THE RHODODENDRON HYBRIDISERS: FINDLAY, ROTHSCHILD & STEVENSON

Julian Taylor-Whall

The Rhododendron Hybridisers:

Thomas Hope Findlay of the Savill and Valley Gardens, Windsor; Edmund de Rothschild of Exbury Gardens in the New Forest, Hampshire; and Roza Stevenson of Tower Court, Ascot, Berkshire: the three creative geniuses who are appraised in Volume Five of *The Rhododendron Hybridisers*.

As before, an array of photographs portraying their most widely planted introductions feature throughout, these preceded by historical articles on each hybridiser and the gardens they created, plus a listing of all their registered combinations.

THE RHODODENDRON HYBRIDISERS

Julian Taylor-Whall

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- *Title Page* -
R. ‘Fred Wynniatt Bach Choir’ AM 1988

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- *Hope Findlay* -
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- *Roza Stevenson* -
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Thomas Hope Findlay:

Thomas Hope Findlay and his Rhododendrons.



by Mark Flanagan.

Thomas Hope Findlay was born in the estate bothy at Logan, near Stranraer, on 21 April 1910. As the son of a head gardener, Hope was brought up in that tradition of great Scottish gardeners, which emphasised hard work, application and attention to detail. To these virtues Hope added his own flair and the imagination that is so evident in the plantings in the Savill and Valley Gardens and was celebrated in his Chelsea show gardens during the middle decades of the 20th century.

Robert Findlay took his family south prior to the First World War eventually becoming curator of Wisley. Hope followed the same path into private service when he took up employment at Pyrford Court near Woking in Surrey, the seat of Lord Iveagh.

By the time he reached his early thirties he was Head Gardener to Sir James Horlick at Little Paddocks, part of the Titness Park estate near Sunningdale, whose garden, on that great seam of Bagshot sand which wends its way through north-west Surrey and adjacent parts of Berkshire, was celebrated for its woodland gems. It was from Little Paddocks that Hope was 'head-hunted' by Sir Eric Savill, commencing his employment in Windsor Great Park on 1 January 1943.

At that time the Savill Garden was barely ten years in the making and already suffering from the exigencies of wartime neglect; the Valley Gardens were, at most, just an idea in Sir Eric's mind. Hope threw himself into his new position with characteristic vigour and enthusiasm. In Sir Eric he had a hard taskmaster but a man of vision and authority. Over nearly thirty years, until Savill's retirement in 1970, they jointly created the finest woodland gardens in the country, in the words of that noted horticultural commentator, Arthur Hellyer:

> 'Between them the Savill and Valley Gardens provide an object lesson in all that is best in 20th century garden making'.

It was said that Eric Savill could look at a wilderness and see a garden, and though Savill set out the bones of the landscape, it was Hope who added the flesh. He drew from an encyclopaedic knowledge of hardy plants and was equally at home in the propagation house as he was in the garden. Today the Savill and Valley Gardens have reached maturity and we can appreciate hope's genius. Delightful vignettes are everywhere - from the exhilarating sweep of the Azalea Valley to the intimacy of the peat beds in the Savill Garden. In every case Hope utilised his in-depth knowledge of the local microclimates and the inherent potential of the landscape to execute a brilliant series of garden areas.

Now, some 10 years after his death, Hope is remembered by few; his contemporaries are gone and the succeeding generations found new horticultural heroes. Even less well-known is hope's skill as a breeder, principally of rhododendrons, but also of daffodils and other plants. Posterity has not been kind to his rhododendron hybrids. They were bred to grace the great woodland gardens of the British Isles at a time when such gardens were beginning to wane. His use of new species and novel combinations didn't always produce the expected results and the resultant progeny were never distributed extensively enough to gain widespread approbation. But despite this, his imagination and thoroughness have left us some lovely plants that still deserve to be better known.

- opposite left & right -
Two photographs of Hope Findlay:
A formal shot taken in the Valley Gardens during the late 1960s (left),
and at work in the Savill Gardens during the 1950s (right).



It is likely that Hope was involved with the Horlick Hybrids, so it is not surprising that his breeding programme at Windsor began within a year of his arrival and continued until 1968. During this period he made 288 separate crosses of which 56 were named. Unfortunately we have no in-depth written records of this programme and much of what follows is the result of personal observation, analysis of the results of Hope's work and, all too brief conversations with the late John Bond.

It would seem that initially flower colour was his guiding principal, much as it had informed the breeding work at Exbury and Bodnant. Between 1944 and 1947 the majority of plants raised had pink flowers - for instance 'Bray' and 'Seven Stars'. This was followed by a red period during the years 1948 to 1951 - 'Appleford' and 'Red Rum', with yellows (a favourite colour of Sir Eric Savill) dominating during the early 1950s - 'Binford' and 'Theale', for example. After this point the crosses became much more diverse and many of Hope's loveliest hybrids date from the mid to late 1950s.

As the programme developed it would seem that Hope had a series of favourite hybrids and species that he used as parents again and again. The Windsor FCC form of *Rhododendron souliei* was used many times as was *R. aberconwayi,* its characteristic saucer-shaped corollas producing several distinctive clones. Of the hybrids, the Exbury pair of 'Hawk' and the various 'Jalisco' clones were repeatedly used. Hope also demonstrated great foresight; in 1947 he was one of the first hybridisers to use *R. yakushimanum,* little more than 10 years after its first introduction and his dwarf hybrid 'Chink', itself dating from 1947, anticipated the modern trend towards plants of lesser stature.

Naming hybrids can be tricky, many obvious names will already have been used and so many are saddled with ghastly names. If a breeding programme is underway it can be valuable to adopt a theme as a means to link the plants together. In Hope's case, the majority of his hybrids were named after Berkshire towns and villages or areas of the Windsor estate.

Initially, the newly raised plants were held in nursery rows, but as they came into flower they were assessed and if they passed muster were named and planted in the gardens. Over time many were shown to the Rhododendron and Camellia committee, where they found an appreciative audience, gaining many awards. Most were awarded from the vase and judged solely on their flowers. Time has shown us that not all are worthy of esteem but many are, and having observed these hybrids closely since 1997, I would like to offer my top 5. I have to confess to having a soft spot for the paler shades which provide such subtlety in the woodland garden, rather than the more stolid oranges and reds. I am also drawn to the primary hybrids, with their inherent sophistication, in preference to the more highly bred multiple crosses.

'Crowthorne' (*souliei* FCC x *aberconwayi*) - a lovely plant from a cross made in 1951. It combines two very distinct species and draws the best attributes from each. The flowers are shell-pink in bud and pass to pure white on opening. The plant stays relatively compact and is very floriferous. It has none of the miffiness of *souliei,* nor the rather ordinary foliage of *aberconway.*

'Ardington' (*yakushimanum* x ['Hawk' x *brachycarpum*]) - a more complex cross and not an obvious one. Many regard *brachycarpum* as an undistinguished plant, hardy but lacking in refinement. In this hybrid *brachycarpum* is much to the fore and adds greatly to its beauty. It has rich pink flowers which have an ethereal quality in the reduced light of the spring woodland. From *yakushimanum* it draws a more interesting leaf and despite the presence of *fortunei* it doesn't make an overlarge specimen.

- opposite -
Tranquility defined - deciduous azaleas in bloom at the Savill Garden.

'Blewbury' (*roxieanum* x *anwheiense*) - perhaps Hope's best known hybrid. This plant is well represented in gardens in the British Isles and can be seen growing in many gardens on the Pacific coast of North America. It is a very distinct plant with narrow leaves forming a dense shrub. The flower trusses are small but neatly formed and well displayed above the foliage, which forms a supporting ruff - like an Elizabethan collar. Its parentage confers a tolerance of more open conditions and the best plants at Windsor are on the woodland edge rather than in the more sheltered interior conditions enjoyed by some of its peers.

'Swallowfield' (*souliei* x *yakushimanum*) - another unlikely cross. Rather than build on the compact habit of *yakushimanum,* Hope seems to have wanted to add the wonderful foliage of this taxon to the flowers and form of *souliei.* The results are quite extraordinary. It is difficult to see much of *yakushimanum* in the progeny. The leaves lack indumentum, are ovate-elliptic and the plant forms an open, airy shrub. Nonetheless the combination is enchanting. The pink, campanulate flowers cascade forward and are produced in loose trusses. A group of plants from this cross, on the edge of the peat beds in the Savill Gardens never fails to delight in the week leading up to Chelsea.

'Clewer' (*wardii* Litiense Group x 'Crest') - to my mind the best of Hope's many yellows, which to a greater or lesser degree are prone to mildew. Despite this, I admire the beautiful richness of the flowers of this plant, which have gorgeous peachy tips when they emerge from the bud. It is perhaps the least gawky of his yellow hybrids and keeps a reasonable shape and coverage as it ages (would that we all could!).

Of the remaining 51 clones, many never made it beyond the woodlands of the Savill and Valley Gardens. I presume Hope himself recognised the decline in both the overall popularity of rhododendrons and in the large woodland hybrids in particular. He restricted his distribution to interested friends and colleagues most of whom had the opportunity to give these plants the conditions that would do them justice. Today they can be seen in discerning collections, notably in Ray Wood at Castle Howard, thanks to the taste and industry of James Russell, and on Battleston Hill at Wisley. For the record I have included a list of the Hope Findlay hybrids [see the elepidote registration table below] of which we have some records, though readers should realise that, with few exceptions, these are only those he bred using members of Subgenus Hymenanthes [specifically from the re-named Section Leiorrhodium]. We know that Hope was an active breeder of deciduous azaleas and he made a number of selections, and a few hybrids, from species in Subgenus Rhododendron [now Subgenus Lepidorrhodium, Section Lepipherum], particularly in Subsection Triflora.

I can also report that we are about to start an active programme of propagation, supported by several of our nurserymen friends, to ensure the continuity of this most important group of hybrids and as an acknowledgement of the debt we owe to a great gardener.

Mark Flanagan was the Keeper of the Gardens, Windsor Great Park, from 1997 until his sudden and untimely death in October 2015. His profile of Hope Findlay and the breeding programme he undertook at Windsor was published in the RCMG 2006 Yearbook *Rhododendrons Camellias and Magnolias*. Regrettable, none of Hope's deciduous azalea crosses appear to have been registered with the *IRRC* (either under his own name or that of the Crown Estate Commissioners), but two evergreen azalea hybrids have been identified in addition to the lepidote and elepidote pairings.

The Collection of Rhododendron Species in Windsor Great Park.

A progress report by E. H. Savill, C.V.O., C.B.E., M.C.



It was very fortunate that his Majesty King George VI was a keen gardener, for when the collection of Rhododendron Species at Tower Court, Ascot, was offered for sale, after the death of Mr. J. B. Stevenson, the king immediately took a keen interest in its acquisition and it was with his personal encouragement that negotiations were successfully carried through.

The original collection was first started by Mr. J. B. Stevenson at Tower Court, Ascot, in 1918. I have asked Mrs. Stevenson to give me an account of its initiation and she has kindly replied to me as follows:

> "Because of the great muddle and lack of general knowledge upon the genus Rhododendron, my husband conceived the idea of grouping the species and planting them in one piece of ground in order to solve the problems and through this grew the idea of producing a document. My husband then worked along with his living plants upon the series and for the Rhododendron Society he edited *The Species of Rhododendrons* which was produced in 1930. The Introduction by my husband explains the reasons for producing such a work. So it will be seen that this book grew out of the idea of *The Species Collection* and after *The Species of Rhododendrons* was produced, the Tower Court collection became 'the book in being'.
>
> "It will be readily understood, with such a large genus, what a task and undertaking this work in general became. I can well remember, for years before the book was eventually produced, the amount of checking and cross-checking upon names, number, series, etc, we did between us at Tower Court, for my husband was determined to have the whole subject in one book in order to form a basis from which further work could be carried out in the future, as it is now proving to be, under Dr. MacQueen Cowan's careful guidance at Edinburgh Botanic Garden".

It is probably safe to say that there is no other collection of Rhododendron species in the world so large and comprehensive. Its creation was a very great undertaking and was pursued with the same care and enthusiasm as Jack Stevenson gave to everything he undertook. He was assisted by Mrs. Stevenson, the present owner of Tower Court, who gave much of her time and experience to help him and has since assisted us in many ways with advice and guidance. Visitors to Tower Court will very quickly appreciate her vast knowledge of the subject.

Represented in the collection are plants raised from seed sent back by Fortune, Wilson, Farrer, Forrest, Kingdon-Ward, Dr. Yü, Ludlow and Sherriff, and by the recent Nepal expeditions. There are over 2,000 plants in 21 series and 460 species. Of the 21 series represented in the genus, 12 are complete. At Tower Court they occupied an area of 2½ acres. At Windsor it is expected that 30 acres will be required to house them all.

It was appreciated that, as the plants when originally set out over a period of years were comparatively young and small, a very much larger area of ground would be required so as to allow each plant room for further growth and development of its own characteristics. The photograph [opposite left] gives a general view of part of the collection, while still at Tower Court, taken in May, 1952, showing the somewhat crowded conditions, due, more than anything else, to the excellent growth and health the plants have always maintained at Tower Court.

- *opposite* left -
The Falconeri Series at Tower Court, May 1952
(*R. falconeri* had been moved from the centre of the bed in March 1951).

- *opposite right* -
Sir Eric Savill in the Valley Gardens, a formal photograph taken in the late 1960s.











Another advantage of wider spacing is that it gives more opportunity to study a plant individually: so wide spacing has been adopted at Windsor - in some people's judgement, too wide, the feeling being that Rhododendrons are companionable plants and prefer close association with one another. With this view we do not disagree but, provided plants have shelter both from sun and from wind, little harm comes to them so long as they are sufficiently fed and watered.

After very careful consideration a site was chosen on the eastern side of Breakheart Hill, a densely timbered valley leading down from the plateau named Smith's Lawn to Virginia Water. The site is protected on the north and east by the hill itself, but is rather exposed to the south-west. Its advantage is that it ultimately links up with the Valley Gardens established a few years ago.

Trees were felled and rides and paths were formed, the rides being wide enough to take lorries. The photographs on page 16 - above left, and above right - show a part of the valley during clearing and after planting: the former, looking south-south-east, was taken in April 1951 and shows the cleared site; the latter, on December 3rd, 1951, after the planting of the first series to be moved, namely Arboreum, was completed.

It was thought that it would be more interesting for botanists and Rhododendron enthusiasts generally if the plants were set out in their new home strictly according to their series and sub-series. No particular order for these was decided upon, except for giving consideration to hardiness. The more tender series were invariable planted on the highest ground. Naturally, therefore, no thought could be given to colour arrangements or to "landscaping" of the more detailed kind.

Plant moving was started in October, 1951, and by the spring of 1953, the Arboreum series of 33 plants, the Cinnabarinum series of 17 plants, the Neriiflorum series of 270 plants, the Thomsonii series of 250 plants, the Grande series of 50 plants, the Falconeri series of 140 plants, the Triflorum series of 117 plants and the Azalea series of 59 plants had been moved from Tower Court and replanted. In addition, cuttings of the Lapponicum and Saluenense series were taken and have been rooted.

Many of the plants to be moved were of considerable size, the largest in bulk, perhaps, being *Rhododendron falconeri,* the type plant. This measured 14 ft. high by 18 ft. through [4.3 by 5.5m], and probably weighted 1½ tons [1,524 kg], and it may be of interest if a short description of our method of transplanting is given.

The photograph below left on page 16 shows a plant of *Rhododendron diaprepes* being prepared for moving from Tower Court. Fortunately, there have been at Windsor for some years men with great experience of moving heavy plants, for the Rhododendrons in the Valley Gardens consist, almost exclusively, of mature plants acquired either by gift or by purchase from some of the best known private gardens in the country. We were therefore equipped with trained men and also with the necessary plant and machinery.

