

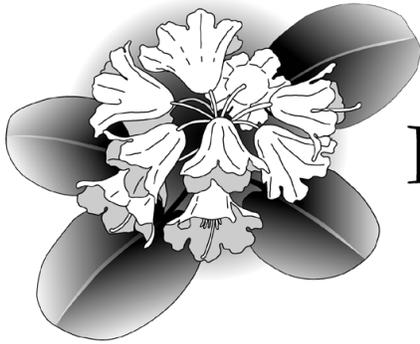
AtlanticRhodo

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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.

The current membership period is September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020. The membership fee is \$20.00 if paid between September 1, 2019 and November 30, 2019, and \$30.00 after Nov. 30, 2019. A membership form is included with this issue. For benefits and to download a membership form 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 \$74.00 Canadian. A membership form is included in this issue. For benefits and to download a membership form see www.atlanticrhodo.org

Cheques, made payable to Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society should be sent to **Rebecca Lancaster, 22 Walton Dr. Halifax, NS B3N 1E4**

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: Bosuch x *aureum* 'Diana's Select' - A terrific early bloomer hybridised by Dick Steele and named for his daughter Diana. [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. at 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.

April 7 **Success with Growing Plants from Seeds. (Cancelled due to Covid 19)** A panel discussion with four seasoned ARHS plantspeople who will share their experiences and their methods for germinating seeds and growing them on. Come to this meeting and find out how to succeed with this most satisfying and economical method of propagation. Panel participants TBA.

May 5 **Member to member plant sale. (Cancelled due to Covid 19)** An annual event at our May meeting. If you are a member and you have extra plants to sell, this is your chance!

May 23 **Member's Commercial Plant Sale.** Date: Saturday May 23. Pick up time: 10am to 12:30pm
Address: 726 West Pennant Road. Phone #: 902-346-2018. Email: lynnrotin@gmail.com.

Message from Lynn Rotin about social distancing and procedures for plant pickup:

1. Plants will be **grouped according to each person's order** and labelled with their name.
2. Orders will be picked up **one person at a time**. Stay in your cars or line up keeping **six feet apart**.
3. Sandra Dumaresq will be in her car to accept **cheques**. You can also pay by **e-transfer** to the Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society (cheques should be made out to the Society as well.)
4. Please **print out your orders** and have them on hand. This will be your record. Office copies will be going to Sandra.
5. Please bring **boxes** for your plants as boxes will not be supplied.
6. Please advise if you are **unable to pick up your plants**. Jim Sharpe has kindly offered to make deliveries.

June 14 **June Garden Tour and Potluck. (Cancelled due to Covid 19)** The Dick Steele garden, Hallie Watson garden, Ruth Jackson garden, Jay Wesley garden, and Chris Hopgood garden will be on the tour. Chris Hopgood will be hosting the potluck.

Sept 1 **Clematis for Modern Gardens**, or another topic to be announced. Presentation by Jeff Jabco, Director of the Scott Arboretum at Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, and President of the International Clematis Society.

Oct 6 **Steele Lecture:** TBA. Because of Covid 19 restrictions Lionel de Rothschild's presentation on Exbury Gardens has been postponed to a future date.

Nov 3 **Annual General Meeting**, followed by the film *The Gardener*, by Sébastien Chabot. The film reveals the story behind Les Jardins de Quatre Vents, a superb private garden in Quebec that was created by Francis Cabot, who also created Stonecrop Gardens in upstate New York.

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 November.

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Renee Forrestal, | Halifax |
| Kelly Grant, | Hammonds Plains |
| Jacqueline Jordan, | Dartmouth |
| Anne Pryde, | Halifax |
| Debbie Symonds, | Dartmouth |

Are your dues paid up to date? Our records show that some members are not. If you are a local ARHS member please consider renewing as a dual member of both the ARHS and ARS (American Rhododendron Society). This gives access to the ARS Journal, a full colour magazine published quarterly, as well as access to the ARS seed exchange, ARS conventions, and other benefits. Please see page 2 for information on payment methods. And our website: <http://atlanticrhodo.org/about-us/membership-info/>

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by John Brett



As the Atlantic Rhodo newsletter deadline looms I ponder what to say about our current peculiar situation that has not already been said. For the most part, our spring garden events have been canceled, and there's still so much uncertainty around the Covid 19 virus that at this point we can't even tell you if we'll be holding our monthly meetings at the Nova Scotia Museum, this coming fall. We can say that we communicate with the Museum, and we will let you know if and when we get the go-ahead.

In the meantime, spring is now truly with us and, for those of us with gardens, what a consolation this is! After a morning stroll on a gorgeous day such as today, with many early rhododendrons in full bloom, I come back into the house the sunniest of optimists. And of course there is lots to do, if we need further outdoor distraction: clean-up, fertilizing, pruning, tool-sharpening and repairs, planting, even weeding already if you happen to be cursed with goutweed.

I am going to devote the rest of this column to a few words from our colleagues on the Membership Committee of the American Rhododendron Society. Their April letter to the chapters came to me recently, and it expresses my own grateful thoughts and feelings, directed towards our volunteers and the valuable work they are doing to keep our society functioning.

I think particularly of Lynn Rotin, Sandy Dumaresq, Rebecca Lancaster and Frances Dorsey, who are working so hard on the plant sale. A less dedicated group would have thrown up their hands and cancelled. They are just terrific volunteers! I also think of Sterling Levy, who does such an extraordinary job on the layout and design of our newsletter; and Chris Hopgood, with his dedicated corps of volunteer plants-people, who are at work every spring on behalf of the ARHS, maintaining and improving public gardens in the region. Jim Sharpe and Rebecca Lancaster, co-chairs of our 2021 ARS Spring convention, also continue to forge ahead with planning for that event, despite all of the uncertainties associated with Covid 19. These are the folks that come immediately to my mind. I know there are other ARHS members who, in quieter ways, are serving our society, by keeping in touch with other members and undertaking other meaningful acts of gardening solidarity. To them, I am also grateful.

Now to the ARS Membership Committee's letter to the chapters: a brief and heartfelt consideration of our current predicament and some sound advice for making the best of it.

'Twenty years ago, at the "turn of the century", those of us in the tech industry were concerned about our Computer readiness for January 1, 2000. Would our networks crash, making communications, product delivery, our computers, inoperable? How would we recover quickly if we had a 'crash'? People's jobs, livelihoods and well-being were at stake. We made it (through) because for months we had run our computers forward beyond the 'drop dead' date to test them. We made plans for failure and recovery, some of those plans we put into action, some of them went on the scrap heap of experience.

Covid 19, twenty years later, did not give us an opportunity to 'ramp up' for its world-wide effects and damage, so we improvise, we help our shut-in or quarantined neighbor. We walk singly in our neighborhood. We work in our gardens and chat with neighbors, walking singly, across a fence and space gulf of 6+ feet. We volunteer in the community where it is safe for ourselves and others. We make the milk and coffee last just a few days longer.

All of this is being done by our chapter members, our chapter Boards of Directors and most importantly by our chapters' newsletter editors and web masters.

*Many of our chapters' newsletter editors and web masters are still hard at work keeping their chapters' members **together** with newsletters, beautiful pictures, human interest stories, Rhodo stories and highlights, pest notes and weed stories. There are no meetings or interesting speakers, or garden visits, no potlucks or cookie exchanges, but the telephone trees are still calling members to remind them that though there is no meeting they are still in our thoughts and we are hoping to see them soon.*

Part of our chapters' glue and society's bond has been temporarily broken; no chapter meetings, no celebration of our 75th year Convention. So make the best of what we have left of 2020 by reaching out to members to remind them of their value and friendship."

As spring continues in all its glory, I hope to see at least some of you in the gardens here on Halls Road, Halifax, at a respectable "social distance", of course. I think it's fair to say that these days I am usually home, unless I have headed down to Morris Island, Yarmouth County, to attend to that garden.

