't flower any time soon! But that's OK as like many of the indumented rhododendrons, its flowers are also pale pink.

A close look-alike is 'Golder' (*pachysanthum* X *pseudochrysanthum*) whose foliage is nearly as good and at least will bloom at a reasonably young age.

Another beautiful indumented rhododendron is *R. campanulatum* var. *aeruginosum*. Its leaves are glaucous blue-green on the upper surface and light cinnamon on the lower. All this on a compact plant that, again according to John, may not bloom any time soon. The last good foliage rhododendrons that are grown locally are *R. recurvoides* (narrow leaves that are cinnamon on the bottom, rugose dark green on the top and whose stems and petioles are covered in brownish hairs) and *R. haematodes* (buffy indumentum and RED flowers!)

There are many other indumented rhododendrons on the market and I am always on the lookout for new ones. The species and hybrids noted above are all doing well in St. John's thus should do well in coastal areas of mainland Nova Scotia and certainly, the 'yak' rhododendrons should do well throughout most of the Maritimes. On a final note, there is one other lovely indumented rhododendron I grow. The plant was bought at a local nursery under the name 'Yak #7'. The plant has a compact habit (one by two feet after six years) with leaves four inches by an inch and a half. They emerge covered in cinnamon-orange indumentum, just slightly lighter in colour than *R. bureavii*. The flower truss is smallish with orange-pink flowers and a large calyx. The flowers look very similar to a picture of 'Bambi' in the book *Making the most of Rhododendrons and Azaleas* by Christopher Fairweather. John Weagle thinks the hybrid may be 'George Munroe's Favorite', but I cannot find any information on the parentage of that hybrid. If any members out there have information on this infamous 'Yak #7' then I would most appreciate it. I may be contacted at tboland@nfld.com.



R. "yak #7" [Photo Todd Boland]

How to Make Rhododendron Crosses

By Sven-Goren Alkstrand

Mr. Alkstrand is a member of the Swedish chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.

Pollinate more!!!

We need to improve and extend our seed list! The only way to do that is to have more members try to do crosses.

What we want is seed from controlled pollination (CP). This means that the hybridizer controls the pollen that reaches the pistil. You cannot predict the result but you can be sure what the parents are and that is a good start.

Conditions for successful pollination

The best time to get a successful pollination or take is around noon. In addition if it is warm the opportunities are even better. Avoid pollinating in rain. A cross may fail even though conditions are good, due to barriers between different species and cultivars. Some are good seed plants while others give good viable pollen. Some cultivars are sterile and there is no point in trying them. Still others give poor pollen that rarely germinates on the pistil. Others do not cross with any other species, e.g. *R. schlippenbachii*. If a shrub that has flowered for several seasons never gives a seed crop when pollinated by insects your opportunities to get seed from it are not much better. A failure is almost certain. But we urge you to try. Some pollinations might succeed and by this much is achieved.

There are several methods of pollinating. Below are just a few simple steps to make a start.

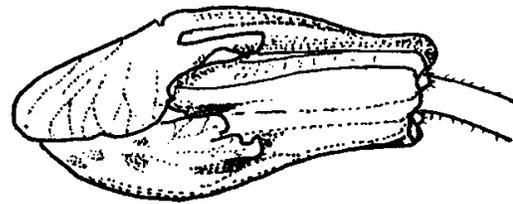


Fig. 2. A flower in the balloon phase. As you see, it is not yet open and no pollen can have reached the pistil.*

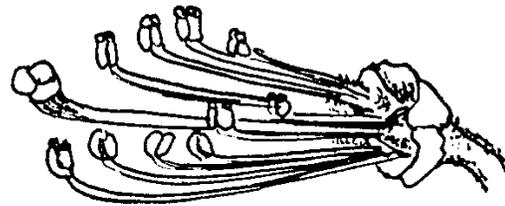


Fig. 3. At this stage you remove the corolla.

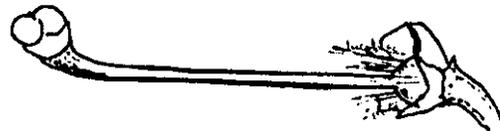


Fig. 4. Then the stamens are removed. There are several, five or more. Very often they have a colour other than that of the lonely pistil and are easy to distinguish. Tweezers do this work best. NB! It is absolutely necessary to avoid getting any of the pollen onto the stigma!