If the reader will refer to the photograph mentioned, they will see that an incline has been prepared down to the base of the root of the plant and a trench dug round the perimeter. Subsequently the soil has been eased from the fibrous extensions to the root system so as to reduce the solid ball to manageable dimensions. Nonetheless, it will be seen that the ball of soil supporting the root system is still about 6 ft. across [1.8m]. For moving plants of this size we use a hand truck on caterpillar wheels, as shown in the photograph below right on page 16. After the root has been sufficiently eased from the ground, the plant is tilted away from the prepared incline so that the root system is, as near as may be, perpendicular instead of horizontal. The truck is them pushed beneath the root and the plant brought back to the horizontal and eased centrally on to the truck, which is then man-handled on to firm ground. In exceptionally heavy cases, the truck with the plant on it can be extracted by means of a small tractor. It should be noted that the plant is sacked up before removal so as to avoid evaporation as far as possible and to keep the ball of earth solid. The branches are tied into the plant, as far as flexibility will allow, to save room during transport. The caterpillar truck is then hauled on to a low trailer drawn by a tractor, the photograph below showing two large plants of the Arboreum series nicely balanced on the trailer (*R. floribundum* 'Borde Hill' 14 ft. x 12 ft. [4.3 by 3.7m] on the left, *R. argyrophyllum* 12 ft. by 11ft. [3.7 by 3.4m] on the right; October 17th, 1951).





The photograph above shows the same plant of *R. diaprepes* being lowered into position in its new home. The team of men on the right of the photograph, though they appear to be pulling against those on the left who are hauling the truck, are in fact easing the truck down the hill and keeping the plant upright. An important point, also, is that the men on the handle of the truck are keeping it low to the ground, so as to maintain the plant as long as possible in an upright position.

It will be appreciated that just moving plants from one place to another is not all the story. Three-inch [7.6cm] water mains have been laid for the whole length of the new valley, as well as subsidiary branch pipes. We believe in trenching all the ground so as to ensure as much intake of rain into the soil as possible, and the soil to be placed around the root system of the plants is reinforced with a generous quantity of humus. Many tons of leaf soil have been used for this purpose.

As, for the most part, the ground is sloping, it is necessary to build up the lower half of the cup to receive the plant, in order to ensure that the plant is perpendicular and that the watering it receives, whether natural or artificial, does not run off the surface of the ground. This method of planting can be seen if the reader refers again to the photograph above right on page 16.

It has been found that, during the first summer, some plants are inclined to premature leaf-drop, the petiole snapping at its junction with the leaf. The reason for this is not known (by us, at any rate), but it seems that the plant loses a certain amount of turgidity and severe wind is inclined to snap the stalk at its junction with the leaf. In addition, many leaves are inadvertently damaged during the process of tying up the plant. However, this leaf-drop does not appear to injure the plant permanently and even plants such as *Rhododendron hookeri,* which lost all their leaves shortly after being moved, are now in full foliage with vigorous new growth.

With regard to results generally, some thousand plants have so far been removed and up to now the losses have been three only, namely *Rhododendron keysii* KW 13625, *Rhododendron cinnabarinum* L&S 1354, and *Rhododendron neriiflorum* KW 9561.

If any generous reader has a plant of any of these collectings spare in their garden, we should be happy to make friends with them!

Eric Savill was nominally the Deputy Ranger of Windsor Great Park between 1932 and 1970 when he created both the Savill and the Valley Gardens with Hope Findlay. His progress report on the transfer of the Tower Court species collection to the Great Park was published in *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1954,* and of course links-in with the final section of this volume detailing the registered hybrids of Roza Stevenson.

A two-part account of the Tower Court species collection move to Windsor Great Park, including the involvement of the Sunningdale Nurseries in the project - who bought plants for use in their own landscaping projects or on consignment for other firms - was written by one of their former employees, Alleyne Cook, in 1997. Part I can be read in the *Journal American Rhododendron Society,* Volume 51, Number 2, while Part II was published in Volume 51, Number 3. Both can also be individually accessed online, at:

https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v51n2/v51n2-cook.htm

https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v51n3/v51n3-cook.htm

- opposite right -
The Valley Gardens Visitors Map, displayed in the car park on Money Hill, back in 2010.

Welcome to The Valley Gardens

Windsor Great Park



● You are here

WINDSOR GREAT PARK

The Royal Landscape

SAVILL GARDEN • VALLEY GARDENS • VIRGINIA WATER

Rhododendron Notes.

by T. H. Findlay.

Hope Findlay wrote many short articles for the RHS Rhododendron Year Books between 1955 and 1973, with these often included in the 'Rhododendron Notes' section of the annual publications. Seven of these are reproduced below:

The Preparation of a Virgin Wood for Rhododendrons (1955).

Fortunate indeed is he who is able to start from scratch in a wood and to plant a collection of Rhododendrons.

The ideal wood would be one of some acres in extent which contained mixed hardwoods and was preferably protected from the north and east. It must, of course, have a lime-free soil.

Virgin woodland is usually much too shaded for planting Rhododendrons and other woodland plants; therefore the first task would be the removal of unwanted trees.

The thinning of the wood needs careful planning and a great deal of thought is necessary before any trees are felled. It may well repay a hundredfold to walk through your wood several times during the summer before the thinning begins. In this way you come to know how much shade and light there is at different times of the day and thus decide which trees it would be well to remove.

The oak, in my opinion, is the finest tree for retaining in a Rhododendron woodland and the sycamore probably the worst. A few beech and birch, although robbers of the ground, are valuable for the contrast in leaf and twig formation.

Rhododendrons like to be free of north and east winds and prefer above all else a position of dappled shade. They can be planted close to the roots of oak but will not thrive, however, unless given plenty of room overhead.

It is well to remember when thinning your wood that places should be made for other trees such as Magnolias, Cherries and sorbus, which will provide added interest and beauty and act as a natural complement to the Rhododendrons. These trees, when grown as standards, can be planted quite close to the Rhododendrons, to provide extra shade.

After thinning and removing all unwanted scrub, the next item to consider should be the making of paths. It is a matter of individual taste whether they should be broad grass glades or narrow tracks, but my ideal path is at least 6 ft. wide - better still 8 ft. - [1.8 or 2.4m], and winds in gentle curves through the wood. To achieve a natural appearance, shape the path with the natural soil at hand and allow it to moss over.

It is a great asset to have an ample water supply and this is best installed when the paths are being formed. It is convenient if the water mains can be confined to the paths, with connections at frequent intervals. Any repairs or renewals can then be effected without disturbing the planting.

Rhododendrons will grow freely on any lime-free soil, providing one or two simple rules are followed:

Rule One should be the thorough preparation of the ground before planting. Too much emphasis cannot be laid on the initial preparation. If planting your Rhododendrons in beds, the beds should be trenched, incorporating a good quantity of humus in the form of leaf soil or peat as work proceeds, and removing all tree roots and other rubbish. As Rhododendrons are truly surface-rooting plants, extra humus should be mixed with the top 12 in. [0.3m] of your trenched soil. The surface after trenching should be left as rough as possible. The rough tilth serves two purposes; first to collect any rain that falls and secondly to collect fallen leaves, thus forming a natural mulch.

If it is not practicable to trench your beds before planting, a satisfactory compromise may be made by making large pot-holes for each plant. A hole two or three times the size of the ball of the Rhododendron to be planted should be prepared. This will keep the plants growing for two or three years, during which time the trenching of the beds can proceed at leisure.

Rule Two should be shallow planting. Too often have I seen Rhododendrons unhappy and dying merely because they had 4 to 6 in. of soil - usually rammed hard - on top of their root system [10 to 15cm]. When the ground is ready for planting, holes can be made twice the size of the ball in breadth, but no deeper than the actual depth of the ball to be planted. The soil that has been removed from the holes should be mixed with a quantity of leaf soil or peat. This gives the plant a good start in its new position, as it is the soil which will surround the ball when it is being planted.

A point worth remembering is to see that the root or ball being planted is sufficiently moist. If it is in the least dry, give it a good soaking, either with a hosepipe or by plunging it in a tank of water. Never plant a dry specimen, as after planting, it is almost impossible to moisten a dry ball by the usual watering methods.

Firm planting is essential, care being taken to see that the roots are not damaged in the process. Add no more than an inch of fresh soil to the top of the ball [2.5cm].

I find that Rhododendrons can safely be moved in any of the months from September to April, but the months of September and October are the best. The plants root freely in early autumn and in doing so grow away very much more freely than when planted later.

I hope these notes may help any enthusiast who is starting on that most enthralling of all hobbies, a woodland garden.

The Naturalisation of Rhododendron Species (1956).

To the rhododendron enthusiast, the discovery of natural seedlings is always exciting, especially among the species. It appears that the young plants thus obtained are generally stronger than those raised under glass, and, of course, time and labour are saved.

Given the right conditions, certain rhododendrons will reproduce themselves freely, almost in competition with *R. ponticum* and *R. luteum.*

Here at Windsor, the north edge of a mossy path or a north-facing bank, seems to make an ideal natural seed-bed, as indeed, does an old and mossy tree-stump. Close observation has been kept on these natural seedlings from species, and in no case, as far as one can judge, has any hybridisation taken place.

To give a few examples, *R. yunnanense* gave us hundreds of flowering plants within five years. Also from the Triflorum Series, *R. davidsonianum* and *R. pseudoyanthinum* seed freely, while the lovely *R. augustinii* seems to delight in old tree-stumps, the roots sinking deeply into the rotten wood.

A near relation, *R. rubiginosum,* from the Heliolepis Series, has the same generous reproductive characteristics, as have *R. fictolacteum* and *R. rex* from the Falconeri Series. Other youngsters found near parent plants include *R. euchaites, R. neriiflorum, R. sperabile, R. diaprepes, R. fortunei* and *R. sutchuenense,* while only a few months ago a drift of hundreds of young *R. albrechtii* was discovered on mossy banks near the parent plant.

A photograph taken at Inverewe some years ago aptly illustrates the point of these notes, for here *R. sinogrande* has seeded in the mossy bark of a dead tree in the shade of bamboos and *R. ponticum.*

In 1950 on the Camellia and Magnolia Tour in Cornwall, seed was collected of *R. sinogrande* at Heligan. This seed was divided into two lots, one of which was scattered on a north-facing mossy bank; the other was sown in pans and then placed in a heated house to

germinate. The interesting thing is that today, the plants sown outside are further along than those raised under glass. Some of the former are over two feet in height with leaves over 18 inches long [0.6m and 0.45m].

In the plantation devoted to the Stevenson collection of species two or three seed pods are left on each bush to sow themselves in the rich leaf-mould around them. This idea developed from the experience we had when the plants, on which many of the seed pods remained, were moved from Tower Court. The first season after planting, literally thousands of seedlings appeared and those which have flowered have all been true to type.



Self-sown seedlings of *R. sinogrande* at Inverewe Gardens.

Review on some of the Series
in the Species Collection of Rhododendrons (1959).

The object of these notes is to report on the progress since moving and the behaviour in their new position of some of the rhododendron species moved from Tower Court in 1951 to Windsor Great Park.

As this report will take three or four years to complete, it has been decided, this year, to concentrate on the alpine type rhododendrons, mostly the Lepidotes, as these have settled down more quickly and probably more easily in their new homes than have the larger-leaved species.

During the planning and setting out of this vast collection of rhododendrons we were fortunately able to give most of the plants the best possible situation for their individual requirements.

Therefore the alpine sorts were given an open situation, sheltered from the north, but fully exposed to the sun, and situated well away from overhanging trees. This area, known as the Alpine Meadow, is on a gentle slope, and frost can 'drain away' quite easily to the lake below. Moisture is not a problem as we are able to water when necessary. The soil is almost pure sand but has been enriched by trenching-in plenty of leaf-mould and peat prior



The method of pruning *R. saluenense*.

to planting.

The Alpine Meadow contains some thirteen series, including Anthopogon, Boothii (those that are reasonably hardy), Campylogynum, Camtschaticum, Ferrugineum, Glaucophyllum, Lapponicum, Lepidotum, Ovatum, Uniflorum and Virgatum. The series Triflorum, Scabrifolium and Heliolepis are planted on the fringe of the meadow and form a perfect background for the dwarfer plants.

When it was decided to move this valuable collection to Windsor it was realised that one of each species would look rather lost in a large area, and that some plants might die after transplanting. Therefore all the plants in the series mentioned were propagated vegetatively during the autumns of 1951 and 1952, so that when these series were put into their new home, during 1955, we were able to plant in groups instead of as single specimens.

Small growing shrubs, such as *Acer palmatum, A. palmatum dissectum, Magnolia stellata,* daphnes, pieris and ericas, with a few dwarf conifers, were planted with the rhododendrons to give variation of foliage and to break the monotony of the 'sameness' of the rhododendrons when out of flower. Large quantities of the small daffodil species and other spring bulbs have also been planted to naturalise where they will and to make a ground cover.

The largest series amongst these dwarf rhododendrons is Lapponicum, containing some thirty-eight distinct species. These were growing in full sun at Tower Court and have been given a similar position here, but with rather richer ground. Having been given more room they have all tended to bush out and become even more compact. What wonderful free-flowering plants these Lapponicums are, with a great colour range, varying from the soft yellow of *R. chryseum,* through the pinks of *R. cuneatum* and *R. ravum* to the blues of *R. scintillans* and *R. russatum.*

We feel that this type of rhododendrons looks better when forming a hump, and as these plants have settled in, the opportunity has been taken to prune back the older wood in order to encourage young growth from the base.

Our next largest series is Saluenense, which is complete, and was growing at Tower Court in a somewhat shady position; some of the older collections had made bushes 4 to 5 feet high [1.2 to 1.5m]. When these were moved into the open position they immediately started to branch out from the base; this was especially so with *R. saluenense* and *R. calostrotum* and the photo opposite (bottom right) shows the severe pruning of *R saluenense* that was carried out, with vigorous young shoots developing as a result. *R. keleticum* and *R. radicans* love this open situation and make great humps, some 2 to 3 feet across [0.6 to 0.9m], hugging the ground all the time.

The Anthopogon Series, now very much enlarged, are supposed to like the moister ground, but have developed well here and flower freely, especially the lovely *R. cephalanthum* var. *crebreflorum,* looking more like a daphne than a rhododendron. *R. sargentianum* also thrives.

Some beautiful rhododendrons are represented by the Boothii Series, some too tender for our climate, but *R. leucaspis* and *R. megeratum* both flower freely, while *R. tephropeplum* is represented by fifteen different collectors' numbers, those of Kingdon-Ward having much larger flowers than the collections of Forrest or Rock.

Near neighbours of the Boothii Series are those of the Glaucophyllum Series, thriving on an open sunny bank. Of these *R. charitopes* is probably the best.

Early to flower and always free-flowering are the Uniflorum Series, with the best being *R. imperator* and *R. pemakoense.* We have two forms of *R. pemakoense,* one of which suckers quite freely and forms large matts. *R. pumilum* has also settled down.

The Virgatum Series is interesting for its great variation in the different forms of *R. racemosum* of which Forrest 19404 is very dwarf; *R. virgatum* itself, a tender plant, has prospered here since it was planted two years ago.

On the whole the moving of these few series has been very successful, considering that some plants were twenty to thirty years old; they have all now become well established.

Foliage in Rhododendron Species (1963).

To any rhododendron enthusiast, the growing of these plants for foliage effect is both absorbing and rewarding. In common with hosts of other horticulturalists, I find this subject fascinating, and never tire of comparing the habits and colouring of these noble plants.

In this article I shall write about those rhododendrons which I like to grow most for foliage effect. All of these are growing at Windsor, so it is safe to assume that they should be perfectly hardy over most of the country.

Any rhododendron grown for its colouring in leaf must have woodland conditions, with dappled shade and adequate moisture during the growing season, both in the ground and in the atmosphere. The large-leafed species require cultivation in the form of annual top dressing with equal parts of leaf soil and old cow manure. This treatment pays for itself, putting size and colour into the foliage, but never softening the plant against winter frosts.

The choice of species is a very wide one: indeed, few gardens today could hope to accommodate them all. It must be remembered that the greatest colour effect comes in the spring and early summer, from the new growth, and in my opinion, this can equal that of many flowering plants. The foliage colouring can range from silvery-white to grey, from fawn to rich bronze, and from jade green to a delicate powder blue.

