

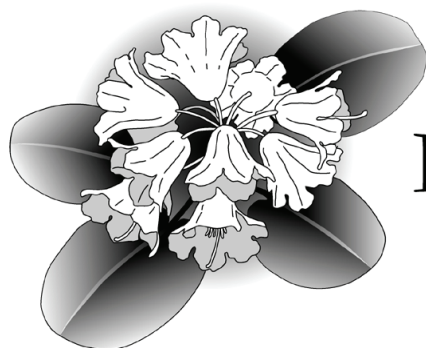
AtlanticRhodo

www.AtlanticRhodo.org

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Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society

Positions of Responsibility 2010 - 2011

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			May- Public Plant Sale	Duff & Donna Evers	835-2586

Membership (Please Note Changes)

Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society.

Fees are \$20.00 from September 1, 2010 to August 31, 2011, due September 2010. Make cheques payable to Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society. ARHS is a chapter in District 12 of the American Rhododendron Society. For benefits see ARHS website www.atlanticrhodo.org

American Rhododendron Society

Combined ARHS and ARS membership cost is \$50.00 Canadian. For benefits see www.rhododendron.org

Cheques, made payable to Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society should be sent to **Jim Drysdale, 5 Little Point Lane, Herring Cove, NS B3V1J7.**

Please include name, address with postal code, e-mail address and telephone number, for organizational purposes only.

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

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Cover Photo: 'Queen Alice'. [Photo Chris Helleiner]



Calendar of Events

All ARHS 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 meetings or events.

Tuesday Sept. 7

Cora Swinamer: Rhododendron 101. This introduction to the placement, care and culture of Rhododendrons was first aired several years ago. It is an excellent overview of the use of Rhododendrons in the garden, of interest to both novice and experienced gardeners.

Tuesday Oct. 5

Annual General Meeting

Steele Memorial Evening. Capt. Dick Steele who died this year in March was a founder of the Canadian Rhododendron Society, a hybridizer, teacher and great promoter of the genus Rhododendron. This evening several of his friends will share their reminiscences of his life, his hybrids, the way he influenced their appreciation of plants and how he guided and affected the way they planted their gardens. Photos of plants and gardens will underline this journey. Wine and cheese will also be served.

Tuesday Nov. 2

Julia Corden -The Explorer's Garden. Julia, who lives in Pitlochry, Scotland will share her experiences of the Himalayas. She is recently returned from Bhutan where she was following in the footsteps of George Sherriff, looking for Blue Poppies and plant hunting for new specimens.

Tuesday Dec. 7.

Christmas party and Members Photos. Our annual party is always a favourite with good things to eat and plenty of wine. Members are encouraged to bring a few photos of their garden, or someone else's garden, or travel photos of plants or gardens around the world. Members are also asked to bring finger foods. Wine will be provided by the Society.

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 ARHS events, in order to minimize the risk of allergic reactions.



A very warm welcome to our new and returning ARHS members who have joined since the February Newsletter.

**Peter Hicklin
Frances & Tom Howard
Annie Jivalian**

**Ralph Pineau
Janet E. Shaw
Sarah Whitehorn**

**Sackville, NB
Dartmouth, NS
NSCC (Kingstec Campus), Kentville
ARHS Award Winner
Halifax, NS
Hacketts Cove, NS
Halifax, NS**



Dick Steele – Bayport Memories

By Joe Harvey

Dick left us with many memories. I shall concentrate on only one aspect – that concerning his nursery at Bayport near Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, and the unforeseen results that came from his propagating setup.

After retiring from the navy and selling his share in the New Jersey nursery, he looked around for some suitable land and lighted on a small disused strip-farm on a sheltered bay on Nova Scotia's South Shore. The property was narrow but extended back from the shore for a distance I never did determine. This was a typical settlement farm and would have provided a family access to the bay, fields and a woodlot from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The old house was still standing, as were a few dilapidated sheds.

Behind the house Dick put up a plastic-covered hoop house in which to propagate rhododendrons and other plants. To service the hoop house he incorporated one or more of the existing sheds and connected them with a series of structures to house the pump and furnace, and to provide a work area with benches, sink, stools, etc. This small complex had a very cobbled-together home-made appearance through using miscellaneous 2x4's and found materials (including the coffee mugs). It was known as the header house.

What I term the *Header House Gang* had no fixed membership, although there were some regulars. After fixing a day, often a Sunday, word would go out and those who lived in Halifax would car-pool for the approximately hour's drive. Dick was always enormously pleased to be visited.

If it was a fine day the routine would be to tour round the nursery to see how the plants were doing, with Dick providing commentary. Nearest to the hoop house was the nursery field where plants were grown for sale. Further up the slope was scrubby woodland which had invaded the old fields. To trial his experimental crosses Dick would take a chain saw and open up a roughly circular area, leaving the surrounding bushes as a windbreak. He would plant out the seedlings from his crosses a batch at a time in each succeeding clearing. This was pretty rough treatment for the plants, but as he explained he wanted to eliminate the weaker ones. Over the years we would be able to follow the progress of these plants. It was quite fascinating.

Dick experimented with many crosses, but dear to his heart was the aim of producing a yellow-flowered elepidote rhododendron hardy enough to survive the east coast winters. As the years passed we were able to see how these progeny did. Some died, some did not thrive, some were white-flowered, some cream, and a very few were yellow.

