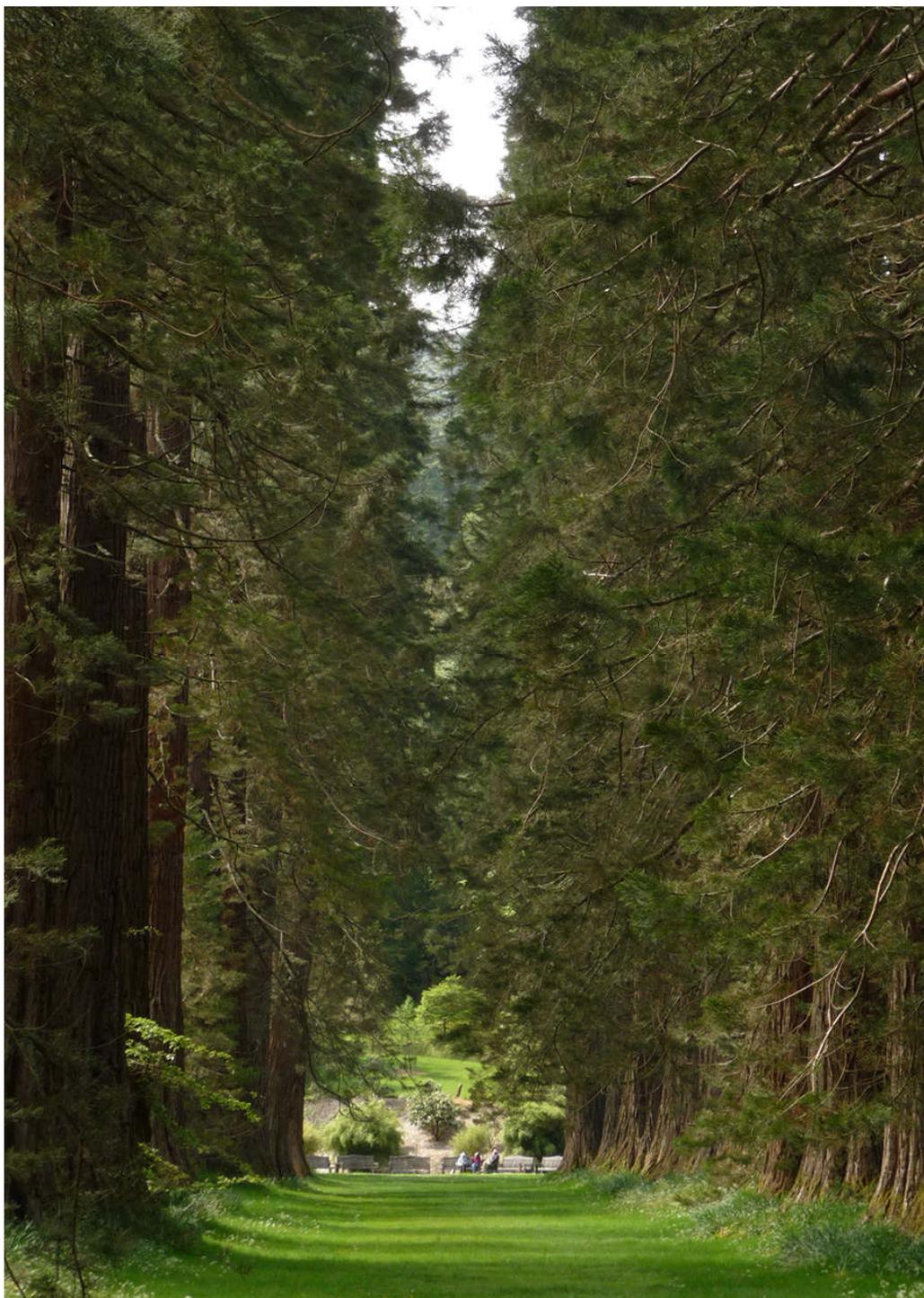


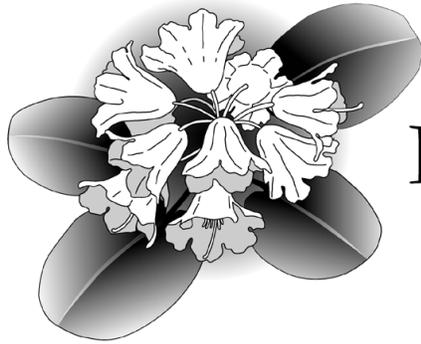
AtlanticRhodo

www.AtlanticRhodo.org

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November 2017





Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society

Our Mission

ARHS supports and promotes the development and exchange of expertise and material relating to the practice of creating and maintaining year-round garden landscapes featuring rhododendrons and other plants.

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Photos in articles are by the authors, unless otherwise identified.

Membership

Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society.

Fees are \$20.00 Canadian from September 1, 2017 to August 31, 2018, due September 2016. For benefits see ARHS website www.atlanticrhodo.org

American Rhododendron Society: ARHS is a chapter in District 12 of the American Rhododendron Society. Combined ARHS and ARS membership cost is \$57.00 Canadian. For benefits see www.rhododendron.org

Cheques, made payable to Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society should be sent to **Gloria Hardy 47 Melwood Ave. Halifax, NS B3N 1E4**

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 & 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: Champion Trees - a magnificent allée of *Sequoiadendron Giganteum* at Benmore Garden, Scotland. [Photo John Brett]



Calendar of Events

ARHS meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, from September to May, at 7:30 p.m. usually in the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History Auditorium, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, unless otherwise noted. Paid parking is available in the Museum lot. We welcome anyone sharing our interest in plants and gardens.

November 07

Green Patience, Woodland companions for rhododendrons, Philip MacDougal.

Philip lived in Halifax for nearly 20 years. He was a member of the ARHS and his garden was well known for its treasures. Philip is a plant breeder and plant explorer who has collected in many places including Hokkaido, Sichuan, Yunnan and South Korea. His talk will be preceded by the ARHS annual general meeting.

December 05

Christmas party. Members are invited to bring in a maximum of 5 photos which will be projected as part of our members' photo display during the meeting.

2018

January 02

Panel discussion: Siting and Planting rhododendrons and companion plants. Four of our ARHS members will discuss their experiences and respond to your questions.

February 06

Revelations and dreams in my Garden, Dennis Crouse.

Dennis is an ARHS member and board member. His talk is based on his garden experiences at home in St. Margaret's Bay, as a professional landscaper, and as a visitor to other gardens in Canada and abroad. All of these have influenced and inspired the development, design and maintenance of his own garden.

March 06

The Himalayan Gardens of Western Scotland, John Brett

A tour of impressive garden landscapes and the extraordinary plants within, including rhododendrons collected by some of the great plant hunters of the late 19th and the 20th centuries.

April 03

Introduction to Ikebana, The Art of Japanese Flower Arrangement, Miyako Ballesteros.

This presentation will introduce the basic concepts and structure of an ikebana arrangement followed by live demonstrations showing basic and advanced styles. Miyako is a qualified instructor in the Sogetsu School of ikebana with a rank of 2nd Grade Jonin Sanyo, and is an active teaching member of the Sogetsu Teachers' Association. Currently, she teaches ikebana at her studio in Halifax.

May 01

Member-to-member plant sale. NS Museum, project room and auditorium.

Thank you for avoiding the use of perfumes and scented products when you come to ARHS events.



A very warm welcome to our new members who have joined ARHS since May .