If I have a favourite rhododendron it is *R. macabeanum,* which is I think one of the finest hardy large-leafed rhododendrons. It flowers freely on reaching maturity, some ten to twelve years after planting. One point of interest here is that the best colour in foliage comes from the best coloured flower form, namely the F.C.C. variety. *R. macabeanum* is magnificent in late April and May, when the young growth is covered with a silvery indumentum, and the stems with scarlet bud scales. It should be planted away from the wind, with plenty of room to grow, for it makes a big plant.

Another startling plant is *R. sinogrande;* the largest in leaf and stature grown in this country. Again, this plant is lovely in spring, with its young growth of silvery-grey; but its main attraction is its huge green leaves of bright green, with a silver reverse, in summer and winter.

I know that some people regard *R. sinogrande* as tender, but surely this is not so if the correct form is found. A 2 foot high plant [0.6m] was planted in the Valley Gardens here some fifteen years ago. It is now 12 feet by 12 feet, with leaves 2 feet long [3.7 x 3.7m and 0.6m], and it has survived severe frosts. A point to note here is that some forms make their young growth in April, and other as late as July and August. It would appear that forms collected by the late Captain Kingdon-Ward, especially from his last collection, are of early growth, and are therefore more hardy than those collected earlier.

For the small garden, with little shade, nothing could be better than *R. yakushimanum.* The F.C.C. form is lovely in habit; a mound of silvery-grey in the spring and holding this colour well into the autumn. It is, of course, renowned for its flower, but I rate it very highly as a foliage plant. A member of the Ponticum Series, it makes a plant of 2 to 3 feet high, but 3 to 4 feet in width [0.6 to 0.9m, and 0.9 to 1.2m].

Moving along the colour range, many good rhododendrons show in their young foliage



R. cinnabarinum Roylei Group



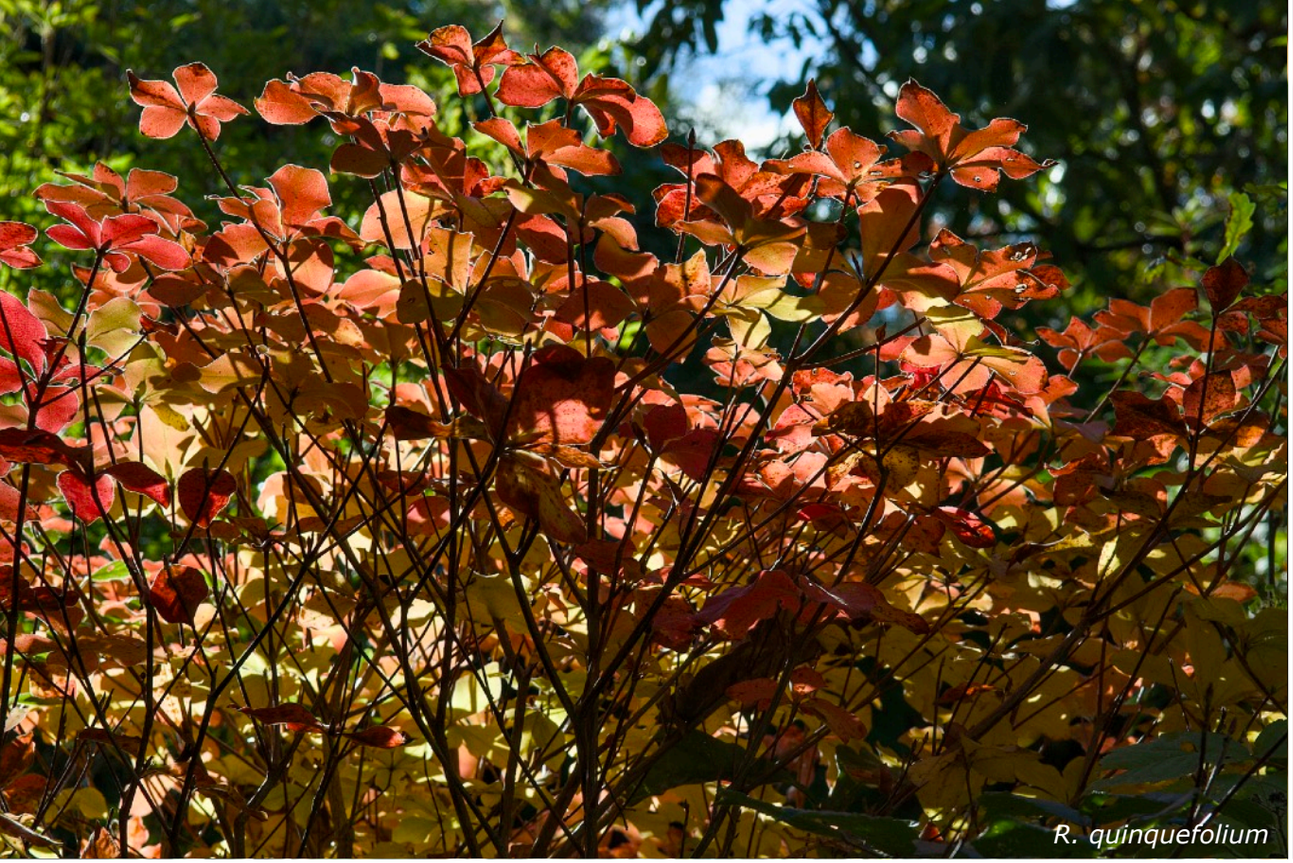
R. sinogrande



R. rex ssp. *fictolacteum*



R. campanulatum ssp. *aeruginosum*



R. quinquefolium



R. falconeri ssp. *falconeri*



R. degronianum ssp. *yakushimanum*



R. luteum

the golden-bronze indumentum. From the Falconeri series alone there is a choice of six types. These are *R. falconeri* itself, *R. arizelum, R. eximium, R. fictolacteum, R. rex* and *R. lanigerum.* I particularly like *R. rex* KW 4509. This makes a large tree, with leaves a foot long [0.3m]. Its young foliage is a rich golden-bronze. It is quite hardy. Similar in habit is *R. eximium,* with deep bronze-red young foliage which persists well into the winter. This rhododendron requires shade to be seen at its best.

Three members of the Ponticum series, although having rather poor flowering qualities, are worthwhile, from the foliage point of view, in the open garden. These are *R. metternichii, R. makinoi* and *R. degronianum.* They have narrow dark green leaves with pale brown indumentum. Two others worthy of mention are *R. bureavii,* from the Taliense Series, and *R. tsariense* from the Campanulatum Series. *R. bureavii* has deep salmon-orange indumentum on bottle green leaves, and is a very attractive foliage plant. For some years *R. tsariense* has attracted much attention here with its coppery bronze young foliage. It is very dwarf in habit, only 2 feet high after fifteen years [0.6m].

Breaking away from the thick, woolly leaves of the aforementioned plants, and while it is not generally considered as a foliage plant, I like to grow *R. lutescens,* for its gloriously bronze young growth which it produces so early every year. From the Triflorum Series, this rhododendron is light, airy, and elegantly beautiful when allowed to grow naturally.

A large number of rhododendrons have a bluish green tint in both the young and the mature foliage. Included in this range are the Campanulatum, Cinnabarinum, Thomsonii, Triflorum and Trichocladum Series. From these I would choose *R. campanulatum* var. *aeruginosum,* a bushy shrub with metallic blue young foliage. It is not a large grower, so is useful for the smaller garden. *R. cinnabarinum* var. *roylei,* a tall-growing shrub, with blue-green leaves, is beautiful all the year round. A plant which attracts me is *R. lepidostylum,* from the Trichocladum Series. Poor in flower, it earns its place in any garden with its fine blue foliage and dwarf habit.

Most of the foregoing species are seen at their best in either spring or summer, but with the use of rhododendrons from the azalea series the season can end in a blaze of yellow, scarlet and orange.

The common *R. luteum,* so lovely in spring, has no rival in autumn with its beautiful yellow and orange colouring.

The more classic *R. quinquefolium* and *R. pentaphyllum,* with their distinctive pale green leaves in Summer, can also be very beautiful, with a soft golden display at leaf-fall.

In conclusion, I would say that the rhododendron species well repay spending a little time and trouble in the choice of the right setting, for surely no other plant gives quite as much reward for time and money, keeping its interest as it does right through the year.

Notes on Rhododendron Hybrids at the Great Park, Windsor (1967).

After making some 275 rhododendron crosses, it is interesting to look back and reflect on some of the results over the past twenty years. One always, of course, hopes for a winner from every cross, and it does happen that many good hybrids will come from one deliberate cross.

The late Mr. Lionel de Rothschild made a cross between R. 'Lady Bessborough' and *R. wardii* which produced R. 'Hawk' A.M. A clone from this family, 'Crest', one of the best yellows, received an F.C.C. in 1953, and it was at the Rhododendron Show in that year that we were very kindly given a truss for breeding purposes. I remember well bringing this truss home and making nine deliberate crosses between it and both species and hybrids. These were *R. wardii* and *R. litiense,* two beautiful species, especially *R. litiense,* a good strong yellow that we had obtained from Messrs. Slocock some years before. Those



R. lepidostylum

between hybrids were with R. ‘China’ (the ‘A’ form), R. ‘Penjerrick’ (the yellow form), R. ‘Jalisco’, R. ‘Loderi Julie’ (a pale creamy yellow), R. ‘Loderi Venus’, R. ‘Idealist’ and R. ‘Damaris’ (a good yellow on a form better than the Logan form).

Most of the crosses made with R. ‘Crest’ have produced something outstanding. It is our policy to grow approximately fifty seedlings on to flowering size (if that number has germinated) and then to select and keep only the best. On an average it takes ten years to see and appraise a new variety. Rarely do we name a rhododendron unless it has had an Award of Merit, a P.C., or has been selected for trial at Wisley.

To revert to the nine crosses. The most outstanding are the ‘China’ x ‘Crest’ hybrids. although this cross is between two hybrids, the two hybrids have three species and one hybrid in their make-up (namely, *fortunei, wightii* and *wardii,* and the hybrid ‘Lady Bessborough’) which have produced a level lot, very vigorous and with large trusses. One of the best of these, R. ‘Binfield’, received an Award of Merit in 1964. This plant also won, in 1964, the Loder Cup for the best hybrid in the Rhododendron Show. R. ‘Binfield’ is a vigorous grower with leaves six inches long [15cm] and seventeen-flowered trusses of primrose yellow. Another good clone, a sister seedling similar in habit but, I think, a better plant won the Loder Cup in 1965. This and others are as yet unnamed.

R. ‘China’ was bred and introduced by Messrs. Slocock. I must refute the statement made in the report on the 1965 Rhododendron Show on page 107 of the Rhododendron Year Book 1966 that the seedlings shown by Messrs. Slocock were sister seedlings of the Loder Cup winner R. ‘Binfield’. Messrs. Slocock made a similar cross but used, I think, a different ‘China’ as one parent. In any case we still hold the original seedlings. From the ‘Penjerrick’ x ‘Crest’ we have another yellow range, and an Award of Merit was given to one of these in May, 1966. This has been named ‘Theale’, a primrose yellow with a slight flush of cardinal red. This rhododendron holds its flowers like ‘Penjerrick’; beautifully poised, it has ten flowers to the truss.

In the batch from the ‘Loderi Julie’ cross some very lovely forms have appeared, and one, named ‘Arborfield’, was given an Award of Merit in 1964. This type follows the Loderi parentage in all but colour.

When using ‘Crest’ as a parent we were, of course, trying to breed good yellow rhododendrons, and I think we have achieved this in the *litiense* cross with ‘Crest’. Many clones of this cross are really deep yellow and of dwarfish stature. They should make some good garden plants for the small garden. One, named ‘Clewer’, received a P.C. in 1966.

To date from what we have seen of the flowers of the *wardii* and ‘Idealist’ hybrids (not all have flowered yet) I would say these are very good. They have flowers of good texture and sit well on the bush.

The ‘Jalisco’ cross has produced nothing worth keeping, as I think was to be expected, and the ‘Damaris’ hybrids, good flowering yellows, but nothing worth naming. So on the whole R. ‘Crest’ is a very good pollen parent.

The History and Parentage of a New Rhododendron Hybrid (1969).

In breeding new rhododendrons one often wonders what the results are going to be, especially after waiting a period of some ten to twelve years.

In our breeding programme we box up approximately fifty young seedlings of any one cross and grow them on to flowering size. This, of course, requires ample room if the new hybrids are to remain shapely and in good condition, and means constant transplanting from the nursery lines to the flowering area, and often after a period of ten years one must still wait for a further five before all the plants from any one cross have flowered.

In 1953 R. ‘Idealist’ was crossed with R. ‘Crest’ and the following spring the seed was



R. ‘China’ - the AM 1940 & FCC 1982 clone at the Savill Gardens

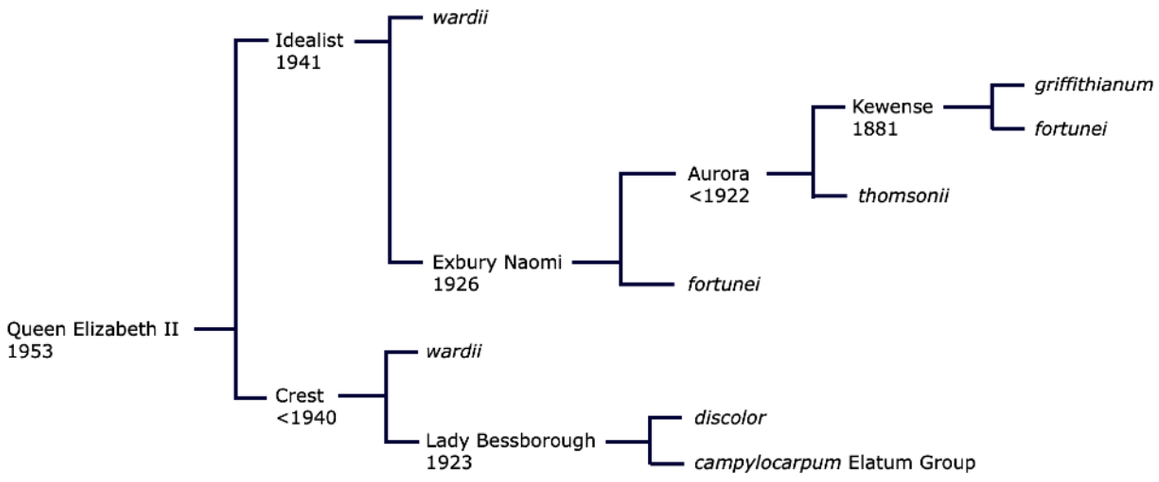


R. ‘China’ - the ‘A’ clone at the Savill Gardens

sown. This germinated freely. All the young seedlings grew splendidly and eventually all made very vigorous plants. In. 1964 the first plants from this cross flowered, and it was obvious that all these were of first-class quality; some cream, some yellow, some with pink suffused throughout the cream and yellow. On 2nd May, 1967, the best one, a lovely deep yellow with ten to twelve flowers to the truss and individual flowers 4½ inches across [11.4cm], was in perfect condition for showing, and received the Award of Merit at the Rhododendron Show under the number 137/53/1. This plant is now named 'Queen Elizabeth II' by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen.

This year at the Rhododendron Show a different clone of the same cross won the Loder Cup, which is awarded annually to the best hybrid shown at the Rhododendron Show.

The parentage of this cross is quite interesting, and seems to have started around 1881, as can be seen from the following table:



Some Dwarf Rhododendron Hybrids Raised at Windsor (1971).

Of the many hybrids I have bred at Windsor none have given me greater pleasure than some of the dwarf types, ideal for the small garden or for the shaded parts of a rock garden. One of the first to be recognised of these is a dwarf yellow, named 'Chink' - a pale yellow bred from the deciduous *R. trichocladum* and the semi-evergreen *R. keiskei.* This cross has given a nice compact bush, deciduous, very floriferous and flowering just before 'Blue Tit' and 'Blue Diamond' at the end of March. The cross was made in 1947 and an A.M. given to a selected clone in 1961. The rate of growth has been slow. Most plants of this cross are only 2 to 3 feet high now and about as wide [0.6 to 0.9m].

