100 Years
of Glendoick's Woodland Gardens

In 1919 Euan Cox went to Burma with celebrated plant hunter Reginald Farrer in search of new and rare plants. When he returned to the UK, Euan began to transform the grounds of Glendoick House near Perth with Himalayan plants, creating a now famous woodland garden. 2019 is Glendoick's Centenary.

Glendoick Gardens will be open daily throughout April and May 2019

Open 7 days 10am to 4pm

Tickets £5 from the garden centre

Children go free!

Garden Tour of Glendoick's Woodland Gardens

with Kenneth Cox

Sunday 5th May and Sunday 12th May at 11am

Kenneth Cox will be leading **guided tours of the gardens**, explaining their history and development.

Tour tickets need to be booked in advance as numbers are limited. Available from the Glendoick website.

A new guidebook to the gardens,
Glendoick 100 - Guide book and history of Glendoick
written by Kenneth Cox will be released in April - May 2019.

Woodland Gardening

By Kenneth Cox

£40

Launched in Spring 2018 is Kenneth Cox's spectacular new book Woodland Gardening with rhododendrons, camellias, magnolias and other plants.

Ken traces the history of this gardening style and takes the reader on a world tour of gardens from New Zealand to Japan, Europe and North America.

Scottish Rhododendron Society Yearbook 2019

Cover Pictures: Front: *Rhododendron* 'Mrs T. H. Lowinsky'
By Geoff Westmoreland (See page 24)

Back: *Rhododendron sichotense*
By Tessa Knott (See page 33)

Editorial

Welcome to the 2019 Yearbook. After a mild and benign February, March has turned the tables and is wet and windy.

This Yearbook truly has something for everyone with a wide diversity of topics. I sincerely thank all my contributors without whom there would be no publication.

Included are articles on species, hybrids, history, mindfulness, and gardens. I have had such a good response for my pleas for articles, that I have decided to hold back some material for future publications.

On the home front, the mild February has brought on many rhododendrons here that would normally flower about four weeks later. Now of course the poor weather is spoiling the blooms, but that is always the danger with the early flowers. The flower bud set is very good promising a lot more from our favourite genus.

This year is Glendoick's centenary year and the garden centre and woodland garden are involved in celebrations. More details are on the inside front cover.

A very exciting photographic exhibition at the Explorers Garden, Pitlochry is being supported by the SRS this year. Have a look on the back inside cover for details.

Meanwhile read on and enjoy your Yearbook.

John Roy.

The Development of Carclew Mansion and Garden at Mylor in Cornwall, and the Raising of *Rhododendron* 'Sir Charles Lemon' An Historical Perspective

John M. Hammond

Introduction:
Each spring I look forward to the schedule of garden visits that have been in the planning stages over the past year, together with the inevitable discussions and entertaining banter that accompany the detailed inspection of the wide variety of plants that happen to cross our path. One of the plants that often invokes comment and speculation as to its provenance is *Rhododendron* 'Sir Charles Lemon', with its distinctive foliage and white flowers; so, the following notes aim to provide some historical background and answer some of the queries that are often raised in connection with this interesting cultivar. Equally, it is somewhat surprising that Sir Charles Lemon has remained a somewhat elusive character in historical terms, given the part he played in the establishment of a large garden containing exotic plants at time that predated the period when horticulture became fashionable, and he was a key activist in encouraging ships' captains to seek new species of plants from India, the Far East and the Americas.

As a longtime Garden Tour Organiser, over the years I have arranged several week-long tours to Cornwall and many readers will be familiar with some of the names of major gardens in the county, such as Burncoose, Caerhays Castle, Chyverton, Helligan, Lamellen, Lanhydrock, Pencarrow, Penjerrick, Trebah, Tregrehan, Trelissick, Trengwainton, Tresco and Trewithen, to name but a few. In reality, the majority of springtime visitors tend to unknowingly miss many interesting gardens, as some years ago I listed a staggering total of 76 public and private gardens with significant plantings of rhododendrons in the county. So much to see, and so little time! This is the story of one of the infrequently visited 'Lost Gardens of Cornwall', a onetime extensive designed landscape, of which just a skeleton remains today.

William Lemon (1696-1760), often referred to during his lifetime as 'The Great Mr. Lemon', was the proud owner of two imposing houses and two gardens.

His town house in Truro was Princes House in Princes Street, and was built in around 1739 to the design of Thomas Edwards, an architect based on the River Thames at Greenwich, who was creating fine houses for the Cornish Gentry at the time. Carclew, Lemon's country estate, was already built, but effectively unfinished, when he purchased the estate from the Bonython family in 1749. Thomas Edwards was commissioned to extend and embellish the house so it could be a fitting dwelling for the increasingly wealthy Mr. Lemon. His remit was to, '*Alter, enlarge and fit up with colonaddes and offices the carcase.*' Meanwhile, the Bonython family, for whom Cornwall was their ancestral home, split-up, each going their separate ways to either Australia or North America.

Off the beaten track, hidden away behind the development of other properties along the A39, around 5 miles from the well-known Trelissick Garden (NT), is the remnants of the Carclew Estate at Mylor, in the Parish of Perranarworthal 3.5 miles north of Penryn. St. Perran was the most distinguished of the Irish missionaries who converted the people of Cornwall to the Christian faith. Overlooking Restronguet Creek, an inlet from the Carrick Roads; the location of the Estate is close to the historic Port of Falmouth, the first port of call for most sailing ships arriving back in England from India, the Far East, Australasia, or the Americas, in the 18th & 19th centuries.

William Borlase's 1758 engraving, from a photograph, of the original unfinished Carclew House. The Natural History of Cornwall, 1758

The Development of the Carclew Estate:

The timeline of ownership of lands of Carclew, previous known as Crucglew or Cruclew, can be traced back many centuries to D. Aungero, a Norman, then on down to the Daunger family, from whom it passed by marriage in to the hands of the Bonython family in the 15th Century. This family continued in occupation until the end of their male line in 1677, when the Estate was inherited by Samuel Kempe of Penryn, who began to construct the first significant mansion on the land and planned extensive formal gardens; said to be a profligate rogue, he died before either could be completed, leaving his wife in possession of an unfinished and uninhabited house and garden. Carclew Estate, including Kempe's late 17th century incomplete mansion, was purchased by William Lemon, Esq., in 1749 for the sum of £3,300.00.

William Lemon grew up in Breage, West Cornwall, and came from a relatively humble background. Fortunately, he had inherited wealth through Isabella, his wife, and used it shrewdly to develop the Gwennap Mine, and to promote wider business interests. He very quickly became an important member of the Local Community, being twice elected Mayor of Truro and was also Sheriff of Cornwall. He soon recognized the importance of commissioning a larger and a more splendid home in which he could entertain on a more lavish scale. Thomas Edwards, who had been the architect for William Lemon's town house in Truro in 1739 (Princes House), was ten years later commissioned to enlarge and fit up, etc., Lemon's newly acquired country house at Carclew. The original building, standing unfinished when Lemon bought the estate, is shown as the central feature in William Borlase's drawing and engraving of 1758 in *The Natural History of Cornwall*.[1] Edwards gave it a colonnade and pavilion on either side, in the Palladian manner, and constructed in good quality granite from St. Just.

William Lemon died in 1760 worth £300,000, making him the equivalent of a multi-millionaire today, and was succeeded by his grandson, also William Lemon (1748-1824), who was literally a very fortunate and prosperous heir. He was created a Baronet in 1774 and represented his county in Parliament for half a Century. He eventually found the house too small for his needs and initiated a series of additions beginning around 1799 under the supervision of William Wood (1746–1818), born in the village of Germoe, near Breage. William Wood began his architectural apprenticeship with John Bland in Truro. Bland had worked under Edwards on St. Michael's Church in Helston and St. Mary's Church in Truro in the 1760s, and it is suggested that this association accounts for the influence of Edwards' work on Bland's young apprentice, William Wood.

The East Wing was built first, in 1800, and the West Wing added in 1802. Compared with Borlase's print, Carclew had grown massively, with raised extensions where Edwards' colonnade had been, and his little pavilions replaced with large Palladian windowed wings. The dates for these additions can be found in the receipts for masons' work 'taking down part of the Cornice at the East Wing of Carclew House to make the way clear for the New Office and for cutting the New Stone Cornice' dated December 1800, and in 1802 'Day work done by Mansell and man at the West Wing or New Addition at Carclew, by Mr. Wood's order'. (No less an authority than Sir Howard Colvin, who has written about Carclew agrees that Wood was the architect). At this time the property tax payable was based on the number of windows in the House, or houses, on the Estate, and the tax bills confirm further evidence of Carclew's enlargement between 1800 and 1802: 124 windows were assessed at Michaelmas 1800 for the great house plus 13 windows (Home farm) £65/8s/3d — before the west wing is finished. On Ladyday 1803 the assessment was for 128 windows in the main house.

By the early 1800s the House was surrounded by a fine shrubbery and beautiful gardens, walks and ponds that were described as being remarkable for a combination of natural and artificial beauties, and an extensive park contained a large herd of deer. It is said that John Luscombe, who first discovered the evergreen Luscombe Oaks, was a gardener at Carclew before he started his famous nursery in Devon.[2] 'A quiet and gentlemanly old man', Sir William Lemon died on 11th December, 1824 at Carclew, 'one of the most beautiful mansions in Cornwall', which he had embellished.

Plants grown-on from Joseph Hooker's 1848-51 Expedition:

Sir William was succeeded by his tenth child, Sir Charles Lemon (1784-1868), who soon after becoming of age, served his parliamentary apprenticeship representing Penryn from 1807 to 1812, then later represented Penryn, then Cornwall from 1830 to 1857. He was Sheriff of Cornwall from 1827 to 1828, but perhaps more importantly from a horticultural perspective he was a founder member of the Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall. Wealthy through mining and overseas trade, Sir Charles developed the gardens at Carclew in the early 1800s and planted rhododendrons and other genera brought back to Falmouth from India and the Far East by the Cornish sea captains. In this era, Falmouth was the first calling point and a rest station for ships arriving back in England from the Far East, and having caught their breath, the crew would then sail on to the Thames. But not only that, Falmouth was the branch of the General Post Office's Packet Service, its maritime mail delivery service. Captains working for the Packet

This portrait of Sir Charles Lemon now resides in the Pandora Inn at Falmouth. It was recently purchased at an auction in Truro. Interestingly, the Inn was at one time owned by Sir Charles Lemon. Courtesy, The Pandora Inn

Service in Falmouth are recorded as undertaking additional work to their postal duties, as on Sir Charles Lemon's behalf, and that of the Fox Family, the Captains explored the ports they visited in search of new plant varieties. Sir Charles Lemon also had many links to the Veitch Family and their Nurseries in Exeter, having employed and trained William Lobb and his brother Thomas in the stove house at Carclew; whilst their father worked on the Estate as a gamekeeper. William began his plant-hunting career on the Packet Ship '*Seagull*' travelling from Falmouth to Rio de Janeiro. Falmouth was also the port where the intrepid plant collectors usually disembarked on arrival of their ship at the port and then travelled overland to London, arriving in the City days prior to their ship. Sir Charles was also an 'intimate friend' of Sir Joseph Hooker who would stay at Carclew on his visits to Cornwall, and Sir Charles sponsored his 1848-51 expedition to the Himalaya. Carclew was one of the earliest gardens to obtain plants from Kew, and on 5th December, 1851 Sir Charles received, *R. falconeri*, *R. hodgsonii*, *R. griffithianum*, *R. maddenii*, *R. ciliatum*, *R. dalhousiae*, *R. cinnabarinum* var. *roylei*, *R. glaucophyllum*, *R. niveum*, *R. thomsonii* and some plants that were numbered having not yet been named. It is likely that Sir Joseph Hooker accompanied these plants to Carclew during one of his visits to Cornwall. Sir Charles appointed William Beattie Booth (c1804-1874) as Head Gardener. Booth was an expert on the cultivation of camellias and would have been able to care for rhododendron material; he remained at Carclew until 1858. During this period Carclew was run as a small country estate with enough offices and farm buildings to be self-sufficient. Sir Charles died without issue in 1868, leaving the estate to his nephew, Colonel Tremayne, son of John Hearle Tremayne of Heligan. So here is yet another ancestral 'link' between the great gardens of Cornwall, and it should be no surprise that Colonel Tremayne provided plant material to the Heligan Estate, which gives a clue to the origin of some of the material in that garden. Other gardens to benefit from the 'links' between Carclew and well-known Cornish Gardens are Tremough,

Left: View looking across the 'Pleasure Garden' in an engraving from a photograph taken in 1874, with the trunk of a Luscombe Oak in the foreground. Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener, 1874

Tregothnan, Killiow, Menabilly and Scorrier.