Denise Caines
Jules Chamberlain
Janet O'Dor
Frances Dorsey
Terri Gates
Susan Hazelwood
Carla Heggie

Goodwood, NS
Halifax, NS
Halifax, NS
Halifax, NS
South Berwick, NS
President of NSAGC
Upper Tantallon, NS

Wayne Moores
James Nelson
Cindi Palmer
Steve & Judi Phillips
Christina Rafales
Jane Reid
Juan Zhou

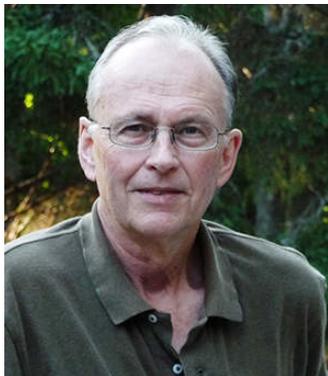
Kentville, NS
Wolfville, NS
Hammonds Plains, NS
Halifax, NS
Halifax, NS
Halifax, NS
Halifax, NS

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THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Building upon an Atlantic Canadian Legacy

By John Brett



In this month's column I am focusing on a very exciting project initiated by our society. When we meet to vote our 2017/2018 budget at the upcoming November meeting, we will indirectly be voting on it, as it represents a significant portion of our spending for the upcoming year. So it's important that you, our members, have a good understanding of what you are being asked to support.

Here's the project, some aspects of which you may already know about: The Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society (ARHS) is proposing a collaboration with the Atlantic Food and Horticulture Research Centre, aka the Kentville Research Station, to produce a series of high quality outdoor interpretive panels that will highlight what is arguably the most important chapter in the rhododendron story of Atlantic Canada. These panels will be situated on the grounds of the research station in Kentville, Nova Scotia, in close proximity to the large display beds which feature mature plantings of massed

rhododendrons. The panels will interpret the significance of these rhododendron plantings to Atlantic Canada, celebrate the achievements of pioneering rhododendron breeders in our region, and summarise both the natural and cultural history of the genus. The panels may also allow viewers with mobile devices to link to websites, including our own, where they can learn more about all things rhododendron.

This is an ambitious project, and a unique collaboration between the ARHS and a federal government department. It involves the creative development and the fabrication of anywhere from 4 to 6 large alumitex outdoor panels. And it involves a significant expenditure on the part of the society, up to a maximum of \$13655.00, which is the sum you will be voting to approve in our 2017/2018 budget. I emphasise that this is the maximum allocation, and that the actual costs may be lower.

I am sure some members will be asking questions about this large and unusual draw on the ARHS coffers. So here are two reasons why I feel very strongly that we should support this project - one very practical, a matter of dollars, cents and the Canadian Revenue Agency; and the other of a more elevated nature.

We'll start with the practical: As a non-profit society, the ARHS is not supposed to accumulate significant profits. It's against the tax rules. For the ARHS, the definition of "accumulated profits" is quite simple. It is the members' equity, which in our case is virtually all in cash in our back account. This amount currently stands at about \$50,980.00. Since our annual budget is about \$21,000.00 in revenue, this means the accumulated profit is about twice the budgeted revenue. Our treasurer, Rachel Martin, an accountant by trade, has noted that in charities and non-profits where she has served, the Canadian Revenue Agency would take a dim view of such an accumulation of profit relative to budget revenue. She gives the example of a charity with 4 million dollars in revenue and 8 million dollars in accumulated profit (equity). She does not think the tax folks would accept this. In summary, we have good reason to want to lessen our cash position, and the Kentville project is a worthy way of doing it.

Now for the more elevated reason: I will start by referring back to the title of this column, *Building upon an Atlantic Canadian Legacy*, and asking what exactly we mean by the word "legacy". The New Oxford Dictionary of English defines it as "A thing handed down by a predecessor". And so to build on a legacy would be to maintain and improve upon that which has been handed down to you. And also perhaps to adapt that legacy to changing times so that it continues to be meaningful. I believe this is what the Kentville project represents for our society.

From 1952 to 1983, the Kentville Research Station, under the leadership of Don Craig, carried out an ambitious rhododendron breeding program of national significance that aimed at extending the range of good, hardy, broad-leafed evergreens available in eastern Canada. At the time, this was a category of plant material that was very limited, with only a small number of old iron-clad rhododendron varieties to choose from. As the Kentville program developed, many notable breeders, including our own Dick Steele, played their part. Out of the program came selected varieties that have proven to be among the finest hardy rhododendrons developed in Canada: Bellefontaine, Minas Grand Pre and Minas Peace come to mind.

Fortunately for us, these important introductions, along with many other fine cultivars and species trialed at Kentville, were planted on the grounds of the station. As they grew in size and maturity their visual impact started drawing crowds during the spring bloom time. This evolved into an ongoing tradition that began in 1967 with the designation of the second Sunday in June as 'Rhododendron Sunday', when the public was invited to visit the station grounds to admire the impressive floral displays. This in turn stimulated a greater public interest in rhododendrons and in ornamental gardening in general. What's more, the beginnings of the ARHS are closely associated with the Kentville breeding program. It created a locus of activity that brought together enthusiastic plants people which led to the forming of the Rhododendron Society of Canada (RSC) in 1972, out of which our current society evolved. The early members lists for the RSC read like a who's who of rhodo breeders and enthusiasts at that time, including Dick Steele, George Swain, Les Hancock, Don Craig, Ed Mezitt, August Kehr, John Weagle and Joe Brueckner.

Sadly, the Rhododendron breeding program at Kentville ended in 1983, a victim of budget cuts and changing priorities. Less emphasis was placed on weeding and pruning the display beds after this date, and by the early 2000's the ARHS, under the leadership of our own Chris Hopgood, was becoming involved with maintenance in an attempt to slow the decline. Rhododendron Sunday continued but attendance was dropping. And last year no official date was advertised for the celebration. The effect of all this has been to lower public awareness of the outstanding role played by the Kentville Research Station in developing rhododendrons and azaleas to beautify the Atlantic Canadian landscape.

This is why our current initiative is timely in the extreme. With a commitment from the Kentville Research Station to work with us on the project, and to install and care for the interpretive panels, we have an opportunity to enlarge and enhance public awareness of the genus rhododendron. What better way, I ask, for our society to promote a more thorough appreciation of our favourite plants?

There are challenges, of course. The most significant of these will be to reach a binding agreement with the Kentville Research Station that guarantees the existence and maintenance of both the display beds and interpretive panels for a period of at least 10 years following installation. Without this, it is difficult to justify the expenditure of time, money and effort required. The formal creative collaboration between the ARHS, a non-profit society, and the Kentville Research Station, a branch of a federal government department, is also quite unusual. There is no precedent for it in our society. However, under the energetic leadership of our own Sheila Stevenson and Stephen Archibald, it has been smooth sailing so far, with both sides eager to work together. Sheila and Stephen are well known to many of you. They are a dynamic duo with a lifetime of professional experience in the museum world and are ideally suited to lead this project.

In closing, I ask that all of my fellow ARHS members give this Kentville rhododendron legacy project thoughtful consideration. The majority of our board has voted to support it in principle. Personally, I am enthusiastic in my support. I hope that the majority of you will be too. We will be voting on it at our upcoming meeting on November 7. ☞

ERRATA

In our Spring 2017 issue we did not mention that Glen Jamieson, editor of the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society, contributed the editor's note at the head of Joe Harvey's article, *Drought Tolerance in Rhododendrons*. Our apologies to Glen for the oversight. Joe's article originally appeared in the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society. We thank them for permission to reprint it. ☞

A Fond Look Back at the Spring Garden Tour 2017

By Bob Howard



Some ARHS members with the rhodies at the Kentville Research Station.

We had an enthusiastic turnout and cool bright weather for the June 10, 2017 edition of our annual garden tour and potluck. In a full day that included a tasty lunch, we visited nine gardens in the Kentville-Wolfville area. I was tired but inspired by the end of it.

First stop: the Atlantic Food and Horticulture Research Centre, aka the Kentville Research Station. Jamie Ellison met us at the top of the hill by the Blair house, where many old rhododendrons were full of bloom. He gave an overview of the history of the rhododendron collection and breeding program. He readily admitted that many of the plants are unlabeled and their identity is probably unknown. As we walked toward the hillside, there were some very large ‘Minas Grand Pré’ specimens, with their elegant foliage. For more on this, go to Dr. Don Craig’s article, *Fifty Years of Testing and Breeding Rhododendrons in Nova Scotia*. It’s on our website under “Plant Info”, then click on “Rhododendrons & Azaleas”.