Many crosses were made using *R. forrestii* as one parent, such as *forrestii* x 'Choremia', *forrestii* x *beanianum,* and with *beanianum* Compactum, 'Barclayi' and *R. barbatum* as other mates.

Some of these crosses had, of course, been made by other hybridisers and most have made good dwarf hybrids, all dark red in colour. Our most successful cross in this group is *forrestii* crossed with *barbatum.* Made in 1949, a clone named 'Appleford' received an A.M. in March, 1966. This clone is a humpy bush some 2 feet high, and has taken on the habit of the sprawling *forrestii* with a nice-sized truss of glowing scarlet.

Again, *forrestii* has been crossed with *R. smithii.* All the progeny are growing with a dwarf habit but upright, taking more after *R. smithii* than *forrestii.* I wonder why this should happen, for *R. barbatum* and *R. smithii* only differ in habit very slightly.

Another fine red raised here is the result of a curious set of parents. It is not yet named, but one day is sure to receive some award. It has been our policy not to name a new hybrid unless it has had an award of some sort either in London or after trial at Wisley. This new red is derived from a red rhododendron raised by the late Mr. Rose, who was then at Townhill Park. His red was the result of crossing R. 'Loderi' with R. 'Earl of Athlone'. Many may remember this red but it was never named. 'Elizabeth' from Bodnant was the other parent. Only one seedling of this cross was of any use, but it is a good dwarf, with large red flowers and a compact habit.

R. yakushimanum had, of course, to be used as one parent for keeping the dwarfing habit, and many fine seedlings have resulted. The best is probably the result of using it with *R. aberconwayi.* Every one of the fifty seedlings were winners. One clone, R. 'Streatley', had an A.M. and the Cory Cup in 1964. Raised in 1956, plants today are still only 18 inches to 2 feet high [0.45 to 0.6m].

A new *yakushimanum* hybrid flowered for the first time this year and looks like a winner; the result of using *R. insigne,* it has produced a fine foliage plant, good truss and nice pink flowers.

A hybrid of similar type is R. 'Blewbury', A.M. 1968. This is *roxieanum* x *anwheiense.* A compact bush with white heavily spotted small flowers, *R. anwheiense* is a small growing shrub from the Barbatum Series and, crossed with *R. aberconwayi,* again proved successful, producing R. 'Enborne', A.M. 1966.

Recent hybrids are just coming to flowering size, and these might prove to be interesting. The crosses were mostly made between *R. carolinianum album* as the seed parent, and *R. leucaspis,* R. 'Seta', *R. moupinense,* R. 'Silkcap' and *R. sulphureum.*

Hope Findlay (1910-1994), M.V.O., V.M.H., the Keeper of the Gardens at Windsor Great Park, also wrote articles on the Reticulata Camellias, the Kurume Azaleas, and the Magnolias that were growing in the Savill and Valley Gardens. These can be found in the 1964, 1967 and 1972 Year Books respectively, while a portrait of the rhododendron plantings at Westonbirt Arboretum in Gloucestershire was published in the 1965 edition. The botanic nomenclature and classification used throughout Hope's essays reflect the strictures in place at the time they were written, rather than the 1996 Edinburgh revisions or the most recent structural changes.

The Evergreen Azalea Registrations:

R. 'Chalk Hill'
'Mucronatum' X 'Wadae'
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5-6 June 0.6m x 1.5m

'Chalk Hill' is a stunning evergreen azalea hybrid that can partner *R. nakaharae* in the rock garden, for it has a similar semi-dwarf spreading habit and an early June flowering time, though it sports pure white, openly-funnel-shaped corollas with two rays of greenish-yellow spots on the dorsal lobe instead of brick-red funnel-campanulate blooms. These are carried in lax trusses of three, with so many produced that when fully open, they can completely cover a mature plant, hiding virtually any trace of the small, mid-green leaves.



R. 'Chalk Hill' AM 1987

R. 'Snow Hill'
'Wadae' X 'Mucronatum'
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5-6. May 0.6m x 1.5m

'Snow Hill' reverses the pairing used to produce 'Chalk Hill', with 'Wadae' now maturing the seed, and it is Hope Findlay's only other registered evergreen azalea. It is also more widely grown. Both crosses were made in 1957, but introduced over a decade apart, 'Snow Hill' first, in 1974, 'Chalk Hill' in 1986, with the former marginally the better plant, having more corollas in the truss - 4 or 5, rather than 3. The greenish-yellow spotting on the dorsal lobes is also heavier, although it is still a fan of speckles rather than a distinct blotch.



R. 'Snow Hill' AM 1978



R. ‘Chalk Hill’ AM 1987



R. ‘Snow Hill’ AM 1978



R. ‘Chalk Hill’ AM 1987



R. ‘Snow Hill’ AM 1978

R. ‘Chalk Hill’ AM 1987

R. ‘Snow Hill’ AM 1978

The Lepidote & Elepidote Registrations:

Appleford
'Portia' X *barbatum*
AM 1966
Flower Colour: Cardinal Red

Arborfield
'Crest' X 'Loderi Julie'
AM 1963
Flower Colour: Mimosa Yellow

Ardington
yakushimanum X 'Hawk' x *brachycarpum*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Medium

Binfield
'China' X 'Crest'
AM 1964
Flower Colour: Yellow-green
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Bishopsgate
'Jalisco Elect' X 'Crest'
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow

Blewbury
roxieanum X *anwheiense*
AM 1968 & FCC 1983
Flower Colour: Yellowish-white
Flowering Time: Late April-May
Height: Medium

Bradfield
souliei X *yakushimanum*
Flower Colour: White

Bray
griffithianum X 'Hawk'
AM 1960
Flower Colour: Mimosa Yellow

Brightwell
forrestii Repens (KW 6832) X *barbatum*
AM 1966
Flower Colour: Red

Brookside
'Goshawk' X *griersonianum*
AM 1962
Flower Colour: Yellow Ochre
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Bucklebury
yakushimanum X 'Kiev'
AM 1986
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: Mid May
Height: Medium

Buttersteep
'Jalisco' X 'Crest'
AM 1971
Flower Colour: Yellow

Candy Floss
'Hawk' X 'Mrs Randall Davidson'
AM 1983
Flower Colour: Creamy-white

Chink
keiskei X *trichocladum*
AM 1961
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: April-Early May
Height: Semi-Dwarf

Clewer
wardii Litiense X 'Crest'
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow

Cranbourne
'Azor' X 'Isabella'
AM 1957
Flower Colour: Tyrian Rose
Flowering Time: July
Height: Tall

Cranbourne's Sister
'Azor' X 'Isabella'
Flower Colour: Rose-pink
Flowering Time: July
Height: Tall

Crowthorne
aberconwayi X *souliei*
Flower Colour: White
Height: Medium

Donnington
chaetomallum X 'Portia'
Flower Colour: Red

Dukeshill
'Kiev' X 'Lady Digby'
AM 1973
Flower Colour: Scarlet-red
Height: Tall

Enborne
aberconwayi X *anwheiense*
AM 1966
Flower Colour: White-Phlox Pink
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Englemere
'Jutland' X 'Royal Blood'
AM 1971
Flower Colour: Red

Fernhill
'Peregrine' X *yakushimanum*
AM 1973
Flower Colour: White
Height: Low

Florida Ogada
macabeanum X *sinogrande*
FCC 2002
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Grilse
'Fusilier' X 'Jalisco Eclipse'
AM 1957
Flower Colour: Porcelain Rose

Helen Webster
discolor X 'Richard Gill'
AM 1954
Flower Colour: Phlox Pink

Hope Findlay
'Loderi' x 'Earl of Athlone' X 'Creeping Jenny'
AM 1979
Flower Colour: Red
Height: Medium

King's Ride
insigne X *yakushimanum*
Flower Colour: White-purplish-pink
Flowering Time: Late May
Height: Medium

Lady in Waiting
'Idealist' X 'Crest'
AM 1989
Flower Colour: Yellow
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Lambourn
'Lady Chamberlain' X *maddenii*
Flower Colour: Persian Rose

Mah Jong
'Chink' X *valentinianum*
Flower Colour: Yellow-green
Flowering Time: April
Height: Semi-Dwarf

Manor Hill
'Dido' X 'Jalisco' x *yakushimanum*
AM 1974
Flower Colour: Orange-yellow
Height: Medium

Mortimer
'Gladys' X 'Yvonne Pearl'
AM 1964
Flower Colour: White-yellow

Parkside
souliei X 'Hawk'

Peregrine
souliei X 'Hawk'

Peregrine Fledgling
souliei X 'Hawk'

Queen Elizabeth II
'Idealist' X 'Crest'
AM 1967 & FCC 1974
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: Late April-May
Height: Tall

Queen's Wood
souliei X *aberconwayi*
AM 1972
Flower Colour: White-purplish-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Red Rum
'Barclayi' X *forrestii* Repens
AM 1974
Flower Colour: Red

Royal Windsor
'Jutland' X 'Royal Blood'
AM 1975
Flower Colour: Red

Seven Stars
'Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker' X *yakushimanum*
AM 1967 & FCC 1974
Flower Colour: Pink-white
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Silkcap
leucaspis X 'Cilpinense'
Flower Colour: White

Smew
'Hawk' X *souliei*
Flower Colour: White-pink

Sonning
hyperythrum X *aberconwayi*
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: Mid April
Height: Tall

Streatley
aberconwayi X *yakushimanum*
AM 1964
Flower Colour: White-rosy-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Swallowfield
souliei X *yakushimanum*
Flower Colour: White
Height: Low

Tan Crossing
'Jalisco Eclipse' X 'Jalisco Goshawk'
AM 1976
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow

Theale
'Penjerrick' X 'Hawk Crest'
AM 1966
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow

The Queen Mother
'Halcyone' X *aberconwayi*
AM 1968
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Thicket
moupinense X *seinghkuense*
Flower Colour: Chartreuse Green

Tilehurst
'Dido' X 'Sarita Loder'
Flower Colour: Carmine Rose-Porcelain Rose

Wantage
'Fabia' X 'Dido'
Flower Colour: Reddish-orange
Height: Semi-Dwarf

Warfield
'Jalisco' X 'Crest'
AM 1970
Flower Colour: Yellow-green

Whitmoor
'Grenadine' X 'Royal Blood'
AM 1971
Flower Colour: Red

Windle Brook
minus Carolinianum X 'Cilpinense'
Flower Colour: White

Windles
'Dido' X 'Jalisco' x *yakushimanum*
Flower Colour: Yellow-orange

Winkfield
'Fusilier' X 'Jalisco Elect'
AM 1958
Flower Colour: Pinkish-yellow

Wishmoor
yakushimanum X *wardii* Litiense
AM 1972 & FCC 1987
Flower Colour: Yellow-green
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Low

Woodside
'Halcyone' X *aberconwayi*
Flower Colour: Pink-white



R. 'Appleford' AM 1966

R. ‘Ardington’

R. ‘Blewbury’ AM 1968 & FCC 1983

R. ‘Blewbury’

roxieanum x *anwheiense*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H6-7 Early May 4m x 3m

Along with ‘Seven Stars’ and ‘Wishmoor’, ‘Blewbury’ is probably Thomas Hope Findlay’s most well-known and widely planted rhododendron hybrid.

Named for a small village in Oxfordshire, R. ‘Blewbury’ is a straight F1 cross between *R. roxieanum* and *R. anwheiense,* opening 5-lobed, open-campanulate corollas in tightly packed trusses of 18 to 20. These are pink in the bud, opening white with a flush of pink, and then fading out to a yellowish-white. The upper lobe of each corolla is fairly heavily spotted purplish-red in the throat, the blotch sometimes split into two distinct flares.

The hybrid’s leaves are narrowly-elliptic, about 9cm long, thin, pointed, and with recurved margins. They can sometimes look a touch chlorotic, a trait inherited from the pollen parent. A loose, pale brown, woolly indumentum cloaks the blade underside. Habit is upright and bushy, a mature shrub awash with bloom each season, and flower buds first form when a plant is around 5 or 6 years old.

Hope Findlay was born into a gardening family, his father being in charge of the Logan estate, near Stranraer in southern Scotland, on the day of his birth in April 1910 and retiring as curator of Wisley at the end of the Second World War. His son began work at Pyrford Court, Woking, the home of Lord Iveagh, rising swiftly through the ranks and moving between estates to become head gardener to Sir James Horlick at Little Paddocks, Titness Park, from where he was poached by Sir Eric Savill for Windsor Great Park, the Savill Garden, and the then nascent Valley Gardens. And from the start of 1943 until Sir Eric retired in 1970, these two men created what are probably the finest woodland gardens in the UK, if not the world.

Findlay had begun hybridising rhododendrons under Sir James Horlick’s guidance while still employed at Titness Park, but at Windsor he came into his own. There is no detailed record of the breeding programme as such, even though it began within a year of his arrival and ran through until 1968, simply one line entries in the Windsor Great Park Stud Book. But Mark Flanagan, one of Hope’s successors as curator of the two gardens, as well as the author of the article from which these two paragraphs have been composed - published in *Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias 2006* - has discovered that 288 crosses in total were made, and of these, 56 hybrids named and registered. But a check of the official *IRRC* database will show Hope Findlay’s name assigned to very few of them, including the plant that bears his name. For the tradition at Windsor was that new hybrids were introduced and registered by the Crown Estate Commissioners.

Thomas Hope Findlay died in Bracknell in 1994 at the age of 84.



R. ‘Blewbury’ AM 1968 & FCC 1983

R. ‘Blewbury’ AM 1968 & FCC 1983



R. ‘Blewbury’ AM 1968 & FCC 1983


R. ‘Bray’ AM 1960

R. ‘Bray’

griffithianum hybrid x ‘Hawk’

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H4-5 April-May 3.5m x 2m

‘Bray’ is one of Hope Findlay’s crosses from the late 1940s, the actual pairing placing pollen from Lionel de Rothschild’s ‘Hawk’ - not officially introduced until 1947, when it won an Award of Merit from the RHS - onto the style of *R. griffithianum,* at least, as detailed in the 2004-published Second Edition of the International Rhododendron Register and Checklist. Except the entry in the Windsor Great Park stud book - No. 5/46 - records the seed parent as being an unknown *griffithianum* hybrid (*Thomas Hope Findlay and his Rhododendrons,* an appraisal by Mark Flanagan written for the 2006 *Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias* yearbook), which is the lineage detailed above.

The plant itself opens blooms in a flat-topped lax truss of eight corollas, each 7cm long and 10cm across at the mouth, flesh-pink in bud, but pale mimosa-yellow flushed pink when fully expanded. Unfortunately the mix of colour is quickly lost and the corollas fade to a clean white, pleasing to the eye but no match when set against the introductory salvo.

The leaves are elliptically shaped, medium-sized and dull green, but only held for just one year and discarded once the new growth has fully extended, although a sparse appearance is usually avoided thanks to the criss-crossing branch structure.

R. ‘Bray’ borrows its epithet from the Berkshire village that borders the River Thames, a naming tradition Hope Findlay adopted for many of his hybrids.


R. ‘Bray’ AM 1960

R. ‘Bray’ AM 1960

R. ‘Bray’ AM 1960

R. ‘Bray’ AM 1960

R. ‘Brookside’ AM 1962



R. ‘Brookside’ AM 1962

R. ‘Buttersteep’ AM 1971

R. `Buttersteep' AM 1971



R. ‘Chink’ AM 1961

R. ‘Chink’

keiskei x *trichocladum*

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H6	Late March-April	0.6m x 0.4m

Verb:

1. To make or cause to make a light, high-pitched ringing sound.

Noun:

1. A narrow opening;
2. A beam or patch of light admitted by a narrow opening;
3. A high-pitched ringing sound;
4. A weak spot in someone’s character or armour;
5. A contemptuous term for a Chinese person or a person of East or Southeast Asian birth or descent.

When Hope Findlay named and introduced his low-growing *keiskei* x *trichocladum* cross in the early 1960s, British social attitudes towards people of colour were in an entirely different place to where they are now, which though enlightened, are still far from perfect. It was during an era when ‘golliwogs’ advertised jars of jam, Alf Garnett spurted bile on the BBC, and racism was endemic and largely unremarked.