Plants Dick thought showed promise would be tagged for moving or evaluating in future seasons. But what did those labels mean? "Oh, I couldn't tell you that", he said. Eventually he did. I am forgetting the details, but "G" was good; "SG" meant some good ("some" being an intensifier in Nova Scotia); "DG" was damn good and "SDG" was top category. His best yellow, 'Nancy Steele', recently named for his wife, reached, if I remember correctly (and I probably don't), the dizzy heights of "SBDG". He had of course a great sense of humour.

After the garden tour we would retire to the warmth and humidity of the header house, and in winter we would of course go straight there. Some of us would go into the propagator to see how the cuttings and seedlings were doing, dodging the mist when the system clicked on. After that we would sit around the bench for tea or coffee and cookies, the more fastidious among us attempting to scrub the crud from their mug beforehand. Then the talk began.

Dick was a great raconteur, his stories ranged around the world, occasionally about World War II and his last secondment to Washington, DC, but mainly about his gardening exploits. Whenever he was in London he would visit Windsor Great Park, meeting of course Sir Eric Saville, but his most immediate source of seeds, cuttings and instruction had been T. Hope Findlay from whom he got a lot of his rhododendron information. On the craft level he would demonstrate to us the cross-pollination of flowers, sowing seeds, taking cuttings and discussing the relative merits of the various rooting compounds. We learned a lot during those meetings.

Other than rhododendrons, Dick was enthusiastic about the then new hybrid blue hollies and magnolias. In fact it was his growing several magnolia hybrids that made us realize that they grew quite well in Nova Scotia, and several people joined the Magnolia Society (now Magnolia Society International) as a result. In retrospect these meetings were very precious.

After I left Nova Scotia for British Columbia, I got a surprise telephone call on New Year's Day. It was from the header house. The gang was meeting there and merrily wished us all the best in our new place. That was the last time I spoke to Dick, and it was nice to be greeted by him and his crew. As I put the receiver down I imagined a faint whiff of Grant's.

Looking back I realize now that what happened in the header house was, to borrow the title from Russell Page's lovely little book, *The Education of a Gardener*. We thought we were just having a fun day out. We were a group which came together with a mutual interest to educate each other and learn new things. In other words a "university" in the original sense of the word. In so far as a university might have a physical presence, the header house supplied it, so in a not altogether fanciful way we attended Header House University. Dick was the President. The graduates are now spread across Canada, putting into practice what they learned and passing it on to the next generation. Dick has several lasting legacies, but this to me is one of the more profound. □

Pine Grove Park

Dedicated to the Memory of Captain Richard Steele

Bowater Mersey paper Company Ltd created Pine Grove Park in 1987 as a forest garden to commemorate Queen's county's year as the "forestry Capital of Canada."

Captain Richard M. Steele, Canada's "Captain Rhododendron", became Pine Grove's foremost advisor, benefactor, and supporter. He selected most of the rhododendrons, azaleas and magnolias planted throughout this park, among them plants of his own breeding, many of which he donated. Over more than two decades Dick cultivated as many wonderful friends of Pine Grove as he contributed spectacular plants. They continue to support the Park.

Captain Steele died on March 14, 2010 at the age of 94.

In June 2010, amid the spring profusion of bloom and among many of his friends in the Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society, Bowater Mersey dedicated Pine Grove Park in Captain Steele's memory.

Captain Steele believed passionately that gardens hold the power to soothe the human spirit.

May your time in this special place be a time of peace.

This plaque was placed on a rock monument at the entrance to the Park.



Planting the Emperor Oak in memory of Captain Steele at Pine Grove Park. [Photo Chris Helleiner]



Diana Steele beside the memorial plaque to her father. [Photo Chris Helleiner]

Plant Portraits

Three Favourite Rhodos

Rhododendron ‘Golfer’

All summer my favourite rhodo is ‘Golfer’, because of its marvellous gray foliage and its neat shape. I first saw it in Bunchberry Nursery’s display garden, growing out in full sun and looking spectacular. At that point I thought it was one of the more exotic rhodos that are hard to find and take special care, but when I discovered that it was a fairly ordinary yak hybrid, I ordered a tissue culture plant. That was in 2002; now, eight years later, the tiny tissue culture plant is about 28 inches high and 38 inches across, a nice symmetrical shape. (70 x 95 cm.)

Although most of the rhodos in our city garden are somewhat crowded, I wanted this one to have room to develop a good shape. It was planted in our sunniest spot, which means about three quarters of a day of sun, with plenty of space around it. That space is now filling up ; ‘Mist Maiden’ and ‘Wintonbury’, two other yaks, are nudging it.

The glory of ‘Golfer’ is the gray hairs (tomentum) on the upper surface of the leaves. When they first unfold in the spring the leaves are a beautiful whitish blue gray. Gradually they become darker but still very attractive. Even Earl which hit two days ago could not spoil them.

The parents of ‘Golfer’ are *RR. yakushmanum* and *pseudochrysanthum*; in other words it is a first generation or primary hybrid of two species. *Pseudochrysanthum*, which also has excellent foliage, is offered by the ARHS as a tissue culture this year, as are two other spectacular foliage species, *pachysanthum* and *campanulatum* var. *aeruginosum*. We are going to try them all.

And by the way, it flowers too. This year for the first time our plant has ten fat buds.

Rhododendron ‘Queen Alice’

This one is another of our favourites. It also came as a tissue culture in 2002, and has never looked back. I’m not sure when it started blooming, but it was several years ago, early for a yak, since they often have to be fairly mature before they make much of a show.