Walking down the hillside we skirted a forest verge planted with rhododendrons over sixty years ago. Some of these have reached an enormous size, like ‘Bellefontaine’, a cross between *R. fortunei* and *R. smirnowii* that was done by the American breeder, Radcliffe Pike, and sent to Kentville for testing. Don Craig has said that ‘Bellefontaine’ is “judged by many as the Research Station’s outstanding introduction.” You can get a sense of this impressive display in the accompanying photo taken with Jamie Ellison’s aerial drone camera. It’s also worth noting that the Kentville plantings may become even more significant to the ARHS, as we are currently developing a proposal that would see our society working with the Kentville Research Station to develop a signage and interpretation program for this historically important site. If you haven’t seen it recently, I highly recommend visiting in June.

Next up in Kentville was Ed Reekie’s garden, and the opportunity to learn more about his azalea and rhododendron seedling trials. This is a big garden, decades in the making, with mature landscaping around the house, outdoor living areas, a pond, and in the backyard, a park-like setting with beds of his azalea and rhododendron crosses as well as seedling beds containing his new crosses -- some of which he offered to us. I now have three of his *viscosum* x ‘Jolly Jester’ and three of the reverse cross in my garden. Thank you, Ed!

Also in Kentville, we visited Jamie Ellison’s tightly packed collection of plants. Succulents and cacti are definite curiosities in Nova Scotia and fun to see. But it’s really the dwarf things that look good year-round that get my attention. His *Rhododendron pachysanthum*, with its exquisite felted foliage, seduces me. He also has a hardy heath aster, *Symphotrichum ericoides* ‘Snow Flurry’, growing right out to the curb, resisting salt, snow burial, and street life. It’s a garden full of plant stories, told by Jamie in a most entertaining way.

Our fourth garden of the day was in the countryside outside Kentville, at the home of Rob and Sue Gunn. Sue is the daughter of the late Dr. Don Craig, plant breeder of strawberries and other small fruits, as well as rhododendrons. The many azaleas, in particular, were blooming strongly and filling the evergreen borders of the beds to overflowing. The place is a large park-like farm with many huge majestic oaks as well as other trees. The most notable ones, I think, are the mature *thujas* (arborvitae, ‘cedar’), both the full rounded hedges and the almost twenty-foot-tall fastigate specimens at the corners of the beds. These mature evergreens organize the space, giving a sense of order and direction to an exuberant collection of flowering shrubs.

Sophie Bieger and Paul Donovan hosted us for lunch at their home near Canard, with its impressive tree-lined drive; another inspiring garden in a pastoral setting, with long views across the dykelands and orchards. They were such gracious hosts and a lot of fun. Many thanks to them for the soup, wine, and the beautiful setting. It’s worth mentioning that the wine is made from grapes grown by Paul on the property, and that it is very drinkable. Much thanks is also due to all the club members who brought a wide assortment of delectable dishes.

After lunch, we visited Tim and Melanie Amos's garden near Medford. Begun in 1983, this garden impresses with its maturity. It's the kind of garden you want to live in. The vegetable garden is framed by clipped boxwood and holly hedges near the outside patio, and the dining area invites ideas of settling in. Large, well-considered trees cast shade across sweeps of grass, encouraging a relaxed stroll. As in the Craig/ Gunn garden, a high thuja hedge as well as some false cypresses and bamboo groves organize the space. This is a garden with lots of horticultural interest.

The seventh garden of the day was a country place on the North Mountain, the home of Gill and Chris 'Kit' Childs. I especially remember the gazebo surrounded by rhododendrons, the cold lemonade, and the long view over Kit's vineyard and out across the Valley. Many of us enjoyed a guided walk, conducted by Kit, through his vineyard. The afternoon had turned hot, so the shade and the cool drink were much appreciated.

Then on to Wolfville and the residence of Jutta and Paul Cabilio. This is a plantsman's and plantswoman's garden. The site is well-chosen, with a nearby nature trail to Reservoir Park and views to Blomidon. Many trees, including a very large beech -- native and healthy -- create shade garden conditions. Paul has for many years grown a wide range of plants from seed. I was especially impressed by a patch of cyclamen (I think it was *hederifolium*) growing along a path. Both Paul and Jutta engaged with our members, trading stories and information about the many plants they have tried over the years.

At the end of the afternoon we headed over to the Tangled Garden, a local business operated by Bev McClare, who transforms herbs and fruits into jewel-like jellies and other flavourful products. The store location is perhaps equally well known for the impressive garden that is located next to it and surrounds the Tangled Garden store. This garden is open to the public for a small entry fee. We met Bev and Nina Newington -- a well-known garden designer who is working with Bev - for a guided tour. On entering, I was struck by the weeping beech antechamber, and it quickly became clear that this garden is an ambitious labour of love, densely planted, with many features that reflect the unique creative personality of the owner. The 'Arts and Crafts' inspired stone work and the occasional Piet Oudolf-influenced plantings are notable. Climbing roses, ornamental grasses, the utility and beauty of the herbal beds, add additional layers of interest and complexity to the design. For a third time this day, I was impressed with the mature hedges that organize how one moves through the garden. All of these elements, as well as others not mentioned, come together to create a strong unified effect, the result of a singular guiding vision. This makes for a memorable visit, and it was a wonderful way to end off our tour of King's county gardens.

Thank you to all the gracious gardeners for your generous hospitality, and for sharing your knowledge and your beautiful properties. A further heart-felt thanks is due to Sophie Bieger for doing the time-consuming work of organizing the tour, hosting and organizing the lunch. It was a memorable and fulfilling gardener's day out. ☺



The Craig/Gunn garden at the home of Rob and Sue Gunn, established by the late Dr. Don Craig. [John Brett]

Six New Conifer Friends

By Pat Pelham



Abies holophylla.

When I retired in the first decade of the new century, I did not think I would do much planting. I thought I would put a few things in here and there, make a path or two to avoid the ticks, and maybe create a shady place to sit. Some old plant friends and a few new ones would be enough to populate the land. However old habits die hard. We have nine acres of hayfield bordered by trees-- hot in summer, wind-swept in winter. Oaks and pines did well, but the view still looked too bare, especially in winter. Perhaps a few more conifers to go with the pines?

I blame the sinister influence of Jaime Ellison for pushing me towards the Dark Side, and John and Lee Dickie for feeding my addiction. For now, I, once a happy, well-adjusted gardener, have become a committed conifer enthusiast. (And while we're at it, John Weagle, let's not forget that *Chamaecyparis* in your garden long ago.)

Here are a few conifers that have proved successful so far in my experience. Since I have a big field, I'll talk about trees.

For some time now, a favorite tree has been the Manchurian Fir, *Abies holophylla*, sometimes called "needle fir" for obvious reasons once you have grasped its branches. It is a tall, conical, climax forest fir, dense in full sun. So far it is quite healthy for me. Indeed the foliage reminds me of a shiny, thick, green *Cunninghamia*. The needle fir tree in the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens must be about 30' now. This plant has a subtly exotic quality in our Zone 6 climate, due largely to the size, shape, and lustrous nature of its foliage. Several of the large firs share this effect, at least for me.

Another fir that has done quite well for me, personally, is *Abies borisii-regis*, the King Boris fir. This native of the Balkans is tall, dark, and handsome. It has proved a healthy, moderately fast grower. Planted at a mere 6" high in 2003 it is now about 17' high on the edge of my birch wood. How can one resist such a name?

Finally for the firs, a few words about the always highly rated *Abies homolepis*, or Nikko fir. My tree, after a difficult beginning, has been doing well for a number of years in a relatively exposed position. Initially, it grew slowly compared to some, and was on the pale side. But its blunt needles have darkened appropriately in recent years as it has found its footing. It could be seen as a tribute to its resilience that it has succeeded out in my field with the pines, and is beginning to look as it is supposed to.