So registering ‘Chink’ as the epithet for a yellow-flowering rhododendron hybrid caused not the slightest politically incorrect ripple to stir, even in the hallowed halls of the Crown Estate Commissioners.

Today, heads would probably roll if an equally offensive tag were suggested and even the Robertson’s Wikipedia page now simply refers to ‘Golly’, as if the final three letters had never even existed, though thankfully the revisionists have yet to get around to Florence Kate Upton or Debussy.

Of course, the epithet was almost certainly chosen with definition number five in mind, the other four having no contextual linkage with the plant whatsoever. All those who knew him however, agree that in hindsight, Hope would have been appalled that his choice of name might cause offence. But that selection is now set in botanic stone.

The plant itself can be an eye-catching sheet of chartreuse-yellow when in bloom, each truss holding five nodding corollas that are spotted darker on the dorsal lobes. Unfortunately, once the flowers fall, a dichotomy is more starkly revealed: the quality chasm between the corolla, and the leaf.

Bronze-coloured when they first unfurl, the small elliptic-lanceolate-shaped blades soon morph into a dull mid-green, remaining so until the chills of autumn prompt reddish tints to return. However, the foliage is semi-deciduous, with around half the leaves being discarded over the winter months.

Which is fine, as the problem lies with those that persist:

For each will be spotted to some degree and so rendered unsightly, marring the floral display to come. The AM clone - the selection least widely distributed - seems to sport the most resilient, least disfigured leaves, but only when conditions in December through March remain relatively mild. Should the weather turn severe, the visual outcome becomes decidedly unsavoury, as other clones from the cross - those available from the specialist nurseries and some garden centres - fair even worse, as the photograph on page 50 confirms.

The shrub’s habit is upright, but usually compact, with the plants growing taller than they spread out, which means multiple specimens will be needed to achieve the coverage depicted in the photograph on page 51 and the top right Back Cover image.

R. ‘Chink’ AM 1961

R. ‘Chink’ AM 1961

R. 'Chink' AM 1961

R. ‘Clewer’

R. ‘Clewer’

wardii x ‘Crest’

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H6	May	3m x 3m

‘Clewer’ only secured a Certificate of Preliminary Commendation from the RHS when it was shown for the first time in 1966, but it is Hope Findlay’s pièce de résistance in yellow-flowering hybrid rhododendrons. Put simply, it is a gem.

The cross was made in 1953 and used pollen from Lionel de Rothschild’s exemplary primrose-yellow ‘Crest’ to dust the stigma of a glaucous-leaved form of *R. wardii*. That mating produced a child whose flowers are a light greenish-yellow in tone, without a blotch or spots or any crimson in the throat. Each corolla is funnel-shaped, around 4cm long and 5.5cm across, carried in a compact truss of up to 10 blooms. Flowering is usually profuse, with waves of colour decorating a mature shrub, the pristine hue long-held.

The leaves are dark matt green, oblong through elliptic in shape, and the blades often display a slightly convex profile. But one characteristic inherited from ‘Crest’ unfortunately mars an otherwise consummate pairing: that foliage is only held for just one year; giving older specimens a sparse and leggy appearance that even an abundance of bloom cannot hide. Equally, the leaves are also susceptible to powdery mildew, though rarely to a degree where upper surface disfiguration is readily apparent.

The epithet, although suggestive of an avian connection to a certain Scottish nursery, maintains Hope Findlay’s tradition of naming his hybrids for Berkshire towns or villages, Clewer being an ecclesiastical parish in the Royal Borough of Windsor.



R. ‘Clewer’



R. ‘Clewer’

R. ‘Clewer’

R. ‘Clewer’



R. ‘Cranbourne’ AM 1957

R. ‘Cranbourne’ AM 1957

R. ‘Cranbourne’
‘Azor’ x ‘Isabella’
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5 June-July 4m x 6m

Named Forms:
Cranbourne – AM 1957 (tyrian-rose).
Cranbourne’s Sister (rose-pink).

Both parent plants involved in the ‘Cranbourne’ cross are tall-growing and relatively tender; flower late in the season; and are really suitable only for mild woodland gardens in the south and along the west coast. So too their progeny, ‘Cranbourne’ and ‘Cranbourne’s Sister’. They result from an ‘Azor’ x ‘Isabella’ pairing made in 1948, but are wider spreading than they are tall and bushier than either parent, though still of a straggly and open habit.

‘Cranbourne’ has flowers that are typical of a *R. auriculatum* hybrid (the ‘Isabella’ pollen parent): large, broadly campanulate, and carried in an open truss; in this case, nine per inflorescence, suffused in tones of tyrian-rose (pale pink), blotched red in the throat and with speckles and spots of reddish-brown on the dorsal lobes. And they are fully deserving of the Award of Merit secured on their introduction in 1957.

Their foliage foil consists of elliptic, dark green and somewhat glossy leaf blades, each around 16cm long. But these are beset with the usual *auriculatum* lifespan of little more than one year, falling soon after the new leaves emerge and extend.

The chosen epithet is once again borrowed from a Berkshire village.

‘Cranbourne’s Sister’, the second clone, was only introduced in the early 1990s.

It has rose-pink flowers in a tighter truss, those corollas spotted, but lacking the drama and contrast found in their sibling’s blooms. That said, they are still better than most other rhododendrons flowering in July.

Unfortunately however, their foliage is inferior: similar in shape and colour to ‘Cranbourne’, and with the added bonus of a convex profile, but disfigured by an apex that is twisted and often bent backwards on itself.


R. ‘Cranbourne’ AM 1957


R. ‘Cranbourne’s Sister’

R. ‘Cranbourne’s Sister’



R. ‘Crowthorne’



R. ‘Crowthorne’



R. ‘Crowthorne’



R. ‘Crowthorne’

R. ‘Crowthorne’

R. ‘Enborne’ AM 1966

R. ‘Enborne’

aberconwayi x *anwheiense*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H6 Mid April-early May 3m x 3m

After brushing pollen from *R. anwheiense* onto the stigma of *R. roxieanum,* the Windsor Great Park stud book entries for 1956 reveal that Hope Findlay also applied those same viscin strands to the style of *R. aberconwayi:*

The first cross - entry number 188/56 - resulted in ‘Blewbury’, probably his most highly rated hybrid.

The second - 192/56 - delivered another knockout prodigy, ‘Enborne’.

The chosen epithet is once again borrowed from a small West Berkshire village, with the plant retaining the floral characteristics of *R. aberconwayi,* but now combined with the almost overabundant floriferousness of *R. anwheiense*. Produced in their thousands on a mature shrub, each corolla is a broadly funnel-campanulate bell, pure white with an initial phlox-pink flush, 3cm long by 4cm across, distinctly spotted crimson-purple on the dorsal lobes and gathered 12 to 14 in each compact, flat-topped truss.

In contrast, the leaves are deep green elliptic-lanceolate arrows with recurved margins, albeit held for just one year, which sadly gives the shrub an open appearance when not masked by that unbroken shawl of bloom.

Regrettably, there are other negatives to report: weak growth as a juvenile, though this improves with age; a tendency towards chlorotic foliage; and poor flower bud production until the bushes move into their second decade, though as the specimen plants photographed in Ray Wood, Castle Howard, and the Valley Gardens, Windsor, show, the wait is most certainly worthwhile.

A number of ‘expert’ texts indicate a low or even semi-dwarf stature, but this is complete balderdash, as the portraits confirm.

‘Enborne’ thrives in a woodland environment of light dappled shade as far north as Castle Howard or beyond, the H6 hardiness rating allowing the shrub to be planted in any UK garden where rhododendrons succeed.



R. ‘Enborne’ AM 1966

R. ‘Enborne’ AM 1966

R. ‘Enborne’ AM 1966

R. ‘Englemere’ AM 1971

R. ‘Grilse’ AM 1957

R. ‘Hope Findlay’ AM 1979

R. 'Hope Findlay'

'Loderi' x 'Earl of Athlone' X 'Creeping Jenny'

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H5-6	April	3m x 4m

Thomas Hope Findlay (1910-1994) was head gardener at Windsor from the mid-1940s and through the 1950s and 60s when the Savill and Valley gardens were being established in the Great Park, the effective right-hand man of their creator, Sir Eric Savill. It was Findlay, for instance, who oversaw the massive transfer of plants from Tower Court, some of them 7m-high specimens, loosing just a handful of the thousands of rhododendrons that were moved because of stress from the replanting. He was also a prolific hybridiser, with near sixty crosses registered in the *IRRC,* though as explained above, under the coverall of the Crown Estate Commissioners umbrella. Which puts him on a par with Francis Hanger at Wisley, Edmund de Rothschild at Exbury, Lord Aberconway at Bodnant, or Eric Harrison at Tremeer. But without the public persona of his contemporaries. And one of those sixty is the shrub that bears his name: 'Hope Findlay'.

This cross is listed as No. 109 in the Windsor Great Park stud book. It was paired in 1951 and uses pollen from Aberconway's 'Creeping Jenny' placed onto the style of an unnamed hybrid grown from a 'Loderi' x 'Earl of Athlone' pairing, which may or may not be one of Hope's unregistered creations.

The selection from the 1951 combination was named in 1974, at around the time Hope retired from active duty at Windsor, and opens pure, scarlet-red flowers in April. These are carried in loose, globular to flat-topped trusses of eight to ten broadly funnel-shaped corollas, each trumpet 5cm long by 6cm across. Their hue is actually 'slightly deeper than vivid red, lightly flushed strong red towards the margins and with fine veining along the midribs of moderate red' - to quote the full *IRRC*-entry description.

Foliage-wise, the shrub carries leaf blades that are narrowly elliptic in shape, a mid through dark shiny green in colour, with each measuring up to 10cm length and around 3cm in width. They are borne for one, sometimes two years, with the majority discarded once the new growth has fully expanded.

Habit is upright, with the ascending branches likely to top-out at around the 3m-mark and spread somewhat wider. Hardiness is good, down to -18ºC, but not sufficient for the coldest UK gardens even if specimens were available to purchase from the few remaining specialist nurseries.



Hope Findlay & Sir Eric Savill

R. ‘Hope Findlay’ AM 1979

R. ‘Hope Findlay’ AM 1979

R. ‘Manor Hill’ AM 1974

R. ‘Manor Hill’ AM 1974



R. ‘Manor Hill’ AM 1974

R. ‘Manor Hill’

‘Dido’ x (‘Jalisco’ x *yakushimanum*)

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5-6 Mid May 2m x 4m

‘Manor Hill’ is one of Hope Findlay’s little known gems. The cross was conceived in 1958, but only named and introduced in 1974, after gaining an Award of Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. Yet unlike some of Hope’s other epithet choices, the appellation is not borrowed from the Manor Hill neighbourhood in East Brighton, nor that of Market Drayton or even Miskin, Pontyclun, but from an area near the old South Gate of Windsor Great Park, betwixt the two western arms of Virginia Water, where ‘The King’s Houses in the Park of Windsor’ once stood.

The few specialist UK nurseries that propagate the hybrid, along with its *IRRC* entry, described the shrub as ‘very dwarf and compact’, and while that latter contention remains basically true, the former applies only for the first twenty years or so, for the mounded dome that develops will continue to build-up over time, eventually reaching 1.5 or 2m in height, with a spread to double that figure. The plant’s leaves are dark green in tone, narrowly obovate in shape with recurved margins, and up to 9cm in length, and 4cm in width. A thin, fawn-coloured indumentum cloaks the leaf underside at first, but is usually lost by maturity. Regrettably, the blades are only held for two years, which can leave the lower limbs of older specimens open to view, especially if encroachment from taller-growing neighbours consigns the planting site too much shade, a state of affairs that will also reduce the freedom of flowering and draw-up the branches.

Those blooms open in May, and unlike many rhododendrons, they actually get better with age.

Held in a loose, open-topped truss of eight or nine widely campanulate corollas, each one around 4cm long, they emerge orange-yellow from the bud, their hue becoming butter yellow when first fully open, although slightly darker in the throat and with some brownish-crimson speckling decorating the base of the dorsal lobe. The stamen filaments and style are flushed yellow to match.

Then, the lobe margins begin to pale to white, and the yellow tone recedes down towards the mouth of the tube, transforming into a more mustard-yellow, and the darker hue within, at the base of the throat, strengthens and expands around the tube.

Meanwhile, on the outside, at the base of the corolla, an irregular-lobed calyx with arms almost 3cm long - these held erect or even reflexed, and deeply divided from one another - goes through the very same colour transformation.

And if that were not enough, the two upper lobes of each calyx are also spotted brownish-crimson.

So on reflection, the RHS’s gift of a mere AM appears somewhat churlish…

R. ‘Manor Hill’ AM 1974

R. ‘Manor Hill’ AM 1974

R. ‘Manor Hill’ AM 1974

R. ‘Queen Elizabeth II’ AM 1967 & FCC 1974

R. ‘Queen Elizabeth II’ AM 1967 & FCC 1974

R. ‘Queen's Wood’ AM 1972

R. ‘Queen’s Wood’
souliei x *aberconwayi*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5 Mid May 4m x 3m

In 1951, Hope Findlay created two hybrids that combined *R. aberconwayi* and *R. souliei*. ‘Crowthorne’ (pictured on pages 60 and 61), the first of the pair to be introduced, used *R. aberconwayi* as the seed parent and was entry No. 103 in the Windsor stud book, while ‘Queen’s Wood’ - No. 104 - reversed that pairing, with *R. souliei* maturing the fertilised ovules. On the surface - morphologically - such a swap might appear trivial, but the floral display reveals that it was not. For while the blooms of both ‘Crowthorne’ and ‘Queen’s Wood’ are shell-pink in the bud, the former open pure white, whereas those of the latter are suffused deep purplish-pink and are perfectly poised, a difference between the two that is akin to chalk and cheese, as the gift of an Award of Merit by the RHS Floral committee members to ‘Queen’s Wood’ in 1972 confirms.

Up to eight saucer-shaped corollas are carried in each of the latter’s loose trusses, the 5-lobed bowls 7.5cm wide at the mouth, and blotched and spotted crimson-purple. Produced in great profusion on a mature bush, the effect is not ostentatious or glitzy, but sublimely beautiful, indeed, quietly resplendent, graceful and elegant. Onlookers will stand silently transfixed, contemplating true perfection, the brashness of any nearby blowsy Grande Dame forgotten.

Dark green elliptic leaves complete the picture and fill the framework of crisscrossing branches, the blades perfectly in proportion with the flowers and adorned with a thin brown tomentum below. Each is around 5cm in length and half that in width.


R. ‘Queen's Wood’ AM 1972


R. ‘Queen's Wood’ AM 1972

R. ‘Queen's Wood’ AM 1972

R. ‘Queen's Wood’ AM 1972

R. ‘Royal Windsor’ AM 1975

R. ‘Royal Windsor’ AM 1975

R. ‘Seven Stars’ AM 1967 & FCC 1974

R. 'Seven Stars'

'Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker' x *yakushimanum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H6-7 Late April-early May 4m x 6m

'Seven Stars' is almost certainly the most popular and widely planted Hope Findlay hybrid rhododendron, though few if any Sunday afternoon horticulturalists will be aware of its true progenitor, that same truth regrettably applying to many otherwise savvy rhodophiles, courtesy of the all-enveloping monoculture of the Crown Estate Commissioners. This accords them the right to be designated as hybridiser, grower and selector, responsible also for naming, introducing and registering any and all of the crosses bred, raised and shown by the gardening staff they employ on the Sovereign's behalf, even though most of these once-removed civil servants wouldn't know a rhododendron if they fell over one and who, most certainly, kept their hands spotlessly clean of dirt all the way through the breeding and selection process. Thankfully, for those who have read *Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias 2006,* which contains Mark Flanagan's fine biography of Windsor Great Park's most outstanding head gardener, the lid has at last been lifted on just who did what and when.