May we all come out of this stronger than when we went in. ☺

ARS 2021 Spring Convention Update

by Jim Sharpe



View across the valley to Cape Blomidon, NS. [Photo Old Orchard Inn]

A progress report on the American Rhododendron Society 2021 Spring Convention, “Rhododendrons Down East: Exploring the Atlantic Region”, to be held at the Old Orchard Inn, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada, June 2-6, 2021.

It has been a very challenging time for convention planning as all meetings with more than five people have been disallowed due to the current Covid-19 State of Emergency rules. In spite of this, we continue to plan, as we expect Covid 19 travel restrictions to be lifted later this year and, hopefully, everyone will feel comfortable travelling again by the Spring, 2021.

Several international speakers are confirmed, including: Ken Cox from Glendoick Nursery in Scotland, who will speak on the history of Glendoick Gardens and Nursery and also, in a separate talk, survey

great woodland gardens from around the world; Kristian Theqvist, President of the Finnish Rhododendron Society, who will introduce us to “Hardy Rhodos and Gardens in Finland”; and Joe Brusco of New England, whose presentation will be about “Breeding Hardy Rhodos” in the northeast. We also will feature presentations related to rhodo cultivation in the Atlantic Provinces, with John Weagle speaking on the history of rhodo culture in Nova Scotia, and a panel discussion on what makes for successful rhodo gardens in both Newfoundland (Todd Boland) and New Brunswick (Dianne McLeod).

Other works in progress include: The propagation of over 1000 rare and unusual rhodos for the convention plant sale; the development of tours that will intrigue both local and visiting rhodo lovers, including visits to local gardens, the Kentville Research Station, and the Grand Pre UNESCO World Heritage Landscape. Trips farther afield to such Nova Scotia highlights as Annapolis Royal and the Peggy’s Cove coastal barrens are also in the works. To introduce the convention, we are most pleased that noted Mi’kmaq educator, Gerald Gloade, will be giving a welcome presentation on the Kluscap Legends, which reveal an illuminating interpretation of the landscape of Mi’kma’ki, the traditional and current territories of the native indigenous Mi’kmaq people.

The ARS 2021 Spring Convention is going to be a great event, and we especially want to welcome you, our fellow ARHS members here in Atlantic Canada, to join us for 4 days of warm East Coast Hospitality and some very tasty meals, which will include local food, cider, wine and seafood, including a lobster banquet. So please put this on your calendar and let’s make a date to meet at The Old Orchard Inn in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, June 2-6, 2021. ☺

A Letter from the West Coast

by Carol Dancer

Editor’s Note: Carol Dancer is a long-time member of the ARHS, as well as being a member of the ARS Victoria chapter, the Victoria Horticultural Society, The Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Club, and several international groups. Before her move to Victoria, B.C., she lived and gardened in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. I remember her gardening expertise and her generosity as outstanding. Speaking personally, she was an inspiration, always encouraging me to try new plants. If I hesitated, I can still hear her quietly amused tone of voice, “Well, John, the worst thing that can happen is you’ll kill it.” Which to Carol wasn’t all together bad, as you now had a spot for some other new and untried beauty. As a result of her own high standards and her willingness to push the limits, she played a very important role in the development of the ARHS.

I think that keeping in touch with one another has never been more important than now, as we experience life with Covid 19. We are constantly being told that we must self-isolate and stay at home. However, people are social beings who crave contact with others especially those who share similar interests, and so what better way than to write a letter.

It was with this thought that John Brett suggested it was time for me to once again send a letter from the west coast to my east coast friends, to stay in touch and give an update on my garden.

Well, my garden, just under half an acre, continues to grow and evolve. We have over eight months free from frost here in Victoria, British Columbia, which is wonderful for a gardener and means one can grow a fabulous array of plants from all over the world: scheffleras from Taiwan, hebes from New Zealand, bulbs from South Africa, fuchsia from South America, cyclamen from Europe and of course rhododendrons, mostly from Asia.

I have learned many lessons about gardening in the twenty years since moving here from Dartmouth and starting this garden, mainly that the same basic rules apply no matter where you live. You have to look after your soil and keep your garden clean. Also, it is just as easy to kill a plant here as it is in Nova Scotia.



An evening view of Carol's backyard in May.

We have very poor, thin soil which constantly needs additions of humus. Each year I spread up to eight cubic yards of good quality mulch. Victoria receives only 58 cm (23 inches) of rain each year and most of that falls in November, December and January. It is a true Mediterranean climate; mild, wet winters and dry warm summers. Temperatures rarely fall below - 5 C. in winter, or rise above 25 C. in summer. This year we had over ten inches of rain in January and next to no rain after the end of February. If one wants to grow rhododendrons, irrigation is imperative. For my big-leaf rhododendrons I start watering the first of March and, as we all know, water becomes a more precious commodity each year.

So although I had dreams of a garden filled with big-leaf rhododendrons, I have concentrated on the lepidotes and especially the dwarf, alpine types which typically grow on the sides of mountains exposed to sun and drying winds. These are the rhododendrons quite able to cope and thrive in Victoria.

The first rhododendron book I acquired was Peter Cox's *'The Smaller Rhododendrons'*, and it is still the book I take down from the shelf most often. I grow several of the Cox rhododendrons named for Scottish birds. They are mostly grown in pots which sit out in the garden throughout year and are most forgiving if I miss watering for a few days. I will include a photo of two of my favourites, Razorbill and Wren.

I do grow a few of the big-leaf rhododendrons: *R. macabeanum*, *R. praestans*, *R. calophytum*, *R. sutchuenense*. They do not forgive me if I forget to water. I have tried to grow mostly species because so many are under threat in the wild. Many are on the red list. Just now in my garden *R. edgeworthia* and *R. johnstoneanum* are blooming, and exuding their intoxicating perfume.

But one cannot create a garden with one genus, and when I started to dream about this garden I wanted it to have flowers every day of the year. Through trial and error (many errors) I have succeeded.

It is difficult these days to get people to join garden clubs. They think they can learn everything via the internet. I know for certain I would never have acquired the knowledge I have today and been able to make this garden without the friendship of people from the Halifax group: Capt. Steele, John Weagle, Walter Ostrom, Joe Harvey and others, all of them people I met at the R.S.C (now the Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society). Joe, of course, moved here to Victoria. He and I still have frequent discussions on the merits of certain plants.



Magnolia 'Daybreak'.



Magnolia wilsonii



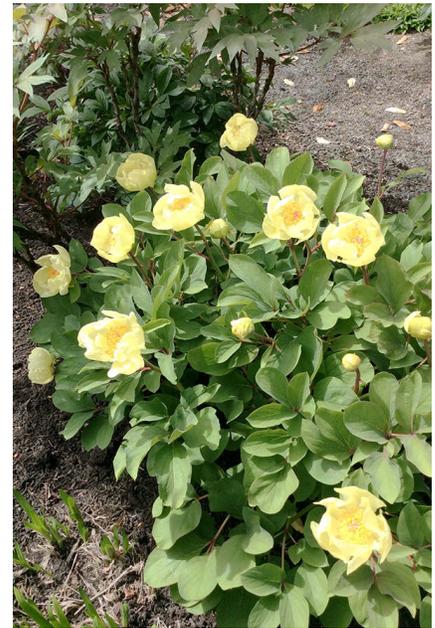
Rhododendron insigne



R. 'Razorbill' and R. 'Wren'



Trillium grandiflorum



Paeonia daurica ssp. *mlkosewitschii*

Anyway, back to a year of flowers. The mainstays of my winter garden are shrubs such as *Chimonanthus praecox*, common name Wintersweet, and *Hamamelis* varieties, common name Witch Hazel. I have three of these, which bloom in succession. My favourite is 'Jelena', a *Hamamelis x intermedia* hybrid between the Japanese witch hazel (*H. japonica*) and the Chinese witch hazel (*H. mollis*). It's always in bloom by the New Year. *Rhododendron mucronulatum* and *Rhododendron dauricum* usually start to flower in mid-to- late January. And of course one can't have too many hellebores and snowdrops. My snowdrops actually start to flower the end of September when *Galanthus peshmenii* comes into flower, followed by various species and hybrids blooming through to about the first of March, when *Galanthus plicatus* ends the snowdrop season.

