



**Right: *Rhododendron  
kesangiae***

**Below: *Rhododendron  
flinckii* Pink Form**



## Scottish Rhododendron Society Spring Review 2016

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### Cover Pictures:

Front: *Rhododendron* 'Lems Cameo'

Back: *Rhododendron* 'Polarnacht'

Inside cover pages: A festival of pink!

All pictures by John Roy

## **Editorial**

Welcome to another Scottish Rhododendron Society Review. It has been a busy Spring, so although this should be the Spring edition you will be receiving it in the Summer. The reasons for this are that I was invited on a trip to Sikkim at the end of April, and some copy was late in arriving.

The Sikkim trip was a great success, with 32 out of 36 species of rhododendron recorded in Sikkim seen. Not all in flower of course. I will write up the trip in more detail for the Yearbook.

Gradually, year on year, our membership numbers are dropping. Very few younger members are joining to replace those dying, or leaving. I joined the Society in the early 1990s before I was forty years old, and I know of other long standing members who joined at a quite young age. Do we need to spread our wings wider to have more appeal? Any suggestions are welcome.

What would you like to see and read in your Reviews? It occurred to me, while I was making up the Rainfall data, that another weather station had dropped out in 2015. It is quite a painstaking and time consuming job to correlate all the data and produce as accurate a table as I can with the information provided. I personally find it interesting to see the huge rainfall differences, but let me know what you think, and if you have access to rainfall data, consider sending it to me if you would like this to continue.

Also it was said to me some time ago that the garden write-ups from our tours were not interesting, and not read. Is this a widespread view? I know a lot of members do not like to have to write them up, and it is my job as Editor to nominate members on trips to do the write-ups. My feeling is that it is an important part of our event calendar, and some of our Reviews would be thin volumes without them.

So let me have a bit of feedback.

*John Roy*

## President's Column

Recent garden tours have provided an opportunity to discuss and compare a number of areas of concern between individual National Trust properties on both sides of the Scottish Border. So, firstly, let's take a look at the way of approach to the property management and staffing of gardens in Scotland.

As a result of reorganisations in recent years there has been a gradual reduction of garden staff across the NTS properties, which would seem to have been the result of not replacing staff when vacancies have occurred, for whatever reason. Indeed, there has been noticeable change in the way of approach of the Trust, whereby houses and buildings have been prioritised in terms of manpower and budgetary resources, with the gardens becoming the 'Cinderella' properties in terms of support levels. This would seem to have come to a head in the past couple of years with the loss of several key Property Managers & Head Gardeners, including those at Brodick Castle, Crarae Glen and Arduaine; indeed, the impact of this is clearly evident in what has taken place at the latter two gardens. We lost a highly-regarded and long-standing Property Manager & Head Gardener at Crarae Glen when Nigel Wright lost his battle with cancer; Nigel had been closely involved with the SRS since the days he worked alongside John Basford at Brodick Castle and as a 'team' they were outstanding ambassadors for the Trust. Nigel's replacement at Crarae is a Property Manager & Head Gardener with experience in an entirely different field of horticulture, i.e., walled gardens, and has no background relating to the care of a woodland garden with collections of trees, ornamentals and complimentary plants.

In late-February of this year the Trust lost another highly-regarded and long-standing Property Manager & Head Gardener, when Maurice Wilkins retired after 25 years of caring for Arduaine, a garden he had great affection for. At the time of writing in mid-May there has been no replacement for Maurice, so the Crarae Glen Property Manager & Head Gardener has become responsible for both gardens. It should be no surprise that the SRS has enjoyed a long-term interest in both gardens, having supported a '*Festival of Gardens*' and other activities in a practical way at Crarae Glen, together with co-ordinating financial support from North America when the '*Save Crarae Garden*' Appeal was instigated to found an Endowment Fund; in reality, our members enjoy free entry to the garden in recognition of our long-term association with the garden in the period prior the NTS taking over the property.