The 'Seven Stars' pairing was made in 1947, with *R. yakushimanum* used to pollinate 'Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker'. In consequence, nigh on eighty years later, the hybrid has laid claim to the title 'Tallest-Growing Yak Hybrid' with the original plants in the Savill and Valley Gardens now easily topping the 4m-mark on their way to heights unknown, though youngsters will take about a decade to breech the 1m mark and up to twice as long again to double that figure, so rampant unmanageable growth will never be a problem. For much of that time, the shrub will adopt a compact deportment, the dense cloak of leaves hiding virtually the entire subframe. They are clearly the gift of the pollen provider, albeit tempered somewhat by the *facetum* and *strigillosum* genes that came from 'Lady Digby'. To *R. griffithianum* they appear to owe no significant allegiance apart from the tendency to yellow and to scorch in full sun. Oblanceolate through narrowly-obovate in shape, those blades are up to 14.5cm long and 5.5cm wide, matt dark green above, and with recurved margins. They also boast a pale brown, but thin and powdery indumentum on their underside, this detersile and lost at maturity. Handsome all year round, the leaves are also the perfect foil for the flowers:

These are reddish-purple to pale magenta-pink in bud, opening white tinged pale pink, with their inner surface showing a hint of purplish-red. The outer surface however is much more heavily flushed with this hue, though only at first, when the corollas may still be described as campanulate. Fully expanded and funnel-campanulate in shape, the darker tones will have receded, leaving white-flushed-pink blooms, these soon becoming pure white. The flower trusses are domed or flat-topped, populated by between 12 and 15 bells, each corolla being 4.5cm long by 5.5cm across, with slightly frilly lobe margins. And they are very long lasting, as well as scented.

If left to its own devices and spared an assault by a pair of secateurs, 'Seven Stars' will ultimately take on the tree-like bearing of the three species on the seed parent side of the pairing equation, although it responds well to pruning especially if such is begun early on in its life. Fully winter hardy down to at least -21ºC or lower - despite *R. griffithianum* and *R. facetum* being part of the mix - the hybrid can be grown in any UK garden where the soil is suitable, with a dappled-shade placement in the southern counties preventing leaf burn as well as a too-fast tonal transition to white. Remarkably, when last checked, no one has as yet paired 'Seven Stars' with any other rhododendron, or at least, registered such a combination…



R. 'Seven Stars' AM 1967 & FCC 1974



R. 'Seven Stars' AM 1967 & FCC 1974

R. ‘Seven Stars’ AM 1967 & FCC 1974

R. ‘Seven Stars’ AM 1967 & FCC 1974

R. ‘Seven Stars’ AM 1967 & FCC 1974

R. ‘Seven Stars’ AM 1967 & FCC 1974

R. ‘Streatley’ AM 1964


R. ‘Streatley’ AM 1964


R. ‘Streatley’ AM 1964


R. ‘Streatley’ AM 1964

R. ‘Tan Crossing’ AM 1976

R. ‘Tan Crossing’ AM 1976

R. ‘Tan Crossing’

‘Jalisco Eclipse’ x ‘Jalisco Goshawk’

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5 June 3m x 3m

Two named selections of Lionel de Rothschild’s hybrid ‘Jalisco’ - ‘Eclipse’ and ‘Goshawk’, the latter providing the pollen - were paired by Hope Findlay at Windsor Great Park in 1950. Twenty-six years later, the result of that combination - ‘Tan Crossing’ - was gifted an Award of Merit by the RHS, though it had been named and introduced just post its tenth birthday. Like most of the ‘Jalisco’ clones it too has yellow flowers, these widely funnel-campanulate in shape, with between ten and twelve trumpets in each loose and open truss. But though grey-red in the bud, with the blooms initially flushed flesh-pink, when fully expanded and unlike its parents, any crimson-red hues that remain - in the streaks and spots of the dorsal blotch - are distinctly muted. So the pale, greenish-yellow corollas, their tone darkening towards the throat, can shine without distraction.

At the base of each bloom will be found a prominent ring of large and irregular, reflexed calyx lobes, these individually up to 2cm long, with their upper vanes equally streaked and spotted.

The ‘Tan Crossing’ leaf blades are dark green in colour, oblanceolate in shape, and up to 21cm long by close to 5cm wide’ They have a distinct midrib, but are rarely held for more than a year, which gives the bush a very open mien, exacerbated by a requirement for a dappled-shade placement in southern gardens and a well-sheltered locale in venues along the east coast, factors leading to long internodal growth. Regrettably, the foliage, mirroring that of its parents, is susceptible to the powdery mildew fungus.



R. ‘Tan Crossing’ AM 1976



R. ‘Tan Crossing’ AM 1976



R. ‘Tan Crossing’ AM 1976

R. ‘Tan Crossing’ AM 1976


R. ‘Theale’ AM 1966


R. ‘Theale’ AM 1966


R. ‘Theale’ AM 1966

R. ‘Theale’ AM 1966

R. ‘The Queen Mother’ AM 1968

R. ‘The Queen Mother’ AM 1968

R. ‘The Queen Mother’ AM 1968


R. ‘The Queen Mother’ AM 1968


R. ‘The Queen Mother’ AM 1968

R. ‘Tilehurst’

R. ‘Whitmoor’ AM 1971

R. ‘Winkfield’ AM 1958



R. ‘Winkfield’ AM 1958

R. ‘Winkfield’ AM 1958

R. ‘Winkfield’ AM 1958

R. ‘Wishmoor’ FCC 1987



R. ‘Wishmoor’ FCC 1987

R. ‘Woodside’

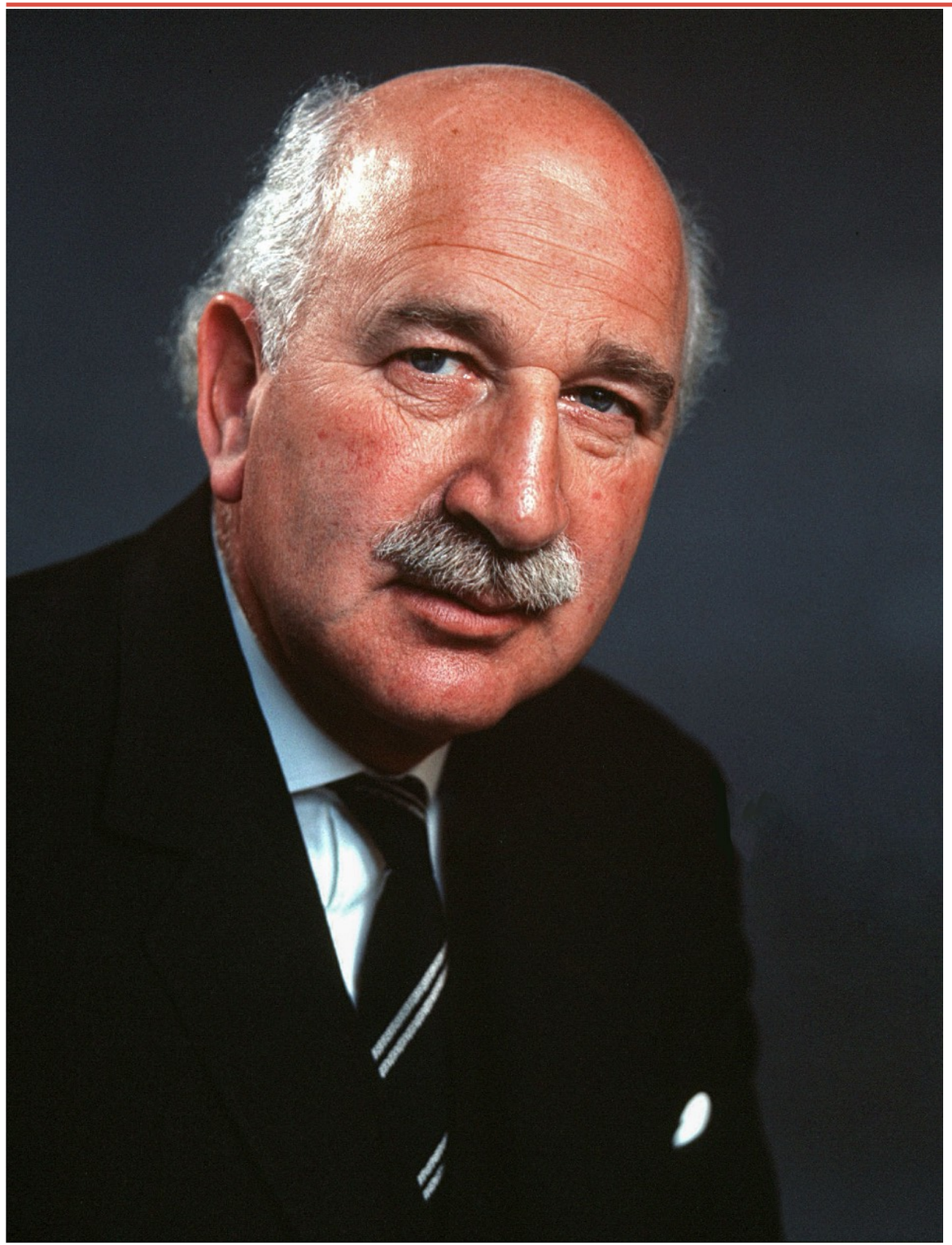
R. ‘Woodside’

R. ‘Woodside’

R. ‘Woodside’

Edmund de Rothschild:

Edmund de Rothschild, C.B.E., V.M.H., (1916-2009) - An Appreciation.



by Martin Gates.

In 1946, Edmund de Rothschild was demobilised from the Army and returned home to Exbury, where he went for a solitary walk along the woodland paths. The house and garden had been requisitioned by the Admiralty in 1942, and most of the gardeners called up for war service. The immaculate gardens created by his father Lionel were covered in brambles and weeds; there were dead branches everywhere and many dead and dying plants to be removed. Nevertheless, Edmund decided there and then that the gardens would be restored.

Numerous difficulties lay in the way: Edmund's father had died in 1942 and the estate was deeply in debt; the head gardener Francis Hanger had left to become curator at Wisley and the Admiralty were still in possession of Exbury House. Regardless, work began on clearing away all the invasive undergrowth which had accumulated during the years of neglect. Edmund was working in the City during the week, but at the weekends he and his mother continued the work in the woods, together with any guests who happened to be staying with them!

In order to repair the finances, however, it was necessary to adopt a more commercial approach. Trees and shrubs of all kinds were assembled, packed and despatched to customers at home and abroad. Large exports were made to the United States, where the Rothschild rhododendrons were much appreciated.

By 1948 Edmund was able to appoint Fred Wynniatt as head gardener. Fred became an expert on rhododendrons, and was awarded the A. J. Waley medal by the RHS in 1959. As work continued in the woods, occasional lost rhododendron species were discovered; Fred Wynniatt found a form of *Rhododendron haematodes* ssp. *chaetomallum* in 1959, which had grown from seed gathered by George Forrest in 1924-25. Another species, *R. traillianum* var. *dictyotum* 'Kathmandu' [now regarded as a natural hybrid], was only discovered in 1965. Some first class hybrids were also discovered, including R. 'Hawk Crest' (*wardii* x 'Lady Bessborough') which first bloomed in 1949, and R. 'Lionel's Triumph' (*lacteum* x 'Naomi') in 1954.

Edmund continued to hybridise rhododendrons, bearing in mind his father's overriding principle that any worthwhile hybrid must be an improvement on at least one of its parents, and preferably both, and if not it must be destroyed. Edmund learned that even if a plant appears to be of a very high standard in the first year of flowering, it will not necessarily be as good in the years to come. Since 1946 over 40 RHS awards have been won, including:

FCC for R. 'Exbury Angelo' (*griffithianum* x *discolor*) and R. 'Kilimanjaro' (*elliottii* x 'Dusky Maid') in 1947, R. 'Hawk Crest' in 1953, R. 'Fred Wynniatt' (*fortunei* x 'Jalisco') in 1980, R. 'Queen of Hearts' (*meddianum* x 'Moser's Maroon') in 1986, and R. 'Edmund de Rothschild' ('Fusilier' x 'Kilimanjaro') in 1993. Awards were also attained for four species: FCC for *R. yakushimanum* in 1947, and an AM for *R. pseudochrysanthum* 1956, *R. irroratum* 'Polka Dot' in 1957 and *R. quinquefolium* 'Five Arrows' in 1958.

In addition, Edmund continued his father's practice of exhibiting at the RHS shows and Exbury were awarded a silver medal in 1950 at Chelsea and a gold medal in 1959. Subsequently, prizes were won in most years at the London Flower Shows. For example, in 1983 Exbury took more prizes than any other garden and in 1992 won over 30 first prizes. Exbury's loyal support for both the Early and Main Rhododendron Competitions continued throughout Edmund's lifetime and beyond; indeed in 2009, Exbury were again winners of the majority of classes at both events.

In 1976 the gardens suffered a severe setback:



The summer in that year was hot and dry and the water table at Exbury fell by nine feet [2.7m]. Then in the autumn the rains returned and the ground became waterlogged. The contrast was too much for many trees and shrubs, and thousands of plants were lost. Eleven years later, the great storm of October 1987 destroyed 350 oaks and 150 other trees, to be followed by another storm in January 1990, which brought down most of the Cedars of Lebanon, which had stood for over 250 years. However, like a true gardener, Edmund recognised that these disasters each represented an opportunity and, in time, the loss of the canopy enabled new planting to take place and new vistas to be opened up.

To safeguard the future of the gardens, in the late 1980s, Edmund placed all the trees and shrubs into a charitable trust, and the gardens are administered by a limited company on behalf of the trust. The chairman is Edmund's brother Leopold and the board of directors includes both family and non-family members.

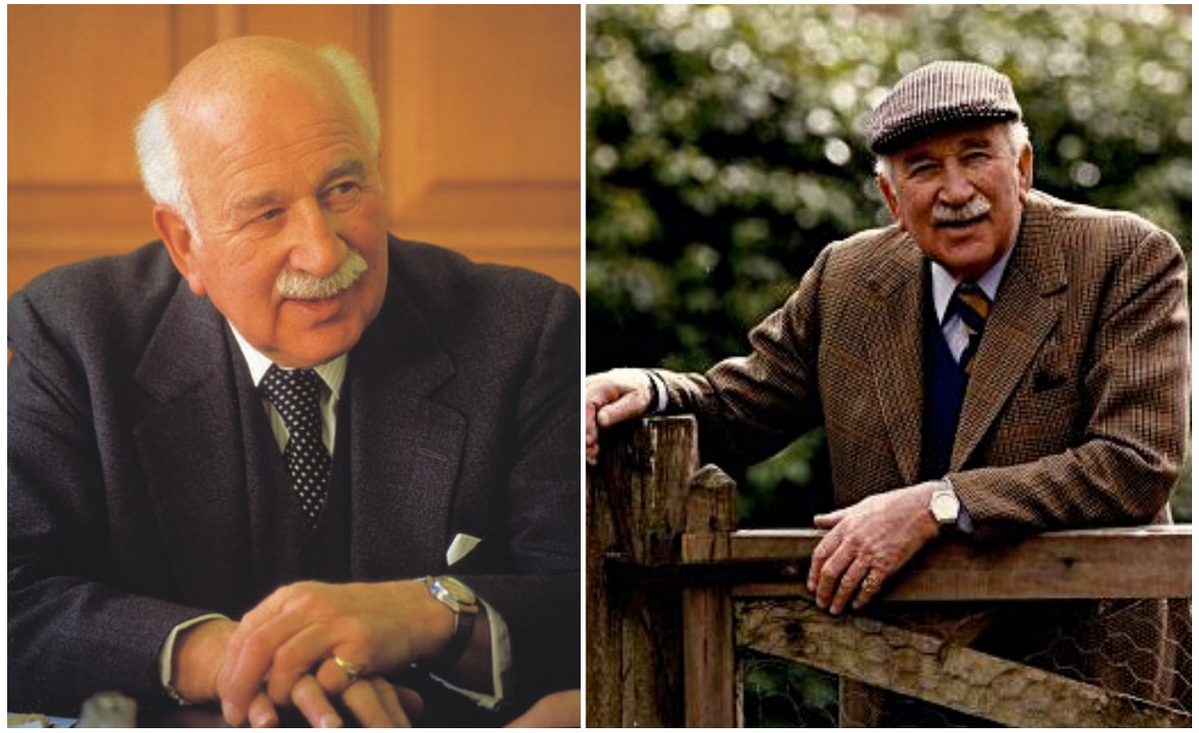
Edmund continued to take a keen interest in the gardens, and liked to drive along the paths in his small car, and often surprised visitors by stopping to talk to them along the way. He also enjoyed walking through the woods armed with a pair of secateurs and a stout stave, knocking off the old blooms and cutting out dead wood.