The flowers on ‘Queen Alice’ are brighter than most yak blooms. The buds are a deep pink, almost red (but definitely *not* magenta). When they open the flowers are a good pink, and stay pink for some time, but finally end up off-white like most yaks. It is a free bloomer; when I looked at it this morning there was a bud on every branch. The leaves are a good solid green, very perfect, a fine setting for the flowers. There is a bit of rusty indumentum on the undersides, again like most yaks.

‘Queen Alice’ also makes a nice symmetrical plant. At present ours is about 42 inches high and wide; I suspect it will get quite a bit bigger. Greer’s *Guide* gives four feet as its height after ten years and Ken Cox classifies it as “low”. Greer gives its hardiness as –5F. but our plant has come through –10F. (-23C.) unscathed.

The parents of ‘Queen Alice’ are *RR. Yakushmanum* and ‘Alice’. ‘Alice’ is an old hybrid from 1910.

This one just shows what a little tissue culture plant can do.

Rhododendron ‘Millenium’

‘Millenium’ has two great virtues: the flowers are a brilliant colour and it blooms in mid July.

‘Millenium’ is a deciduous azalea. We acquired it from the ARHS pre-ordered plant sale in 2006 and were immediately impressed with it. The blooms are a really showy colour, a very bright pinkish red. It blooms at about the same time as some of the other very late azaleas; we have it planted with azaleas ‘Wombat’ and ‘Alexander’, both very low growing, and they seem to blend well together.

This is an upright grower, so far anyway, and various authorities give heights from three to six feet at maturity. They all seem to agree that it is hardy in U.S. Zone 5, which should mean that it is hardy in most of Nova Scotia. According to Ken Cox (*Rhododendrons and Azaleas, a Colour Guide*) 'Millenium' is mildew resistant and stands up to summer heat. Certainly our plant has no sign of mildew (but neither do our other azaleas) and this was a summer that might have tested it for heat.

The parents of this one are 'Weston's Sparkler' and 'Weston's Parade', two deciduous azaleas with lots of eastern American species in their background.

– Mary Helleiner

2011 ARHS Seed Exchange

We are anticipating the upcoming 2011 Seed Exchange with great interest. Last year's contributions were quite well received, although numbers were down from previous years. As usual, we thank all who participated as donors or as purchasers.

It would be very nice to see a few more donors from the general ARHS membership. All members are welcome to donate seeds from an interesting plant(s) in their garden; be it rhododendron, azalea or a companion plant.

Last year we gave some hints regarding seed handling, and that information is still timely. Bill is quite happy to clean seed for anyone who isn't feeling "proficient". You can also contact us if you have other questions.

Ideally seed should be fresh, clean and labeled. A concise description would be helpful. Crosses should, of course, include the names of the parent plants. Early collected seed should be kept cool and dry, or "cool and damp" in the case of those seeds which should never dry out. Please ensure that the envelopes used to transport seed are sealed along the seams to prevent leakage.

The Seed Exchange includes seed of rhododendrons and azaleas, wild and cultivated, species and hybrids, both hand pollinated and open pollinated. It also includes other unique shrubs, trees and perennials.

Members are encouraged to try growing rhododendrons and azaleas from seed. Germination requirements are included for the majority of seeds each year.

Cultural information is readily available, and the rewards are heartening. Results, from a bloom standpoint, often appear in as little as 2-3 years. Azaleas are especially "easy". They also seem to yield many very nice plants from either HP or OP seed lots. We could say there is no such thing as an ugly azalea!

We welcome questions and feedback. sbryson@ns.sympatico.ca

Send seed or a list by December 1, 2010, to:

Sharon Bryson, #407 Old Maryvale Rd. RR#3 Antigonish NS B2G 2L1

ARHS Outreach 2010

Regatta Point, the John Meagher garden, Saturday April 24th.

By Chris Hopgood



Photo Sandy Dumaresq

Great progress was made in subduing the Japanese knotweed in the John Meagher garden. For the third year of combating this ornery weed we seem to be making headway. That plant is difficult, the roots go down 4 inches and more and they are somewhat tuberous so that as you attempt to pull them they break off and leave the weed root underground somewhere beneath. Thankfully there is no goutweed there.

The weather cooperated even though it was a bit chilly with the wind off the water, although it didn't seem to bother Jenny Sandison who worked away with just a shirt and slacks.

Again we had some of the residents come by and thank us for our efforts in getting this interesting garden back into shape. Actually we added a new member: Jim Drysdale our membership chair signed an enthusiastic resident – Sarah Whitehorn had noticed us last year and this year she came along, gave us a hand and joined the society.

The plants that Audrey Fralic contributed last year are doing just fine, the *R. 'Ginny Gee'*, *R. 'Bpt 80-5'* now known as *R. 'Nancy Steele'*, *R. 'Isola Bella'*, *R. 'Purple Gem'* and *R. maximum* are all doing well. 'Isola Bella' and 'Nancy Steele' were putting on a nice little show for us that morning. *R. maximum* looks fine, but needs a bit of time to get its roots into the ground.

We had a visit from Mrs. John Meagher and daughter Gail; they were quite interested in noting our progress and kindly offered plants from their garden to bolster our Outreach project. Very much appreciated and the offer might well be acted on as we make continued progress there. Gail later sent me a copy of the original plan that Mr. Meagher had made, along with maps of the plantings he did at Point Pleasant Park. This might make good subject material for a ARHS meeting presentation.