Hellebores are the most amazing winter flowering plants. They continue to flower through frost, wind and heavy rain in clouds pink, white, yellow to almost black. Some of the latest hybrids make beautiful foliage plants as well: 'Penny's Pink' and 'Anna's Red', for example.

As the snowdrops and hellebores fade, the magnolias, trilliums and spring bulbs provide the flowers. I have several species of trilliums but *T. grandiflorum*, the eastern Wake Robin, is my favourite, with its elegant white flowers. Both it and the B.C. native, an inferior plant, will seed about. Tree paeonies are the drama queens of the garden in May, an interest I share with Joe. June, of course, is the time for roses. I don't have many and all are grown behind a fence. The biggest enemy of roses are the deer which roam all through the city devouring plants as they go. Roses and tulips are among their favourite snacks. During rutting season I have seen valuable shrubs and young trees totally destroyed. We also contend with rabbits and raccoons. Having not harvested a fig for the past four years, the fig tree has been given the chop and replaced with an olive tree, in the hopes raccoons don't care for olives.

For summer flowers I rely on lilies and iris. The martagon lily is my favourite, and it will self-sow if I don't remove the spent flowers. I have lilies coming up in the oddest places. Another favorite I have really come to appreciate is the Siberian iris. The hybridizers have really improved the species - something hybridizers don't always do. The Siberian Irises now come with bigger flowers, in various colours, and the latest break-through is repeat bloomers. The foliage of the iris also provides that vital vertical accent in the border.

The summer high-light of my garden is the bed of agapanthus, mostly grown from seed, creating a sea of blue in the back border. I wouldn't be without them. The flowers of penstemons, salvias and agastache carry through into autumn completing the seasonal cycle, and then it all begins again.

In closing, I wonder if Nova Scotia is seeing the surge in interest in gardening that we have seen here? Garden centres and nurseries were declared an essential service when the new rules came into effect and people took advantage. Line-ups could be an hour long and seeds literally disappeared off shelves. I had to go to three different locations to find seeds of runner beans! Maybe the renewed interest in gardening portends a brighter future for garden clubs.

As a P.S., I always welcome east coast friends who visit out this way. ☘

A Seed Growing Primer: Part 2, Seeds With Special Needs: Peonies, Lilies & Magnolias by Sharon Bryson

In the previous issue of the newsletter I wrote on growing rhododendrons and azaleas from seed, and I promised there would be a sequel. So here it is, and this time I will focus on some of the companion plants. Each year a tremendous variety of seed, from many different genera, is donated to the ARHS Seed Exchange. Some kinds of seed can be difficult to germinate because they require rather strict growing procedures, and that will be my focus in this article. I won't be able to touch on everything, but hopefully you will glean some useful tips on propagating Peonies, Lilies and Magnolias.

One general rule to keep in mind is that germination, for many seeds, is best achieved by mimicking Mother Nature. Strategies may include planting as soon as possible after seeds ripen (often in the fall), utilising cold/moist stratification, and making sure seed is stored properly.

PEONIES

Growing peonies from seed is an excellent way to propagate many beautiful species that may be hard to come by at a nursery. Many are welcome additions because they bloom earlier than the *P. lactiflora* cultivars. Our seed exchange and others have offered quite a selection over the past many years. Our most recent listing included eight different lots.



Species peonies with early foliage and bloom (L-R): *P. officinalis*; *P. obovata*- bud & bloom; *P. veitchii*.

Bill used to say growing peonies from seed is as easy as growing carrots, except it takes a little longer, (about 3-5 years). The results, however, are far more satisfying.

There are two approaches which will lead to good success.

In late summer or early fall collect ripe seed pods from different species or cultivars. The pods will start to crack as the seeds ripen. These will be mostly open pollinated seeds, so the variety of potential characteristics is huge. Simply leave the pods in an open container to dry, and then remove the seeds. The formation of seed pods is an integral, rather attractive part of the seasonal progression of the genus *Paeonia*. It should be noted that some species will exhibit bright red "seed" clusters which are actually non-viable seeds. This is obvious in the image below. Viable seeds will range in colour from dark blue, brown to black. You have the option of planting the ripe seeds outdoors or indoors.



Seed pods: An unopened seed pod, far left, followed by open seed pods showing the red non-viable seed, as well as viable seeds coloured blue and black.

OUTDOOR PROCEDURE:

Start the seeds as soon as they are properly ripened by first preparing a nursery bed area somewhere in your garden. Simply plant the peony seeds much as you would beans. Place a marker label to identify the area and the seed source.

Outdoor planting in late summer or early fall gives the seeds an obligatory warm, moist treatment, followed by a cold treatment over winter, followed by a re-warming the next spring, after which most seeds will germinate and send out a shoot at some time during the spring/summer months.

This sequence is the one you must mimic if you use the indoor treatment.

INDOOR PROCEDURE:

About the beginning of October fill 4-6 inch pots with moist potting soil. Plant the seeds ~4 cm. apart and ~ 2 to 2.5cm deep, several in each pot.

Place the pots in plastic food-storage bags. Tie with a twist tie and place in a warm place (~ 20 deg. C), leave for about 3 months. During this period the radicle and also a root system will develop. Soil can be carefully removed for periodic inspection without harming the little plants. Simply replace soil and place the pot back in the bags.

When radicles and roots are sufficiently developed place the pots in a cold spot (just above freezing). That old fridge in the basement is marvelous for this purpose! Leave in the cold for 2-4/months...until spring.

Select a spot in the garden for a nursery bed. Carefully knock the soil and seedlings out of the pot (keep intact as much as possible) and plant at the same depth as in the pot. Insert a plant marker with the seedling information. Keep planting area moist (mulch). Throughout the summer you can expect the first leaves to appear. Some seedlings may not put forth leaves until next spring...be patient. Leave the little plants over winter (a further layer of mulch will help them overwinter without heaving) until Aug-Sept the following year. Transplant at this time to about 1 foot apart and at the same depth as the plant was growing. The little peony roots look a bit like carrots with coarse roots.

With a bit of luck (and good management) you can have a few blooms the following year (3rd year). You can expect to have plenty of blooms in year 4 and 5.



Open pollinated *P. lactiflora* hybrids produce a wide variety of beautiful plants.

One species of peony that is particularly successful in my garden is the Tree Peony *Paeonia suffruticosa* var. *spontanea* (also known as *P. rockii*). It's worth noting that peony nomenclature has changed a lot over time. "Also known as" is a common phrase. *P. suffruticosa* is a very hardy species which results in a robust plant 4-5 ft. tall at maturity.

LILIES

The genus *Lilium* is very large, and there are a number of species which can be quite easily grown from seed. This is also true for some named cultivars within the Trumpet and Oriental Lily divisions. Technically, any lily that forms a seed pod has the potential to be grown. Common cultural practice is to deadhead lilies, so if you want seeds for more plants, a few blooms must be left to mature.



A sample of species grown from seed (L-R) : *L. canadense*; *L. martagon*; *L. leucanthum*; *L. pumilum*.

Lily seed is collected as pods ripen in the fall. The seed usually needs to undergo a repeat warm period followed by a cold period, followed by another warm period. Germination is quite variable and is dependent upon the nature of the species. Lily seed is usually classified as epigeal or hypogeal. Epigeal types will usually germinate in the first warm period with a sprout arising. The Martagon lilies (*Lilium martagon*) usually follow this pattern.

Hypogeal types will first sprout a radicle underground. After the cold treatment a sprout will hopefully appear during the following warm period. The time from seed sowing to a plant big enough to bloom may be from three to five years.