In 2005 he was awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour by the RHS, which was a fitting recognition of his contribution to horticulture.

Following the family tradition, he was a strong supporter of, what is now, the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group. He was always pleased to welcome members of the New Forest Branch to the gardens at Exbury, and would ensure that we saw the most interesting parts of the garden on the day of our visit. He even took the trouble to recommend fish and chips as the best buy at the restaurant!

Edmund had many interests apart from the gardens, and, in particular, he was involved with ex-service organisations. For many years he had close links with the Not Forgotten Association and the Association of Jewish Ex-servicemen and Women. On 29 May 1994, as part of the national D-Day remembrance, two hundred ex-servicemen and women took part in a service of commemoration on the lawn in front of the house.

Edmund died on 17 January 2009 at the age of 93. He will be remembered as a family man, and for his leadership, generosity and boundless energy. He loved the natural world and we must be grateful that he was able to reclaim and reinvigorate his father's great legacy. The gardens are now in the safe hands of his family.



Edmund de Rothschild, in later life.

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A photograph from the 1970s.

- above left -
At his desk in N. M. Rothschild and Son Limited, *c.* 1960.

Martin Gates has been a member of the RCMG and the Group’s New Forest Branch for over 30 years, serving as an officer in several roles during that time. This was recognised in 2024 with Honorary Member status, following his Chairman’s Award in 2018. He has also been a regular volunteer at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens for the past quarter of a century. His appreciation of Edmund de Rothschild was published in *Rhododendrons, Camellias & Magnolias 2010.*

Edmund Leopold de Rothschild.



Edmund Leopold de Rothschild was born in London, at 46 Park Street, Mayfair, on 2 January 1916, the first son of Lionel de Rothschild (1882-1942) and Marie-Louise née Beer (1892-1975). At the time of his birth, his father was a junior partner at New Court, and MP for Aylesbury. His mother, Marie-Louise, was a great-great-niece of the composer Meyerbeer; and her elder sister Nelly was married to Baron Robert de Rothschild, of the French branch of the family.

Eddy (as he was known) was brought up at Exbury House, the estate his father acquired in late 1918, bounded by the New Forest, The Solent and the Beaulieu river. He was educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge. Part of every summer holiday was spent cruising Europe's coastline aboard his father's yachts, Rhodora I and II. Rhodora II, a magnificent vessel, had a hold large enough to accommodate Lionel de Rothschild's Rolls-Royce.

After Cambridge, in 1937 Eddy was sent by his father on an 18-month tour around the world, of which he published an account as *Window on the World* (1949). He went to Africa, rode horseback over the Andes, and motored across the Northern Territories in Australia. He pressed on to Burma, India and Afghanistan, calling, en route, on the Viceroy, Mahatma Gandhi.

Returning to England in May 1939, Edmund joined the family firm at New Court until the outbreak of war in September. In 1935 he had joined the Royal Bucks Yeomanry. In January 1940, the Bucks was among the first territorial regiments to join the British Expeditionary Force in France. As a battery-captain in the 77th Highland Field Regiment (RA), he went to North Africa with 4 Division, in the First Army. He saw action at Oued Zarga, Banana Ridge and Peter's Corner. In the aftermath of the war, Edmund de Rothschild was a major in the newly-formed Jewish Infantry Brigade.

N. M. Rothschild & Sons.

Having joined the family bank in 1939, Mr. Eddy, as he was known by the staff, became its effective head in 1955, when his uncle Anthony de Rothschild (1887-1961) suffered a severe stroke. A partner from 1947, from 1952, Mr. Edmund's chief preoccupation was with what was then the most costly project ever undertaken by private enterprise: the development of the vast hydroelectric potential of the Hamilton (later Churchill) Falls in Labrador. He led the consortium, and crossed the Atlantic more than 400 times over the 20 years the project took to complete.

Edmund de Rothschild became senior partner in 1960. He opened the partnership to non-family members, beginning with David Colville, brother of Sir John Colville, Churchill's private secretary who was appointed in July 1960 as the first non-Rothschild partner. From 1952, he was at the centre of the Brinco project, which came to fruition in 1973 with the opening of the centrepiece, the Churchill Falls power scheme, harnessing 5,225,000 Kw into the Canadian grid. Mr. Edmund presided over the bank's transition from a highly conservative family firm to a modern institution, and oversaw the demolition and rebuilding of New Court 1962-1965.

Mr. Edmund learned Japanese in 1960s and was No. 2 on a City delegation to Japan in 1962 to reopen commercial ties, and in 1966, he welcomed the Japanese Economic Mission to Europe to New Court strengthening ties between the UK and Japan; in 1973, The Order of the Sacred Treasure, one of Japan’s highest honours, was conferred upon Edmund de Rothschild by Emperor Hirohito “in full recognition of your great contributions in the international monetary field to the economic and industrial development of Japan and the ceaseless endeavours you have devoted to the promotion of Japanese-British friendship”.

- opposite -
Edmund de Rothschild, walking in the gardens at Exbury, *c.* 1994.

Edmund de Rothschild became the first Chairman of N. M. Rothschild & Sons Limited in 1970, when the firm became the last London accepting house to relinquish its private partnership status. He stepped down as chairman in 1975, to be succeeded briefly by his cousin Victor, 3rd Lord Rothschild (1910-1990), and then by his cousin Sir Evelyn de Rothschild (1931-2022).

Exbury.

After his return from the Second World War, Edmund set about the restoration of Exbury Gardens in Hampshire, the 260-acre woodland garden created by his father Lionel in the 1920s and 1930s. The gardens had been greatly neglected since Lionel's death in 1942, as Exbury House had been requisitioned by the Admiralty as a “Stone Frigate”, HMS Mastodon, responsible for the administration, victualing and training of the crews moored in the Beaulieu River during the war. Over the next 50 years he replanted some three-quarters of the acreage, and produced several dozen new rhododendron hybrids. In 1955 he opened Exbury Gardens to the public.

Eddy worked hard for charitable causes, in particular the Queen's Nursing Institute, of which he was a trustee, the Not Forgotten Association, and the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women, of which he was for many years president. He was a vice-president of the Council of Christians and Jews. He held the Territorial Decoration, and was appointed C.B.E. in the New Year's Honours, 1997, for charitable services. In 2005 he received the Royal Horticultural Society's highest award, the Victoria Medal of Honour. His autobiography, *A Gilt-Edged Life,* written with George Ireland, was published in 1998.

Edmund de Rothschild married Elizabeth Lentner (1923-1980) in 1948, and together they had four children: Katherine, Nicholas, Charlotte and David Lionel. In 1982, he married Anne Harrison (née Kitching) (1921-2012).

Mr. Eddy died on 17 January 2009, aged 93.

Edmund de Rothschild’s online biography can be read at The Rothschild Archive:

https://family.rothschildarchive.org/people/127-edmund-leopold-eddy-de-rothschild-1916-2009

The Living Garden.

by Edmund L. de Rothschild, Exbury, England.

My first visit to the United States to see your beautiful gardens was in 1947 when I met the late Mr. John Henny and Mr. Jock Brydon who drove me from San Francisco, in whose botanical gardens I saw some of the Exbury azaleas, up through the redwoods through Oregon and Washington, where I was shown a number of magnificent gardens, eventually to British Columbia where I met Mr. Layritz. He was a wonderful old man having come out to Vancouver around the 1870's and ran an excellent nursery garden. I also visited the Buchardt Gardens for the first time. On the East Coast of the United States I have seen Winterthur, the Dupont Gardens, where Mr. Harry Dupont himself showed me round with great enthusiasm, the New York Botanical Gardens, and in Canada the Lilac Garden in Montreal and an exceptional garden in Ontario where Dr. Joseph Brueckner has created a remarkable collection of hardy hybrid rhododendrons. Also on the East Coast I have contributed to the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy in Tennessee. I am proud to be associated on this side of your continent with the Cecil and Molly Smith Garden, sadly I have not had a chance to visit it on this occasion.

The British gardeners were not the only people to collect and hybridise azaleas and rhododendrons, and here in Canada and the United States there are such household names who have contributed so much to all our gardens as the Dexter rhododendrons, the Gable azaleas, the remarkable 'Lem's Cameo', and B.Y. Morrison in his work on the Glenn Dale azaleas at the National Arboretum in Washington. There are many others I would like to mention but this might be invidious.

All of us have so much in common, we are all servants of the elements and very often they are hostile - wind, rain, hail, frost, snow, flood, and drought. Yet even when the bad events overtake us we soldier on and every spring are hopeful that our gardens will smile in the sunshine that from time to time filters through the trees. What problems we have with naming plants, after all we like to name them after our family or friends. My father, Lionel, when he took people round the garden, used to call some of his hybrids after them. He was very friendly with the Earl and Countess of Bessborough, so he named a cross after Lady Bessborough - *R. discolor* x *R. campylocarpum*. He also formed that remarkable group of *R. cinnabarinum* hybrids and called his First Class Certificate hybrid which was *R. cinnabarinum* 'Roylei' x 'Royal Flush' after Lady Chamberlain, the wife of Sir Austin Chamberlain, who was a distinguished Englishman at the League of Nations in Geneva. My elder sister, Rosemary, married into the Berry family so, therefore, my father named another *R. cinnabarinum* hybrid after Lady Berry, the cross being 'Rosy Bell x 'Royal Flush' - most apt.

My mother, after the death of my father in 1942, kept things going with the greatest difficulty until I returned from overseas service in 1946. Many of you may have met her when you came to visit Exbury. There is a lovely *R. lacteum* hybrid named after her, 'Mariloo'. Its parentage is *R. lacteum* x 'Dr. Stocker'. There is another one called after my father, 'Lionel's Triumph', *R. lacteum* x 'Naomi', and the parentage of 'Naomi' is 'Aurora' x *R. fortunei*. After World War II our first VIP visitor was the then Princess Royal. Her Royal Highness Princess Mary was going round the garden with my mother and Lady Bessborough and we came to the most beautiful small tree covered profusely in pale rosy opal flowers. I said, "Ah here is the pride of the garden 'Lady Berry'". Lady Bessborough looked at it quizzically and turned her head from side to side and finally said, "I am not jealous, she droops". There were many other visitors including the explorers Joseph Rock, and Frank Kingdon-Ward and those who identified the species and put them into their series, including Balfour and Tagg.

Many books have been written on trees and shrubs and perhaps the two outstanding ones on this side of the Atlantic are Mr. David Leach's immense and complete work on rhododendrons, *Rhododendrons of the World,* which must rank as one of the most comprehensive books on rhododendrons in publication, and Homer E. Salley and Harold Greer's *Rhododendron Hybrids, a guide to their origins*. In the United Kingdom we have Mr. W. J. Bean's series on all the flowering trees and shrubs hardy in the British Isles. Mr. Bean used to go round Exbury Gardens with my father with his group of gardening friends and my father would suddenly say, "Bean, what is that tree over there?"

Mr. Bean would not reply, but in the middle of dinner or when the port was being passed round he would suddenly say, "Mr. Lionel, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* Magnificum (*Nakai*)".

"Good God Bean, what are you talking about?"

"Mr. Lionel, you asked me the name of that tree and I have been looking it up and it is rather a rare tree and comes from Japan".

"Oh, thank you Bean, thank you".

And that was the end of that conversation.

Now I would like to take you on a tour of Exbury Gardens. The house was built probably late in the 18th Century and was of red brick which my father rebuilt using Portland stone. It used to be owned by the Mitford family, the head of whose family is Lord Redesdale. When my father first came to Exbury, after World War I, there was a small planting round the house. My mother and father walked down what is now known as the Glade. The magnificent Cedars of Lebanon and the redwoods, *Sequoiadendron giganteum,* were the outstanding trees amongst oak and brambles.

At the bottom of the garden there were two *Cupressus sempervirens*. There is a story attached to these trees. As I told you Exbury House and the Estate used to belong to the Mitfords. At the time of the Duke of Wellington's funeral, as the cortege was passing by, one of the young scions of the Mitford family saw a wreath fall off the gun carriage carrying the coffin, and dashing out he picked it up, took two seeds and put the wreath back on the coffin. He planted these two seeds and they grew into the trees my parents found. We have taken seeds from them but sadly those two trees, particularly the ones from the coffin, were blown down in the great storm of October 1987, as was the tree identified by Mr. Bean.

When the present Duke of Wellington visited the gardens he gave me an oak tree from an acorn picked off the oak tree which was planted on Copenhagen's grave which is at Stratfield Saye. Copenhagen was the horse which Wellington rode at the Battle of Waterloo.

There is another rather amusing anecdote on the Glade. When Walter Annenberg was US Ambassador to the United Kingdom he came down to Exbury with his charming wife Lee and David Rockefeller. They came to the Glade, Mr. Annenberg gasped and said to my late wife, "Oh, Elizabeth, how beautiful, I rename this Memory Lane", to which Elizabeth replied somewhat acidly, "No, Mr. Annenberg, it is called the Glade".

Now we come to the Bridal Path. Here Rhododendron 'Ivery's Scarlet', a hardy hybrid, has at its base the white evergreen azaleas 'Palestrina', the whole forming a stunning sight. In this area is one of our finest hybrids, which I have named after my younger daughter, Charlotte, *R. discolor* x 'St. Keverne (*R. griffithianum* x *R. zeylanicum*). As we progress down the path we come to the main cross-roads just before the ponds - here is where there is a bank of 'Hawk Crests'. Just before World War II, my father had a tray of seedlings of 'Lady Bessborough' x *R. wardii,* and he showed it to his friends and invited them to please take as many of these as you want, and they helped themselves and only a few small ones remained which were left to take their chance during the war. The very smallest

one became ‘Hawk Crest’ which only goes to show that sometimes it is the weakling that surprises one and sometimes turns out to be the best.

Incidentally, the house became a naval establishment, His Majesty's ship Mastodon, during the war and was used by the Royal Navy as one of their land ships for the planning of “D Day”. After the war a training college, H.M.S. Hawk took over, so this plant was called after it.

Also on the cross-roads is the plant *R. yakushimanum*. That great Japanese nurseryman Mr. Koichiro Wada sent two plants back from the island of Yakushima off the southern tip of Japan. My father's then Head Gardener was Mr. Francis Hanger and just before I was demobilised, the Royal Horticultural Society, not thinking that Exbury Gardens would be carried on, invited Mr. Hanger to become Curator at Wisley. Mysteriously one of the *R. yakushimanums* found its way to Wisley and that plant was granted the FCC, but the Exbury *R. yakushimanum* is far superior.

Going past the bank of ‘Hawks’ one comes to a small stream, the outflow of one of the two springs in the garden. One is called ‘St. Mary’s’ and is planted round with *Pieris forrestii*. Forrest was an intrepid explorer who made seven expeditions to Yunnan in China. On one of these visits the Tibetan Lamas of the Yellow Sect were very hostile and terrorised the local inhabitants. Forrest was at a Mission Station under Father Dubernard at a place called Tzeki. One evening news came that the Lamas had massacred the Chinese garrison at Atunze, a small Chinese-Tibetan trading post two and a half day's journey from Tzeki and were concentrating their forces to attack the mission. That night two aged priests and their small band of Christian natives with Forrest and his men set out for safety but next morning they were overtaken by the Lamas and all but 14 out of 80 persons were killed or captured. Forrest and one of his 17 men escaped. One of the fathers was among those killed at once but the other, Father Dubernard, survived for two days before being captured and tortured to death. Forrest, without food and barefooted, for he had had to discard his boots to avoid tracks as he crossed the streams and rivers to throw off the scent of the Lamas’ large and ferocious dogs, was hunted for 9 days. On the ninth day when he was at the end of his tether he was in a small bamboo thicket. He had his rifle with him and was determined to sell his life dearly when the monks came down to the stream opposite. Suddenly he saw Father Dubernard amongst them waving to him to go further down the stream - which he did and the Monks called off the chase and gave him up for dead. He was then guided by friendly natives over a 17,000 ft. range of mountains, finally reaching safety three weeks later. It was only then that he found out that Father Dubernard had met a horrible death several days before he thought he saw him with that band of Tibetans.