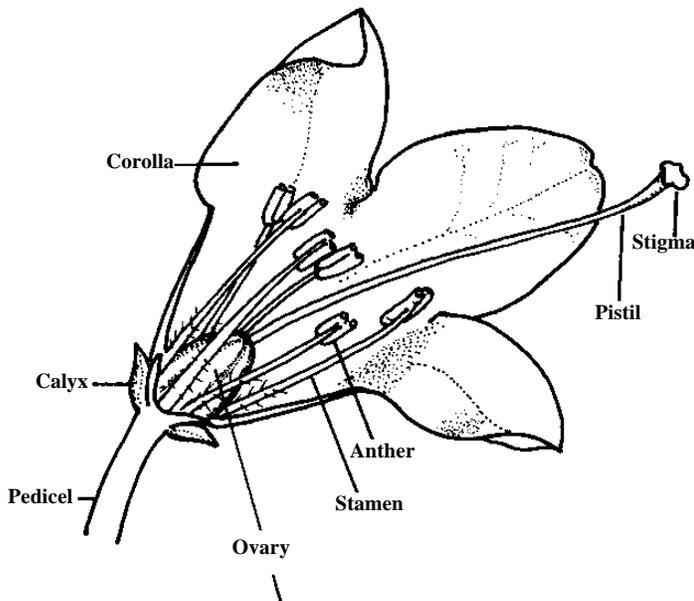


Fig. 1. Botanical terms for the flower. parts.

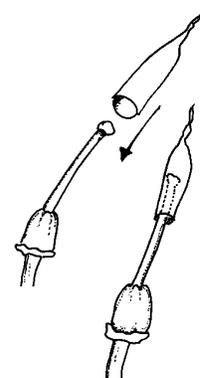


Fig. 5. Now you have to isolate the pistil to assure that no undesired pollen will reach it. Best and simplest is to draw a small cone of aluminium over it. The cone is pinched around the stigma so that it will not slip off. This stops any undesired pollen from reaching the pistil and you control the process completely!

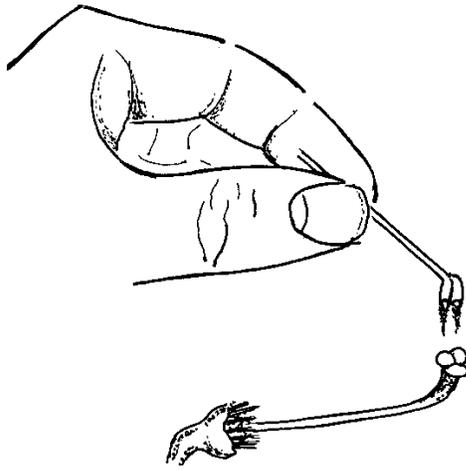


Fig. 6. When the pistil has matured the selected pollen is placed on the stigma by tweezers or by hand. If you use several different kinds of pollen on different pistils clean your hands or tools between each pollination. When the pollen has been applied (the procedure can be repeated for several days and the results will be better) the pistil has to be isolated again.

Why can you not pollinate directly? The pistil must be “mature”, i.e. receptive for the pollen grains. The pistil usually matures after the pollen has developed to avoid self-fertilisation. You can tell that the pistil is mature by a sticky sugar layer has been developed on the stigma. You have to wait for a couple of days – sometimes longer – before the isolated pistil has matured. You will have to check now and then by taking off the aluminium cone.

Signs of successful pollination

If the pollination is successful you will notice in due time that the ovary expands. Something you must not forget is to label the cross! Your memory is shorter than you will admit! In addition you had better record your cross and the

plant you pollinated. In the summer when the plants make their growth the pollinated flowers are easily hidden. Then the label will help you find them. It might be wise in a truss to remove the flowers in a truss that you do not intend to pollinate. If there are 15 flowers in a truss and if you intend to pollinate three of them remove the others. Later on it is impossible to determine which one was the subject of the controlled pollination. The cone of aluminium may have slipped off.

At last the seed is ready to be harvested. You cannot predict when this should be done. The seed cases should be brown (look matured), but not open. You will have to check now and then. On the seed envelope you record first the seed plant and then the pollen donor. The pollen does not need to be from a flower that blooms at the same time. The pollen might be collected in a previous season and stored in the freezer. If you intend to freeze the collected pollen it must be dried first. Otherwise you will have the sad experience that the pollen has been attacked by mildew. I usually keep my pollen in a simple paper cover on which I record the donor plant’s name. I have the covers open and airy in a small box in the freezer. You may keep pollen for more than a year and it is still viable. If you are using frozen pollen thaw before using.

I do hope these brief suggestions make you try pollinating. Many members will appreciate your efforts. Offered seed has never covered the demand!!!

* *RR. brachycarpum* and *maximum* are the exceptions. They will self-pollinate well before opening.

Kindly translated for the RSCAR Newsletter by Lennarth Jonsson, Lindesnäsavägen 8, S-371 45 Karlskrona, Sweden. The Swedish title was ‘Pollinera mera!!!’ by Sven-Goran Alkstrand. Reprinted from *Rhododendronbladet* Nr. 2, 2001, p. 21-22 with permission from the Swedish Chapter.



Trillium grandiflorum is one of our very rare early native wildflowers. [Photo Chris Helleiner]