On one visit to England, while wandering through a treed park, I came upon a group of tightly fastigate conifers placed rather strangely in a glade of more conventionally shaped trees. They seemed at first glance to be *Chamaecyparis* or *Thuja*, but not quite so. They proved to be *Calocedrus decurrens*, the incense cedar, in the form usually found in large gardens—as tight, vertical accents. Their beautiful, rich green foliage is held in sharply pointed sprays



Abies holophylla, the foliage.



Thuja plicata.

which are placed at an angle outwards or even upwards. The tree at the entry to the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens is a little wider and more open, which lets you more easily see the reddish tinged bark. This is an individual and beautiful tree, with its narrow but tall silhouette. It should have a place in various garden situations. It is still more often encountered in Europe than in North America, although it is native to the southern Rockies. Sadly, my own small tree was murdered by field mice many years ago.

Perhaps here I could mention that *Thuja plicata*, the western red cedar, has proved to be a tall, beautiful, wide plant with thick, rich green foliage. Mine has never had a problem of any sort, and I feel it deserves a plug if only for its durability and apparent reliability. Planted in 2001, my own *Thuja plicata* is approaching 30'.

Also *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis Glauca*, the Blue Nootka false cypress, although certainly not exotic, becomes more lovely each year, and is truly one of the pillars of the evergreen landscape.

All of these plants have so far passed the test of time and are large enough that they have given good landscape service in our part of the Annapolis Valley. The deer in my area have yet to eat them, but in closing one should remember that bucks in season will damage and break trees of all kinds with their antlers. I have lost pines this way. Just because the plant is not seen as food (yet!), doesn't mean it doesn't need protection, especially while small. ☞

Paul Reimer's talk, "Deciduous Magnolias for Canadian Gardens"

By Bob Howard

Paul's Sept. 5, 2017, illustrated magnolia talk to the ARHS was comprehensive. Paul is the president of Reimer's Nursery in Chilliwack, BC, specializing in magnolias, beeches, Japanese maples, and dogwoods. The nursery was started in 1937 by Paul's grandfather. His father planted an arboretum at the nursery, so there's a living legacy as well as new production on the property.

Paul showed us some of the hardier Magnolia species and the better hybrids that arose from those species. And he took a look at Magnolia hybridizing for the future. Paul showed us many photos, including a selection of his favorite magnolias, which I list below in the order presented.

Along with beautiful flowers, Paul introduced some of the important people in Magnolia-Land.

- Étienne Soulange-Bodin, a retired French cavalry officer, who first hybridized *M. x soulangeana*.
- Hans Nooteboom and Dick Figlar, leading taxonomic authorities on the genus magnolia.
- David Leach, Dr. Augie Kehr, and David Ledvina, a generation of American hybridizers, now passed away, who contributed notably to the development of modern magnolia varieties.
- Vance Hooper, Mark Jury, Ian Baldick, all growers and hybridisers from New Zealand.

Towards the end of the photo list below you'll see the names of some of these folks next to the Magnolias they hybridized.

Paul touched on magnolia production, and on art inspired by Magnolias. Some of the beautiful painted illustrations he exhibited are in a sumptuous book, *Magnolias in Art & Cultivation*, by Jim Gardiner, Barbara Oozeerally, and Steven Sponberg.

Commercial propagation from cuttings is by far the most common method used for magnolias. We saw this illustrated with photos Paul took at a Polish nursery. From his own nursery, we saw photos illustrating propagation by grafting.

Where is magnolia breeding headed? What desirable traits are breeders working towards?

- fragrance
- smaller plants for containers
- hardier plants
- upright and dwarf forms for smaller urban gardens
- and true red colors!

I've included a few pictures to whet your appetites. Paul's wife, Eileen, also has a blog with pictures of both garden travel around the world, and of magnolias in the Reimer Nursery arboretum. Take a look at: eileenoverboard.blogspot#11E54CF. Scroll down to "Autumn, 2014".

Paul Reimer's images for "Deciduous Magnolias for Canadian Gardens"

Magnolia stellata star magnolia

- 'Royal Star'

M. kobus

M. x loebneri (*M.kobus x M. stellata*)

- 'Donna'
- 'Spring Snow'
- 'Ballerina'
- 'Leonard Messel'
- 'Jane Platt'

M. liliiflora lily magnolia

- 'Ann'
- 'Betty'

M. denudata Yulan magnolia, lilytree

M. x soulangeana (*M. denudata x M. liliiflora*) tulip or saucer magnolia Étienne Soulange-Bodin

- 'Alexandrina'

M. grandiflora southern magnolia

M. virginiana sweetbay magnolia

M. macrophylla bigleaf magnolia

M. tripetala umbrella magnolia

M. vallartense a distinct species from *m. pacifica*, the difference noted in 2012 by Ricardo Diaz Borioli

M. yarumalensis endemic to Columbia



Magnolia 'Daybreak'

M. campbelli

- Sir Harold Hillier'

M. sargentiana var. *robusta*

M. dawsoniana 'Chyverton Red' and *M. dawsoniana*

M. sprengeri

M. sieboldii 'Colossus' Augie Kehr

M. x wieseneri (*M. obovata* x *M. sieboldii*) 'Swede Made'

M. acuminata cucumber tree/cucumber magnolia, only magnolia native to Canada

David Leach hybrids

- 'Golden Gift'
- 'Coral Lake' 'Butterflies' and 'Legend' are two of its parents
- 'Golden Sun'

Dr. Augie Kehr hybrids

- 'Sunburst'
- 'Sun Sprite'
- 'Sunsation'
- 'Daybreak' Augie thought this was his best hybrid
- 'Woodsman' one of the parents of 'Daybreak'

Brooklyn Botanic Garden

'Elizabeth' (*M. acuminata* and *M. denudata*)

Evamaria Sperber, plant breeder

- 'Yellow Bird'
- 'Judy Zuk' most orange of the yellow magnolias

- 'Lois'

Dennis Ledvina

- 'Blushing Belle' 'Yellow Bird' x 'Caerhays Belle'
- 'Rose Marie'

Phil Savage

- 'Butterflies' *denudata* x *acuminata* Martha Stewart's favorite yellow magnolia!

Others

- 'Gold Star' Planted at Caerhays, Cornwall in 1992.
- 'Daphne' Named by Phillippe de Spoelberch, Belgium. Rated best yellow in Europe.

New Zealand

- 'Cleopatra' Vance Hooper
- 'Genie'

Mark Jury

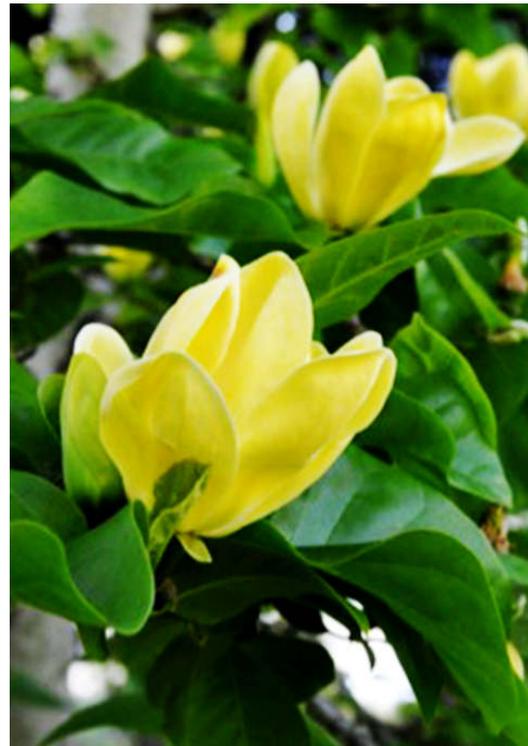
- 'Felix'
- 'Burgundy Star'
- 'Honey Tulip'

Ian Baldick

- 'Ian's Red'
- 'Purple Sensation'

Peter Cave

- 'Royal Purple'



Magnolia 'Yellowbird'

Oswald Blumhardt

- 'Aurora'

Inter-specific crosses

- *laevifolia* x *loebneri*
- *sieboldii* 'Colossus' x *insignis* 'Anita Figlar'

Paul's favorites

Whites

- 'Ballerina'
- 'Wada's Memory'
- *sieboldii* 'Colossus'

Yellows

- 'Yellow Bird'
- 'Butterflies'

Pinks

- 'Daybreak'
- 'Leonard Messel'
- 'Rose Marie'
- 'Blushing Belle'

- 'Coral Lake' David Leach hybrid

Reddish

- 'Mercury'
- 'Burgundy Spire'

❖❖❖



Magnolia sieboldii 'Clossus'

A Summary of the ARHS Outreach program, 2017

By Chris Hopgood



The view looking northwest at Stratford Way Park.