Typically, plant the seed in moist medium and place in warmth and light for a period. If sprouts appear in a few weeks, just let them continue to grow in place. If no shoots appear, place the pot in a plastic bag, seal and place in the fridge for weeks or months. Then remove from the cold and place back in warmth and light. You can, if it's the growing season, take the labelled seed pots and sink them in a nursery bed area of your garden. Be patient, as it may take quite a while for sprouts to appear.



(L-R) Lily seed pod; lily seeds; lily seedlings; *L. sargentiae* bulbils.

Many lilies are candidates for propagation by seed. Trumpet and Oriental types often come quite true to the parent. *Lilium sargentiae*, a beautiful, fragrant, trumpet form, is reluctant to set seed and is more often grown from bulbils, which form in the leaf axils, and are a vegetative reproductive mechanism which can easily be used to increase lily numbers. These bulbils can be planted directly outdoors as they ripen on the plant late in the season. For more control, they could be planted in a pot which can be over-wintered in a cold frame or other protected situation.

One rather unfortunate drawback to growing lilies here in Nova Scotia, and elsewhere, is that they are vulnerable to decimation by the Scarlet Lily Beetle (*Lilioceris lili*). It is widespread and, as a result, many beautiful lilies have disappeared from the gardens here in Maryvale and across the nation.

MAGNOLIAS



(L-R) ex *Magnolia loebneri* hybrids 'Spring Snow'; 'Leonard Messel'; 'Ballerina'.

If I were to choose one tree which is very satisfying to grow from seed, it would be a Magnolia. And there have been many interesting Magnolias offered through the ARHS seed exchange over the years. Quite a number have been grown here at The Willow Garden. It is a great way to get a free Magnolia!

Both the species and named varieties usually give attractive results, with a range of variations in flower form, colour, and plant habit occurring as a result of the hybridising process.

Magnolia seed pods ripen in the autumn, and you know they are ripe when the berries start to burst from the pods. The seed is contained in the berry, which will usually be bright red or pink. And the berries need to be treated in a specific fashion to extract the seeds and prepare them for overwintering in the cold. Once extracted, the seeds need to be kept moist, and never allowed to dry out.



(L-R) unripe seed pod *M. sieboldii*; unripe seed pod *M. tripetala*; ripe berries; cleaned seeds for storage in sphagnum moss.

Harvested berries can be placed in a container of water and left to “rot” for a few days. The outer flesh will soften and actually seem a bit gross. Manually squish off the softened pulp. Wash a few times under running water, and if all the pulp doesn’t seem ready to come off, add more water and leave for another day or two. The exposed seeds will be of various sizes and shades of brown/black depending on the species or variety of Magnolia. Once the seeds are cleaned of pulp, add more water to which a few drops of dish detergent has been added. Let soak for another day or two. This “soapy” treatment will remove an oily germination inhibitor. Drain the seeds and package in damp sphagnum moss in a zip-lock bag. Remember to label the bag! Place in the refrigerator until spring.

As spring approaches, seeds can be planted indoors and grown under lights for a few weeks before moving to an outdoor environment. Germination seems to benefit from good, warm conditions. I usually sow seed in six-cell packs (one per cell), and a few weeks after germination, transplant to 3”-4” pots. After spending the summer being a bit pampered outdoors the little plants can be overwintered in a cold frame or the pots sunk in the ground with a protective mulch. I have also overwintered small plants in the cold sunporch with success.

The next spring, you have the option of putting them in slightly larger pots or planting them in a nursery bed in the garden. This second growing season usually sees quite vigorous growth resulting in fine little trees by the fall. At the start of the third growing season, these can be placed in their permanent garden locations. The small trees transplant reasonably well. It perhaps goes without saying that they need quite good soil, even moisture and a modicum of fertilizer during these early years.



(L-R) Magnolia seedling pots sunk into bed; 2-3 Yr. plants in ground; ~3 Yr. seedling; 2 year old *M. tripetala* seedling.



(L-R) Some favourite Magnolia species from seed: *M. stellata*; *M. sieboldii*; *M. tripetala*; *M. macrophylla* ssp. *asheii*.

There are many more examples of trees and shrubs that can be grown from seed, but we will leave those for installments of “Seeds with Needs” that may come in future issues of the newsletter. ☺

Magnolias and Springtime

by Bob Howard



Magnolia stellata (star magnolia) in front of a collection of *Magnolia x loebneri* 'Dr. Merrill' on the intervale walk in the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens.



M. x loebneri 'Leonard Messel'.

In the late 1990's, local gardeners started planting magnolias throughout the town of Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. Today there are well over 100 blooming trees and shrubs representing over 30 different species and varieties in public places, private gardens and the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens. A 2017 list and map of these plants can be found at <https://celebratingmagnolias.wordpress.com/>

Magnolias, with their tender pink and white colouring, proclaim spring for me. They are the first really big flowers of the year. Beginning in late April we see a glorious display of *Magnolia stellata* (star magnolia) in front of a collection of the taller *Magnolia x loebneri* 'Dr. Merrill' on the intervale walk in the Historic Gardens. Both of these are hardy to zone 5. *Magnolia stellata* and its offspring, like 'Dr. Merrill', a hybrid containing *Magnolia kobus* as well as *Magnolia stellata*, have a profusion of strap-like petals that give the flowers a star-like appearance. Using the pink form of the star magnolia (*M. stellata* 'Rosea') in the same cross produced the pink *M. x loebneri* 'Leonard Messel'.

An early goal of magnolia hybridizers was to introduce richer bloom colours. To this end, *M. stellata* 'Rosea' crossed with *M. liliifolia* 'Nigra' produced most of "the Little Girls" series, developed at the US National Arboretum and introduced in the mid-1950's. The "Girls" are hardy for us and bloom two to three weeks later than the straight star magnolia. Plus they are dramatically coloured—brilliant purples with dark red to light pink tones. In Annapolis, we have examples of Betty, Ann, Susan, as well as the species *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra', a very deep maroon. All of these, along with the star magnolia, are large shrubs, rather than trees, highly recommended for small gardens.

Magnolias like organically rich soil, moist, but well-drained, neutral to somewhat acid, in full sun to light shade. They should be placed out of the wind, and perhaps on the north or east side of a house, to delay blooming thus avoiding late frosts. The species magnolias used to create the hybrid varieties in our gardens mostly originate in the southeastern US and southern China. The hybridisation process has resulted in many new colour forms along with other desirable plant characteristics.

The Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society has given many magnolias to the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens including *M. 'Legacy'*, donated in 1996. At around thirty feet, it is much taller than the label information suggests. Celebrated rhododendron breeder, David Leach, crossed *M. sprengeri* 'Diva' x *M. denudata* 'Rosea' to produce this slow-growing, but eventually large tree with outsized flowers (9" – 11" across), purplish red at the base grading to lighter pink toward the ends of the petal-like tepals. And what a display these magnificent flowers produce, starting in about mid-May.

The Brooklyn Botanic Garden took the next big step in magnolia hybridizing, introducing yellow flowers with the variety 'Elizabeth' in 1977, the first "precocious" yellow flowering variety. "Precocious" in this case means flowers come out before the leaves. 'Elizabeth' is fragrant, with large blooms that last up to four weeks. The cross is *Magnolia acuminata* x *Magnolia denudata*. It is named for Elizabeth Scholz, a much-honored Director of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

Below, I've included online addresses for two articles about the best yellow magnolias, for those who are interested. You'll find that even the experts disagree on the criteria. Since I think the colour green and its many interpretations are the highlight of spring, and as a designer I prefer soft-toned colours in this young season, I agree with our friend, Maurice

Foster, that the gentle yellow of ‘Elizabeth’ is elegant and just right in the spring garden. You can read more from Maurice by going to the first website address below. The second website address will take you to the Caerhays Estate, with a world-class magnolia collection, where they prefer strong, deeply saturated yellows. Both articles are fun and informative.

https://www.arboretumwespelaar.be/userfiles/file/pdf/150600_Yellow_Magnolias_Camelbeke_Foster.pdf

www.visit.caerhays.co.uk/theestate/thegardens/ (From here you can click on “Magnolias” then “History and breeding of yellow Magnolias”).