An overview of the gardens written in 1874, six years after Sir Charles Lemon passed away, tells us that the mansion at Carclew occupied a slightly elevated position in a much diversified park through which runs a lengthy carriageway, the major part of which is profusely interspersed with groups of oaks and old Scotch firs. 'On approach to the mansion there are fine specimen trees and both common and choice rhododendrons, planted in around 1750 by William Lemon, an enthusiastic owner at a time when horticulture and the creation of a designed landscape was not so fashionable a pursuit. To this foundation Sir Charles Lemon overlaid a wide range of genera, including the exotic dark-leaved Magellan Fern, *Dicksonia antartica* and *Woodwardia elegans*, and many other specimens of fern. To the left of the mansion two terraces contained the formal flower gardens, surrounded by substantial stone walls, and basin fountains occupy the centre of the beds. Ascending to the second garden, with its geometric layout, the visitor is surrounded by a class of shrubs and trees that were they not in Cornwall would be only found under glass. To one side of the geometric gardens the land has been allowed to retain its natural outline, and the slope, intersected by suitable walks, is overgrown in places with trees and shrubs. Rhododendrons of all kinds

Right: Another engraving, also made in 1874, of the view across part of the Formal Terrace Gardens, with a fountain in the centre of the carpet bedding. Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener, 1874

seem quite at home, including some of the Sikkim and Himalayan ones; and the same can be said of the camellias and Indian azaleas. There is a *Rhododendron* of the true *arboreum* section, or one very near akin to it, with a clear bole more than six feet high without a branch and stout enough to form a gate post for a carriage road, whilst others of the Smithii type were equally large and attaining the proportions of trees, one of which is *Rhododendron* 'Gill's Goliath', having been measured at 24 feet height with a stem of 4 feet in circumference. Many of the Sikkim species seemed equally at home; *Rhododendron thomsonii* was particularly fine, as were *Rhododendron falconeri*, *aucklandii*, *campanulatum, maddenii*, etc. Intermixed with these rhododendrons were camellias, and magnolias of the deciduous class assuming the character of timber trees. A fine *Rhododendron cinnamomeum* was quite 10 feet high; the underside of its leaves are of a rich brown, and its flowers are said to be magnificent.'[4] So, here is the plant that is the subject of this article.

There is no record of how many plants Sir Charles received of each of the Hooker species; however, Kew raised 'four *Rhododendron arboreum* forms: *R. arboreum*, *Rhododendron campbelliae*, *Rhododendron arboreum rubrum* and *Rhododendron arboreum roseum*' and some, if not all, of these were amongst the unnamed plants circulated in 1851, as confirmed by John G. Millais in his 1917 monograph '*Rhododendrons*'. Based on a visit to Carclew in 1917 he recorded seeing: *R. grande*, *R. falconeri*, *R. barbatum*, *R. arboreum*, *R. griffithanum*, *R. lanatum* and *R. arboreum* var. 'Sir Charles Lemon'. Of the latter he notes:

'The original plant of this fine form *R. arboreum* is at Carclew. It is 27yds. round [drip line dia., or spread] and 30ft. high [1917]. It is a tall growing plant with fine dark leaves with an orange brown pubescence to underside. The flowers are good size and pure white in colour. It is regarded as one of the best forms of the species. The late Mr. Charles Daubuz of Killiow remembers this plant coming as a seedling to Carclew. It came from seed sent by Sir J. Hooker from India. Recently Mr. P.D. Williams discovered a large plant of this variety with lilac-mauve flowers in Miss Mangles' garden at Littleworth [Beauty of]. It may be a common plant in Sikkim.'

As mentioned above, the late Mr. Charles Daubuz of Killiow also noted another seedling of the same form could be found that had white flowers edged with lilac. This plant in Miss Mangles' garden at 'Hethersett', Littleworth Cross, had been transferred for safe-keeping from 'Valewood', the home of another pioneer

Left: Rhododendron 'Sir Charles Lemon' can become a massive tree-like spectacle, as did the specimen in Carclew Garden. Courtesy, Burncoose Nursery

rhododendron plantsman, James Henry Mangles (1832-1884) who passed away at the early age of 52 and had visited Sir William Hooker at RBG, Kew to see the forms of *Rhododendron arboreum* then being grown under glass.[7] John G. Millais also noted *R. wightii* and *R. campylocarpum* that were known to be Hooker seedlings at Littleworth Cross, which suggests that Mangles also obtained *R. arboreum* plant material from Sir Joseph Hooker's expedition direct from

Right: Rhododendron 'Sir Charles Lemon' in bloom

Below: Rhododendron 'Sir Charles Lemon' foliage. Courtesy, Hank Helm, Bainbridge Island, WA

Kew.[6] You may well ask, 'What has all this got to do with Carclew?' Well, in a different life, Sir Charles Lemon and James H. Mangles were well acquainted, as both were Directors on the Board of the London & South Western Railway, which is a story for another time.[7]

Right: The final frontage of Carclew Mansion is depicted in this 1925 postcard scene; not many years prior to the devastating fire of 1934. John M. Hammond Collection

In the early 1900s Lord Aberconway made a point of visiting several of the key gardens in Cornwall each spring, staying with the owners and hoping to acquire a selection of plants to take back to enhance Bodnant Garden; he was also one of the 'key' members of *The Rhododendron Society* founded in 1916, which met at Lamellen House each spring for many years. Whilst

Above: Today little is left of the frontage of Carclew House, although what remains have been Listed Grade II. John M. Hammond

Right: Past glories are depicted in this view across the Lily Pond, with the massive Rhododendron arboreum species and its R. 'Smithii' hybrids in the background. John M. Hammond

visiting Carclew in around 1910 he was very impressed with the specimen raised from *Rhododendron arboreum* seed that had a *R. arboreum* ssp. *cinnamomeum* appearance, which he considered was a cross of *R. arboreum* ssp. *cinnamomeum* and *R. campanulatum*. It had the stature of a tree, was then over 50 years old and more than 30 feet in height, so he named it *R.* 'Sir Charles Lemon', and took cuttings home with him to raise plants at Bodnant. It remained one of his favorite plants and he registered the cultivar in 1937.

On 5th April, 1934 Sir Charles Lemon's mansion, described at the time as the finest Palladium mansion in Cornwall, was destroyed by fire and today just a few ruins, surmounted by the clock tower, (Listed Grade II) are all that is visible of what was once a great house. Following the destruction of the house by fire, the gardens were neglected for many years and, unfortunately, some of the plantings were cleared in the 1950's, including the original *Rhododendron* 'Sir Charles Lemon', which was then over 100 years old and in good condition.

In Conclusion:
Writing in 1923 J.C. Williams of Caerhays Castle recalled:
'Probably the finest specimen (Rhododendron) of any kind (in Cornwall) is 'Sir Charles Lemon' at Carclew on account of its great size, of remarkable refinement of flower, which is a good white, and of the unusual beauty of the foliage, particularly of the underside of the leaf, which is the most brilliant contrast in colour to the surface of the leaf, which any member of the family gives us as far as I know.

The late Mr. Daubuz always said that this plant came out of a sowing of Indian seed, and has every appearance of being a good form of the Indian ARBOREUM, which is endless in its variation . . . .'[10]

Whilst reviewing the Arboreum Series in 1989, H.H. Davidian noted this interesting comment on plant identification:
'It may be remarked that in cultivation *Rhododendron cinnamomeum* is sometimes confused with the hybrid *Rhododendron* 'Sir Charles Lemon'. It is regrettable that in a few gardens some plants which have been labelled *R. cinnamomeum* are in fact *R.* 'Sir Charles Lemon'. Both plants have cinnamon indumentum and white flowers. They differ in that in *R. cinnamomeum* the leaves are oblong-lanceolate, lanceolate, or rarely oblong, 2-5 cm broad, and the inflorescence is very compact or somewhat compact, whereas in *R.* 'Sir Charles Lemon' the leaves are

nearly orbicular, oval or broadly elliptic 5.5-10 cm broad, and the inflorescence is lax.' [9]

The well-known *Rhododendron campanulatum*, one of the most common plants in the Himalaya and widely distributed from Kashmir to Bhutan, is also exceptionally variable, and is known to hybridize freely in cultivation. There are known natural hybrids from the wild, including some early named species such as *R. batemanii* whose characteristics are intermediate between *R. campanulatum* and *R. arboreum*, as both, including *R. arboreum* ssp. *cinnamomeum* populate the 2,700-4,000m (9,000-13,000ft) altitudes. [11]

So, it is extremely likely that Hooker brought back some natural hybrids amongst his *Rhododendron arboreum* ssp. *cinnamomeum* seed, and this would explain the *R. campanulatum* shaped leaves and lax trusses of *R.* 'Sir Charles Lemon'. It is hardier than some ratings suggest and will grow well in locations where the pure forms of *Rhododendron arboreum* are too tender.

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Gardens & Wellbeing

Dr Uzma Durrani, Garelochhead

Gardening and wellbeing, are extensive subjects in their own right and this short article cannot do justice to either. Therefore, I have briefly written how my initial foray into gardening was instrumental to my mental and physical wellbeing. I hope this window into my learning will allow the experienced gardener to reflect on their own journey and the novice to venture out, by taking small first steps.

Gardens, whether in rural or urban areas, are characterised by a structural complexity and functionality, which bring unique benefits to ecosystems and people. They are often thought of as intimate private spaces attached to households, large private or formal gardens open to the public, or part of hospitals or hospices. In whichever way gardens are used, the space represents powerful settings for human life, transcending time, place and culture, as well as the connection between gardening and well-being.

As any gardener can attest, working with flowers, vegetables and other plants can be a relaxing and calming activity. Even elements of gardening have the ability to trigger emotions in people. It is argued that flowers are a powerful positive emotion inducer and have immediate and long-term effects on emotional reactions, mood, social behaviour and even memory. Gardeners feel pride in what they produce and they must use patience, planning and perseverance in order to succeed. These positive aspects of gardening have proven to be of significant benefit to people suffering from various personal difficulties and hardships in their lives. For the last 10 years, therapeutic gardening has taken off in most UK communities and come to be seen as a legitimate and worthwhile strategy for bringing about positive change in people's lives and is currently being used with a variety of populations worldwide with a host of life challenges.