The 2017 Outreach program was an ambitious one compared to previous years. Our activities were of three different kinds, focused exclusively on HRM's Stratford Way Park, just off Lacewood drive.

For those unfamiliar with the Park, our involvement began a few years back, when the Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society, working with the Halifax Regional Municipality, developed several large garden beds to beautify the site. The focus was on rhododendrons, and the ARHS undertook the design, and contributed the labour and rhododendrons. Since then we have monitored and maintained the beds, making necessary changes and improvements as they developed.

This year, the first activity on our agenda was to do a general clean-up of the beds, prune the rhodos, and move a couple of them to more favourable spots in the garden. This was all done on the morning of May 12th, and a chilly morning it was, too. Lynn Rotin, Susan

McLean, Rachel Martin, Sophie Bieger, Ron Lawlor and Chris Hopgood made up our hard working crew of talented member volunteers. They did a very fine job and many thanks to all of them.

The second activity on our agenda for this year was to plan for an evergreen windbreak and procure the necessary trees. The planning started in 2016 when I met with parks staff at HRM. On behalf of the ARHS, I suggested that a number of trees and shrubs should be planted on the northwest side of the park, where a chain link fence is in plain view, along with a number of apartment buildings. This park has a very nice border of native trees on the south side and south east side of the park, so the side with the chain link fence called out for attention. The HRM staff agreed to allow the ARHS to do the tree selection as long as they bestowed final approval, and they agreed to let us do the planting.



Planting the conifer windbreak on June 16, 2017.

During our May 12th Outreach work day, the ARHS crew talked it over, and we concluded that native conifers would be perfect for planting in front of the chain link fence on the northwest side of the park. These conifers would give the year round green-scape that was desired, eventually hiding the chain link fence, as well as providing a microclimate sheltered from cold winter winds. This would protect the rhododendrons in the nearby planting beds, along with providing a natural nesting habitat for native birds.

A list of native trees was drawn up for the HRM staff to consider. These were white pine, red pine, red spruce, black spruce, white spruce, eastern hemlock and deciduous service berry (*Amelanchier* species). The staff gave approval for all of these. The next step was to source them. It's not easy to find a nursery that provides these native trees, but with the help of Shirley MacArthur of the Provincial Strathlorne Forest Nursery near Inverness, Nova Scotia, we were directed to several suppliers. After a few phone calls it was apparent that T & D Nursery in New Ross could supply our needs. So off to the nursery, and a bargain was had, 12 white pine and 12 red spruce, all for \$38 plus GST, and a bit of gas money - a bargain to be sure.

The third activity on our agenda for this year now became clear. A day for planting our new, little conifers was arranged, and on June 16th four trusty AHRS member volunteers answered the call: Rachel Martin, our society's treasurer, Sophie Bieger, a serious urban tree planter, Ron Lawlor, a talented man with a pick and shovel, and Chris Hopgood, your correspondent. It took a little over 90 minutes to get all 24 trees planted, digging the holes, mixing bagged earth with what little dirt was there, in cool but sunny weather. A lack of rain during the previous days was a bit of a concern as there was no source of water at the park, but Mother Nature provided us with 8.9 mm of rain the very next day, and on the 20th another good bit of rain fell. Our little conifers were off to a good start! The staff of HRM was notified of their presence, and we requested that park maintenance staff be alerted to watch out for them. Hopefully these little trees will survive and provide a beautiful green conifer background for flowering rhododendrons and azaleas that we will place in front of them, the next phase of this ambitious Outreach initiative.

Editors Note: Just a few days ago, Chris Hopgood checked up on our little conifers and is pleased to report to that they all are looking very healthy !



The garden clean-up crew L-R, Lynn Rotin, Rachel Martin, Susan McLean, Ron Lawlor, Sophie Bieger

Champion Trees

By Jenny Sandison

While I was in the UK this last summer I visited Bodnant Garden in North Wales. It proved to be one of those extraordinary Edwardian estates with an enormous house and the gently sloping hillside to the south reconfigured with five Italianate terraces. It was started by Henry Davis and Agnes Pochin and their family, and it was their grandson Henry McLaren who was passionate about the garden and very interested in the new trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants being brought back from Asia and the Americas. Henry was an active sponsor of botanical expeditions and of the plant explorers Ernest "Chinese" Wilson, George Forrest, Frank Kingdon-Ward and George Sherriff, and he received their exotic seeds which were germinated and then planted out at Bodnant.

My interest in the garden was piqued by an article in the RHS monthly magazine that described the garden and the efforts of Troy Smith, a recent head-gardener. The garden is now run by the National Trust and Troy had just finished a redesign of the rose terraces and the herbaceous beds and borders. All these were quite lovely in late summer, with masses of bold, flaming colours complementing the massive stone terraces with their formal lakes and reflecting pools.

But what I found most impressive were the number of Champion Trees. This is a program in the UK to identify and officially register the biggest and best examples of specific trees. Bodnant has around 40. They date from about 1900 and include a Giant Sequoia and Japanese Umbrella Pine, both of which were little known in the UK at that time.

In many countries any large and different trees are often the result of owners and gardeners placing and nurturing unusual plants. We can never tell if the tree we plant will survive to be the best of its kind but we can plant in hope, even if we don't know what becomes of our properties. Often people comment that they will never see the tree become mature, but I don't think that is the point. Some of the trees in my garden have become quite striking in under twenty years. If I plant others I may have twenty more years to appreciate them.

In my own garden one of the trees that attracts a lot of attention is a Liriodendron. It is already over forty feet tall and is quite splendid. As species go, Liriodendron isn't particularly unusual, but there certainly aren't a lot around here that I see. What I do see are a lot of Norway maple plantings. What a sin! One of my plans for the next few years is to try and introduce more unusual trees to the Mahone Bay landscape. The local garden club works in the aquatic garden and that is a good place to plant. It's quite protected and there is space. The other possibility is the cemetery, and while people don't want trees disturbing the graves, the perimeter could accommodate a good number. Planting in the public domain can be so rewarding. I remember visiting Vancouver in March and marvelling that the city planners of the day had seen fit to plant an entire street with magnolias, the next with all cherry trees, and the next with all amelanchiers. In Tokyo, Ginkos make wonderfully suitable street trees. Maybe we should be approaching local councils to be equally daring.

Our own Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society has been quite forward thinking in this regard, offering a wide variety of unusual trees over the years. Some of these are getting too crowded in my garden but are still young enough to move. So I am making plans to dig up my Korean Stewartia, and the Liquidambar. While I may miss them, and while I know their continued life in the outside world is uncertain, it's worth the risk. Will anyone notice them? Well, I think someone might, and they might even wonder who planted such unusual and splendid trees and bless me unawares. ☞



A champion tree at Bodnant Garden, probably Cedrus libani.



Bodnant Garden - a view of the lily pool leading the eye to a fanciful garden folly.

ARHS Editor's Note: This article first came to my attention in the *American Rhododendron Society Journal*, Summer 2017 issue. With the permission of the ARS journal and the authors it is reprinted here in a revised form. We thank them for their generosity. In our last issue we published an article by Joe Harvey with observations on breeding rhododendrons for greater heat and drought tolerance. This is a topic that may prove more and more relevant to parts of Atlantic Canada if they become hotter and drier, as some climate models are predicting.