The Brooklyn Botanic Garden also produced ‘Yellow Bird’, the top seller at Paul Reimer’s wholesale nursery in British Columbia. Paul was a guest speaker in the society’s 2017 fall program, where he spoke on *Deciduous Magnolias for Canadian Gardens*. At Annapolis Royal, we have ‘Elizabeth’ in the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens, ‘Yellow Bird’ at the Post Office, and many other yellows around town and in private gardens, including ‘Butterflies’, “Gold Star”, ‘Stellar Acclaim’, and ‘Yellow Lantern’.

Beyond flowers, magnolias have beautiful foliage, healthy growth, and excellent form. Magnolia ‘Wada’s Memory’ is a superior plant in all these aspects. After the flowers in May, the green leaves emerge with a purplish base and edges, turning very dark green in summer, and then a golden yellow in fall. ‘Wada’s Memory’ has a strikingly attractive shape, upright like a sentinel, crisp and cheerful.

Magnolias generally grow well in Annapolis Royal. The grandest display we have is a line of thirteen Magnolia ‘Galaxy’ (*M. liliiflora* ‘Nigra’ x *M. sprengeri* ‘Diva’) bordering a 210 ft. (64m) stretch along Chapel Street. This wall of trees presents a massive curtain of dark pink flowers in mid-to-late May. ‘Galaxy’, released in 1980, is a large, pyramidal tree, growing to a height of 30 ft. or so, and is hardy to zone 5.

In the November, 2017, issue of *Atlantic Rhodo* you can find a report on Paul Reimer’s 2017 presentation to the society, which contains an extensive listing of magnolias and hybridizers. Online, I found a few nurseries in Nova Scotia with a varied selection of magnolias. I expect there will be some fine choices at our 2021 ARS Convention plant sale in Wolfville.

I want to thank local gardeners and friends, Lorraine Beswick, Angelika Waldow, Karen Achenbach, and Trish Fry for helping me with photos and information for this article. I want to also acknowledge the many people who have participated in community gardening in Annapolis Royal over the last twenty years. It’s especially appreciated at this time of year, as we get outside for walks (at a social distance, of course), surrounded by the many beautiful magnolias flowering around town, the result of all those various efforts. ☘



M. ‘Leonard Messel’ with *M.* ‘Dr. Merrill’ on the Court House lawn.



M. ‘Elizabeth’, introduced in 1977, the first “precocious” yellow flowering variety. [Photo Trish Fry]

Editor's Note: Atlantic Rhodo would like thank the author, Glen Jamieson, and the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society, for permission to reprint this article. The subsection Fortunea is of particular interest to Atlantic growers, as species in the genera have contributed to many fine hybrids grown in our region. Of special note for us is the species, Rhododendron fortunei. Every spring, magnificent large specimens put on a stunning display in some mature Halifax gardens, and other coastal areas of Nova Scotia.

Glossaries of the botanical terms used in this article can be found online. A very quick search led me to the one listed here. There are many others, some being more basic and some more extensive. <http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/botanicalterms.html>

Rhododendron Species for Beginners: Subsection Fortunea in the Rhododendron subgenus Hymenanthes

by Glen Jamieson, Parksville, BC, Canada

Rhododendron subgenus *Hymenanthes* is a subgenus of the genus *Rhododendron*, with a widespread distribution in the temperate Northern Hemisphere. The subgenus contains elepidotes (without scales) and it includes two sections: section *Ponticum*, divided into 24 subsections and about 180 species; and since 2005, section *Pentanthera*. The species in section *Ponticum* are evergreen shrubs and small to medium-sized trees (up to 20 m (65 ft) tall), with medium-sized to large leaves (over 40 cm (16 inches) long in a few species). The flowers are large, with 5 – 40 of them clustered together in terminal trusses. Plants in this section are the ones that most people think of when they hear the word “rhododendrons”, and they are widely planted in temperate climate gardens.

In previous articles, I discussed the general characteristics and taxonomic relationships of species of deciduous azaleas in subgenus *Hymenanthes*, section *Pentanthera* (JARS, Jamieson 2018) and of the evergreen rhododendrons in section *Ponticum*, subsection *Taliensia* (JARS Jamieson 2019). Here I discuss species in subsection *Fortunea*, also in section *Ponticum*.

Overview

One of the greatest of plant collectors in the Far East was Robert Fortune (1812-1880), who was born at Kellor in Berwickshire, England. After serving his apprenticeship, he received a thorough training at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, under William McNab. He was a skilled gardener, and became the superintendent of the Hothouse Department of the Horticultural Society's gardens at Chiswick, outside London. (Editor's note: The Horticultural Society didn't receive its “Royal” designation until 1861.) When hostilities between Britain and China ceased after the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, there was an opportunity to collect plants in China, and the Horticultural Society decided to send a collector to Asia. Fortune applied for the position and was accepted. Between 1843 and 1862, he made four trips to China and Japan and wrote four books about his travels.

He discovered and introduced large numbers of species of various genera, with two of his most valuable introductions being: the tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*), which he took from Chekiang, China, to India in 1855; and *Rhododendron fortunei*, named in his honor, also from China, and much used by plant breeders in the west to this day.

Fortune discovered *R. fortunei* growing at 920 m (3000 feet) on his third expedition (1853-1856) to Zhejiang in the mountains of eastern China. The plant was not in bloom but was reported by the locals to have beautiful large flowers. Fortune collected a considerable quantity of seed, which he sent back to Chiswick, where a number of vigorous plants were grown and distributed. It was the first of the Chinese rhododendrons to be introduced to Britain.

Later, other forms of *R. fortunei* were collected and it is from one grown by Sir Edmund Loder at Leonardslee, and crossed with pollen from *R. griffithianum*, that the hybrid ‘Loderi’ was created in 1901. It is still considered to be one of the most beautiful of all rhododendron hybrids. There are more than 30 named cultivars of the *R. griffithianum* X *R. fortunei* cross, including ‘Loderi King George’, ‘Loderi Venus’ and ‘Loderi Pink Diamond’. Overall, there are now more than 80 named hybrids with *R. fortunei* as a parent!

When Robert Fortune introduced this rhododendron into cultivation nearly a century ago, everyone who saw it in flower must have realized immediately that here was something new and different. Its flower colour of pale lilac (just off white) was not exceptional, nor was its fragrance a new feature among rhododendrons, for many of the Sikkimese species such as *R. maddenii*, *R. dalhousiae* and *R. griffithianum* were even more richly scented and had individual flowers of even larger size than the ample ones of *R. fortunei*. What made *R. fortunei* unique was the modeling of its corolla, the poise of its flower, a charm difficult to describe, but supremely satisfying even to the untrained eye. The fact that there are seven lobes,

instead of the five found in most other flowers of the genus, added a sumptuousness that contributed still more to its striking beauty (Nearing 1957).

These seven corolla parts of the flower are a leading feature by which most of the 27 species are brought together in subsection *Fortunea*. Sometimes the lobes number only five, sometimes as many as eight, but the characteristic number for the subsection is seven. Elsewhere in the genus *Rhododendron*, very few species have seven corolla lobes, the only ones with this number regularly being *R. auriculatum*, *R. galactinum*, *R. watsonii*, *R. eritimum* and *R. metternichii*, while about 10 other species have seven lobes occasionally (Nearing 1957).

McQuire and Robinson (2009) describe *Fortunea* as a very diverse subsection. Either trees or shrubs, they have leaves oblanceolate or oblong to orbicular, without hairs (glabrous) and with essentially smooth surfaces, and their usually five to seven-lobed corolla is usually pink or white, funnel or open-campanulate, and sometimes fragrant. Cox and Cox (1997) state that *Fortunea* species are characterized by white to pink flowers and glabrous leaves. While most species in subsections *Thomsonia* and *Campylocarpa* also have glabrous leaves, these tend to be smaller and more rounded, and their flowers are usually red, yellow, or deep pink. Cox (1990) stated the majority of species in subsection *Fortunea* have large foliage, are in the main vigorous and hardy, and are perhaps the most heat tolerant after species in subsection *Pontica*. The flowers are often glandular (sticky), somewhat fleshy, and with a small calyx. In summary, subsection *Fortunea* contains many useful species for severe climates, with *R. fortunei* being the hardiest species with scented flowers.