Gardens, as well as the activity of gardening, have been shown to have a positive impact on peoples' health and wellbeing, the result of both the physical activity and the use of the garden as a space for mental relaxation and stimulation. The actual process of gardening impacts the physical, by stimulating all five senses and the mental, as a positive means of self-gratification. In 2017, a report by the King's Fund health charity documented how regular gardening benefits our

mental and physical wellbeing and explored what the National Health Service (NHS) and the wider health and social care system can do to maximise this impact. The intentional use of gardening for therapeutic outcomes is not a new idea. The term "horticultural therapy" (HT) was first used in 1948 by Olszowy. In the early days of formal HT, the primary beneficiaries were people in physical rehabilitation. The use of therapeutic gardening with disabled veterans was implemented following World War I and the Red Cross began similar work with wounded military troops soon after.

When I moved from London to the west coast of Scotland 5 years ago, little did I realise that I would be embarking on a gardening journey that would be so demanding and become part of my everyday routine all year around. I was used to the typical suburban back garden; flat, small, rectangular and relatively dry. By comparison, my Scottish plot is a wet, east facing sloping plot of 2 acres overlooking the Gareloch and wet. Half is formal and the rest mixed woodland. The formal part has 4 grass patches and a couple of raised beds. A burn runs along one side. The woodland was overgrown with *Rhododendron ponticum*, which enveloped the house on 3 sides. On arrival, walking around this area was exciting and daunting at the same time.

I researched on Google, bought a stack of books on Scottish gardening, read blogs, watched gardening shows, went to local botanical gardens and walked around my plot trying to identify plants and trees. The first few months were a steep learning curve, from trying to understand the topography and appreciating how all 4 seasons could be experienced, sometimes on the same day. After a few months my excitement had ebbed and turned into a seeping anxiety every time I looked out onto the space and saw the dead pieces of last autumn's perennials shake in the breeze. I knew this meant they'd snap off with an easy crack, creating yet another tidying job. Just like the strappy brown leaves of the dead *Crocosmia*, whose debris and invasive corms really irritate me. The less I did and the more I looked out of the window and saw the garden chores pile up, the more frustrated I felt and anxious I became.

The most challenging part of mental wellbeing is recognition of an issue. The next difficulty is asking the right questions of oneself, at the appropriate time. By noticing my internal frustration and then allowing myself to feel the effect, such as my lack of confidence and self-belief in doing the work, led to understanding my own resistance to starting the work. Frustration originates from

feelings of uncertainty and insecurity, which stems from a sense of inability to fulfil needs. If the needs of an individual are blocked, uneasiness and frustration are more likely to occur. By immersing and observing my feelings about the garden, I began to get a better understanding of myself. Once I made that link, addressing what to do, became easier.

Looking back over those 5 years, I can now appreciate how much of a novice gardener I was and how massive the project was. At the time, I called upon my limited gardening experience and common sense in order to tackle each task by looking at the garden in smaller sections. I took pictures, observed the light, drawing inspiration from the existing plants and soon I began to have a clearer plan. I was feeling physically and mentally stimulated by actively engaging in the setting. All the walking, cutting and clearing of pathways, *Rhododendron ponticum*, brambles and weeds had made me physically stronger and fitter. However, not all was rosy, as I did suffer some lower back pain, with all the lifting and digging. While gardens can confer many benefits on physical health, they can also become problematic. For instance, for some older adults, taking care of gardens can be 'a considerable practical burden'. However, for me, the mental and physical benefit far outweighed any physical aches and pains and there was a sense of pride emerging from the gardening.

What I learned in practical terms from my experiences are: there exists a symbiotic relationship between gardening and wellbeing and that the process is a journey, not an outcome. Five years down the line I have become completely hooked to that journey. I am by no means an expert gardener, more of an enthusiastic amateur, learning by trial and error what works for the garden and how that in turn affects me. The key was to appreciate that asking the right questions of myself and managing what made me happy in the process. Don't get me wrong, I still get frustrated when the rain pours and I can't make things happen exactly the way I want.

In this fifth year, I plan to have a go at something new; namely growing my own vegetables and soft fruit. I have the same mixed feelings of anxiety and excitement about this new project that I had when I first set eyes on the place. The difference now is as winter progresses, and I view the suspended, withered state of the garden, the anticipation of the work to come doesn't bother me as much; as I know the garden and I will get through this dark, cold time, without fail.

I finish this article with 3 points you may find useful in understanding the link between gardening and well-being:

1. Allow views of a green space or a (semi) natural scene into your everyday life. Numerous studies have shown that simply viewing a green space through a window can relax people and reduce stress levels.
2. By immersing yourself in a natural setting one can reduce stress, increase relaxation and improve recuperation.
3. The positive effects of physical work are magnified when conducted in a natural setting compared to just conducting the same amount of exercise in a gym for example.

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Early Red-flowered Species

Peter A. Cox

Few gardeners who grow at least some rhododendron species realise how many early red-flowered species there are. By early I mean those that flower from February to April in an average year. There are a few well-known ones such as *R. barbatum, R. thomsonii* and the red forms of *R. arboreum* plus a multitude of hybrids and the rest tend to be largely ignored. And yet there are many other red-flowered species, most of which are little known, and lots of these have fine foliage (particularly splendid young growth) and bark in addition to lovely flowers. Admittedly they are prone to getting frosted in flower but can make beautiful plants the year round. They vary from being low to prostrate dwarfs to quite sizable trees.

I fear for the future of many of these taxa both in the wild and cultivation. Nurseries are unlikely to offer the majority of these, wild seed will not be introduced, partly to do with the Nagoya Protocol and partly a general tightening up on any collecting and importing. The exchange of plants between botanic gardens and the general public has become very difficult. Countries are getting more and more worried about live plants being imported because of the international spread of pests and diseases. Countries like Australia and New Zealand have been very strict over the importing of any seed of plants that are not already in cultivation due to the fear of anything new that might become invasive. Global warming, over grazing, cutting for firewood and human disturbance continue to reduce wild populations.

Red flowered forms of the tree-like *Rhododendron arboreum* mostly come from low elevations so are only suitable for mild west coast gardens and these include ssp. *delavayi*, its subspecies *albotomentosum,* ssp. *nilagiiricum* and ssp. *zeylanicum*. These all make very fine specimens in suitable locations, most forming neat upright habits and compact trusses. The last two are later flowering. The related *R. lanigerum* makes a more rounded bush with early flowers coming from unusually large flower buds. The flowers vary from red to pink.

Subsection Barbata gives us bristly plants with fine peeling bark giving all the year round attraction. By far the best known is *Rhododendron barbatum* itself but it is often not the best to grow with frequently inferior flowers and unexciting foliage although there are good forms about such as those collected by Hooker in the 1850s. I prefer the closely related *R. argipeplum* with more consistent fine trusses. It was formerly known as *R. smithii.* Another close relation is *R. erosum* with handsome leaves and attractive young growth but with more open-topped trusses of smaller flowers. Another relative is *R. exasperatum* (actually meaning rough) with very fine foliage and often a compact habit but comes early into growth so needs protection. The flowers can be rather small. *R. succothii* is sometimes placed in this subsection. Like the other members of the subsection it has a peeling bark but it is usually non-bristly and can be shy-flowering. I like to class *R. fulgens* as a relation of *R. succothii,* differing chiefly in its indumentumed superior leaves and better flowers, a handsome plant.

Rhododendron barbatum

There are two species in subsection Irrorata with red flowers. Both are tender and start very early into growth so are only for the mildest gardens. *Rhododendron kendrickii* has narrow

Rhododendron exasperatum

Rhododendron strigillosum

wavy-edged leaves. The best forms are nice but avoid those with small-flowers. *R. ramsdenianum* has wider leaves and we find it shy-flowering.

There are two red-flowered species in subsection Maculifera, *Rhododendron ochraceum* and *R. strigillosum* and both can be of exceptional merit, if you choose good forms. The former was apparently not in cultivation until 1994 but has now been introduced a few times from different locations. So far my own collection in 1995 is the best with good foliage, a rounded habit and ball-shaped trusses of rich red flowers, freely produced. I regard it as being one of my outstanding introductions. It was found growing on the top of rocks and on cliffs, indicating that it requires perfect drainage. *R. strigillosum* is generally a bigger plant in all parts and produces more of a flat-topped truss but is none the less a good plant in its better forms with striking young growth and rich red flowers.

Subsection Neriiflora contains a multitude of species, subspecies and varieties. Many have variably coloured flowers and there are several natural hybrids. Many of these are high altitude plants in the wild so are not generally suitable for warmer districts. *Rhododendron beanianum*, *R. catacosmum*, *R. coelicum*, *R. haematodes* ssp. *chaetomallum*, *R. piercei*, *R.*

Rhododendron piercei

pocophorum are all related species of small to medium stature, early flowering that require fairly exacting conditions to flourish. Most are from high altitudes, disliking summer heat and drought. All have attractive indumentumed leaves and nice red flowers but are more collectors' items for a specialised collection. These are what I would call danger taxa, being unobtainable and liable to disappear from cultivation. My son Kenneth collected a plant midway between *R. piercei* and *R. beanianum*, very free flowering and compact.

Rhododendron mallotum is different from the above, coming from a relative low elevation and is unlikely to be hardy in cold areas. It has more of a tree-like habit, rather larger rugose leaves with fine dark indumentum. The fine red flowers are very early. It has a very limited distribution in the wild and may be threatened.

Rhododendron aperantum forms neat low mounds and is one of these species that can vary in the colour of its flowers, red being just one. Requires exacting conditions to grow well but is worth the effort. *R. microgynum* is

Top: Rhododendron sanguineum var. haemaleum

Right: R. forrestii

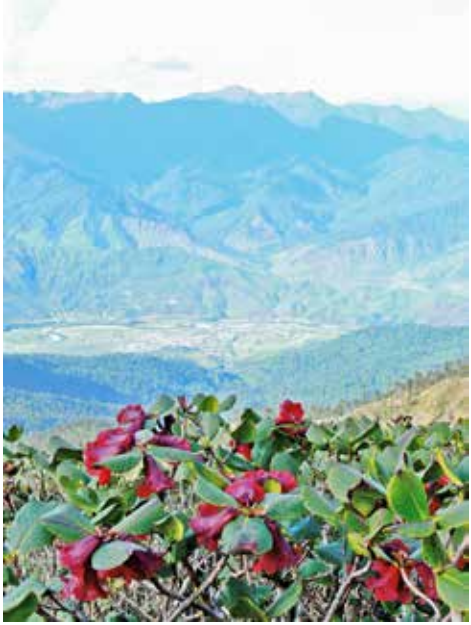
Growing in the wild in Yunnan

a larger plant and more easily grown and freer flowering. *R. sanguineum* is another variable species but some have good red flowers. By far the most popular is the very dark var. *haemaleum,* as near to black as any rhododendron taxon. Like the rest of the subsection it needs good drainage.

Rhododendron forrestii and *R. chamaethomsonii* are another story. The latter has proved to be an unsatisfactory species as most of the plants grown in cultivation under this name are undoubtedly natural hybrids with all shapes and sizes and even different coloured flowers. It is certain that it is difficult to make out what should be classified under a broader coverage under the name '*forrestii*' and what should be 'binned' as a hybrid. For instance the plants growing on the Doshong La in Tibet vary entirely according to whether they have shelter or not and grow taller where they have a little shelter and have more than one flower to the inflorescence. The question is should they be separated taxonomically. I think not. In cultivation *R. forrestii* is often of little horticultural value in areas with frequent spring frosts. If grown in sun it gets its growth and flowers frosted most years, if grown in the shade it will not flower. This is our experience in east Scotland and it has a similar problem elsewhere. Which is sad as it could be a most charming garden plant with is comparatively large red flowers if only it was not so frost-prone. *R. chamaethomsonii* should be just a larger in all parts version of *R. forrestii* with generally more than one flower to the inflorescence.