Some Like It Hot

By Steve Krebs and Jing Wang

Steve Krebs, Director, and Jing Wang, Field Station Specialist, both work at the David G. Leach Research Station of The Holden Arboretum in Madison, OH. Steve and Jing are members of the Great Lakes Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.

ARS Editor's Note: This article was first published in the Spring 2017 (V1/2) issue of *Forests and Gardens*, the quarterly journal of Holden Forests and Gardens. It is reprinted here in a revised form with permission from the journal's editor.



Figure 1. Typical leaf drooping and wilting on a rhododendron with advanced *Phytophthora* root rot disease.

At the Leach Research Station of The Holden Arboretum, we have been hybridizing rhododendrons that are resistant to root rot disease, the most common cause of mortality in gardens and nurseries. This disease is caused by a fungus-like pathogen, *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which resides in soil and invades the roots of susceptible plants in its quest for carbohydrate food sources. Leaf drooping and wilting is an indication that the root system has been extensively colonized (Fig 1). The plants appear drought stressed because the vascular system that conducts water to the shoots has been destroyed. The pathogen is not only a problem for rhododendrons, but is a global invasive that is impacting over 1000 plant species in agricultural and natural settings.

The rationale and preliminary work for this project were described previously by Krebs in *The Azalean*, Fall issue, 2010. Plant breeding via cross pollination involves recombining genetic variability that derives from species in the wild. Our resistance breeding program is based on a *Rhododendron* species from Taiwan, *R. hyperythrum*, that is highly resistant to root rot and readily transmits that trait to its offspring (Fig 2). Importantly, *R. hyperythrum* is also heat tolerant and capable of growing in the Gulf South (USDA hardiness Zone 9), a climate that is too hot for most rhododendrons. Because *R. hyperythrum* is less cold hardy than desired and also white flowered, it has been hybridized with hardier and more colorful cultivars in order to produce progeny that combine hardiness, resistance, and ornamental value.

For gardeners, landscapers, and commercial nurseries, root rot resistance is a useful trait that would lead to greater success growing rhododendrons. In particular, commercial nurseries are interested in heat tolerance because it opens up a new, southern market for rhododendrons. The presence of both features in *R. hyperythrum* is a desirable combination that can be co-transferred to hybrids because the traits may be functionally related. We hypothesize that resistance is necessary for plant survival in warm, wet climates where disease pressure from *P. cinnamomi* increases. To test this in breeding populations, we employ a protocol where *R. hyperythrum*-derived hybrids are first evaluated in NE Ohio for field performance, ornamental traits, and cold hardiness (USDA hardiness zone 5). Selections from this stage of the program are then clonally replicated (by rooting stem cuttings) and planted in a field trial in southern Louisiana. Plant Development Services Inc. (PDSI), the plant introduction and marketing division of Flowerwood Nursery in Alabama, is the commercial partner assisting with these evaluations.



Over 160 selections were made from 2500 hybrid seedlings first evaluated at the Leach Station in Ohio. Four to five replicates of each selection were planted in spring 2012 at the southern site in Independence, Louisiana, using a randomized field design. Over the past four years we have compared performance among selections at both locations. Most of the original plants, from which the replicates were cloned, continue to do well at the Leach Station, although many did not prove flower bud hardy at -24°F (-31°C) during the winter of 2015. In contrast, a majority of the 160 selected clones died during the Louisiana trial,

Figure 2. Resistance genes at work. Seedlings in the middle and right-hand rows have disease susceptible parents. Healthy seedlings in the left row are from a cross between a susceptible rhododendron and *R. hyperythrum*, the root rot resistant species.

many within one or two years of planting. Based on symptoms, the cause of mortality appears to be root rot disease, and the presence of *P. cinnamomi* on site is inferred from the fact that other susceptible and resistant control plants included in the trial performed as expected. A high level of disease pressure is probably due to the climate. Another contributing factor may be this location's former use by a nursery to grow camellias, which are also host plants for *P. cinnamomi*. Additional research is needed to confirm that the pathogen is the primary factor determining survivorship in our hybrid populations, and that the best performing individuals in this southern environment are also the most root rot resistant.

On the positive side, a group of 30 individuals (18% of the starting selections) at the southern location has performed well in spite of high temperatures and considerable precipitation, conditions that favor the pathogen. Some of these top performers are very attractive plants that could be introduced commercially in the near future. One of them (Fig 3) will be commercially available in 2018 as an offering in PDSI's Southgate® series, for sale under the trade name 'Splendor'. The promotional copy on Flowerwood's website states that "the exciting new Southgate® rhododendrons are heat tolerant and thrive in the South while performing equally well in traditional [northern] rhododendron areas." The other rhododendrons distributed under the Southgate® brand were created by Dr. John Thornton, who pioneered the use of *R. hyperythrum* for developing heat tolerant hybrids.

Form and function are equally important in ornamental plant development. The rhododendron hybridizing project started by David G. Leach combined beauty and cold hardiness in new hybrids. We are extending the Leach legacy by adding adaptive traits such as disease resistance and heat tolerance that will make large leafed rhododendrons easier to grow and expand their horticultural use into warmer regions. These additional traits may also reduce the need for fungicide drenches commonly used by production nurseries to control *P. cinnamomi*. Furthermore, the southern trial provides a preview of plant performance under the warmer and wetter conditions predicted by climate change models for more northern latitudes. Rhododendron adaptation to that environment is largely dependent on root rot resistance, and this finding illustrates a broader concern. Disease resistance will become increasingly important for plant health if, as predicted by epidemiologists, the geographic range and activity of plant pathogens are increased by climate change. ☐

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Figures 3A & 3B. Rhododendron 'Splendor', the first Southgate® introduction from the Leach Station breeding program.

ARHS Editor's Note: *This intriguing article first came to my attention in the American Rhododendron Society Journal, Summer 2017 issue. With the permission of the ARS journal and the author it is reprinted here in a revised form. We thank them for their generosity.*

Rhododendron Myths from Around the World

By Elizabeth Georgian

The Author: *Elizabeth Georgian earned her Ph.D. in Botany from the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she studied the ethno-botany, pollination, and evolution of rhododendrons in northwest Yunnan Province, China. She is a STEM editor for botany and evolution manuscripts, with a focus on articles written by english-as-second-language authors. She currently lives in Florence, Italy. She can be contacted at egeorgian@gmail.com.*

Species of the genus *Rhododendron* are used around the world for medicine, food and drink, and handicrafts. Additionally, rhododendrons are incorporated into the local mythologies of many cultures, and not just in the Himalayas where rhododendron species are most numerous and diverse. Here, I take a closer look at previously published myths as well as myths that I collected during my field research from 2010 through 2012.

In China, the written record of myths and stories featuring rhododendrons goes back at least as far as the Liang Dynasty, c. AD 482. About that time, the poet, Cheng Yanxiong wrote, "*Rhododendrons and cuckoos, what's the relation between them? Perhaps the bleeding mouths of cuckoos have dropped blood onto the rhododendron branches and it then turned into red flowers.*" Many of the Chinese myths about rhododendrons also include cuckoo birds and it is important to note that in Mandarin, rhododendron and cuckoo have the same name, "*du juan*". The following story, which I have paraphrased, reveals this association between plant and bird. It is one of several I have found in the published literature that associates rhododendrons with sadness and loss.

"Two young brothers lived in the countryside with their widowed mother. The younger son was favored by his mother, while the eldest son, her stepson, was treated as a slave. The stepson was starved, beaten, and sent to work in the fields every day. Despite this unfair treatment, the brothers had a strong bond and the younger brother would help his elder brother by giving him extra food and taking the blame for any mistake.