Since the inception of the SRS in 1983, Arduaine Garden has been the Society's spir-

itual home, and when the garden was handed over to the NTS there was a requirement embodied in the Agreement that the SRS would have the opportunity to continue to make an input to the way of approach in caring for the garden, its plantings and planning for the future. This input has taken place through the auspices of the Arduaine Advisory Committee, but this has foundered with the approach of Maurice Wilkins retirement. The SRS Committee have expressed deep concern in regard to the lack of appropriately experienced Managers being appointed at both Crarae Glen and Arduaine, together with the need to reach an understanding of how the Trust is going to meet its obligations to enable the SRS to continue to make an advisory input in regard to Arduaine, where our members also enjoy free entry to the garden in recognition of our long-term association with the garden in the period prior to the NTS taking over the property. With this in mind the SRS will shortly be raising these issues formally with the NTS.

Turning our attention now to ‘South of the Border’, this Spring’s five-day SRS Tour of Cheshire, Staffordshire & Shropshire Gardens provided an opportunity to visit 14 gardens, and it has been interesting to compare the way of approach of the NT to the care and upkeep of several gardens we visited. It would not be unreasonable to come to the conclusion that the larger, more well-known gardens in North West England are better resourced in terms of budget and investment than the smaller, less well-known gardens. Neither would it be unreasonable to come to the conclusion that the staff of a smaller garden, which has multiple horticultural problems that require attention, has a mountain to climb to seek budgeted financial support and access to specialised manpower resources.

Take the case of Hare Hill Garden, near Alderley Edge, as an example. Here we have an active and enthusiastic team of gardeners, who are seeking to improve the property in a number of ways, including the clearance of undergrowth, one area at a time; tidying-up some of the rhododendrons and other plantings; and planning to take forward the clearance of the ponds, also one at a time. Unfortunately, much of this work will be in vain if the primary problems remain unaddressed. Firstly, the raising of the canopy throughout the garden is the overwhelming priority, as the lower branches of the trees are smothering the rhododendron collection and other shrubs, many of which are not flowering due to the lack of light and are also badly affected by fungus caused by the secretion from scale insects on the plants and aphids higher-up in the trees. Equally, the branches overhang the ponds cutting out the light and are responsible for a considerable volume of leaf-fall into the ponds. Secondly, there are far too many dark yew trees in the garden whose low spreading branches are growing into the adjacent plants and need to be taken out to let in some light and provide air



circulation. In reality, the garden is dark and dismal in many areas and one member of the public remarked that the NT had a cheek to charge for entry to the garden in its present condition, which is an adverse Public Relations problem for the NT to address.

Clearly, the enthusiastic staff require help in the form of a team of tree surgeons for at least a week to carefully fell the lower branches of the trees and to take out specimens that are counter-productive to the maintenance of the property; leaving the garden staff to clear-up in their wake. This action would re-invigorate the garden and its plantings, make a massive improvement to the light levels and air circulation, and provide the garden staff with the incentive to continue the restoration work required. A letter to this effect will be forwarded to the NT Head of Gardens in the hope that some action will be forthcoming, as the gardens and its plantings are well worth caring for.

*John M. Hammond*

## **Secretary's Notes**

It is April 14<sup>th</sup> and I have just come in from the garden, dressed in 2 sweaters, a jacket, an overcoat, trousers, overtrousers, thermal socks, boots, 2 scarves and a warm hat. Temperature is 4°C and falling. An overnight frost is forecast and I have to do a quick summary of the plants just coming into leaf or bloom that I would like to protect i.e. small rhododendrons, acers, cardiocrinums and other lilies. Sadly, no cover, be it fleece or a big bucket seem to provide adequate protection; both smother the flowers. Protecting anything large is out of the question and so my beautiful *Cercidiphyllum*, just coming into rosy red leaf, will have to take its chances.

More shelter is the answer, you will say and I envy Osgood Mackenzie starting his shelter belt aged 26. Alas, time is not on my side but still, there is so much to be positive about in this new, very exposed garden. Trilliums, *Anemone blanda* cultivars, narcissi, species tulips, erythroniums and primulas are untroubled by frost and most herbaceous plants - hostas for example - have not yet emerged. Hardy shrubs, such as *Exochorda macrantha* and *Ribes sanguineum* 'Album' flower through the harshest weather. There is so much to look forward to; another years growth on trees and shrubs and flower buds to open on species and hybrid rhododendrons, basking in the light and in soil which three years ago was virgin pasture.

No doubt all those planning to exhibit at this year's Rhododendron Show at Garelochhead were watching the weather. The crippling frosts at the end of April last year put paid to many exhibits but there was still a tremendous display and entries in all classes. A view of the show just prior to judging can be seen on the new SRS web-site.