Those that joined the work party this year were, (in no particular order) Sandy and Syd Dumaresq, Rachel Martin, Jenny Sandison, Sheila Stevenson, Stephen Archibald, Ann and Jim Drysdale, Carl Swinamer and Christopher Hopgood. Also the Dumaresq's dog, Bandit was our constant companion, supervising all activity, he has become our mascot for this project, well done Bandit!

Many thanks to Sandy and Sydney Dumaresq for supplying snacks and drinks, and to Sandy for taking pictures to record this event of great magnitude, and last but not least to Carl Swinamer for bringing 2 and ½ cubic yards of mulch which was used to cover and beautify the John Meagher garden at Regatta Point.

There is talk of having a fall work party, to tidy up the garden before the winter, stay tuned for that. ☐



Photo Sandy Dumaresq

ARHS 2011 TISSUE CULTURE- Advance Sale Information

It's time again to order your Tissue Culture plants for Spring 2011. This year again we have some new varieties and also some older ones that our newer members may not have. The cost of each of these plants will be approximately \$5.00. We try to keep the price 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 confirmation is received of the plants' arrival date. In addition to your order you may be able to purchase leftover plants if any are available the day of pick-up.

Plant descriptions and an order form are included with this newsletter. Please make sure your phone number and if possible, your e-mail address is included on the order form. If your order cannot be picked up the day of the sale in Halifax, please indicate on the order form. This sale is only available to paid-up members in the Atlantic Region.

Orders that are not picked up in Halifax on the sale date will be shipped collect by whatever method you have indicated on your order. Where shipping options are limited, the parcel will be shipped by Canada Post.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO MAKE A COPY OF YOUR ORDER. THE DEADLINE FOR THE 2011 ORDER WILL BE DECEMBER 17, 2010.

Please send your orders to:

ARHS,
c/o Audrey Fralic
RR 1,
Port Mouton, N.S. B0T1T0
Phone 1-902-683-2711
E-mail alfralic2@yahoo.ca

Remember that these plants have NOT BEEN HARDENED OFF. We recommend that you give them a good watering and as soon as possible pot them up in 4 in. pots. A mixture of one part peat, one part perlite and one part commercial mix makes a nice light mix for these small rhodies. DO NOT OVERWATER. Keep them inside under lights IN A COOL PLACE until all risk of frost is past (at least late May). On nice days you can place them outside to begin hardening them off but do not leave them out overnight until the risk of frost is over. Plant them in the ground in a cold frame or some other well protected area. Mulch to keep the moisture and soil temperature stable and make sure they are watered as needed.

For the first winter provide some protection. Use a coldframe, burlap or conifer boughs and make sure to use some mulch. Do not use clear plastic as it will cause burning and may even kill them. Shade cloth (purchased at Lee Valley) provides excellent shade and wind protection.

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

HAPPY GARDENING - AUDREY FRALIC

ARHS 2011 ADVANCE TISSUE CULTURE SALE

RHODODENDRONS (all rhododendrons are elepidotes unless otherwise stated)

VARIETY	HYBRIDIZER	DESCRIPTION
<i>R. Astrid</i>	Hachmann	This new release by Briggs nursery is a first class red <i>yakushmanum</i> hybrid with flowers opening from dark red buds. The flowers are of a heavy substance and resist damage from rain and sun. Glossy, dark green foliage densely covers the plant. Compact habit growing to 3' X 3'. Blooms mid-late and is hardy to -15 F.(-25C).
<i>R. Capistrano</i>	Leach	Outstanding, hardy yellow rhodie which bears trusses of 15 frilly, greenish-yellow flowers in midseason. Excellent foliage. Dense, mounding habit. Hardy to Zone 5. Grows to 4' X 4'.
<i>R. Florence Parks</i>	Joe Parks	Hardy, heavy flowering dark purple. New to Briggs, parents are Roseum Elegans' x 'Olin O. Dobbs'. Hardy to Zone 5. Probably 4' to 5' in size.
<i>R. Holden's Solar Flair</i>	Leach	New introduction by David Leach. Flowers have a waxy texture and are pink in bud opening to pale yellow with deep red dorsal blotch. Plant hardy to at least -20F(- 29 C). Flowers in midseason and has grown to 7 ft. in 26 years.
<i>R. Karin Seleger</i>	Brueckner	Lepidote. This rhodo is a hardy, compact plant with medium purple flowers that bloom midseason. Grows to about 2.5' but may be wider . Hardy to -25F(-30C).
<i>R. Lisetta</i>	Hachmann	Another new introduction by Briggs Nursery from Hachmann's collection and another deep red. Compact grower to 3' X 3'. Hardy to Zone 6.
<i>R. Midnight Ruby</i>	Weston's	Lepidote. This may be the best of the black-leaved rhodies introduced by Weston Nurseries. The very early flowers are reddish-purple with a distinct wavy edge. Compact upright habit, 3 'X 3' . Very hardy.
<i>R. Rabatz</i>	Hachmann	Perhaps the most distinctive rhodie by Hachmann so far. Beautiful deep red flowers. Parents are 'Double Date' x 'Erato.' Compact growth to 3' X 3'. Zone 6.
<i>R. Rimini</i>	Hachmann	This beautiful rhodie is another new intro from Briggs Nursery. Orange flower buds open to golden yellow flowers in abundance. Bright green foliage. Growth after 10 years is 3.5' x4.5'. Hardy to Zone 6.
<i>R. campanulatum</i> ssp. <i>aeruginosum</i>		This wonderful plant has the most superior foliage with cinnamon indumentum combined with dark green leaves that open as silver turning to a soft blue with age in summer. Flowers are very light lilac to white. 4 ft. Hardy to -20C.
<i>R. pachysanthum</i>		This is another species with beautiful foliage. The dark leaves have a thick covering of whitish-tan indumentum on the undersides. New growth has silver indumentum on the topsides of the leaves. Widely bell-shaped flowers are light pink to white and heavily spotted. Compact plant to 30". Hardy to -20C. Blooms early midseason.