"One day, the wicked mother gave each of her sons a bag of seeds, but the bag of seeds she had given the stepson were roasted and had no chance of growing. She told the boys that if a field did not grow, whoever had planted that field would be banished from the house. The younger brother chose to switch bags of seeds with the older brother hoping this would protect him from being sent away. After the stepson's seeds had begun to sprout, the younger son, knowing his mother would be angry because his seeds were not growing, ran away from home. When the mother discovered what her younger son had done, she was furious and sent her stepson to look for his brother with the threat that if they did not return she would have him murdered.

*"The older brother searched for his younger brother to no avail. Witnessing his sadness, the gods took pity on the older brother and turned him into the first cuckoo bird so he could fly and thus find his brother faster. After many weeks searching for his brother by wing, the boy lost hope of ever finding his beloved younger brother. Helplessly, he perched on a tree branch and began to cry until his tears ran dry. His last two tears were made of blood and from the blood grew an azalea. The azalea is believed to be a memorial to the love between these brothers, and the sad call of the cuckoo is a reminder of the boy's endless search for his missing younger brother."*¹

Another similar kind of story featuring both rhododendrons and cuckoos comes from Sichuan Province:

"The beloved King of Sichuan Province, Du Yyu, was known for taking care of his people. One day, a disastrous flood reached Du Yyu's kingdom and threatened the lives of his people. In accordance with King Du Yyu's kind reputation and despite the urges of his advisors to seek alternate shelter, King Du Yyu sought shelter on the Cangping Mountain with his people. Rapidly, the flood made its way up the mountain and all were sure they would drown.

"When all was thought lost, the spirit of a soft-shelled turtle appeared and created a gorge, which allowed the floodwaters to retreat. While his people cheered, King Du Yyu showed his gratitude to the spirit of the soft-shelled turtle by giving his crown to the spirit.

*"Many years later, King Du Yyu died a natural death. While cuckoo birds were calling, King Du Yyu's spirit flew over the land to wish his beloved people "farewell." The people of Sichuan missed their loyal King Du Yyu after his death and decided to call the cuckoo Dujuan in his memory. Rhododendrons bloom in the same season when cuckoos cry, so the people of Sichuan named the flowers after the bird, so that both bird and flower would remind them of his everlasting presence."*²

¹ Ferguson, G. 1996. *The World's Great Nature Myths*. Helena, Montana: Falcon Publishing, Inc: 160 pp

² Fang, W. 1986. *Sichuan Rhododendron of China*. Beijing, China: Science Press: 346 pp.

In a variation on the above story, the beloved King Du Yyu of Sichuan Province dies after ruling his land for many years. After death, his spirit transforms into a cuckoo bird so he can fly over the land he once ruled. In this way he wishes his people farewell and cries until he cannot cry any longer, at which point his mouth bleeds and he turns into a red azalea. Aware of this, Du Yyu's loyal subjects name both the cuckoo and the azalea *Dujuan* after their beloved king. From that time on, the cuckoo cries only when rhododendrons are in bloom, and serves as a reminder of the beloved Du Yyu.³

Further south, in Yunnan Province, various ethnic minorities little known outside of China have their own myths connected to rhododendrons. One such ethnic group, the Nu, consists of about 23,000 individuals scattered across rural northwest Yunnan.⁴ Their homeland is a country of high mountains and deep ravines crossed by the Dulong and Irrawaddy Rivers, and by the Salween River, which is also known as the Nujiang River in this part of China. The Nu (Fig. 1) speak an unwritten language classified in the Tibeto-Burman language family,⁵ and although the Nu's traditional animist beliefs are slowly being forgotten, every year a major holiday honors one of their traditional deities. It takes place between March 15 and March 17 and is known as either the Fairy Festival or the Immortal Festival, depending on the source and the translation. It celebrates a Nu goddess who starts out as a woman named A-Rong, famed for her extraordinary engineering achievements. Here is one version of the story, which I have paraphrased:

"A-Rong, inspired by a spider web, created the first rope bridge that allowed the Nu people to cross the Nujiang River. Additionally, A-Rong created irrigation channels that transformed daily life. Impressed with A-Rong's inventions and dazzled by her beauty, the chief of the neighboring ethnic group planned to force A-Rong to be his bride. After learning of the chief's intentions, A-Rong ran away from her village and hid in a rhododendron forest. The chief followed her there and on March 15 burned down the rhododendron forest with A-Rong in it.

*"To the Nu, A-Rong is a deity, and during the Fairy Festival they memorialize her by celebrating her bravery and her intelligence. As part of this, Nu women gather azalea flowers and offer them to A-Rong in the fairy cave, a specific cave in the area associated with her. Immediately following the offering of azaleas, a feast is enjoyed by the participants."*⁶

During my own research, only two Nu people and one Lisu person (the Lisu are another ethnic minority in Yunnan Province) discussed the Flower Festival. However, it is possible that during my research I missed the specific area where people would know about this highly localized event. It is also possible that fewer people today are observing it.

The Naxi (Fig. 2), another ethnic minority of about 300,000 individuals found mostly in Yunnan Province, have a wide array of myths and sayings about rhododendrons.⁷ The most prominent of these may be found in the Naxi creation story. It says the rhododendron was the first tree to grow after the great flood, and so it is considered sacred. Hence, the Naxi sometimes use rhododendrons in religious ceremonies.

Additionally, Naxi people recall stories, poems, and sayings that relate the beauty of rhododendrons to its actual toxicity. For example, Naxi interviewees associated the beauty and toxicity of rhododendrons with the outer but not inner beauty of women. If a Naxi girl is called a rhododendron, it means she is pretty on the outside but bad on the inside, because rhododendrons are toxic.⁸ A variation on this metaphor equates rhododendrons with the short-lived beauty of women.

A previously published Naxi story also connects the beauty of rhododendrons with their toxicity, the moral perhaps being that external beauty on its own is not sufficient. I paraphrase it as follows:

³ Fang, W. 1986. *Sichuan Rhododendron of China*. Beijing, China: Science Press: 346 pp.

⁴ Van Driem, G. 2001. *Languages of the Himalayas Volume One*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill: 462 pp.

⁵ Bradley, D. 1997. Tibeto-Burman Languages and Classification. *Papers in Southeast Asian Linguistics No. 14 Tibeto-Burman Languages of the Himalayas* (pp. 1-72). Australia: Department of Linguistics Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

⁶ In Kunming. "Fairy Festival of the Nu ethnic group in Yunnan." Retrieved November 9, 2016 from the source: http://en.kunming.cn/index/content/2012-03/17/content_2878479.htm.

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⁸ Georgian, E. and E. Emswiller. 2016. Rhododendron Uses and Distribution of this Knowledge within Ethnic Groups in Northwest Yunnan Province, China. *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 4: 138-150.

*“Rhododendron and several flowers and trees were invited to a large party held by the Flower Queen. Rhododendron, who wanted to take extra time to fawn over herself, decided to come late to the party because she knew she was the most beautiful of all the flowers. She knew that no matter how late she was, she would be awarded the seat of honor beside the Flower Queen because of her pristine beauty. However, upon Rhododendron’s arrival, she was surprised to find the seat next to the Flower Queen had not been reserved for her.”*⁹

Moving now to Nepal, another center of rhododendron diversity, we find previously published myths that feature the genus. The following story, which I paraphrase, explains why the different species of plants no longer marry among themselves.

*“The Goddess of the Forest wished for a husband for rhododendron and chose the alder. The alder was too busy fawning over his own good looks to go immediately to rhododendron but he agreed to visit her when he was ready. Finally, in the starkness of winter, the alder set out to visit the rhododendron and was shocked when he saw her lack of flowers and curled winter leaves. He left immediately, thinking that she was not beautiful enough for him. Urged by the fig to visit a second time, later in the season, the alder was impressed by the spring beauty of the rhododendron and proposed a swift marriage. The rhododendron refused the alder’s proposal. Embarrassed by this rejection, the alder went away and hid in the mountain crags and ravines where alders are found today. This unsuccessful courtship caused the Goddess of the Forest to cease her attempts at match-making between the different flowers and the trees”*¹⁰

Stories about the genus *rhododendron* span a vast distance, from eastern Asia all the way to eastern North America. In Ledyard, Connecticut, there is a place called Mast Swamp, which is known for producing straight tree trunks historically used to make ship masts. Mast Swamp is also known for an abundance of wild rhododendrons that once had yellow flowers, but now bloom with "bloody-hearts" every spring.¹¹ The story of this miraculous transformation takes place during the Pequot War (1636-1638) and it is told by the Pequot Indians (Fig. 3), who often used Mast Swamp to hide from enemies because only those who knew the paths could get through its tangle of rhododendrons. In what follows, I paraphrase the story based on several different sources.