Our updated web site is launched this April. We hope that both members and browsers will find it welcoming and easy to navigate. However, to keep it interesting and up to date, we depend on you, our members, to send in comments, articles and images of interest. We belong to a very special society whose members are keen on seeing, growing, propagating and passing on rhododendrons. A lively and attractive web site will hopefully attract new members who share these aims. Contact details are at the end of the Review.

Gift Aid: reclaiming gift aid on donations and subscriptions made by tax paying members is a valuable source of income for the society. If you are eligible but have not yet signed up for gift aid, instructions and a form can be downloaded in the 'Joining' section of the web site. Alternatively, please contact the Secretary for a form.

Finally Seeds: it seems early days but if you have good forms of rhododendrons, shrubs or companion plants and are able to collect seed, please bag, label and send to Willie Campbell, including as much information as possible. Willie compiles and circulates a list of seed for sale. This is an opportunity to buy and propagate something new and support SRS. Contact details are at the end of this Review.

*Katrina Clow*





## **True Snail Mail**

**Gloria Starck**

As Tours Co-ordinator I receive a large number of letters via Royal Mail. They come in all shapes and sizes, but definitely not like the one I received this week. In June I received an Interest Form for the SRS/RSCG Meeting in October this year. It came to me in a Royal Mail plastic bag indicating that it had been damaged in the post.

The accompanying letter read as follows:

“Dear Customer,

I am sorry that the enclosed letter has been damaged and subsequently delayed.

The item was found during a scheduled collection from a posting box and had been damaged by snails. Unfortunately, despite regular cleaning and placing pellets in the boxes, we find that slugs and snails still occasionally manage to creep into the apertures, fall down into the box and start eating the glue/adhesive on the stamps and envelopes.

I am sorry for any problems caused by this unusual ‘tampering’ and while I am pleased to be able to return your letter, albeit in a damaged condition, I regret the understandable annoyance caused.

Yours sincerely,  
Royal Mail Exeter”

I can assure you that the envelope was definitely eaten by some critter. Two corners of the envelope were missing and the stamp had been eaten.

Fortunately the contents were not too badly damaged and I could still register the interest of the sender. I will not divulge their identity in case a snail reads this and joins the population of slugs and snails that specialise in this type of vandalism.

Rather than you returning Interest Forms to me, I will be happy to receive an email containing the information, thus saving you money and eliminating the risk of gastropod vandalism.

## ***Rhododendron heatheriae***

### **Ole Johnny Larsen**

A photo of a flowering *Rhododendron heatheriae*. As far as I know it should be one of the first in cultivation. The plant was acquired from Glendoick Gardens and grown in Egil Valderhaug's garden on the west coast of Norway. Egil has tested out a wide range of big leaved species which used to be reckoned as not suited for Norway. Most of them grow very well and flower. Never believe so-called established truths!



## **Garden Notes From Aberdeenshire**

**Richard Firmin**

Studious readers of SRS publications may remember an account of budding Rhodophiles using 1-tonne builders' bags to protect their plants from the vicissitudes of Aberdeenshire winters. Such extreme measures may be paying off. True, we haven't had to contend with the harshness of 2010-11 for a while. During the last two years our minimum recorded temperature was -6 degrees C and the bags have stayed in the shed.



**Flower bud of *Rhododendron sutchuenense***

**Picture by Richard Firmin**

*Rhododendron sutchuenense* opened its first bud on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, two days later than last year and two weeks later than in 2014. Despite a couple of nights at  $-2^{\circ}\text{C}$ , which caused the foliage to drop, the floral display remains unscathed. *R. calophytum* was the next to open, followed quickly by *R. wallichii*, producing blooms for the first time. This looks particularly good next to *R. 'Wine and Roses'*, the flowers of the former complementing the indumentum of the hybrid.

*Rhododendron rex* has been the star of the show so far. Now measuring 3m x 3m, this plant produced three flowers in 2014 and none last year, but is now graced by at least a dozen undamaged balls of blossom.

Rainfall in early January was excessive: not just cats and dogs but two little auks blown in to the garden on the evening of January 4<sup>th</sup>. Bearing in mind we are ten miles from the coast this record is even more remarkable for the fact that this is our second sighting of this species here (the first being 26/1/88). Fortunately Storm Frank and his mates have caused no damage in the garden.