Rhododendron neriiflorum is a very variable species, found wild over a very large geographical and altitudinal range. Ssp. *phaedropum* comes from the west end of its distribution, often from a very low altitude so is often on the tender side. Ssp. *neriiflorum* is usually hardier and the better forms are worth growing, some of which can grow quite tall. The other species in the Neriiflorum alliance, *R. floccigerum*, *R. sperabile* and *R. sperabiloides* are closely related with some scattered indumentum.

Subsection Thomsonia has the creme de la creme of early red -flowered species. *Rhododendron hookeri* is perhaps the finest from the western end of its distribution in western Arunachal Pradesh. It can make a big plant with a very attractive bark and magnificent red flowers in a good season. It is a pure chance that the 'hooks' on the leaf underside are the easiest method of identification for



Rhododendron lopsangianum in Arunachal Pradesh, north east India

All photos in this article by John Roy

this species. Those found at the east end of its distribution have different coloured flowers and rather different foliage and could be a new species. *R. meddianum* var. *meddianum* is not a very strong grower but is usually free-flowering with fine red flowers. Next is a species I was involved in the discovery of, *R. subansiriense,* found in Arunachal Pradesh in 1965. There it made a fine erect small tree with smooth trunks and good crimson-scarlet flowers. Alas, in cultivation, it comes into growth so early that it gets growth frosted almost every year, resulting in very few flowers. These three species are related to the well-known *R. thomsonii,* which at least in the fine Ludlow and Sherriff introduction, can be classed as an early red. This is a species that has good flowers, bark and foliage. Lastly in this subsection is the apparently related *R. thomsonii* ssp. *lopsangianum* which at present is a real taxonomic muddle including the few flowered and deeply indumentumed *R. sherriffii.* Leaves may be glaucous above or below and also vary from no or little indumentum. The last with some indumentum are undoubtedly related to *R. sherriffii*, a collector's species of interest rather than beauty. I will not make any attempt here to unravel the different plants that have been given the name '*lopsangianum*' only to say that what I think all they have in common is a fewer number of flowers to the truss than ssp. *thomsonii* and the flowers open earlier. They also have a tendency to be shy-flowering.

We can just hope that keen rhododendron species buffs will make attempts to propagate and distribute these species before they disappear from cultivation.

Some Gardening Adventures including Rhododendrons in rural Aberdeenshire

Geoff Westmoreland

This article is from a fairly recent member of the SRS, who has an ongoing project to convert a hillside into a garden in rural Aberdeenshire. It may be of interest to other SRS members.

Background:
I retired last year after 3 years as a military aircraft designer/stress engineer followed by 40 years as a subsea engineer in the offshore oil and gas industry, hence our current location near Aberdeen. My previous experience of gardening was limited to basic weeding, cutting grass and planting a few tulips.

I bought our place in 1999 because it was cheaper than properties in Aberdeen. It was in a lovely part of the country and it had some land, which I thought I could do something with. We own about two and a half acres, covering most of a hillside. We also control another half an acre below us which has been abandoned for many years. This area we have planted with daffodils and I cut back a couple of times a year as it is a source of "fireweed" (Rosebay Willowherb) which spreads uphill to us, and is a pain to get rid of. The property runs primarily North to South, on various levels, all sloping to some degree, with our house at the Southern end facing West across a glen. Our house is just below the top of the hill at an elevation of about 500 feet, and reached via a long track from the North. We have a field about 25 acres in size along the east side of the property, and a large stand of trees to the south. We are on the edge of the Howe of Alford, in the heart of beautiful Donside, with farms all around us.

The climate here inland is a little different to the Aberdeenshire coast. Aberdeen is twenty five miles to the east of us. We are hotter in the summer and colder in the winter. They fairly regularly get the "haar" sea fog in the summer, which is miserable but fortunately doesn't reach us. In the summer the southern edge of the house acts as a suntrap, and in July and August it is not unusual to reach 30ºC on a sunny day. On the negative side, it is colder here in the winter, partly due to our elevation. We can also get a lot more snow.

Current Situation:
The previous owners had done some planting, including a few *Rhododendron ponticum* near the house and along the track. However, the rest of the property was mostly abandoned to gorse and the dreaded fireweed, with some mature rowans and lots of young Scots pine, field maples, silver birch and downy birch.

My original plan was simply to plant some specimen trees and more flowering shrubs alongside the track which winds its way along to the house. Then later we needed a path to shorten the route to the bottom of our track. This then provided an opportunity for more planting, at which point I discovered hybrid rhododendrons. The track and the path then both became obvious planting sites for these. We later cleared about half an acre of gorse in the centre of the property. This has windbreaks on the North and West sides, and twenty large woodland hybrids (*R.* 'Sappho', *R.* 'Percy Wiseman', *R.* 'Red Jack', *R.* 'Rabatz', *R.* 'Graffito', *R.* 'Nova Zembla' and *R.* 'Mrs T.H Lewinsky') are planted around the edges, with some smaller *R.* 'Cunningham's White' as an inner ring. Most of these later hybrids have been in the ground for four years now and are developing nicely. Those along the garden path have been in the ground about ten years and are threatening to overrun the path. The previous owners' *R. ponticum* and the few I planted along the track twelve years ago are now at least three metres high and some are over four metres wide.

As time went by the rowans stayed about the same size, but the young Scots pines and field maples and the birches seemed to suddenly become a lot of very tall mature trees. I had also planted a lot of ornamental cherry trees and laburnums, and smaller conifers for windbreaks, so eventually it became clear we were living in a small forest with lots of rhododendrons (getting on for a hundred at the last count) planted amongst the trees, not the other way around. I love my trees but I realised we had too many and they were getting out of control. Because of this, over the last two years we have removed a dozen trees and topped another dozen. Now we have a good level of light throughout the garden and much less of a risk of trees coming down in a gale. The trees are possibly located sufficiently at random and in sufficient quantity for our garden to be described as a woodland garden, but in the late spring when everything is growing like crazy it can seem like a jungle, but I love it.

I have an admission to make. For the first few years I bought rhododendrons just based on colour, and I didn't bother to keep a note of their names. It's only over

the last five years, since joining the SRS, that I've kept careful notes. So, if I'm asked what some varieties are, I can only say that's a pink one or a red one etc.

Problems:

Disease – I've read in the SRS magazines and in info from Glendoick Gardens and elsewhere concerns regarding the risk of transmission of disease, and possibly by buying new plants. Our garden has escaped disease so far, and I'm not planning in expanding my collection of rhododendrons at the moment. We also do not have any neighbours with rhododendrons. So, I'm hoping disease will not be an issue in the future.

Wind – Our location is very exposed to gales from the west. We are maybe not as exposed as the folks who live in the Western Isles, but when it blows here it is very impressive and a bit scary at times. We have several trees with trunks at 45 degrees due to the prevailing winds. As mentioned already I've had some spruce and Scots pine trees more than 30 feet high topped to reduce the risk of them blowing down. More will require topping in the future. This is by far the biggest potential problem we have in our garden. After every big storm we see trees down in the local woods, and the shallow roots on many are plain to see. We had a mature 60 foot Scots pine blown down several years ago in a very mild blow, so now I'm on the lookout for trees that are at risk, and will control their height, and also thin out their branches where prudent. As far as the rhododendrons and azaleas are concerned, they are mostly placed behind windbreaks, which have been growing along with them, and our gales haven't troubled them so far. Hopefully that will continue to be the case.

A much loved laburnum we are trying to keep upright despite the gales
All pictures in this article by Geoff Westmoreland

Snow blocking our track last year

Cold and Snow – We've had temperatures as low as –18ºC quite a few times since we've been here. So when the rhododendron bug really bit I started selecting the ones I wanted particularly by hardiness. I've been guided mainly by information gleaned from publications by the Cox family and Glendoick Garden. I initially bought a couple of plants rated at H4, but apart from that I've gone for only H5 or more. Our windbreaks run north to south along our hillside, so there is a risk of cold air being trapped on the up side of the wind breaks. To prevent this I've got gaps in the windbreaks. We've not lost any plants due to the cold, so far. I'm hoping that will continue.

Like the wind, when it snows here, we can get a lot and it drifts, especially if it comes from the east. In 2000, 2001, 2005, 2009 and 2018 we got big dumps of snow from the east. Big for us means more than a foot deep. Unfortunately, if the snow comes from the east with a following wind, we get the snow off the adjacent field, as well as our own snow. Last year we had drifts nearly 5 feet deep. In 2010 we had them over 6 feet deep more than once. We got the first delivery in December, a second a month later and yet another a month after that! Life in the country can be an adventure. We also get power cuts! But I have a generator for that eventuality. Getting back to the rhododendrons, I have very few planted in locations at risk of deep snow drifts – through luck rather than judgement. Buried or not, none of our rhododendrons and azaleas seem bothered by the cold, but the weight of the snow on their branches is the main risk. If we have a lot of snow I will try and remove some safely, but that in itself can cause the damage you are trying to prevent. Complete burial is another problem. When we get a lot of snow some deep drifts may not melt or be completely cleared for days, or even weeks. The snow quickly hardens like concrete, the weight can then flatten the plants, and is very difficult to dig them out without causing damage. I want to keep my large (and getting larger) hybrids, so I have to accept the risk of some snow damage. Snow has always been a problem for the branches of our small conifers, but I've been securing these with string since the first winter after we arrived.

Left: A view North along a garden path – Rhododendron 'Percy Wiseman' after about ten years in the ground

Below: The same path looking South. R. 'Percy Wiseman' and R. 'Captain Jack'

Climate change – This is what concerns me the most. We've always been exposed to the wind here. I may be wrong, but the storms seem to be getting stronger as the years go by. I'm taking precautions, but I'm afraid of a repeat of a storm such as the big one in 1987, and also afraid of these becoming a regular occurrence.

2017 was a washout here, with rain and drizzle throughout the spring and summer. (We only had one barbecue!) and daytime maximum temperatures regularly only 12ºC. However, my rhododendrons and azaleas put on a marvellous display.

2018 the weather has been very different. From June right through August daytime temperatures have been in the high twenties, occasionally over 30 with little or no rain, effectively a drought. (But more barbecues, and some serious suntan!). Our rhododendrons did not flower so well this year, I believe as a result, likewise our ornamental cherry trees and laburnums. I'm not sure if there was any water rationing in Scotland this year, but fortunately we get our water from a series of wells, so watering was not an issue – except I had to do it a lot. Some newly planted hybrids were clearly suffering, so I was out every couple of days with the hose pipe. All the plants seem to have recovered after we started to get rain again late in August. I've very rarely had to water anything other than hanging baskets, but maybe I will have to do more in the future.