“In June 1637, after barely surviving a lost battle with British soldiers in Mystic, Connecticut, some remaining Pequots, including the chief, fled to Mast Swamp in nearby Ledyard.¹² The British soldiers waited at the outlets of the swamp and ambushed the Pequots when they tried to escape. Thinking their lives would be spared, the Pequots surrendered and became prisoners of the British.¹³ The Pequot chief was commanded to reveal the location of the remainder of his people hiding deeper in the swamp. He refused. The British soldiers threw him onto the ground beneath a yellow-flowered rhododendron and shot him through his heart. The rest of the Pequots were imprisoned on a British ship. The women and children were sold as slaves in the West Indies, the men were thrown overboard and drowned.

*“The chief’s dying words were a curse that permanently changed the rhododendron flowers from yellow to blood red, so that every spring the blood red flowers act as a reminder of the brutal killing of the Pequot people. To this day, the flowers are red, but it’s said that if they are transplanted outside of Mast Swamp, they revert back to yellow.”*¹⁴

The various myths and stories I have brought to light in this article express fundamental human concerns related to death, rebirth, remembrance, and the dire effects of intemperate actions. Such narratives are one way that people in all places and in all times have tried to make sense of themselves and the world around them. I’d bet that wherever the genus *Rhododendron* is found, additional interviews and research will uncover more myths and stories that incorporate these spectacular plants into this most ancient of human practices.

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¹⁰ Ferguson, G. 1996. *The World’s Great Nature Myths*. Helena, Montana: Falcon Publishing, Inc: 160 pp.

¹¹ Skinner, C.M. 1903. "Bloody-Heart Rhododendrons." *American Myths and Legends* 1: 129-131. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

¹² Citro, J.A. 2004. *Cursed in New England: Stories of Damned Yankees*. Guilford Connecticut: Globe Pequot Press: 272 pp.

¹³ The New York Times. November 6, 1883. "Ancient Tales of Pine Swamp: A spot made famous in the colonial history of Connecticut."

¹⁴ Skinner, C.M. 1903. "Bloody-Heart Rhododendrons." *American Myths and Legends* 1: 129-131. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

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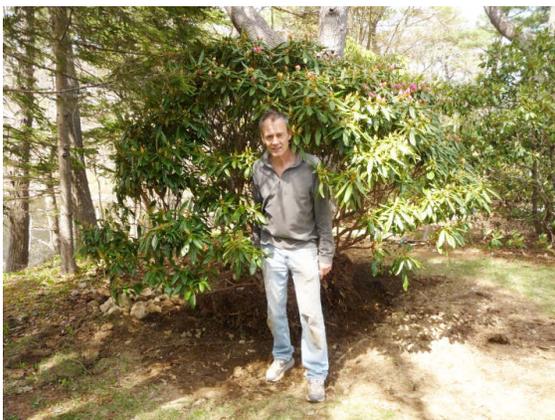
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Photo of leaders of the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation of Connecticut courtesy of EPTN

A big rhodo move in the garden of Peter Buzek and Debbie Hall at 11 Halls Road, May 17, 2017. Where there's a will there's a way. [Photos John Brett]



***Clematis stans* & co.**

By Nina Newington

My quest for *Clematis stans* began with a photograph of a slightly out-of-focus fall anemone behind a scrim of slender, tubular flowers of an unusual blue-grey colour. The tips of the flower petals (tepals really) rolled back, revealing cream stamens. They might have been made of silver, these flowers, so crisp and definite against the hazy pink cheerfulness of the anemone. It was a subtle, elegant combination, one of many in Barry Fretwell's *Clematis as Companion Plants*. He spent years breeding the genus for small, nodding flowered types, a notable one being *C. x eriostemon* 'Heather Herschell'. Would that we could buy them on this side of the Atlantic.

Luckily, my lust for *Clematis stans* coincided with Kristl Walek's brief sojourn in Annapolis Royal. As befits the erudite founder of the Canadian seed company, *Gardens North*, Kristl's home garden was stuffed with rarities I'd never encountered, and one that I recognised: A stout, shrubby-looking plant with vine-like leaves, it was about a metre across and almost as tall, and it was completely swathed in sprays of little amsonia blue flowers, each about 2 cm long. The colour is typical of this whole group of herbaceous clematis which includes the better known *C. tubulosa* (formerly *heracleifolia*) and the hybrid 'Mrs. Robert Brydon'. Writers struggle to describe this colour: 'a cloud of smoky blue', (Vita Sackville-West); 'an unusual kind of greyish-blue, of very tender and lovely quality', (Gertrude Jekyll); 'a spitefully non-contributory off-white, skimmed-milk colouring', (Christopher Lloyd).

The thing about these sub-shrubby clematis is that the flowers are dainty but the plants are not. Big, coarse leaves on a sturdy base are just what I need for the outer reaches of my garden. They cover the bare ankles of the taller shrub roses and, being cut close to the ground in spring, make good companions for bulbs. Plus they flower in August and September and look gorgeous not only with Japanese anemones but also with the soft yellow shuttlecocks of *Kirengeshoma palmata*. They like the same well-drained, moist soil and some sun, though *stans* flowers well in shade too. The seedheads are as decorative as the flowers and last into November. All are hardy to Zone 4.

Fortunately for me, Kristl Walek had some seedlings to spare which I acquired, though she thought a few might be crossed with *C. tubulosa*, another plant on my wish list. As it turns out, in addition to the typical grey-blue flowered *stans* which has a vanilla-ish fragrance, a couple of the seedlings exhibited the same narrow flowers but cobalt blue, and with no scent. Then there's one that must be *C. tubulosa*. The flowers are much broader than *stans*, perhaps 3cm across and 4cm long, and clotted on the ends of the stems. Though far less graceful, they are more fragrant. I'd say tangerine and hyacinth though Christopher Lloyd says hair-oil (he really doesn't like this group). In her 1932 garden classic, *The Fragrant Path*, Louise Beebe Wilder claims, 'The cold blue bell shaped flowers borne in profusion and for a long period "smell of ripe Greengages"' and the leaves when drying of new-mown hay.'

There's far more to be said about the various sorts of *C. tubulosa*, notably *var. davidiana*, but I'd rather end with a good form (or possibly a hybrid) that's available in Nova Scotia. 'Mrs. Robert Brydon' is a sprawling froth of powder blue blossoms, each with a prominent frill of cream stamens, the flowers 3-4 cm across and well-spaced in panicles all over the 2.5 meter spread of good weed-drowning, stump-smothering leaves. A very useful as well as beautiful addition to the garden. I bought mine at Briar Patch Nursery in Berwick. ♪



Clematis stans forming a low, thick clump that fills empty spots and covers unsightly stumps



'Mrs. Robert Brydon' is a good hybrid available in Nova Scotia.

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Photo Album



Capt. Steele's 'Boulderwood Blue' - [John Brett]



'Clematis stans' - [Nina Newington]



Dr. Breuckner's *R. catawbiense* x 'Treasure' hybrids - [John Brett]



R. auriculatum Flower buds - [John Brett]



R. 'Bellefontaine, Great Eastern, Santa Fe' - [Stephen Archibald]



R. calophytum new foliage - [John Brett]



Rhododendron Canadensis (Rhodora) - [Stephen Archibald]



Stewartia pseudocamellia bark - [Stephen Archibald]