R pseudochrysanthum

This compact species has glossy dark green leaves on top, paler on the undersides and both sides are slightly hairy. Bell-shaped flowers, dark pink in bud, open to pale pink or white, with a red spotted inside. Grows to 1-3 ft. in height. Hardy to -10F(-25C).

COMPANION PLANTS

Athyrium felix-femina ‘Frizelliae’

Otherwise known as the “Tatting Fern” this is one of the most interesting ferns available. This clumping fern has fronds 12-18” long with pinnae that are shaped like manbeads. Zone 4.

Miscanthus sinensis ‘Morning Light’

This is a Japanese Silver Grass and is one of the most elegant of the *Miscanthus* cultivars. Its narrow, arching blades are green with fine cream-white margins. Slow growing and not inclined to flop. Autumn flowers are coppery red. The whole plant turns a tawny color in winter and will usually stand upright all winter. 6-7' tall. Zone 5.

Phylliopsis hillieri ‘Pinocchio’

This hybrid of the heath family blankets itself in deep pink flowers in mid spring. It forms a spreading mound of fine, green foliage. Needs well drained, acid soil. A good choice for the alpine garden. Grows to 12-18”. Zone 5. □

ARHS Questionnaire: Preliminary results

We are still working with Dr. Bob Maher at the Centre of Geographic Sciences (COGS) with the assistance of Karen Reinhardt, on the significance of the results of our questionnaire. However, we thought those members who took the trouble to complete the survey deserved some indication of what we found from their efforts, so here is a little information. 58 (32%) of our Atlantic Canada members completed the survey. Here is a list of the 42 most grown rhodos, beginning with ‘April Mist’ (26 growers) and ending with “Weston’s Aglo” (12 growers).

April Mist (26 growers)

Minas Grand Pre (24)

Ginny Gee (22)

Wren (22)

Bluenose (21)

Capistrano (21)

Manitou (21)

Isola Bella (20)

Millenium (19)

schlippenbachii (19)

Stewartstonian (19)

Henry’s Red (18)

April Rose (17)

Calsap (17)

Fantastica (17)

Golfer (17)

yakushmanum Mist Maiden (17)

Dora Amateis (16)

Francesca (16)

Vinecrest (16)

Helliki (15)

impeditum (15)

Janet Blair (15)

mucronulatum Cornell Pink (15)

Patti Bee (15)

Blue Baron (14)

Blue Peter (14)

Snowbird (14)

Elviira (13)

Gibraltar (13)

kiusianum Betty Muir (13)

Minas Maid (13)

Scintillation (13)

Teddy Bear (13)

Weston’s Innocence (13)

Yaku Princess (13)

Bpt 80-5 (Nancy Steele) (12)

Dorothy Amateis (12)

Lemon Dream (12)

PJM Elite (12)

Steele’s Late and Lovely (12)

Weston’s Aglo (12)

We were interested in the plants classed as “poor doers”. The leader here was Elviira; 9 responders called it a poor doer. Then came Bluenose (8), Wren (6), Minas Grand Pre (5), Capistrano, Calsap, Henry’s Red, Helliki and Patti Bee (4).

Stay tuned for more in the next issue !

– Mary Helleiner

A New Plant Introduction from the Arnold Arboretum: *Ilex glabra* ‘Peggy’s Cove’

By John H. Alexander III

In October 1988, I was in Nova Scotia for a speaking engagement with the Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society. Several members were kind enough to show me the sights, including local natural areas. One day we were on a seaside barren, northwest of the fishing village of Peggy’s Cove, looking out at the Atlantic Ocean. Crouched between us and the ocean, on a treeless shore that appeared to be more rock than soil, were numerous inkberries, *Ilex glabra*. I have a special interest in this species and had previously collected inkberry cuttings from the New Jersey pine barrens and from compact plants I spotted while driving along Massachusetts roadways. The plants at Peggy’s Cove were dwarfed and misshapen by the harsh seaside environment, growing here near the northern extreme of the species’ range.

I knew that a plant’s response to its environment does not necessarily change its genetic makeup, so cuttings from these dwarfed plants might grow into large, robust shrubs when planted in a favorable garden setting. But then again—they might not. My hope was that, after countless generations growing by the shore, their compact habit was now genetic. As plant propagator’s like to say, “The best time to take a cutting is when it’s offered,” so I collected cuttings from plant after plant until my hosts seemed to grow weary from watching me.

Thirty-eight of these cuttings—collected from perhaps 12 different plants—were stuck in the Arboretum’s propagation house. At least 19 of the cuttings rooted, and all were given the accession number 929-88. Within this group I found what I had hoped to find: a more compact and smaller-leaved form of *Ilex glabra*.