Top Left: Rhododendron 'Cassata' – one year after planting, probably my favourite Rhododendron

Top Right: Rhododendron 'Sappho' – two years after planting I have eight of these, four in a group

Above: Approximately eight years after planting – R. 'Madame Masson'

Above: Rhododendron 'Rasputin' – four years after planting

Left: Forgive me for not cutting the grass before I took this picture in 2017. From the left R. 'Percy Wiseman', R. 'Rasputin', R. 'Cynthia' and R. 'Rabatz'

Lessons:

I'm not sure any general lessons can be learnt from my amateurish experiences in the wilds of Aberdeenshire over the last 15 odd years. However, I've noted below what seems to have worked in our "woodland" garden / jungle:

- Over the last two years I had to take control of the number and height of our many trees to reduce the risk of them coming down in our regular gales. But I should have done it some years earlier.
- I selected rhododendron varieties that would flower about the same time - May through early June. Some large gardens we've visited in Scotland have varieties that flower outside this range planted together. That doesn't work for me. I think it spoils the overall effect. It can look untidy and a bit sad;
- When I found out it was possible, I selected rhododendron varieties with hardiness I guessed would be appropriate to where we live. H4 as an absolute minimum, preferably H5 or H6. I don't know if the hardiness rating system is accurate, but I've tried to follow it and I haven't lost any plants to the cold – yet;
- I've tried to locate plants where they have some shelter from the wind. Invariably this has meant some have then had more shade than others. I read somewhere that rhododendrons in Scotland need all the sun that they can get. This seems to be true in Aberdeenshire, and it has been necessary to cut back or remove tree branches or other shrubs to increase the sunlight getting to some plants;
- Purely by luck I've generally avoided planting rhododendrons or azaleas in areas prone to deep snow drifts. I have accepted some snow damage is an acceptable risk;
- As far as possible I've tried to obtain new plants from a reliable source. In recent years most of my hybrids have come from Glendoick Gardens near Perth – probably well known to most SRS members. They have all been top quality plants, disease free and have grown on with no problems. I haven't had the patience to attempt growing from seed;
- We have one area which gets very wet during autumn and spring rains, so I have avoided that area. In most other places the drainage seems to suit the plants. This year I planted several young hybrids, just before it got hot, and they have clearly needed quite a bit of watering. Time will tell whether this was just due to the 2018 hot spell / drought;
- Our soil is a bit sandy in places, but seems to be sufficiently acidic. I have always added generous amounts of ericaceous compost whilst planting, but after that the plants seem to survive happily enough on their own. Leaf falls from previous years seems to provide all the mulch they require if any. Getting underneath some to add mulch actually risks breaking the lower branches.

The future:
The main effort in the future will be to keeping the number and height of our many trees under control, as well as maintaining light levels. This will mean topping some, maybe removing a few and cutting back branches.

I've little room left for more rhododendrons. I need to balance the garden. Unless something spectacular comes along (maybe with gorgeous flares like *R.* 'Cassata' or *R.* 'Sappho') I'm going to be concentrating elsewhere – I've planted quite a few roses this year.

The rhododendrons seem to pretty much take care of themselves. So far only a few along a garden path need a bit of pruning width wise. If we get more hot summers, I can see regular watering becoming necessary. Apart from that our rhododendrons and azaleas seem to find life in the wilds of rural Aberdeenshire is acceptable. Long may that continue.

Some side notes. We have a few plum trees which crop every year, but this year the crop was phenomenal - hundreds per branch. In August we also had an increase in butterflies by several orders of magnitude, maybe 50 at a time on one buddleia alone. The huge increase in butterflies apparently was seen in Aberdeen as well. This must be due to the unusually hot spring and summer. So maybe climate change will not be all bad. Finally, Scotland has a reputation for midges. Here the problem is not midges, it is the damned horse flies!

Conclusions – not necessarily applicable generally:

- Careful selection and appropriate positioning seems to be sufficient to allow commercially available hardy woodland hybrids to survive in rural Aberdeenshire. The local *R. ponticum* seem to be bombproof. I haven't attempted species rhododendrons.
- Creating a garden from a blank sheet of paper, without deadlines or restrictions can be a joy – it was for me.
- However, the creation of a big or woodland garden from scratch may be best started before you reach pensionable age. The clearing of ground, the necessary digging, cutting back of tree branches, chainsaw use, cutting of grass possibly requiring a brush cutter may be too much for old bones and joints. (Unless you can afford to pay people to do it for you – but then what is the point?). I was 48 when I started, and even that might be a bit late. I'm still doing it all at nearly 67, but the majority of the hard work has been completed.
- My discovery of rhododendrons and azaleas other than *R. ponticum* has transformed our hillside garden. They are boringly green most of the year, but for several weeks in the spring they are just breathtaking.

Rhododendron dendrocharis

Ian Douglas

Rhododendron dendrocharis is an attractive small plant reaching about one foot in height with a spread of about two feet, with flattish rose pink flowers. It is native to Western Sichuan at a height of between eight and eleven thousand feet and was described by the French botanist Franchet in 1886 (probably from material sent home by Pere David). Remarkably it was only introduced into cultivation in the nineteen eighties, since when it has proved to be a reliable garden plant.

This rhododendron is generally epiphytic in the wild, that is, it grows on trees, much like some ferns and orchids, but is not parasitic on its host. Particularly in wetter areas, moss grows on the bark and over a period of time litter accumulates into which seed can germinate.

Pictures by Ian Douglas

The first illustration shows *Rhododendron dendrocharis* growing on a tree stump in my garden, flowering in late March and early April. The second shows several plants (difficult to pick out) growing on the Silver Fir, *Abies fabri,* at 10,000 feet on the summit of Wawu Shan. (Wawu Shan is sacred to the Taoist religion and is near the better known Emei Shan, the Buddhist holy mountain).

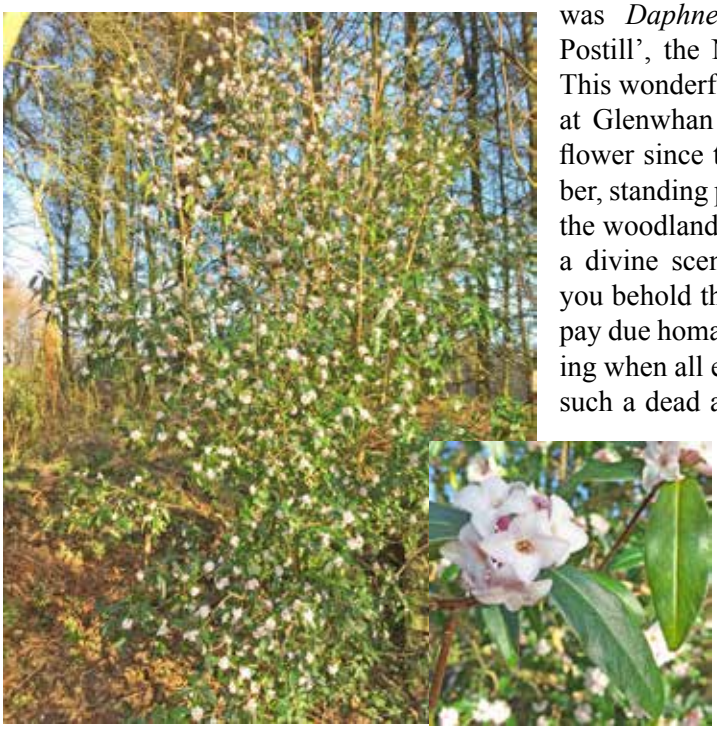
An easy plant to grow but, because it is an epiphyte, it requires very good drainage. A stump is ideal but any slightly raised situation will do, provided plenty of composted bark or pine needles are incorporated into the soil. Once established *Rhododendron dendrocharis* will give pleasure over many years. The plant shown is over twenty years old.

Report from South West Scotland on Rhododendrons and Companion Plants Suitable for the Milder Garden

Tessa Knott

As a member of the International Dendrology Society, I had the good fortune to visit the late Sir Peter Smithers's garden many years ago, at Vico Morcote in Switzerland, and the memory of that visit lives on. To quote something Sir Peter wrote: 'I regard gardening as the other half of life' is something I whole heartedly concur with, and I suspect many members might feel the same, though it seems to have taken up more than half of my life.

I remember Sir Peter's garden was full of glorious plants, many of them at that time I did not know, but he very generously urged the party to help themselves to a table laden with pots of tiny seedlings. The plant I picked at random was *Daphne bhuloa* 'Jacqueline Postill', the Nepalese paper plant. This wonderful plant is now 8ft tall at Glenwhan and has been in full flower since the middle of December, standing proudly on the edge of the woodland, and as you approach a divine scent fills the air, before you behold the plant. Every year I pay due homage, so bravely flowering when all else seems dormant, at such a dead and drab time of year. A wonderful companion plant flowering at the same time is *Rhododendron sichotense,* a native



Daphne bholua 'Jacquline Postill' All pictures in this article by Tessa Knott

to the forest slopes of Sikhote-Alin mountains in the Russian far east. This small shrub closely related to *R. dauricum,* grows to 2 metres with shiny leaves which when touched oddly smell of salami and sports red brown stems of winter colour, and, as I write is smothered in bright violet/pink trusses (see picture on back cover). A plant to brighten up the dreary dark winter days, and not a very well known plant in the west.

Glenwhan, is a garden with a southerly aspect at 300 ft. above sea level, and I would never have believed back in the days of it being but a barren hillside, that it could have produced such an array of strong and healthy plants. The mild climate here in the South West and the close proximity to the sea with the warming influences of the Gulf Stream obviously helps the growth and wellbeing of the plants.

I have now added the word arboretum to the title, I think it merits it, as large parts of the garden have now become woodland interspersed with many shrubs and trees, but in equal measures, the genus Rhododendron.

The mixed shelter belt planted in 1979, creates a good micro-climate, combined with a pH of 4.5 and pretty high rainfall. The rainfall is usually recorded at around 40 inches, but not sure with last year's prolonged and unusual drought whether this was so. Certainly *Rhododendron hodgsonii* and *R. kesangiae* flowered well last year but you could see they were suffering from the lack of water and the hot summer. They seem though to have largely recovered their ordeal. I once saw a forest of these two beautiful species in Bhutan growing very happily together, and when we emerged our boots were surprisingly covered in thick clay, in which they were growing.

Many of the larger leaved Rhododendrons suffered, namely *Rhododendron macabeanum*, and *R. sinogrande*, the latter with enormous glossy leaves the size of your arm, growing in the woodland, sporting huge trusses of creamy white flowers with a crimson blotch. Visitors are often blown away by these magnificent small trees, which can reach great heights, certainly at Logan House Gardens, on the Mull of Galloway. There, the flowers are difficult to see as they are all on the top, these rhododendrons perhaps growing larger in Scotland than in their wild habitat. This plant flowers in April and was introduced by George Forrest in 1913, and comes from Yunnan, NE upper Burma, and S.E. Tibet.

Having established Glenwhan's southerly aspect I would like to highlight some of the more tender plants that are thriving and that will grow outside and obviously the Maddenia subsect. rhododendrons survive very well, and one particular favourite and early flowerer amongst others, is a dome shaped *R. ciliatum* from Nepal, Sikkim, Tibet, & Bhutan, with attractive peeling bark and fragrant bell shaped flowers. Another first early is *R. moupinense* with white flowers and dark markings. I pray that a late frost will not kill their blooms overnight.

Rhododendron lindleyi is a treasured favourite and stands at the top of my list. A straggly grower but so sweetly smelling. An epiphyte growing here on top of a rock, together with a companion tree nearby, *Magnolia* 'Star Wars', a magnificent tree with huge pink goblet shaped flowers in profusion, which are wonderful to see looking up against a clear blue sky. *Rhododendron beanianum* from NE Upper Burma is doing well in the woodland glade, a medium sized shrub with loose habit. Named after W.J. Bean, one of the greatest authorities on woodland plants. The bell shaped flowers are most beautiful.