Unfazed by a handful of losses over the years we continue to plant borderline species. *Rhododendron hookeri* is amongst the most recent gambles. As a seasoned member of the Society recently said – at Stonefield Castle, where *R. hookeri* appears to be in its element – we (collectively) are growers of hope. Short-termism is usually regarded as a curse of our species and quite rightly so when exemplified by politicians who speak of “climate change hysteria”. But as gardeners perhaps there is some virtue in assuming the ostrich position. I am inclined towards the old hippie adage, “be here now”. Nothing wrong with my memory.

## **Autumn Conference 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

### **Ardkinglas House**

#### **John Roy**

The following articles were first published in the Rhododendron Species Conservation Newsletter No 15. Not all SRS members will have access to this, therefore I am reprinting them in this review. Editor.

Once again the Autumn Conference 2015 was a combined affair with the Rhododendron Species Conservation Group. It was superbly attended with more than forty delegates, who gathered in the splendid Ardkinglas House, on the Saturday morning.

RSCG President, Ian Sinclair welcomed everybody to the venue, overlooking Loch Fyne. Our first presentation was by John Hammond, who has a particular interest in historical rhododendron gardens. He took us through the formation and history of some of Scotland's important rhododendron gardens. Glenbranter, was the first outstation of the RBGE, before the donation of land by the Younger family formed what is known as Benmore Garden. John went on to describe the history of other gardens like Arduaine to the south of Oban, and Achamore on the Isle of Gigha. He linked up the gardens belonging to John Holms at Formakin and Larach Mhor with what the Gibsons were doing at Glenarn on the Gareloch. He went on to suggest that Sir John Stirling Maxwell of Pollock wanted somewhere with cleaner air than that around Glasgow to allow his garden to flourish, and so Corrour Estate was chosen. This part of the Central Highlands became an experimental place for higher elevation plantings of both forestry commercial trees and rhododendrons.

Second presentation was by Dr David Chamberlain who gave us a rundown on the reasons for, and the pitfalls ensuing from the Nagoya Protocol. This international treaty is aimed at protecting plant species in the wild, including collection of wild seed. This has had a knock on effect on the SRS seedlist which can no longer provide wild collected seed. Some licenced collection is possible, but there must be some benefit going back to the place providing the material.

An excellent buffet lunch supplied by the Tree Shop followed. Many plants had been donated to auction in aid of Kenneth Cox's Nepal earthquake appeal. This took place after lunch with an excellent £1313 being raised for hard hit areas trying to recover from the devastating 2015 earthquake.

Then the afternoon progressed with John Roy describing of some of the trials and tribulations of treks to remote areas of the Himalaya. John covered some pioneering trekking in Arunachal Pradesh, north east India, linking this to passes visited previously across the border in Tibet. Ground covered in Tibet in the 1990s is no longer available to visit by botanists outside China.

Tom Christian then described an expedition to study plants in Japan that he undertook in 2013. Tom is a conifer specialist, and he described some of the interesting unusual conifers seen on his trip. Examples included *Pseudotsuga japonica*, *Tsuga seiboldii* and *Picea koyamae*.

This concluded the indoor part of the weekend, and we looked forward to the garden visits, starting with the Ardkinglas Estate Garden, which was a suitable end to the day.

The Hamish Gunn Memorial Lecture was given after evening dinner at the Loch Fyne Hotel. Tessa Knott entertained us with the history and progression of her 12 acre garden at Glenwhan tamed from moorland in Scotland's mild south west.



The following day promised visits to two other important gardens in the area: Crarae and Inveraray Castle.

**Tom Christian explaining the Conifer Conservation Project's work at Ardkinglas**



## Garden Visits

Hannah Wilson

### Ardkinglas Woodland Garden



Being Autumn there were a few nice *Sorbus* in fruit to draw our attention. *Sorbus hedlundii* was the first admired, then we came to a lovely *Sorbus sargentii*, an I.D. achieved thanks to its distinctively sticky buds, and helpfully confirmed by a label.

After enjoying Tom's talk earlier we were all keen to learn more about the conifers which dominate Ardkinglas woodland garden. We saw a number of good specimens of *Abies alba*, on which the young shoots are slightly pubescent. Interestingly, there are few young plants of *Abies alba* in Scotland as they stopped being planted in around 1840 when American conifers became available.