Named ‘Peggy’s Cove’ in honor of its site of origin, this cultivar is not only compact, but it also grows well. It has a mounded habit with branches right to the ground. The latter trait is notable since a complaint sometimes heard about the *Ilex glabra* cultivars ‘Densa’ and ‘Compacta’ is that they frequently lose their lower branches. Other surviving plants of this collection either didn’t grow well or weren’t significantly different from cultivars already available.

At the Arboretum, the original plant of ‘Peggy’s Cove’ (now accession number 500-2007-A) is growing in the Leventritt Shrub and Vine Garden, near specimens of ‘Compacta’ for easy comparison. This 22-year-old plant is now 48 inches (122 centimeters) tall and 60 inches (152 centimeters) wide with a rounded habit. Perhaps it isn’t the best example because we have pruned it by harvesting many cuttings from it. Four lightly pruned 8-year-old plants near the Dana Greenhouses (accession number 3-2002) are 22 to 36 inches (56 to 91 centimeters) tall and 30 to 45 inches (76 to 114 centimeters) wide. ‘Peggy’s Cove’ is a female, producing the typical small black fruits of this species (if pollinated by a nearby male *Ilex glabra*). The leaves of ‘Peggy’s Cove’ are dark green and smaller than the average inkberry leaf.

‘Peggy’s Cove’ inkberry grows best in full sun and tolerates light shade, but may stretch a bit and become less compact if in too much shade. Like many hollies, it prefers acidic soils that are evenly moist. Winter damage to leaves of this evergreen has been slight at the Arboretum. ‘Peggy’s Cove’ is probably no hardier than what is typical for the species: USDA zone 5 (average annual minimum temperature -20 to -10°F [-28.8 to -23.4°C]). It is currently in the early stages of commercial production.

Many thanks to John Weagle, Stanley Dodds, Walter Ostrom, and the late Captain Richard M. Steele. It was these folks who were instrumental in getting me to Nova Scotia and to that barren coast where I found *Ilex glabra* ‘Peggy’s Cove’. The registration description of this cultivar was published in the *Holly Society Journal*, 2008, 26 (2): 10-11.

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Our thanks to Stan Dodds for bringing this article to our attention.

The Rhododendron Hunters

Ernest Henry Wilson 1876-1930

By Anitra Laycock

E. H. 'Chinese' Wilson was born in England in the small Cotswold market town of Chipping Camden. The eldest of seven children, he left school early to apprentice as a gardener. Working by day at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, he successfully continued his studies in botany through evening classes. In 1897 he moved to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew where he continued to excel, winning the Hooker prize for his essay on the *Coniferae*. When, in the following year, the well known Veitch Nurseries asked the Director of Kew for a recommendation for a botanist to travel to China, with the principal object of finding and introducing to commerce the recently discovered Dove Tree (*Davidia involucrata*), it was the 22 year old Wilson who was selected for the task. This would be the first of four trips Wilson would make to China over a period of eleven years, during which time his remarkable success in introducing garden-worthy plants established him as the foremost plant collector of his day. Looking back on this period in *A Naturalist in Western China*, (1913), Wilson notes how difficult it is, amongst all the wealth of wonderful plants he found in China, to single out any one genus as exceptional. However, he concludes that "*if any one genus has outstanding claims it is Rhododendron. As in the Himalayan region, so in Western China, the Rhododendrons are a special feature.*" Wilson himself introduced upwards of 60 species of rhododendron from western China into cultivation during this period.

Prior to 1860, all efforts by foreigners to gain access to the vast interior regions of China had been firmly rebuffed, and collection of plant materials had been confined to the coastal regions of Eastern China in the vicinity of the major ports. It was from Zhejiang, just south of Shanghai, that Robert Fortune in 1855 introduced his notable find, *Rhododendron fortunei*. However, following the Anglo-French victory in the Second Opium War, restrictions on travel were removed and the whole of China became accessible to the Treaty Powers. In the years between 1860 and 1900 the incredible diversity and importance of the flora of Western China became abundantly clear, in particular through the collecting efforts of French missionaries stationed in Yunnan and Sichuan. Abbés David, Delavay, and Farges between them discovered a great wealth of material, including several new rhododendron species, sending back seeds and herbarium specimens to Paris for further examination and identification. It was their efforts, and those of other dedicated amateurs such as Augustine Henry, an Assistant Medical Officer in the Chinese Customs Service, that roused the interests of the great nurseries, who were anxious to exploit the horticultural promise implicit in these botanical discoveries by obtaining material in sufficient quantity to get plants into production. "*Botanists were simply astounded at the wealth of new species and new genera disclosed by these collections,*" Wilson, himself will later recall.

After a short period of further training at Veitch's Nursery, Wilson left in April 1899 on the first of his trips to China. Journeying westward, he stopped off briefly in Boston where he met with Charles Sargent, Director of the Arnold Arboretum, who would play a significant part in his subsequent career. On June 3, 1899 he reached Hong Kong, but it was only after a delay of several months, due to political unrest in the region, that he was finally able to achieve his first objective - a meeting with Augustine Henry who was then stationed in Szemao in southern Yunnan. Henry had been urging the Director of Kew, William Thistlethorn-Dyer, to mount an expedition to collect in western China, extolling the great diversity and splendour of the flora, and its suitability for European gardens. The Dove Tree, in particular, Henry declared to be of inestimable value.