McQuire and Robinson (2009) divide the subsection *Fortunea* species into three groups, based solely on their leaf shape:

Group A – leaves lanceolate or oblanceolate, usually large, and more than three times as long as broad;

Group B – leaves oblong or obovate; and

Group C – leaves orbicular or rounded, usually relatively small.

The groupings that follow below are largely from McQuire and Robinson (2009), Cox and Cox (1997) and Cox (1990) and the RSF website (<https://rhodygarden.org/cms/plant-database>).

Rhododendron, subsection *Fortunea* Groups (about 27 species, 21 discussed, red font species are more available):

Group A (leaves lanceolate or oblanceolate)

R. asterochnoum

R. calophytum

R. davidii

R. fortunei

R. glanduliferum

R. griffithianum

R. huianum

R. jingangshanicum

R. maoerense

R. praeevernum

R. sutchuenense

R. vernicosum

Group B (leaves oblong or obovate)

R. decorum

R. oreodoxa

R. qiaojiaense

R. serotinum

Group C (leaves orbicular or rounded)

R. faithiae

R. hemsleyanum

R. orbiculare

R. platypodum

R. yuefengense

Species Details

Group A (leaves lanceolate or oblanceolate)

R. asterochnoum (epithet: with star-like down)

This hardy Sichuan species is a shrub or small tree found at 3000-3660 m (10,000-12,000 ft) elevation. It is closely related to *R. calophytum*, differing in the sparse, discontinuous, whitish, stellate indumentum on the leaf lower surface. Its flowers are seven-lobed, about 4.5 cm (two inches) long, white, tinged with rose, and often with a blotch.



R. asterochnoum var. *asterochnoum*. [Photo Marc Reuling]



R. calophytum var. *calophytum*. [Photo Hank Helm]

R. calophytum (epithet: beautiful plant)

This Sichuan species is a shrub or small tree, height 4.5-15 m (15-49 ft), and found at 2400-4000 m (8000-13,000 feet) elevation. It is one of the hardiest of the really large growing species. New growth has a sparse silver indumentum that disappears when the leaves mature. The flowers have a long, red pedicel, very short (1 mm; 1/25 in)) calyx, are five to seven-lobed, and are white to pink with a deep red blotch and spots. Its 15-20 stamens are very small compared to the style, which has a large, disk-like stigma. The species differs from its nearest relatives, *R. sutchuenense* and *R. praevernium*, by having more stamens, a larger stigma and longer leaf pedicels. It flowers from February to April, and so its flowers may be damaged by late frosts.



R. davidii. [Photo Dr. Stephen Bubert].

R. davidii (epithet: after L'Abbé Armand David, early plant collector in W. China)

This Sichuan native, rare in cultivation (reintroduced after 1990, older plants are incorrectly named and are *R. oreodoxa* or hybrids of it) is a 1 - 6 m (3 - 20 ft) shrub or tree found at 1300-4000 m (4300 to 13,200 ft) elevation.

Its flowers are seven to eight-lobed, pink to purplish blue, spotted purple, with a 1-2 mm (1/25-2/25 in) calyx and ovary that are both densely glandular. It has longer, narrower leaves and a more glandular ovary than *R. oreodoxa*.

R. fortunei (epithet: after Robert Fortune)

This 1.8-9 m (6 - 30 ft) shrub or tree is found at 600-1200 m (2000 - 4000 ft) elevation. Petioles are purplish, bluish or reddish, and the flower is seven-



R. fortunei ssp. *discolor*. [Photo Kathy & Bill McKay]



R. fortunei ssp. *fortunei*. [Photo Coen Zonneveld]

lobed, often wavy, fragrant, and white to pink. This species is hardier than *R. decorum* and *R. vernicosum*, and is distinguished from them by leaf shape and petiole colour. There are two subspecies: *R. fortunei* ssp. *fortunei* with obovate leaves, 1.8-2.5 times as long as broad, and earlier flowering, and *R. fortunei* ssp. *discolor*, with oblanceolate leaves, 2.8-5 times as long as broad, which flowers about a month later (June-July) than subsp. *fortunei*. *R. fortunei* ssp. *fortunei* is the hardiest scented species and is relatively heat resistant. Ssp. *discolor* Houlstonii Group has smaller, narrower leaves than ssp. *discolor* and flowers in May.



R. glanduliferum. [Photo Douglas Justice]

R. glanduliferum (epithet: gland-bearing)

This 2 meter (7 ft) shrub, found at 2200 m (7250 ft) elevation in Yunnan province, has flowers with a densely glandular pedicel and calyx, and a corolla that is densely setulate*-glandular on their outer surface. It was only introduced into cultivation in 1995 and is rare in the wild. *Setulate or setulose refers to a covering of small bristles.

R. griffithianum (epithet: after W. Griffith, a former superintendent of the Calcutta Botanic Garden)

This species, ranging from 1 - 15 m (3 - 50 ft) in height, is found in Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Assam at an elevation of 1800-2900 m (6000 - 9500 ft), and has usually smooth but flaking and peeling bark of several colors. Trusses are on a long, stout rachis that is usually slightly glandular. Flowers are five-lobed and very large, sometimes scented, and are white or tinged or veined pink to red, with a large calyx. With all



R. griffithianum [Photo Rinus Manders]

the above characteristics, the species is quite easily distinguished, and although it has some of the largest rhododendron flowers, it is fairly tender, so shade and shelter are often required for its successful cultivation.



R. huianum. [Photo Rinus Manders]

R. huianum (epithet: after Professor Hu, China)

This 2 to 9 m (6 to 30 ft) shrub from Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizho, is found at an elevation of 1000-2700 m (3250-9000 ft). Its leaves are acuminate (taper to a point), and its flowers are six to seven-lobed, pale or more often deep rose-purple in colour, with nectar pouches. The calyx is large and the ovary and style are both glandular. The above characteristics make it quite distinctive, and it is separated from *R. davidii* by its larger calyx and glandular style. See the profile of this species by Maria Stewart (in the Spring 2019 Journal of the American Rhododendron Society).



R. jingangshanicum. [Photo Theo Damen]

R. jingangshanicum (epithet: after Jinggang Shan (Shan = Mountain))

This 2-5 m (6-16 ft) shrub has leathery, cuneate (wedge-shaped), wavy edged leaves and grows in Jiangxi at an elevation of 1100-1200 m (3600-3900 ft). It has dark pink flowers and is a new introduction.

R. maoerense (epithet: from Maoershan, Guangxi)

This species has only recently been introduced into cultivation. It is an eight to twelve m (25-40 ft) tree from an elevation of 1800-1900 m (6000-6300 ft), and its new growth is maroon to deep red. Petioles and pedicels are purplish, with the latter glandular. Flowers are seven-lobed, pale pink to white, and the calyx, ovary and style are all glandular.



R. maoerense. [Photo Rinus Manders]

R. praevernum (epithet: before the spring)

This compact shrub or small tree is 1.8-4.6 m (6 to 15 ft) in height. It grows in Hubei at an elevation of 1600-2500 m (5000-8200 ft). The leaves are entirely hairless (glabrous) and the flowers are white to purplish-lilac with a distinctive large purple or crimson blotch at their base. The species merges with *R. sutchuenense* (intermediate forms are called *R. x geraldii*) but in its typical form, *R. praevernum* has smaller leaves, with hairless under-sides, and a prominent floral blotch. It is an easy and showy species, but flowering from February to April, can be subject to frost.