Stopping in a glade of young *Fitzroya cupressoides* we all heard about the Conifer Conservation Project's work with this species. *Fitzroya* is South America's giant conifer, reaching up to 200 feet in the wild and living for 5000 years. It is a brilliant timber tree and is now endangered in the wild after three centuries of heavy logging and land conversion. In 1991 the Conifer Conservation Project worked with RBGE to find out how many genotypes there were in cultivation. They found that all 200 specimens in the UK were the same clone!

The species became a flagship for conifer conservation and after years of trips and hard work, there are now about 100 different clones in cultivation; mostly from cut-



**Left:**

***Sorbus  
sargentii***

**Right: A lovely display of Autumn Colour  
set off beautifully by the blue sky**

**Opposite Page: Members investigating  
a textile sculpture in Ardkinglas Wood-  
land Garden: Dark Lady of the Forest by  
Andrew McLintock**

tings as seed set in Chile is very poor and has low viability. The plantings at Ardkinglas are part of the CCP's work and have been grown from seed. Each plant is labelled with the seed batch as an accession number, followed by a unique qualifier letter after the accession.

Ardkinglas was chosen as a planting site for this project as the favourable growing conditions there suit conifers well, as demonstrated by their numerous coniferous Champion Trees, including magnificent specimens of *Abies grandis*, *Fitzroya cupressoides*, *Chamaecyparis obtusa* and *Tsuga mertensiana* var. *jeffreyi*.





**Inveraray Castle and the “Flag Borders”**

## **Crarae Gardens**

We were met by Mark Jeffries and kindly guided round the garden by him. Lady Grace Campbell, aunt of the Himalayan plant-hunter Reginald Farrer, began the developing Crarae Garden from woodland in 1912 on land owned by the Campbell family since 1825. Crarae is now a spectacular hillside woodland garden crammed with exciting plants. The garden follows Crarae Burn; a delightful rocky gorge with a series of cascades, spanned by several bridges. Not far from the first bridge we encountered a fine specimen of *Podocarpus salignus*.

This charming garden has an interesting and diverse collection of plants including a wide variety of shrubs and trees chosen for spring flowering and autumn colour growing in the shelter of towering, majestic conifers. We were lucky to have a gorgeous sunny day for our visit, the blue skies showing off the wonderful display of autumn colour. *Acer*, *Cercidiphyllum*, *Sorbus* and *Stewartia* stood out during our visit, along with a flowering *Eucryphia*.

The lush, naturalistic planting gives the garden a tranquil, welcoming atmosphere,

and I'm sure many of our members will be returning to this garden in spring to see the extensive *Rhododendron* collection flowering.

## Inveraray Castle Gardens

The stunning castle at Inveraray was built in the 1750s and has been the private residence of the Dukes of Argyll, and seat of the Clan Campbell since then. The gardens around the castle are a later addition, begun by Walter Pattison (employed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Argyll). They were mainly lawn until 1820-1850, when the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke introduced more interesting planting including the 'Cucumber tree' - *Magnolia acuminata*, and *Oxydendron arboreum*.

The garden now covers sixteen acres around the castle, within an estate of 180 hectares. The two acres closest to the castle are laid to formal lawns and flowerbeds, the remaining garden area being park and woodland. The borders on each side of the central path, beyond the lawns, are known as the 'Flag-Borders' as the paths have been laid out in the shape of St. Andrew's Cross. These borders contain an interesting mixture of shrubs, interspersed with herbaceous plants to extend the season of interest. *Rhododendron* and *Eucryphia* do well in these borders, but my favourite plant from our visit was a wonderful *Oxydendron arboreum*, about to flower and just starting to take on its autumnal blaze of bright red.

Last winter they cleared out the laurel boundary hedge as it had overgrown its space and the garden is under-going a phase of rejuvenation, with many areas being recently replanted. Planting plans for the old laurel hedge were not yet confirmed, but likely to feature plenty of rhododendrons as they do so well on the site. Conifers are also likely to be included as they do well at Inveraray too, with fine specimens of *Cedrus deodara*, *Sequoiadendron*, *Wellingtonia*, *Cryptomeria japonica* and *Taxus baccata* in the woodlands.

All pictures by Hannah Wilson.