Rhododendron edgeworthii an early flowerer, grows happily outside with no trouble, with branches coated in soft fawn "wool" with funnel shaped flowers white and pink tinged and richly scented. First found by Abbe Delavay in 1886, growing in N. India and NE Upper Burma. You will note I have picked out many scented varieties as I consider scent to be hugely important in a garden.

Above: Rhododendron beanianum

Left: Rhododendron edgeworthii

Rhododendron thomsonii, a Himalayan species, with cinnamon coloured bark and distinctive oval leaves, with blood red bell shaped flowers, struggles here, but I will never forget the sight of a whole exposed scarlet hillside in Bhutan in 2004, the slopes covered from head to foot with these plants. While on the subject of companion plants, I grow *Cardiocrinum giganteum*, the Giant Himalayan lily, and tried to emulate the conditions as I saw it growing in Bhutan. In our acid ground many different primulas revel in the boggy conditions along with a great many *Iris sibirica.* I treasure the trilliums, and erythroniums on the woodland floor. Not to mention *Narcissus actea*, many of which I have planted around Bill, my late husband, who is buried in the garden. They are valuable when the other daffodils are gone and my very favourite.

I would like to add a word about *Sorbus*, great companion plants in the woodland garden, which I grow in variety here. I am very fond of *Sorbus insignis* introduced by Kingdon Ward, from the Naga Hills in Assam in 1928, with huge seed heads of fine red berries, and the brown sticky buds of *Sorbus sargentiana,* found in West China. A magnificent species with large attractive leaves. On a trip to China I saw my first grove of trees growing on top of the mountainside not far from the Tibetan plateau, all covered in many different coloured berries. What a thrill to see them growing in their native habitat. It was obvious that they had done a lot of hybridising in the wild.

Still on the theme of companion plants *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Elizabeth' lightens the woodland canopy with leaves edged in pink in the spring standing out amongst the green leaves of the rhododendrons. *R. bureavii* is a medium sized shrub with rich woolly indumentum and rose bell shaped flowers with crimson markings, and when the flowers are over, is well worth growing for the attractive colours of its young growth from fawn to rusty red. Wilson discovered this plant in 1904. *R. insigne* is exceptionally hardy, a slow growing Chinese species, with very hard leathery leaves of rich glossy green above, and silvery beneath. My plants were

Pittosporum tenuifolium 'Elizabeth'

Rhododendron bureavii

generously donated by Matt Heasman from one of his plant hunting trips. This was first introduced by E.H. Wilson in 1908 from N. Yunnan and Sichuan. The plant has large trusses of bell shaped flowers of soft pink with dark markings, and has happily grown to about 11ft. here. Another species, *R. griersonianum* is growing well from China, but I wait patiently to see the brilliant geranium red-scarlet flowers being distinct because of its tapered flower buds. However *R. strigillosum* is magnificent when bearing bright brilliant scarlet bell shaped flowers in February and March. An E.H Wilson introduction from Sichuan, and NE Yunnan in 1904.

Rhododendron hemsleyanum, named after the English botanist, William Botting Hemsley (1843-1924) who named and described numerous plants of Chinese origin. I understand this plant maybe endangered in the wild. I probably planted this rhododendron about 5 years ago and it is growing rapidly as is *R. griffithianum* from Nepal and India and introduced by Sir Joseph Hooker in 1850. I am looking forward to smelling its sweetly scented white funnel shaped flowers with green speckles, and *R. grande*, another Hooker introduction. None of these are old enough yet to flower, but I mention them here as being suitable for the milder garden and woodland.

I have named but a few plants amongst a myriad of others, growing here. It would be impossible to cover them all in the space. Perhaps save them for another article.

Rhododendron hemsleyanum

My hope is that I am going to go on living for a long time, in order to see these splendid plants flower. I feel that gardeners should be granted a longer span of years in order to see the results of what they have planted! Another fact being they should stay alive long and strong enough to upkeep what they have planted.

One of my big mistakes is not keeping proper records of when and where my plants came from. I urge anyone starting out to be aware of this. Therefore it was necessary back in early May 2018 on an exceptionally fine day, for two members of the Rhododendron Species Conservation Group to converge on Glenwhan in order to locate and collate over 200 + rhododendrons and azaleas, species and hybrids. At the end of that weekend they left with bleary eyes and spinning heads, having worked tirelessly. By the way, there are probably another 150 to do…!

But I would like to take this opportunity to show my appreciation and gratitude to those two of the Group, for their dedication and time spent here, and the work which I know goes on elsewhere. I can't help feeling a little proud that Glenwhan was considered to be worthy of their attention. My task now is putting on the permanent labels for the data base; a good occupation during the dark days of winter, and so roll on the spring. And incidentally to keep on planting.

If the aforementioned plants that are out now and so completely covered in flowers, are an indication of what is to come, perhaps it may be a good omen for the coming flowering season of 2019, and perhaps the hot summer was a good thing after all. Here's hoping.

Getting wired in

Mike Thornley

This article is about two types of wire enclosures, constructed to keep leaves in, and animals out. Miss Jekyll in "Wood and Garden" (London 1899) writes about the importance of gathering leaves and making leaf mould. Gardeners have sometimes found it difficult to meet her exacting standards and often leaf pits and compost heaps become weed infested monuments to past good intentions. When we came to Glenarn the only signs of such activity were a few dilapidated leaf coups, their rusting chicken wire catching a few leaves like fish in a net. That said, and as we soon found out, they were placed in the areas of maximum leaf fall; the Gibsons, unlike Miss Jekyll, did not have to send out a horse and cart and three hands in mid-November to collect leaves from the surrounding lanes.

Miss Jekyll confined her comments on pests and diseases to recommending rabbit resistant plants, and conducting a fox hunt at Munstead Wood, well protected from other interlopers by its surrounding walls and hedges. Our predecessors' defences against rabbits and roe deer were chicken wire fences, equally difficult to maintain as the leaf bins, and knotted nylon stockings containing human hair. They resembled shrunken heads when tied to plants, the nylon and hair proving to be un-degradable but completely useless as a deterrent.

Leaf bins:
We visited Barnhourie Mill on a dreich New Year's Day with a gaggle of children that Esther King and Mavis Paton took remarkably well in the circumstances. Here, in mid-winter, was a young and beautiful garden set at a distance from the house (where tender rhododendrons filled the greenhouses). A dome of granite rock, criss-crossed with paths was surrounded by a series of spaces, their varied shapes generated by the irregular field boundaries. The granite dome was covered with dwarf rhododendrons and in its lee were larger leaf species, while the surrounding garden spaces provided the setting for other interesting plants including a remarkable *Abies koreana*, as broad as it was wide, thrice moved between the past gardens created by King and Paton (see Paton M. SRS Views and News, No. 7 April 1986). Also, what caught my eye were circular leaf bins about 3 feet high (900mm) and 4 feet wide (1200mm), made from pig netting.

Although the concept was excellent, I didn't like the rather rustic looking netting and, instead, we used galvanised welded mesh (sometimes now described as security fencing) which at 900mm high can be bought in 25m rolls (specify 50 x 50mm grid and 3.2mm wire, or 10 swg), cut to length with Felco C7 wire cutters – highly recommended. A 4200mm length, overlapped by 2 grid squares, tied together top and bottom with wire, will create a bin with a diameter of about 1200mm. On flat sites the bin will be sufficiently stable but on sloping ground it is best to secure the bins with three steel rods, 1000 x 10mm, driven in to the earth.

Leaf bin at Glenarn
Pictures in this article by Mike Thornley

Sometimes the contents in the bins will be invaded by roots from trees nearby. If this can't be avoided a geotextile fabric can be laid down. Our bins have lasted 30 years and on being emptied annually are turned upside down to spread the inevitable slow deterioration of the galvanising in contact with the ground that ultimately causes rusting.

One of the problems of rhododendron leaves, particularly the larger leaved varieties, is that they take a long time to rot down. The empty bins are filled each year in November when most of the leaves have fallen (although some oaks and magnolias can be tardy). The leaves are piled in, almost to overflowing with as many twigs and sticks as possible being removed. For us the leaves come from our extensive paths, the leaves on grass being raked under plants to mulch down as a nutrient rich and weed free zone under the canopy (taking care not to pile up the leaves around the trunks thereby running the risk of rot at the base). The leaves in the bin sink down and should be topped up with further rakings from time to time, throughout the year.

In early October of the following year the leaf bins are emptied and their contents

barrowed to the compost bins where they are mixed 50:50 with the grass cuttings from the summer, in layers approximately 50mm thick, with a further picking out of twigs. The mixed material is left for another two winters after which, in the spring, the contents of the compost bins are emptied for use in the garden.

We do not have the conditions (or the skills) to create a truly hot compost heap, nor do we have the time to select the good from the bad weeds. Hence the use of this slow, cold and clean system, only adding the vegetable waste from the kitchen and the application of Garotta, which is cheap and makes us feel better. Given that this is a 3-year cycle 3 compost bins (or 6 in our case) are required. We had these constructed in fair faced concrete block (internal dimensions 2100mm long x 1200 wide x 900 high) with removable timber balks at the access ends. Our mistake was to build the walls off a float finished concrete floor. This helps emptying but despite the rain covers (old garden squares weighed down at their edges with stones) the mixed material becomes waterlogged at the bottom, inhibiting the composting process. This can be overcome by turning the pile after one year, which should not be necessary if the bins have a free draining earth floor, which will also encourage worms. The results of all of this is a weed free, enhanced leaf mould compost which is used to top dress all of the principal beds in the garden.

For those not wanting to follow the composting route, preferring to concentrate on leaf mould instead, bigger wired bins can be employed

Above: Compost bin in use

Right: Compost bins at Glenarn

in which the leaves are left for at least 2 years. However, these will require careful siting, with sufficient space, ideally hidden from view and not close to trees with invasive root systems. Miss Jekyll had hers in the garden yard at Munstead Wood constructed out of huge timbers and on to which she planted delectable tasting radishes to give as treats to her visitors while she sipped her saccharined tea and nibbled at a single biscuit (Wood M. in Tooley M. and Arnander P. eds. "Gertrude Jekyll: essays on a life of a working amateur" Witton-le-Wear 1995).

Plant Nets:

Ken Cox in his new book "Woodland Gardening" (Glendoick 2018) identifies rabbits and deer as the main four-footed enemies in this country. In our case there are few rabbits but fearing a population explosion I assume the worst. The havoc wrought by roe deer is well documented and includes cropping of plants, bark stripping by rubbing of horns in velvet or marking territory, and trampling on deer runs. Rhododendrons such as *R. cinnabarinum* and *R. yunnanense* are particularly good eating while many others are ignored but these may get damaged by bark stripping or trampling as will a host of companion plants and trees. I am still recovering from the shock of putting up a small herd of red deer in the plantation on the hillside behind the house and hope that they will stay on the other side of the West Highland railway line, as red deer pose another order of difficulty.

Plastic tree guards are suitable for many plants with straight stems. (Another solution more in keeping with the ambience of a garden and used at Arboretum Wespelaar is to place 4 bamboo canes, preferably at planting to avoid roots, close around the stems of new trees). However, tree guards do not work with multi-stemmed shrubs and trees, or plants forming dome shapes such as rhododendrons. One of the negative aspects of dealing with the depredation of roe deer is the adverse effect on the garden's aesthetic, coupled with the time it takes to make the protection for individual plants. This is why the idea of fencing the whole garden against deer (and rabbits at the same time) is so attractive and should be considered when a new garden is being created in a high- risk area. However, on top of the initial cost, there are further practical and visual issues to take in to account and here, with multiple neighbours on the boundary, and dry stone walls and Victorian fences to be conserved; we have compromised by only fencing the vegetable patch and the rock garden. Elsewhere we have used chicken netting (sometimes specified as rabbit netting) secured by wooden stakes, the design of which has evolved through many trials and errors, hence this article.