Following Henry's advice, Wilson set off north for the mountainous region of Hubei, bordering Sichuan, basing himself in the town of Yichang, an inland port on the Yangtze just downstream from the famous river gorges. Here he gathered together the large support team needed to carry out his journeys. "*There are no mule caravans. For overland travel there is the native sedan-chair and one's own legs; for river travel the native boat.*" The sedan chair, although seldom used by Wilson was nevertheless an essential part of his baggage as its presence was the "*outward and visible sign of respectability.*" Upwards of 20 porters were required to carry food, medicine, and equipment, and several more men to help with collecting and other work, including cooking, guiding and interpreting. Many of the men Wilson employed would return to accompany him on his succeeding journeys in China and he remarks the genuine regret both sides felt when they parted for the last time.

From Yichang Wilson's first foray was a ten days journey upriver to locate the lone Dove tree specimen seen many years earlier by Henry. Imagine his disappointment when, on successfully locating the site, he discovered that the tree had been cut down to make a house and all that remained was a stump. It was not long, however, before further exploration in the region revealed other *Davidia* trees from which he was able to collect a large quantity of the seed to be sent to England. Over the course of the next two years, Wilson continued to explore the mountains of Sichuan and Hubei provinces around Yichang, returning to England in 1902 with the seed of more than 300 plants, including 16 rhododendron species, and 35 Wardian cases containing bulbs and other living plant materials. The rhododendrons brought back from this first expedition included *R. decorum* and *R. fargesii*. Also introduced for the first time were *Acer griseum*, the paper bark maple, *Magnolia delavayi*, *Clematis Montana* var. 'Rubens', the candelabra primula, *P. pulverulenta*, and the kiwi fruit, *Actinidia deliciosa*.

Veitch was so delighted with the expedition collection that in January 1903 he sent the now newly married Wilson back to China, tasked this time with locating and bringing back the yellow 'lampshade' poppy, *Meconopsis integrifolia*, known to grow high in the mountains bordering Tibet. Travelling once more up the Yangtze River in his own boat, Wilson this time journeyed much further westward, on past Yiching through the gorges and the treacherous river rapids of the Yangtze, risking life and limb to reach the town of Kiating (now Leshan) in Sichuan, a full 1,800 miles up river from his starting point in Shanghai. From Kiating he explored the mountainous regions west of the Min River. Just a day's journey west of the city, the sacred Mount Omei rose almost 10,000 feet sheer above the plain and beyond it lay its sister mountain Wa Shan which Wilson found to be particularly rich in cool-temperate plants. In four days botanizing here in July 1903 Wilson was able to add around 220 species to his collection. His attention was particularly caught by the rhododendrons that dominated the upper reaches of the mountain. He noted the presence of 16 different species during his ascent.

Their gorgeous beauty defies description. They were there in thousands and hundreds of thousands. Bushes of all sizes, many fully 30 feet in height and more in diameter, all clad with a wealth of flowers almost hiding the foliage. Some had crimson, some bright red, some flesh-coloured, some silvery-pink, and others pure white flowers. Their huge rugged stems, gnarled and twisted into every conceivable shape, were draped with pendent mosses and lichens.

Amongst the rhododendron species that Wilson found on these mountains and introduced to western gardens were *R. ambiguum*, *R. calophytum*, *R. cephalanthum*, *R. insigne*, *R. sargentianum*, *R. strigillosum*, *R. williamsianum*, and *R. wiltonii*.

Continuing his arduous journey westward over rugged mountainous terrain, making about 20 miles a day and collecting along the way, Wilson reached the Sino-Tibetan border town of Tatién-lu (now Kanding), which lies at the easternmost extension of the Himalayan Range. Here he remarks upon the striking similarity of the flora to that of the Sikkim Himalaya rather than to that of Tibet. "In point of numbers, two of the commonest plants are *Primula sikkimensis* and *Podophyllum emodi*, both of which are common in Sikkim." From Kanding Wilson climbed high into the snow-clad peaks that flank the Ya-jia Pass where he hoped to find the magnificent yellow poppy sought by Veitch. After a miserable cold and wet night spent at 10,000 ft, he ascended to the head of the pass through alpine meadows "carpeted with *Anemones*, *Primulas*, *Pedicularis*, *Delphiniums*, *Gentians*, and I know not what besides, each taking unto themselves large areas and transforming them into masses of blue, yellow, white, red, and purple."

At 11,000 ft. to Wilson's evident delight the first plant of *Meconopsis integrifolia* appeared.

I am not going to attempt to record the feelings which possessed me on first beholding the object of my quest to these wild regions. Messrs. Veitch despatched me on this second, and very costly, journey to the Tibetan border for the sole purpose of discovering and introducing this, the most gorgeous Alpine plant extant. I had travelled some 13,000 miles in 5½ months, and to be successful in attaining the first part of my mission in such a short time was a sufficient reward for all the difficulties and hardships experienced en route.

As he climbed further the yellow poppies became increasingly abundant until at 12,000 ft. and above "miles and miles of the Alpine meadows were covered with this plant." Spurred on by this success he set out right away on a further trek of 550 miles to Songpan in the far northwest corner of Sichuan to find the red poppy, *Meconopsis punicea*, growing above 11,500 ft in a mountain pass. Despite the taxing conditions he had endured, altitude sickness, severe weather, and lack of food, Wilson returned to his base in Kiating a tired but happy man, with a rich harvest of red poppy seed.