## ***Primula vialii* White Form**

**John Holland**

Many gardeners will be familiar with *Primula vialii*, with its flower spike of deep lavender, usually known as “Red Hot Poker Primula”. This variety of primula was originally discovered by Pere Delavay, the French missionary and plant collector, in the 1880s within Yunnan Province, China. The name “vialii” was given by Delavay in respect of a close friend Paul Vial.

Later in 1906, the same plant was collected by George Forrest, the noted Scots born collector, later introduced into the UK. *Primula littoniana* was the name given to this introduction in deference to Mr Litton, the British Consul of the area where Forrest was collecting. Under the rules of nomenclature for plant names, the name reverted to *P. vialii* as this later introduction was considered to be very similar to the plant originally discovered by Delavay.

To return to the present, the garden at Greenways was commenced in the 1990s within the 1.5 acres of an upland plot purchased in 1992. A new two storey house took the place of an earlier old stone building, then in a ruinous condition. The garden lies in an open valley at an elevation of 850 feet, very exposed to the elements and with very few mature trees present at the time of purchase. Soil is acidic and quite deep, providing good conditions for growing rhododendrons, primulas, meconopsis etc. The rainfall is not excessive, averaging 40 inches annually, along with snowfall of varying depths most winters. Primulas of many varieties were planted in the early years of the new millennium, mainly in an area close to the new house known as the “Top Mound”. Specifically plants of *P. vialii* planted in 2005 flourished and seeded around extensively.

In early June in 2011, prior to an “Open Garden” visit on behalf of local charities I noticed a pale white flower stem emerging from the fronds of a fern, all within a group of *Primula bulleyana*, a candelabra primula, almost a weed in this garden. At first glance this flower head looked remarkably like a northern marsh orchid – *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* which sometimes produces a pale white flower. Upon closer examination of the leaves it was certainly not an orchid; the foliage was really that of a primula and *P. vialii* at that! A delve into the primula books did not reveal a white





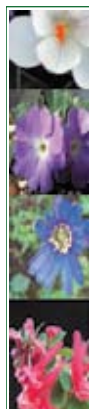
**Picture courtesy of Harperley Hall Farm  
Nursery**

form of *P. vialii*, however there is a cross of *P. vialii* with *P. flaccida*, referred to in John Richard's very authoritative book on primulas.

On 12<sup>th</sup> June 2011 "open day" the new fully developed white primula was photographed and the plant concealed within fern fronds as I realised that questions could be asked by some of the visitors. Secrecy commenced from that time and has been fairly well maintained since. Later in June 2011 tentative enquiries of gardening friends seemed to suggest that this white *P. vialii* could be something special, maybe unique! Such a rare plant certainly requires maintaining. Two lines of progress seemed to be essential, first to take seed from the original plant and sow, secondly to contact micropropagation facilities.



**Scottish National Rhododendron Show 2016. Picture by John Hammond**  
See Mike Thornley's article on page 24



## THE SCOTTISH ROCK GARDEN CLUB

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A seed trial in 2011-12 did not give germination, a further trial in 2012-13 also proved negative. Both trials seem to confirm that the plant is infertile. In respect of micro-propagation, I had been given details of the facility in Cornwall run by Ros Smith. Contact with Ros resulted in plant material being dispatched to Cornwall in Summer 2012.

Subsequently, after some difficulties, a batch of twenty potted plants arrived at Greenways in July 2014. Earlier in that year I had been in discussion with Paul and Gary of Harperley Hall Farm Nurseries with the intention to take over the propagation and distribution of the plant to the wider public. Ten plants of the batch received in 2014 went to their nursery at Stanley in County Durham, the remainder were planted out here at Greenways, where they have prospered, providing a lovely show in May 2015, with lots of pure white flowers as expected. Later, some plants were divided, not as easy as some primulas, but with careful use of a sharp knife, they can be increased, a key element in keeping this plant going.

That really is the end of my story as these plants will be available for the launch of the plant at Chelsea in May 2016. I do hope many ordinary gardeners can benefit from this arrival of *Primula vialii* 'Alison Holland' (my daughter in law) which after all arrived in this garden in Northumberland with no help from me! I am glad to be the recipient of Mother Nature's Bounty.

Editor's Note: *Primula vialii* 'Alison Holland' was short listed in the final 20 for the Chelsea Flower Show Plant of the Year 2016.