R. praevernum. [Photo Rinus Manders]



R. sutchuenense. [Photo Everard Daniel]

R. sutchuenense (epithet: from Sichuan)

This 2 - 6 m (6 - 20 ft) shrub or tree grows in Sichuan at 1400-2500 m (4500-8000 ft) elevation. The plant habit is large and umbrella-shaped. Its leaves are moderately woolly or hairy on the underside midrib, and its five to six-lobed flowers are pale pink with red spotting but no blotch in the throat, with a reddish stigma and 13-15 stamens. It differs from *R. calophyllum* by having no floral blotch and shorter, wider leaves; and from *R. praevernum* by having a hairy underside midrib and, again, no floral blotch. This is one of the toughest and finest larger-growing species, with fine trusses of long-lasting flowers.



R. vernicosum. [Photo Ken Gibson]

R. vernicosum (epithet: varnished)

This species from southwestern China has a height of 1 - 7.6 m (3 - 25 ft). It is found at 2700-4300 m (9000 - 14,000 ft) elevation, either as a rounded shrub or small tree. Its six to seven-lobed flower is usually pale pink to bright rose, with or without crimson spotting. Its distinguishing feature is an ovary and style densely glandular with dark red glands, while all other *Fortunea* species have either white or yellowish glands, or are glabrous (no hairs or glands). It has no scent, and the upper leaf surface becomes sticky, waxy and shiny if heated over a flame. This species is widely distributed in China, and so the various clones can differ in hardiness.

Group B (leaves oblong or obovate)

R. decorum (epithet: ornamental)



R. decorum ssp. *decorum*. [Photo Everard Daniel]



R. decorum ssp. *diaprepes*. [Photo Everard Daniel]

Growing from north Vietnam to southeastern Tibet, this wide-ranging species is found at elevations of 1800-4500 m (6000-15,000 ft). It grows from 1 – 9 m (three to 30 ft) in height. The six to eight-lobed flowers are fragrant, white to lavender-rose, with a yellow, green or crimson tinge at their base, with or without markings, with tiny short hairs at the base of the stamens (puberulous). There are two subspecies: *R. decorum* ssp. *decorum* coming from further north and east than *R. decorum* ssp. *diaprepes*. A notable characteristic of *R. decorum* ssp. *decorum* is that it can live on fairly dry sites where most other rhododendrons don't survive. It is vigorous and one of the easiest species to grow in the garden. *R. decorum* ssp. *diaprepes* is a lower altitude variety, not found above 3400 m (11,000 ft), and is less hardy, later flowering, with larger flowers and earlier growth. Different clones flower at different times, giving a long bloom season.

R. oreodoxa (epithet: glory of the mountains)

Native to southwestern China, this species is a shrub or small tree, height 1.5 to 7 m (5-23 ft). It is found at an elevation of 2300-3800 m (7500-12,500 ft). The five to eight-lobed flowers are white to rose, with or without purple spots, with a minute calyx and glabrous (no hairs or glands) style. It differs from subsection species by having thin shoots, smaller leaves, no scent and an early flowering. This species is fine, easily grown, vigorous, free-flowering and somewhat frost hardy.

There are three varieties: var. *oreodoxa*, with a glabrous ovary; var. *fargesii*, with a glandular ovary, wider leaves and lilac to deep pink flowers with heavily speckled interior; and var. *shensiense*, with a glandular ovary and sparsely rufous-tomentose pedicels.



R. oreodoxa var. *oreodoxa*. [Frederick Thurber]

R. qiaojiaense (epithet: its geographical distribution in Qiaojia County, Yunnan)

This rhodo's name is pronounced "chow-ja-en-se," and it has only recently been introduced. It is found at an elevation of 2000-3000 m (6550-9850 ft) in Yunnan, China, growing to a height of 1.8 - 3.6 m (6 - 12 ft). The almost oval leaves have a thick texture, being similar to *R. decorum* and *R.*



R. qiaojiaense-rosa. [Photo Hans Eiberg]

vernicosum. The plant seems to branch readily, making what should be a compact, rounded garden beauty. The new growth often has a bronze color. The flowers will most likely be white and fragrant. So far, *R. qiaojiaense* is proving easy to grow and does best in a mix of sun and shade, with relief from hot afternoon sun.

Additional references: <http://www.rhododendron.dk/> and <http://chimacumwoods.com/the-plants/qiaojiaense/>

R. serotinum (epithet: late, i.e., autumnal)

A smaller species, height 2.5 - 3 m (8 - 10 ft) from Yunnan, China, with seven-lobed flowers that are fragrant, white to flushed rose with a red blotch and red spots. This may be a late-flowering form of *R. decorum* with red throat markings, as it typically flowers from July to September. It has never been collected in the wild, being obtained from French seed from a collection by Père Jean Marie Delavay



R. serotinum. [Photo Dr. Stephen Bubert]

Group C (leaves orbicular or rounded)

R. faithiae (no image of flower)

This very rare species (known from only two or three locations in the wild, but listed in the current Rhododendron Species Foundation catalog) is sure to become a widely-grown and popular new species in gardens. It is probably most closely related to *R. hemsleyanum* and the recently introduced *R. serotinum*; it shares some of the same characteristics – large, fragrant white flowers in mid-summer, a large habit and impressively large, bold foliage, with the new growth coloured a light burgundy. As seen in the wild, this is a spectacular plant, with elliptic leaves to



R. faithiae. [Photo Tracey Shandler]

25 cm (ten inches) or more in length. Probably best with a bit of shade in the afternoon to preserve the summertime flowers.

R. hemsleyanum (epithet: after W.B. Hemsley, an English botanist.)

An upright spreading shrub, height 3 – 6 m (10– 20 ft) featuring auricled, deeply cordate (two round lobes forming a deep recess at the base) leaves that usually have undulating margins, and are bright or pale matt-green on top. Cox (1990) suggested the foliage is the best in the subsection *Fortunea*. Flowers are fragrant, mostly white with a yellow-green throat, and a glandular ovary and style. Bloom season is from May to July. This is an exotic, distinctive looking species that needs wind protection, but is otherwise robust.



R. hemsleyanum. [Photo Coen Zonneveld]

R. orbiculare (epithet: circular [referring to its leaves])

A shrub that can be compact and dense in the sun, and leggy in the shade, height 1.2 - 3 m (4 - 10ft). Found at elevations from 1650-4000 m (5400-13,000 ft) in Guangxi, China, its distinctive roundish leaves are deeply cordate, glaucous and have long auricles that often overlap. The flowers are seven-lobed and deep pink to purplish rose, with no markings. There are two suggested subspecies, *R. orbiculare* ssp. *orbiculare* with orbicular leaves; and *R. orbiculare* ssp. *cardiobasis*, with longer, more heart-shaped leaves. However, recent evaluations (S. Hootman, pers. comm.) suggest ssp. *cardiobasis*, from the Dayao Shan, should be a recognized full species with no relation to *R.*



R. orbiculare ssp. *orbiculare*. [Photo Coen Zonneveld]

orbiculare, while *R. orbiculare* ssp. *orbiculare*, from the Maoer Shan, is a round leaf form of the very variable *R. fortunei*, with coriaceous, pale or olive-green leaves. The Maoer Shan plants share with “typical” *R. Fortunei* the same upright inflorescences of pale pink, open to funnel-campanulate flowers, and the same mid- to late May bloom season. This is several weeks after the type species, *R. orbiculare*, which has completely different shaped flowers (campanulate). In addition, the growth of the Maoer Shan plants is much more upright and tree-like, as you would expect from *R. fortunei*. The type species *R. orbiculare* has a very rounded and bushy habit, usually quite a bit wider than high.



R. platypodum. [Photo Dr. Stephan Bupert]

R. platypodum (epithet: broad-stalked)

A species from Sichuan growing 2 – 8 m (6 – 26 ft) in height, and found at elevations of 1900-2200 m (6000-7000 ft). The dark green leaves are very distinctive, being leathery, broadly elliptic, rounded or oval, extending down to a very short 1 – 2cm (1/3 to 2/3 in) petiole that is flattened above, and rounded below. Flowers are seven-lobed and pinkish-red or pink.