Roe deer are designed to metric sizes, their cropping height being 1000mm. This proves to be a problem as rolls of chicken wire come in old imperial 3 and 4 feet sizes (900 and 1200mm). It is possible to use a 900mm net, by raising it 100mm but this will not deter rabbits and other small rodents. A 1200mm high net looks too high and unless it is very wide results in the plants becoming un-naturally drawn up. An effective but time-consuming solution is to bend up the bottom of the net 150mm to give an overall net height of 1050mm. The doubling up of the wire stiffens the net, with the double thickness best placed at the bottom and held off the ground just enough to allow weeding. However, while writing this piece I found out that rabbit netting can be obtained at 1070mm and, obviously, this is the way to go if it can be sourced.

Having established the height, what about the width of the net enclosure? This is largely dictated by the habit of the plant. An upright tree can have a tight net but something more spreading needs more space. We have found that a 2600mm length of netting overlapped by 4 hexagon spaces will give a 750mm diameter enclosure which is suitable in most cases, although larger diameter nets are required for more spreading plants if they are to be allowed to grow in character.

Above: Deer net at Glenarn

Right: Newly planted Sorbus

Cutting the net can be tedious which is where the Felco wire cutters help, as well as an extra pair of hands or a large weight to hold down the end, if you are not to be engulfed in the roll. At first it seemed to make sense to use thin netting with large apertures, to reduce the cutting, but the deer learned to push the netting down. For this reason, we now use 50m rolls of 1200mm galvanised wire netting with a 31mm net size 19 gauge, the bottom bent up by 150mm as described above. The roll is cut to length to the last row of required hexagons, leaving them intact but creating two short lengths of wire from the adjacent hexagons which are bent to secure the ends together, overlapped by 4 hexagon spaces to form a straight seam and further stiffening. The bending of the short wires is a fiddly job, which does not do much for your fingers.

The completed net is secured by two 50 x 50mm soft wood posts which are cut from 4800mm lengths, standard in the building industry. These are 1500mm long (or more, depending on ground conditions), and the bottom chamfered on two ‘opposite sides with a saw to form a wedge-shaped end. These are driven in to the ground, opposite each other and inside the net, using a fencing mallet (another good investment) with 50mm left proud at the top of the net. The net is wired, top and bottom, to the posts and it is advisable to run the vertical seam up one of the posts to which it is fixed. Originally, we used bamboos but found that they were pushed over by the deer and the nets blown away by gales. However, bamboos can be used for additional support if a very large net is deployed.

Over the years when we have been wrestling with the problem of roe deer we have kept a close eye on similar efforts at Benmore Botanic Garden, borrowing their ideas which are described by David Gray in “Sibbaldia: the Journal of Botanic Garden Horticulture” No. 15.
https://journals.rbge.org.uk/index.php/rbgesib/article/view/226
If you want a detailed analysis of deer centred problems and robust solutions, including working drawings, based on long experience at Benmore, David’s article is well worth reading, to complement this more amateur account.

Observations in 2018 - 'A Year of Extremes'

Richard A. Baines, Curator, Logan Botanic Garden

The winter of 2017 was fairly mild overall in SW Scotland with occasional cold snaps experienced for short periods. Although mild it started early, was very damp throughout and seemed to last an age culminating in the 'Beast from the East' on March 1st. How did rhododendrons fair during these challenging times?

Firstly an observation. I don't believe that I have ever experienced such a late spring in the UK. Even by mid-May there was minimal growth then over a period of 10 days we went from Spring to high Summer!

Once summer arrived temperatures and sunshine levels were well above average but on the downside Logan received less than 2inches (50mm) rain over a 10 week period. Overall 2018 was a good flowering season with most plants well budded up. The sudden spike in temperatures resulted in lots of rhododendrons coming into flower at once and only lasting a short period. Initial new growth was somewhat stunted but once normal weather patterns resumed in August strong new growth returned.

The first rhododendron to flower at Logan is always *R.* 'R.W. Rye' with its soft yellow colour. It is of particular interest as it was bred locally at Castle Kennedy Gardens and named after one of its Head Gardeners.

Rhododendron 'R.W. Rye'

Pictures in this article by Richard Baines

The most prolific flowering of all subsect. Maddenia rhododendrons at Logan is *R.* 'Harry Tagg' which has funnel shaped white flowers exuding a heavenly scent! Year on

Right: Rhododendron 'Harry Tagg'

Below: R. genesterianum

Bottom: Bark of R. dendricola

year adorned by its showy blooms that act as a magnet for pollinating bees.

One of the most unusual looking rhododendrons is *R. genesterianum* which demonstrates borderline hardiness. With attractive exfoliating bark it has the most unusual coloured flowers. Coming into growth so early its new foliage is often frosted so it needs to be planted in a very sheltered position.

When people talk down rhododendrons one of their most common criticisms is that they flower in spring then for the rest of the year there is nothing of interest. How wrong they are!!! It is our duty to educate the public that there are nearly 1200 species with different ones flowering every month of the year with the majority of them Spring flowering. Apart from flowers many such as *R. dendricola* have truly amazing bark that lasts all year long.

Many of the larger leaved species such as *Rhododendron sinogrande* and *R. suoilenhense* have enormous handsome foliage that would be worthy of growing for their foliage alone never mind the delightful addition of the flowers.

Top Left: Foliage of Rhododendron suoilenhense in the wild in Vietnam

Top right: R. sinogrande new foliage

Below right: R. dalhousiae var. rhabdotum

Below left: R. nuttallii with new foliage

An excellent example of a rhododendron flowering 'out of season' is *R. dalhousiae* var. *rhabdotum* that flowers in early July at Logan. Enormous trumpet shaped creamy-white flowers which resemble *Lilium regale* with a red lipstick stripe along its length never fails to impress. Another rhododendron that has stunning giant funnel

Rhododendron mianningense

shaped flowers is *R. nuttallii* that flowers in mid-summer. The flowers are followed by attractive new growth that is often pinky purplish in colour. Plants at Logan have survived -10C and for the sheer beauty of its flowers it is worth trying it in a sheltered position.

In the current era when conservation of our favourite genus is so important it is reassuring to observe *Rhododendron mianningense* putting on extensive growth and flowering in mid September. This species is critically endangered in China and needs to form part of an ex-situ conservation programme.

Rhododendron magniflorum is another relative new comer and is reputed to have one of the largest flowers of any species with flowers 10cm long in trusses of 12-14 flowers. Critically endangered due to habitat loss this plant is experiencing further pressure as the pollinator is no longer present. It flowers late in the season and is an ideal species for extending the traditional flowering season.

Rhododendron carneum demonstrates borderline hardiness allowing it to be grown in sheltered gardens along the western seaboard. It is vigorous, easy to propagate and flowers prolifically each year. It has an attractive peeling bark and comes in both a white and pink form.

One of the most rarely observed species is *Rhododendron kasoense* which flowers in autumn and probably has potential for hybridising. A member of the Monantha section it is probably more of a collector's item with 3 to 4 singular tubular flowers produced at the apex.

Recently at Logan we have been experimenting growing rhododendrons epiphytically outdoors in tree fern logs which to date is demonstrating good results. Among the species that we are trying are several members of the Pseudovireya

subsect. including *R. emarginatum* from Vietnam. They have unusual waxy yellow flowers that are produced in October and when well grown can be very showy.

Overall 2018 has been challenging with the extreme weather that we have experienced but overall plants have put on sturdy new growth and the bud set for 2019 looks promising.

Rhododendron enmarginatum growing on Y Ty Mountain, Vietnam

The Scottish Rhododendron Society Timeline Highlights
Part 2

Willie Campbell

I have been reading through copies of Society Newsletters and I thought this is a timeline of the Society, the early Committee members, shows, visits, members' garden reports and the occasional controversy.

Some of the gardens no longer exist, some maybe overgrown or turned into flats and many of the contributors have gone to "Rhododendron Heaven". This will give our newer members an insight in to where names come from on the "Show Cups" or the "Autumn Lectures".

I hope you find it interesting, especially the new members and please contact me for any further information about these newsletters (now updated to Review and Yearbook) and I will endeavour to help.

I had reached Newsletter 10 in the 2018 Yearbook, now starting at number 12 November 1987. President Hamish T Gunn, Vice President Peter Cox with Rorie Hereson Hon. Sec. and Hubert Andrews as Hon. Treasurer.

The first article in **Newsletter 12** was **"Starting from Scratch"** by Roger G Woodhouse. Roger was brought up on the Surrey-Sussex border where his parents had a large garden with acidic soil and his playground in his early years was in a garden full of hardy rhododendrons. The article goes on to tell how Roger created a garden on a hillside in Northumberland, which could be very cold, wet, dry and windy throughout the seasons but with careful additions of trees for shelter and some shade he succeeded in filling it with species and hybrid rhododendrons along with azaleas most from seed and cuttings. **No mention of garden name (anybody have any ideas?)**

Next it was a report by **Peter Cox** on the autumn meeting at the RBGE where David Chamberlain gave 28 members a slide show on a recent trip to Yunnan. Members enjoyed mouth-watering slides loaded with flower not only *Rhododendron* but *Primula* and new *Meconopsis* along with other alpine gems. However

David warned all was not well as forests where being systematically felled for timber. After lunch David gave the group a guided tour of the garden, showing many of his favourite plants.

Cameron Carmichael started his article on the **Glasgow Garden Festival** recalling a Glesca Bauchle asking her cronies "Whit are they rosy purple floors hen?" "Oh the cronie said, thems rosydandrums" (*A Glasgow lady asks her friend "What are these purple flowers my dear" the reply "These are rhododendrons").* Cameron explains that he is at a meeting discussing options for garden displays and how the Scottish Rhododendron Society propose to create a Himalayan Glade that will traverse a rock garden of local stone, to create large pockets of plantings including rhododendrons along with other plantings to be displayed over the 5 month period of the festival. Ed Wright would supply bog garden plants and Mervyn Kessell would co-ordinate the other plantings.

Then **Keith James discussed the Hybrids of Richard Gill's Nursery** at Falmouth where they produced some 46 hybrids, some Keith says were still available such as *Rhododendron*'Glory of Penjerrick' {*R. arboreum* (blood red} x *R. griffithianum*} and *R.* 'Shilsonii' {*R. thomsonii* x *R. barbatum*}.

Philip Urlwin-Smith's article talks on his love of magnolias and in particular *Magnolia campbellii* ssp. *mollicomata* var. 'Lanarth' and this variety grown from George Forrest seed F.25655 collected on the Salween-Kiu Chiang divide NW Yunnan at around 11,000 ft. Grown from seed in 1924 and at Lanarth flowered in 1947. Philip encourages us all to plant magnolias in our gardens for future generations.

Ed Wright retires as Hon. Secretary and Treasurer noted and President – Hamish Gunn thanked Ed for his work over the years on behalf of all the membership.

Upcoming events –Alan Clark and his assistant from Leonardslee was to give two lectures at Glenarn on grafting. **Spring Meeting visits** to Benmore and Eckford, Baravalla and Tigh-an-Rudha based at Inveraray. Mervyn Kessell was organising.

Mike Thornley was editor and Amanda Clark typed the Newsletter.