2015	Wuerzburg		Radlett		Glendoick	
	mm	inches	mm	inches	mm	inches
January	51.0	2.01	75.0	2.95	95.0	3.74
February	15.0	0.59	52.0	2.05	34.0	1.34
March	50.0	1.97	22.0	0.87	58.0	2.28
April	20.0	0.79	25.0	0.98	32.0	1.26
May	22.0	0.87	51.0	2.01	88.5	3.48
June	46.0	1.81	25.0	0.98	40.0	1.57
July	32.0	1.26	88.0	3.48	136.0	5.35
August	59.0	2.32	82.5	3.25	55.5	2.16
September	35.0	1.38	35.0	1.38	21.0	0.83
October	31.0	1.22	68.5	2.70	67.0	2.64
November	115.0	4.52	83.0	3.27	156.5	6.16
December	53.0	2.09	55.5	2.19	164.5	6.48
Total 2015	529.0	20.83	662.5	26.11	948.0	37.29
Total 2014	517.0	20.36	862.5	33.96	915.5	36.05
Total 2013	655.0	25.79	735.5	28.95	665.5	26.21
Total 2012	585.0	23.04	903.5	35.56	980.0	38.58
Total 2011	506.0	19.93	520.5	20.51	815.6	32.10
Total 2010	776.0	30.54	682.0	26.87	741.8	28.22
Total 2009	518.0	20.40	793.0	31.23	782.0	30.79
Total 2008	521.0	20.51	753.5	29.67	810.8	31.92
Total 2007	786.0	30.93	785.5	31.00	801.0	31.51
Total 2006	583.0	22.95	617.0	24.29	752.7	29.63
Total 2005			477.0	18.78	899.4	35.40
Total 2004			662.0	26.06		

The weather stations:

Wuerzburg is in Lower Franconia, North Bavaria, Germany.

Radlett is in Hertfordshire, north west of London.

Glendoick is in Perthshire, east central Scotland.

Dunblane is near Stirling, central Scotland.

Glenarn is on the Gareloch, west central Scotland.

Ballachulish is in the Scottish west highlands.

Dunblane		Glenarn		Ballachulish	
mm	inches	mm	inches	mm	inches
		288.8	11.37	575.6	22.66
		98.3	3.87	296.4	11.67
		270.0	10.63	364.2	14.34
		82.6	3.25	150.6	5.93
		212.6	8.37	329.7	12.98
		111.0	4.37	235.2	9.26
		165.1	6.50	284.0	11.18
		161.8	6.37	254.5	10.02
		54.1	2.13	64.0	2.52
		72.9	2.87	151.1	5.95
		368.3	14.50	448.3	17.65
		311.2	12.25	705.1	27.76
		2196.7	86.50	3858.7	151.92
1009.4	39.74	1933.5	76.11	3359.9	133.28
917.8	36.14	1641.2	64.61	2654.6	104.51
1207.8	47.55	1956.3	77.01	2615.0	102.95
1445.0	56.89	2257.6	88.75	3468.5	136.56
1291.3	50.84	1403.8	55.27	1727.0	67.99
1778.0	70.00	1889.1	74.37	2980.7	117.35
1835.7	72.27	2056.6	81.00	3321.1	130.75
		1921.5	75.63	3236.6	127.42
1063.5	41.87	1722.2	67.79	3314.0	130.47
		1511.3	59.50	3082.2	121.58
		1619.3	63.50	3266.6	125.03

No records from Dunblane this year, but if they are sent in I will include the totals next time.

A wet year for Scottish stations, with Glendoick and Glenarn having the second highest readings since we have been logging them in the Review. But what about Ballachulish? An eyewatering total, with the highest ever monthly total for one month in December! And that was higher than the rainfall for the whole year at Wuertzburg and Radlett.

## Show Time

### Mike Thornley

The Scottish National Rhododendron Show was held on the Saturday of the first May weekend. Sue who normally does the showing had gone to see her ailing parents in Cheshire. She departed on Monday prior to the show, having decided, in the circumstances, that she would not be putting in any entries this year, but on Tuesday phoned to say that she had changed her mind. So with frost forecast, I went out into the oncoming darkness to pick flowers that might be particularly vulnerable, such as a huge yellow truss of *Rhododendron macabeaenum*, and one of *R. grande* which had faded to linen white, decorated with a grey purple throat and startling terracotta stamens, a piece of floral haute couture.