After a further year of collecting in the same areas, he returned to England in 1905 with seed from over 500 species. The 36 rhododendron species he brought back included, in addition to those already mentioned, *R. decorum*, *R. orbiculare*, and *R. oreodoxa*. He would make two more trips back to the same regions of China, collecting this time for the Arnold Arboretum (1907-1909 & 1910-1911) and adding to his plant introductions. In 1910 while traveling along the Min valley intent on collecting bulbs of the Royal Lily, *L. regale*, he was caught in a rockslide and his leg badly broken. It was only through the excellent surgical care of a Mission doctor that his leg was saved and he could eventually walk again, albeit with what he called his 'lily limp'. Later he would name one of his rhododendron introductions *R. davidsonianum* after the doctor who set his leg.

Returning to the Arnold Arboretum in March 1911, Wilson worked on *Plantae Wilsonianae*, an enumeration of the plants he had collected in China for the Arboretum, and produced his book *A Naturalist in Western China*. He continued to work for the Arboretum and in 1919 was appointed Assistant Director. Although he was never able to undertake any more expeditions as taxing as those he had made in China, Wilson did make several trips back to the Far-East, including to Korea, Japan and Formosa. While in Japan he visited Kurume where the sight of the spectacular Kurume hybrid azaleas astounded him. The collection of these plants Wilson subsequently introduced into North America as a result of this trip came to be

known as 'Wilson's Fifty'. At home in the United States, Wilson did not neglect the potential for producing hardy hybrid rhododendrons for the Northern gardener. In 1917 he published a list of rhododendrons with excellent cold tolerance and with a range of flower colours that he called the 'Iron Clad' rhododendrons. Several of these "Iron Clads", *R. catawbiense* hybrids such as 'Catawbiense Album', 'Everestianum', and 'Roseum Elegans', are still fixtures in the local garden scene.

On the death of Sargent, in 1927, Wilson was appointed Keeper of the Arnold Arboretum. Sadly, only three years later, on October 15, 1930, Wilson and his wife were killed near Worcester, Massachusetts when their car skidded and went over a steep embankment as they were returning from visiting their newly married daughter. All told Wilson introduced more than 1,000 species of trees and shrubs around 60 of which bear his name. In addition he wrote several books on his adventures, the best known of which are *A Naturalist in Western China* and *Plant Hunting*. The original records of his travels, including *Leaves from My Chinese Note-Book* and *Plantae Wilsonianae* are fully accessible to all on the Harvard Website. In Chipping Campden, the town of his birth, and where he had planned to spend his retirement years, a Memorial Garden has been planted with many of his most famous introductions. □

Book Review

The Plant Hunter's Garden – The New Explorers and Their Discoveries

by Bobby J. Ward

Timber Press, 2004, 340 pages, \$39.95, recently discounted 30%

The great age of discovery of new, showy plants is probably over. No matter how remote the places people go looking, nobody nowadays is likely to come up with a previously unknown treasure as glorious as *Lilium regale*, discovered by "Chinese" Wilson and introduced in 1903. But keen plantmen keep on trying, and they do turn up some interesting novelties. This book describes 25 modern "plant hunters" (or in some cases pairs of hunters) and their activities and discoveries. Almost all of them are personal acquaintances of the author. Each chapter begins with a biographical sketch and concludes with a photograph of these people. Some of the plant hunters have undertaken the classical expeditions to distant and sometimes dangerous regions. Others have limited themselves to areas closer to their homes, and some have looked for novelties among seeds provided by commercial suppliers in foreign countries.

Panayoti Kelaidis is the designer of the rock garden in the Denver Botanic Gardens; he introduced many interesting plants from western North America, as well as from South Africa. Josef Halda, from the Czech Republic is noted for the many crevice gardens he has built in various parts of Canada and the United States. He is the author of important books on daphnes, gentians and primulas. Bleddyn and Sue Wynn-Jones operate a plant farm in Wales, which includes the British national collections of *Paris*, *Polygonatum* and *Coriaria*. Until recently, Dan Hinkley ran a nursery near Seattle, Washington; he is the author of *The Explorer's Garden*.

Ward describes some of the most significant plants introduced by each of the plant hunters, and includes pictures, usually of plants in gardens, but occasionally in their native settings. In some cases, the introductions are genuinely new species; in others the novelty is the result of splitting of species by taxonomic experts. Often the introductions are new, horticulturally outstanding forms of known species. When a new plant is discovered, it is usually collected as seeds, occasionally as cuttings or bulbs.

With only one exception, the plant hunters are commercial suppliers of seeds and other plant material, and their addresses are provided. Naturally, these people are mainly interested in finding "garden-worthy" plants – ones that are not only decorative, but capable of thriving in their new environments. Thriving, but not invasive: the final chapter of this book is devoted to a thoughtful discussion of the hazards of introducing alien plants into our gardens.

– Chris Helleiner

Photo Album -



R. calendulaceum. [Photo Don Craig]



R. occidentale. [Photo Don Craig]



R. arborescens. [Photo Don Craig]



'Blue Peter'. [Photo Sterling Levy]



'Caroline'. [Photo Sterling Levy]



R. dauricum Album. [Photo Sterling Levy]



'Loderi'. Sunningdale Nurseries UK. Circa 1950. [Photo Alleyne Cook]



'Duke of York'. Sunningdale Nurseries UK. Circa 1950. [Photo Alleyne Cook]