Newsletter No 13, February 1988:

The Rhododendron Garden at Kiloran House, Colonsay. Mike Thornley wrote this article on a family holiday to the Isle of Colonsay off the west coast of Scotland, with sea cliffs, birds, hills, wild flowers and sandy beaches.

Around 1930 Lord Strathcona set down plans for a Rhododendron Garden around Kiloran House to his Head Gardener Murdoch McNeill. These instructions in a ledger noted after each visit, setting out work to be completed by next visit. Mike borrowed that ledger to complete his article. I noted even in the 1930s soil condition although good "it did not seem too interfered with the growth of Rh. ponticum".

It's a fascinating article detailing plants planted, plants received from friends F. R. S. Balfour at Dawyck, Sir John Stirling Maxwell at Pollock and from nurseries including Knaphill, Slococks, Waterers, Veitch, Gills and Sunningdale. Almost a third of the plants came from George Forrest introductions with even some from Rock's expeditions. Spacing and labelling was also detailed for the gardeners. One by one the various areas were planted up until September 1939 Lord Strathcoma wrote: "Owing to the outbreak of war no special schemes were envisaged. Concentration was directed towards bringing more arable and garden land into cultivation for food".

Mike completes his article urging members to visit the garden.

Next it's all about the **"Great Gale December 1987"** in South East England. **Kenneth Lowes** writes that about six million trees were lost in Sussex alone. At Leonardslee they lost 1000 trees with damaged estimated at £250,000. It lists the gardens and casualties in these gardens, oaks and beeches, but remarks that Wellingtonias are generally unscathed. However after the destruction most rhododendrons seemed to have survived, apart from a few branches.

Castle Kennedy Gardens Head Gardener David Knott gives the history of the gardens, the exotic plants that are from William Cobb and Joseph Hooker introductions and most of the large trees were planted between 1840 and 1880.

David explains the difficulty in maintaining the gardens at Castle Kennedy with only 4 staff and he goes into great detail of management planning, maintaining the specimen's plants that are oversized or over mature, use of modern machinery to tackle scrub cover and using chemical sprays on *Rhododendron ponticum* and ivy. They are trying to identify, label and propagate plants, renovating and replanting where necessary.

David's Conclusion: no reason standard cannot be again raised, for future generations.

Secretary's notes: - Help! us with show preparations at the Glasgow Garden Festival, on the SRS stand with information, membership forms, and plant sales. The show will be bigger than usual, with trade stands and major garden displays. The outdoor garden "the Himalayan Glade" has to be maintained for the Festival period.

Spring Visit to Argyll provisional schedule prepared, accommodation at Loch Fyne Hotel would be around £25.00 per night dinner, bed and breakfast. Garden visits all arranged and Mervyn Kessell was taking the bookings.

Again Mike Thornley edited the newsletter and Amanda Clark and Liz Divers typed it up.

Newsletter No 14, August 1988:
Neil Rutherford takes a summer walk round the wood at Kilarden (now Carol Rowe's garden) talks about late spring hybrids, a mighty *Rhododendron bureavii* (16 ft. high) and being troubled by roe deer and grey squirrels ripping off the growth buds on big leafed rhododendrons.

Spring Visits. Margaret Buchanan writes about 24 members meeting Curator Arthur Hall and his assistant Ian Sinclair for a guided tour of the Younger Botanic Garden Benmore, with ideal weather where the azaleas and rhododendrons were at their best. Some interesting tips were: if using bark chips round plants add a little sulphate of ammonia and using mulch round trees to eliminate damage by mowers or strimmers. Benmore is suffering from powdery mildew on *R. cinnibarinum*. This was being sprayed with regularly with "Nimrod T ".
After lunch the group visited Eckford, David Younger's private garden (**writes Ian Douglas**) with Arthur and Ian giving a guided tour round the garden. The wildness of the garden, the terrain and slopes give the impression of a Himalayan Forrest with fallen trees and paths to adventure. Much of the garden was unlabelled and it was fun listening and learning from the knowledge and experience of Peter Cox, Arthur Hall and Ed Wright.
Next morning it was off to Baravalla with Peter Cox and Peter Hutchinson. **(Writes Steven Fox)** The most striking aspect of Baravalla in contrast to the over mature gardens visited the previous day was it was "young". The garden consists of around 20 acres of oak/hazel/birch woodland sloping down to the sea. Plants here were not restricted to just rhododendrons, thriving in the warm and wet Argyll climate. It was because of this high rainfall most rhododendrons were

planted on mounds "Argyll Style".
After all the "ooh and ah" at Baravalla it was a happy group of intrepid explorers snaked its way to Ardrishaig in search of rarities at Tigh an Rhuda and the garden of Dr Angus Mackay **(writes Janet Gibson)**. This is a mature garden with a super range of species rhododendron including the famous *Rhododendron lanatoides* suspected to originate from Western China via Tower Court. It has woolly indumentum, and white flowers spotted maroon, which are profuse in March.
After the tour we all had tea or coffee, a selection of cakes and thanking our host we all set off back to our homes full of energy to tackle our own gardens.

Bill Davidson reported on the Scottish Rhododendron Show: This year's show was held at the Glasgow Garden Festival. The number and quality of the exhibits was excellent, giving the Judges Warren Berg, Arthur Hall, Alan Clark and David Chamberlain much to discuss before making the place decisions.
Glendoick won the Rhododendron Challenge Cup for most points. Credit to David Stuart the Show secretary.

Sue Thorley's article on the Alpine rose *Rhododendron ferrugineum* was both interesting and informative.

In memoriam – Len Stubbs a naturalised Scot, hailing from Yorkshire, who taught physics at St Josephs in the east end, and supported Glasgow Rangers. Len's real claim to fame was off course his cheeky hybrid challenge to the Glendoick Dwarf hybrids, Len called the dwarf hybrid "The original Grouse" Len will no longer grace the back pages of the newsletter after his untimely death at Glenbranter. (**Mike Thornley will remember Len with great admiration.)**

That completes the timeline for this Yearbook and I do hope you have enjoyed these notes. Please just ask if you would like more information, I would be delighted to copy full articles and send them to you.

Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden, Tasmania

Marion Kinns

With a son now permanently resident in Australia, Roger and I have made many visits. We have gradually explored much of that country and New Zealand but the Australian state to which we unfailingly return is Tasmania, the large island off the southern coast opposite the state of Victoria. It was not until our visit in 2018 that we got to the NW corner of this diverse island. Situated as it is in the Southern Ocean with the next land mass being Antarctica the climate is much more temperate than the Australian mainland. This fact and the nature of the soil, particularly in the NW, make it ideal for the growing of rhododendrons. The Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden takes full advantage of this situation.

To my mind, even before a discussion of the rhododendrons, the most remarkable fact about this garden is that it was conceived, created and is maintained by volunteers. It is a wonderful achievement. The beginnings were in 1985 when members of the NW branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society decided to begin an area of planting on an 11 hectare piece of land. This was given to the Society for their use by local member Hilary O'Rourke. The land is in the form of an amphitheatre facing east and with a flat area at the base. It had been logged in the 1960s but had never been farmed and there was a re-growth of eucalypts, wattles (acacias) and blackberries.

The site was cleared and developed following an agreed design, with footpaths created around the amphitheatre leading down to the construction of lakes, fed by natural springs. This early concentration on design means that the Garden is a very well conceived whole. Eventually various structures were erected such as bridges, gazebos, a Japanese style teahouse and a Chinese pavilion. In 2005, a Federal Government grant enabled the building of a Convention Centre. It overlooks the gardens and has provided a popular space for conferences and weddings and a source of income to help sustain the garden which has become a valuable asset. It is now owned outright by the members by taking out debentures. It is an independent non-profit organisation.

The climate is mild and rainfall reliable at 1100mm (42") per year with July/August generally the wettest months and February/March usually the driest.

Paths through the rhododendrons

Pictures in this article by Marion Kinns

Temperatures on average do not reach more than 22°C in the hottest months or below 7°C in the coldest. However, 33.8°C was recorded in nearby Burnie on 19/01/18 and –2.9°C on 28/08/18. Rainfall is therefore about half to a third of the west of Scotland and temperatures are warmer but not to the extent of those on the mainland of Australia. The soil is red basalt with a ph of 5.5-6 and is very free draining.

There are over 22,000 plants in the garden at present with ongoing plans and space for more planting. The focus is very much on rhododendrons but other suitable plantings are made to enhance the overall beauty of the garden. Hybrid rhododendrons were originally planted in the central section with species rhododendrons around the perimeter. Interestingly, the species rhododendrons are arranged in the geographical zones in which they are found, even to the extent of the Chinese plants being within their appropriate Chinese provinces. Associating plants from the geographical areas are used alongside. I thought that this approach was very informative. Existing tree ferns were left in place along the western side of the Garden and create a very exotic picture for visitors from the Northern Hemisphere.

Of around 900 species of rhododendrons available to western gardens, close to two thirds of these are grown in Emu Valley Garden. Big leaved species and hybrids were planted early in the history of the Garden and are now all flowering. Some

Subgenus Vireya hyrid Rhododendron 'Tuba'

members became enthusiastic hybridisers and the occasional success has been registered and is now growing in the garden. Early planting of species was thanks to the donation by members of plants from their own collections. Seed of species rhododendrons for germination is now obtained from the RHS, The Rhododendron Species Foundation and the American Rhododendron Society.

The one thing that totally bowled me over in this Garden was seeing a particular group of rhododendrons in the area below the protective canopy of tall Blackwoods which must date I think from the logging in the 1960s. Blackwood is *Acacia melanoxylon* and is an important timber for furniture. This group, the Vireyas, come from tropical parts of the world such as New Guinea, Borneo and the S. E. Asian archipelago. Two species have also been found in mountains of Northern Queensland in mainland Australia. I had previously seen them in the glasshouses in RBGE and under cover in pots in the Pukeiti Garden, New Plymouth, in North Island New Zealand and thought them beautiful. I wasn't prepared for the sight of huge plants covered in blooms in open ground that I saw in the Emu Valley garden. They were just stunning. After success with early experimental plantings a range of species and hybrid vireyas are now grown. As they often

A tree fern in and amongst the Rhododendrons and other plants

Planting within tree fern stems

flower more than once a year they add much to the colour and perfume in the garden.

Two horticultural techniques caught my attention. Old tree fern (*Dicksonia antartica*) trunks are used, very successfully, both vertically and horizontally, for the growing of epiphytic species such as the vireyas. Secondly, straw mulch is layered thickly on the ground in most areas to conserve moisture and suppress weeds. It is topped up every few years as it breaks down.

Ken Cox is a patron of the Garden and writes in the Emu Garden's publication 'Our Golden Dream':
"I have visited most of the best rhododendron gardens in both the Northern and Southern hemisphere and so can say without any doubt that the Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden is the most exciting large scale rhododendron garden that I have seen in the last 20 years. …….I know nowhere else where hardy and challenging alpine species can grow alongside large leaved species to tropical vireyas making up what is almost certainly the widest range of rhododendron species grown outdoors on one site anywhere in the world."

Tasmania is a long way from Scotland but if you get there one day – put the Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden on your itinerary!

I must record my thanks in particular to the Honorary Curator of the Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden, Mr Maurice Kupsch. He patiently answered my email questions while I was writing this article. The entire infrastructure in the Garden has been to his designs, which were then implemented by the many volunteers. Maurice has held this voluntary position since the Garden began.

'Our Golden Dream', published in 2016 to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Garden, informed much of the detail in my article.

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