On Wednesday I walked round the garden recording every rhododendron that was in flower and of sufficient quality to be put on the show benches, neither too tight in bud nor going over, neither spotted by the rain nor pecked by blue tits. That evening I picked again not knowing whether I was cutting for individual blooms, or trusses, or extravagant sprays, and the barn started to fill up with flowers, stuck in milk bottles which along with their crates we had acquired many years ago when milk still came in glass bottles. At the same time I established a command centre in the kitchen where Sue was briefed on her return on Thursday afternoon, when she set about matching the material that had been cut, or was still available in the garden, with the classes in the show schedule.

On Friday we picked all morning, even getting out the orchard ladder, and after lunch loaded the cars with the crates and buckets of flowers, to drive slowly to the Gibson Hall, conveniently nearby in Garelochhead. While Sue worked through the classes, placing the flowers in the tall tin vases, packed with moss that the wretched magpies had thrown all over the lawns, I filled in the cards and put out the entries in the hall: as in beekeeping working together made the task much easier. By 7.00pm in the evening all of our entries were on the benches and, taking a last look round, I realised that I was seeing our rhododendrons as never before, the informal and apparently random planting in the garden now ordered into long lines of flowers, set out with geometric precision, following underlying rules laid down in the show schedule.

The only precedent I could recall for this type of imposed order was George Arblast-

er's hybridisation experiment at Silverhills, his holiday home in the Borders, where he used to produce about 2000 rhododendron seedlings every year. These he planted out in lines in a field as if they were a crop and when they threatened to get out of hand he mowed them with a hedge trimmer, all to the same height. His son, rebelling against his father's extreme sense of control, was a well known anarchist in our student days.

Two weeks later the Helensburgh Advertiser devoted a double page spread to the Rhododendron Show. One of the pictures was of the organising group whose members, collectively exhibiting a mixture of stress and relief, looked as if they had been just released from a hostage taking incident (and perhaps they felt like that too). This picture illustrated just how much effort and how many people are needed to put on a show: printing the schedule, booking the accommodation, organising the judging, finding the tables, looking after the tea room, putting up and taking down the signs, retrieving the cups, and so on. Sue was right; the show had to be supported, and I had found out that the most enjoyable, instructive, and easiest of all the tasks was to pick the flowers.

## **Rhododendron Hybrid Conservation**

**Stephen Harding**

The RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group are undertaking a mammoth project to find Rhododendron Hybrids in the UK. In conjunction with Plant heritage (formerly NCCPG), we have posted a list of threatened hybrids on the RCMG website, under the "conservation" tab. This list of 1440 plants is the end result of the Plant Heritage "Threatened Plants Project" in which they assess the rarity of all cultivars listed in the UK. We are asking RSCG and SRS members to look at the list and let Stephen Harding know if you have, or know the whereabouts of any of the plants. All information is kept in strictest confidence and not broadcast to anybody without permission. Comments and thoughts on the list are very welcome.

We are also inviting members to send in their lists of plants in their own gardens. We are particularly interested in "Best Forms" and plants with collectors' numbers as there is no record of where these plants are in the UK. A note on the condition of the plant is handy. The RHS have been very kind in sending me lists of Rhododendron,

Camellia and Magnolia from all four of their gardens, and several notable Rhododendron gardens have also contributed lists.

The aim of this project is to propagate any rare plants deemed worthy of saving and to re home them throughout the UK for future generations to enjoy. There is no commercial interest behind this, purely conservation. We have enlisted a nursery to help grow plants for the RCMG and will hopefully make use of micro propagation as well. Various RCMG members have offered to produce their own plants on the list and we welcome this help. Currently, there is no record or database of where plants are in the UK and countless may have been lost already. We are hoping to address this.

Two large, public gardens have been asked to house plants raised from this initiative and I will be approaching other gardens nearer the time. Plants will be offered to members as well.

I am also gathering information on collections of Camellia and Magnolia and would appreciate it if lists of these plants could be sent as well please. Lists can be sent in any format. Some members do not have email and I am happy to receive posted, written lists, which I can type myself.

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**Left: *Rhododendron fulvum***

**Below: *Rhododendron  
baileyi***