R. yuefengense (epithet: from Yuefeng, China)

A shrub native to Guangxi, height 0.5 - 1.5 m (1.5 - 5 ft) and found at elevations from 1800-2150 m (5950-7100 ft). Like *R. platypodum*, it also has distinctive, glabrous, oval or broadly elliptic leaves with a cordate base, and a petiole that is flattened above and rounded below. Flowers are seven-lobed and a very pale purple on the exterior surface. The base of the flower is white, as is the interior surface. *R. Yuefengense* is a choice, distinctive species that is easily cultured in the garden. The growth habit produces a shrub that is wider than tall.



R. yuefengense. [Photo Dr. Stephan Bupert]

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A Decade of Happy Collaboration at Tangled Garden

by Nina Newington

“Well, what do you think?” asked Beverly McClare. We were standing side by side gazing at the flight of stone steps leading out of the kitchen garden. Each tread was about 5 ft. long and 2 ft. or so deep, flanked to either side by curving walls in the same rough stone. The front edge of each step was perfectly straight, cut on some no doubt magnificently expensive stone saw.

“Is it going to bother you forever?”

“Yes.”

“The back edge was natural, right?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’d flip them.”

“It can be done?”

“Yes.”

That conversation, shortly after I started working at Tangled Garden in June 2009, marks the beginning of a delightful collaboration on the garden Beverly started 30 years ago behind an unprepossessing little shack on Hwy 1 in Grand Pré, Nova Scotia.

A couple of years ago, Tangled Garden was featured in *The Gardener’s Garden*, a compendium of world gardens, one of only six Canadian gardens to be included. These days, five thousand people come through the garden every year. This has its dangers. Early in my gardening life I lived near a magnificent garden whose owners, garden designers themselves, became very well known. After a while I realized that I far preferred the parts of their garden conceived in their obscurity. The better known they got, the more self-conscious and impressive their plantings became. The soul went out of the place. It lost, to pirate a phrase from W.B. Yeats, “*a lonely impulse of delight*”. That hasn’t happened at Tangled Garden. People respond emotionally to this garden because it has remained, to a remarkable extent, a deeply personal garden. It expresses Beverly’s taste, her loves, her curiosity. For me this has been fundamental to my job. This is not my garden. I have one of my own to experiment with. My job is to make Beverly’s garden as beautiful and as true to itself as possible. Collaboration is easy because that is precisely Beverly’s goal too.

We are to be found, one or two days a week, strolling about the garden in deep confabulation, the source of some mirth on the part of the other workers at Tangled Garden. I do have a jammy job. (Okay, groan.) One of my key qualifications is



Nina Newington and Beverly McClare with impressive fall asters in the garden. [Photo by Jodi DeLong]

that, at the end of an eight hour day, I can still be filled with delight by the angle of a flower bud or the curl of a leaf. The same is true for Beverly. There is often one last thing to look at or smell.

While we do seem to take on big new projects quite frequently – the newly enclosed wedding tent area being only the most recent – a lot of what we do is notice places that don’t quite work and see what we can do about them. Sometimes they are places that never worked. More often, circumstances have changed. Gardens evolve over time. Trees grow. Others die. Paths are rerouted. We lay out hoses and tweak the proportions of beds. We decide that a flower is not quite the shade we had imagined.

Both of us are obsessed with colour and inclined toward limited palates that highlight subtle differences. I might lean toward stronger colours in my own garden but it’s no hardship to work with Beverly’s gentler range. We bring different plant passions to the garden: Beverly’s for conifers and grasses, mine for old-fashioned, fragrant roses and clematis. As it turns out, they combine quite well. Beverly, who claims she never leaves the property, has found my knack for sourcing unusual plants helpful.

For all this attention to line and carefully controlled colour schemes, we do both prefer gardens that welcome wildness. Formal lines and hedges need some self-sown serendipity.

The dry creek bed that cuts diagonally through the lower garden is, by September, a hum of wild asters in every shade of magenta, mauve and violet. Dodging intoxicated bees, we are content to be junior partners in an endlessly fascinating collaboration with Mother Nature, our task to help, not to control.

Except, as everyone who espouses this style of gardening discovers, it does require vigilance. It remains to be seen whether the enthusiasm of *Anemone canadensis* for the damp slope of the Reflection Room will be a blessing or a curse.

A willingness to experiment means mistakes. There have been assorted “What were we thinking?” moments along the way, one of which – changing a tulip colour scheme from pink to pale yellow – still haunts us. Only the most unwanted tulips are truly perennial. Over time we’ve learned the best way to avoid mistakes. Although we generally agree, if, when discussing an idea, Beverly goes “Mmm” or I say “Hmm”, we pause the plan. No good comes of pushing ahead.

On the other hand, when we find a solution we enthusiastically agree on, things can move very quickly. This is exciting, especially compared to the glacial pace of projects in my own garden. That’s how it was with the rill. Beverly wanted one: long, straight, severe even, a narrow channel of water, either on the level or descending a slope in stages. We started trying to find a place for it shortly after I began working at Tangled Garden but it was seven years before we looked at each other and, completing one another’s sentences, agreed it should run along the far edge of the kitchen garden, marking the boundary between Tangled Garden and the wooded strip that separates it from the neighbouring cemetery.

Beverly has a particular liking for rusty metal in the garden and I have come to appreciate it. The rill was descending a slope. It struck me that it was no different really than a set of stairs. Drawing on my past life as a carpenter, I calculated the rise and depth of each “tread”; Beverly prevailed upon a



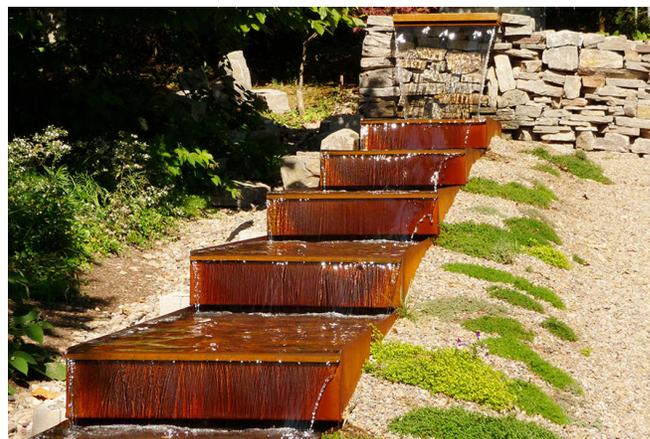
Tall borders along a section of the Dry Creek Bed in mid-October. [Photo by Jodi DeLong]



A map of Tangled Garden showing features noted in this article. [Courtesy of Tangled Garden]

local sheet metal fabricator to build a series of identical boxes, each with a drain plug; the stonemason who had had the unenviable task of flipping those stone steps, came and built the rill “stairs”, with each box on a pad of packed soil, concrete block and peastone, the boxes set so each one slightly overlapped the one below.

The moment the boxes were in and filled with water from a hose so water cascaded down the slope, visitors began to migrate to the rill. We built a little deck and benches. There followed a considerable period of tweaking of water levels and reservoir sizes and pump strength, but it was always clear how much the rill added to the garden. It surprises me still, how well our hastily sketched back-of-the-envelope design worked, but that is to ignore the seven years of ‘Hmm’ and ‘Mmm’ it took to get to Go. ☿



The Rill: one of many happy collaborations at Tangled Garden. [Photo by John Brett]



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Photo Album - The spring garden in Halifax, the first half of May. [Photos by John Brett.]



R. 'Nancy Steele'



Un-named hybrid by Josef Brueckner



R. Oreodoxa 'Fargesii'



R. elegantulum



Bosuch x *aureum* 'Diana's Select'



'Barbara Hall' x *R. sutchuenense* hybrid



Helleborus x hybridus (Lenten Rose)



Barred Owl.