Forrest died in China in 1932, his loyal native plant hunter walked for a great number of days until he came to a station where there was a British presence. My father not only arranged for Forrest to be buried in the small burial ground overlooking the great mountains on the Salween Divide, but managed to have his last collection brought back to England. Incidentally, the Salween Divide is where Kingdon-Ward’s description is so apt, and I quote: “That immense reservoir of hardy plants which, including the Himalaya mountains, Southern Tibet, the North-East Frontier of India, and Western China, comprises the most stupendous elevated region in the world. Here, where great rivers batter their way along cracks in the earth's crust three miles deep, where the wind sobs and raves over the high passes, where the rain mist smokes over forest and moor and snow blankets the landscape for months on end, you will see flowers growing in the most reckless profusion”.

Next we come to the ponds - there are three of them. The top pond has a very magnificent swamp cypress, *Taxodium distichum*. It is the home of a variety of duck and carp and golden orfe fish, and is surrounded by deciduous azaleas and maples. A small series of cascading water leads to the second pond where we have formed the Wynniatt Bowl of evergreen azaleas. The late Mr. Wynniatt was my first true Head Gardener. Freddie Wynniatt had been a prisoner of war and had worked in the salt mines never seeing daylight for two years. He died sadly very prematurely. In this pond there is a plant which I have collected myself from the Adirondack Mountains of New York State, the skunk lily, *Lysichitum americanum*. Another small waterfall leads to the third pond where there are more evergreen azaleas.

We then come to the banks of Rhododendron ‘Fortune’ (*R. falconeri* x *R. sinogrande*). These form huge trusses. It is not often that they all flower together, but during the time I have been in charge at Exbury, which is really since 1947, they have only flowered superbly twice. The first time there was a frost and the second time it was a magnificent sight. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, has been many times to Exbury, so on May 1st, 1987, she came to lunch with us on a private visit as she was told about the fantastic flowering of these splendid rhododendrons. As she arrived she said, “Am I too early?”

I was able to say “No, Your Majesty, they are perfect”.

On May 10th, Her Majesty the Queen came on a similar visit and said “Am I too late?”

I was able to say “No, Your Majesty, they are as perfect as when Her Majesty, your mother, came 10 days ago!”

She remarked that the public, also in the garden on that day, seemed so surprised at seeing her doing the same as them, namely sightseeing.

One then goes to the Camellia Walk. There are many varieties of camellias which make a fine show during April. My favourite, and I fear I am biased, is ‘Inspiration’ as it was bred at Exbury, but I also find that the camellia ‘Debbie’, a fastigiate plant, is delightful. Below the banks of the Rhododendron ‘Fortune’ is the Winter Garden. This is where the very first flowers come out in any quantity to start the season. Rhododendron ‘Androcles’ (*R. arboreum* x *R. calophytum*), has large trusses of a most beautiful rhodamine pink or even white, up to 30 ft. in height [9m]. It is flanked by yellow *R. macabeanum,* the large leafed *R. sinogrande* and other early flowering species, including the better *R. calophytum* hybrids.

We have now made a walk down to the Beaulieu River at the bottom of the Winter Garden. Incidentally the marshes, which belong to me, are the home of many varieties of duck and wading birds. Coming back to the cross-roads at the top pond we turn left and come to the Daffodil Meadow. Here “a crowd, a host of golden daffodils flutter and dance in the breeze” and withstand the early frost forming a brave sight on some of the cold March and early April days. This meadow abuts onto the Beaulieu River across which can be seen Bucklers Hard. Battle ships that were built here during the Napoleonic Wars used the oaks from Exbury and Beaulieu which, because they were grown on rather poor soil, made the wood very hard and therefore suitable for the sailing ships of those days. The Agammemnon and other Nelson war ships were launched just across the river from the Daffodil Meadow from this thriving boat-building yard at the end of the 18th Century.

We then come to Witcher's Wood, named after a band of gypsies who used to live in the New Forest. Its entrance is guarded by a magnificent specimen of Brewers spruce, *Picea breweriana,* from the Siskiyou mountains of California. Here there is ‘Lover’s Lane’, this walk is flanked by the new range of Solent deciduous azaleas, these are tighter trussed, less prone to droop and more sun tolerant. When HRH Princess Margaret came to Exbury, she graciously allowed me to name a butter yellow fragrant azalea ‘Princess Margaret of Windsor’. Witcher's Wood was probably the worst damaged during the hurricane force gale of 1987. Large areas have been completely replanted, but locally there

are still many mature rhododendrons, the tallest being a Lowinsky hybrid at least 60 ft. high [18.3m].

We then take the path to the bridge and note on our way *Magnolia veitchii,* which flowers in April. This lovely flowering magnolia is called after a nurseryman of the last century, Mr. Veitch. Mr. Veitch employed a Mr. David Douglas who was termed a journeyman, a grade of superior gardener in the Victorian era. Mr. Douglas was a really tough Scot and he undertook a series of expeditions to the West Coast of the United States in the early part of the last century. He brought back the fir tree called after him, the Douglas fir. He had a pathological fear of bulls and bears. One day he was walking down an Indian trail when he fell into a bear trap, alas there was a bear in the trap, so that was the end of poor Mr. Douglas.

We now come to the Bridge over Gilbury Lane, a public highway, which divides the garden. In front of this white balustraded bridge is a large bank of different varieties of Rhododendron 'Naomi', called after my younger sister. From the top of this bridge looking over, one sees the planting of hardy hybrids that form a colourful sight as they flank the small road that leads to Gilbury Hard by the Beaulieu River. This bridge leads to the third wood, Yard Wood. This wood is called Yard Wood because it used to contain a number of yew trees and the wood from the yew was used for the yardsticks of the bows and cross bows that were in force in the medieval armies. In fact there is still one yew tree standing which is mentioned in the Domesday Book, which was an inventory of all the lands under the domination of William the Conqueror in the 11th century. Incidentally, one often wonders why so many yew trees stand beside grave yards near to churches and the reason was that in the Middle Ages, archery was compulsory after the morning service.

In Yard Wood there is the azalea drive, the water garden, and the rock garden. The latter was created in the mid 1930s. My father had a small train which brought the huge stones from the Estate Yard several hundred yards away. The Rock Garden covers just over two acres and is probably one of the largest of its kind in the United Kingdom. Incidentally the stones came by rail from Sussex to Beaulieu Road station and so heavy were they that the bridge over the Beaulieu River at Beaulieu was broken, much to the fury of John Montagu, the lord of the manor of Beaulieu, who was also a great friend of my father. On my return from overseas after the war the Rock Garden was completely overgrown, it has only been reinstated since 1982. When the gardens were first opened to the public the cars used to have to park on the lawn in front of Exbury House but when the numbers of visitors reached more than 90,000 we made a new entrance, a car park, plant centre and cafeterias on the site of the Estate Yard. In fact, visitors now enter the gardens through Yard Wood. HRH The Prince of Wales honoured us by opening the car park. He said that he thought it was probably the first time a Prince of Wales had ever been asked to open a car park, though there was indeed a garden centre there. On his way to plant a commemorative tree, a voice from the crowd shouted "where's your wife, where's Di?"

Quick as a flash His Royal Highness replied "She's in Newcastle do you want your money back?"

Exbury Gardens are very varied, there are also many beautiful trees and berried shrubs including Cotoneaster 'Cornubia' and the yellow berried Cotoneaster 'Exburiensis'. It also has a number of other varieties of berried shrubs one of which is *Pernettya mucronata*. There were two plant hunters during the turn of the 18th Century, Pernetti and Bougainville. Pernetti was Italian and Bougainville French. They came to Chile and on the slopes of the volcanic mountains in the south of that country there was this magnificent low growing shrub covered in pink, white and purple berries. Signor Pernetti was most taken by this shrub and is reported to have said, "I would like to have this named after myself".

Monsieur Bougainville who knew a thing or two said, "mais certainment mon ami", but when they came to Hawaii and saw that fantastic cascading flower, Monsieur Bougainville said "maintenant ca c'est apres moi" and, Ladies and Gentlemen, "maintenant ca c'est apres moi" - 'Edmund de Rothschild'.

Tall, upstanding, fresh complexion, not droopy. This hybrid is 'Fusilier' x 'Kilimanjaro', one of the best of the *R. elliottii* hybrids, which however, are sadly not always hardy. We have all seen a splendid showing of plants in different gardens with many fine specimens some of which have been exhibited and won awards. It so happened that I was asked to represent Great Britain in the Valenciennes International Flower Show in 1962. Freddie Wynniatt was my head gardener and Peter Barber was the Agent at Exbury in those days, and one of the authors of *The Rothschild Rhododendrons*. They had spent hours cutting out the last of the dead wood. Peter Barber was on his hands and knees as Freddie Wynniatt had fallen out of a tree and hurt his back when during the formation of the Exhibition a lorry backed up, struck a water pipe, drenched Peter and flooded the entire area the day before; we used towels, handkerchiefs, etc. to mop it up. To our surprise we were awarded first prize and the Gold Medal, known as The Premier Grand Prix D'honneur. Another competitor lodged a protest, and claimed that the Exbury stand did not have two separate groups, his group had shown both azaleas and cymbidiums. Now the President of the show was a lady called Madame Zelia Plumecocq. Peter Barber came up to me and told me what had happened and then said there is a new rhododendron flowering for the first time - it is a *R. souliei* hybrid, 'Rosy Morn' x 'Crest', it is very marked in the large open saucer-like flowers of yellow tinted with pink which are held up in a big, well-built truss, while 'Crest' is evident in the foliage and upright carriage - do you think you could go and see Madame Plumecocq and name this plant after her. So I went to the President's suite and saw Madame Plumecocq and told her I had a most unusual plant and as she had been very kind to us and invited us to participate in her flower show, would she do the honour of letting me call this plant after her. She came down to look at it, and was highly delighted. The award stood and thus we kept the 1st prize and the Gold Medal. Rhododendron 'Zelia Plumecocq' has a worthy place at Exbury, but it has never really proved the great promise it showed on that afternoon.

I feel I must end with another quotation from one of Kingdon-Ward's books:

> "Rhododendrons in the wild, lashed by the mountain gales, harassed by the sun or stung by the driven rain, in winter buried under 10 or 20 feet of snow, are unforgettable. Man can assemble in close embrace a far greater range of rhododendrons than nature ever knew; but never can he reproduce the drama of living plants on the high and lonely passes of Sino-Himalaya".

So, I have taken you from these wild passes to a garden in England and back to your gardens where you, the members of the American Rhododendron Society, have collected, hybridised and embraced the beauty of the living garden. Edmund de Rothschild carries on the work his father, Lionel, began at Exbury Gardens. Exbury, a garden in the grand tradition of British estates, has a fine collection of species and hybrid rhododendrons. A visit to Exbury is a long remembered event.

Edmund de Rothschild's portrait of the gardens at Exbury was adapted from a speech he gave at the American Rhododendron Society Convention, held in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, on April 29th, 1989. It was published within the Fall 1989 edition of the *Journal American Rhododendron Society,* Volume 43, Number 4.

The Exbury form of *R. degronianum* ssp. *yakushimanum*

The Deciduous Azalea Registrations:

City of Southampton
Flower Colour: Yellowish-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Edwina Mountbatten
Flower Colour: Yellow

Fancy Free
Flower Colour: Pink

Fireball
'Scarlet Pimpernel' X 'Favor Major'
Flower Colour: Red
Height: Tall

Frills
Flower Colour: Reddish-orange

Gallipoli
'Hotspur' X unknown
Flower Colour: Yellowish-pink

Gilbury
Flower Colour: Rose-pink

H. R. H. Princess Margaret
Flower Colour: Orange-yellow
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Icarus
Flower Colour: Salmon-orange

Katanga
Flower Colour: Pink

Lady Cynthia Colville
Flower Colour: Pink

Miami
Flower Colour: Yellow-reddish-orange
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Nam Khan
Flower Colour: Pink

Nancy Buchanan
Flower Colour: White

Pink Beauty

Princess Royal
Flower Colour: White

Queen Louise
Flower Colour: Pink

Red Brazil
Flower Colour: Red

Ripple

White Yellow Eye
Flower Colour: White

Zeneta
Flower Colour: Reddish-orange
Height: Medium


R. 'Edwina Mountbatten'


R. 'Edwina Mountbatten'

R. ‘Fireball’

R. ‘Fireball’

R. ‘Fireball’

R. ‘Frills’

R. ‘Frills’

R. ‘Frills’

R. ‘Gallipoli’

The Lepidote & Elepidote Registrations:

Amitiay
yakushimanum X 'Fusilier'
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Low

Anchorage
'Idealist' X *fortunei*
Flower Colour: Yellow-green

Anton Rupert
'Sir Frederick Moore' X 'Kilimanjaro' (FCC clone)
Flower Colour: Pink

Ayton
'Crest' X 'Golden Dream'
Flower Colour: Yellow-green
Flowering Time: May

Bach Choir
fortunei X 'Jalisco'
AM 1988
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink-yellow
Flowering Time: May-early June
Height: Tall

Baron Philippe de Rothschild
'Exbury Naomi' X 'Crest'
AM 1979
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow

Benadette Chirac
yakushimanum X 'Queen of Hearts'
Flower Colour: Red
Height: Medium

Beverley Lear
'Leonore' X 'Barclayi'
Flower Colour: Purple
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Tall

Birthday Girl
yakushimanum X *catawbiense*
AM 2000
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: Late June-July
Height: Medium

Birthday Greeting
'Naomi' X *fortunei*
AM 1979
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Height: Medium

Bordeaux
microgynum Gymnocarpum X *beanianum*
Flower Colour: Red
Flowering Time: April
Height: Medium

Bud Flanagan
ponticum hybrid
Flower Colour: Mauve
Flowering Time: May-June
Height: Tall

Cara Mia
'Aurora' X 'Crest'
AM 1966
Flower Colour: Cream

Caroline de Rothschild
'Repose' x 'Elizabeth de Rothschild' X 'Stanway'
AM 1998
Flower Colour: Yellow-green

Castle of Mey
barbatum (Pink Form) X *chaetomallum*
Flower Colour: Red
Flowering Time: April-May

Charites
'Carita' X 'Crest'
Flower Colour: Yellow

Charles
falconeri X *sinogrande*
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow

Château Lafite
'Impi' X 'Jutland'
Flower Colour: Red
Flowering Time: May-June
Height: Medium

Colonel Rémy
'Hawk' X *campylocarpum*
AM 1978
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow

Concerto
augustinii X *searsiae*
AM 1979
Flower Colour: Purple

David Rockefeller
'Karkov' X 'Gipsy King'
Flower Colour: Red

David Shelley
yakushimanum X 'Purple Splendour'
Flower Colour: Pale purple
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Dayan
'Lady Chamberlain' X *concatenans*
AM 1967
Flower Colour: Orange-yellow

Douggie Betteridge
fortunei X 'Jalisco'
AM 1986
Flower Colour: Yellow-green-purplish-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Duchess Ferreti
'Hummingbird' X *williamsianum*
Flower Colour: Pink

Duchess of Kent
Flower Colour: Yellow

Duchess of Rothesay
'Hotei' X *decorum*
AM 1983
Flower Colour: Yellow
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Ed Farrow
yakushimanum X ‘Kilimanjaro’
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: Late May-June

Edmund de Rothschild
‘Fusilier’ X ‘Kilimanjaro’
AM 1968 & FCC 1993
Flower Colour: Red
Height: Tall

Elizabeth de Rothschild
‘Lionel's Triumph’ X ‘Exbury Naomi’
AM 1965 & FCC 1992
Flower Colour: Yellow-green
Flowering Time: May-June
Height: Tall

Ella
‘General Sir John du Cane’ X *griffithianum*

Falkner Allison
‘Naomi Exbury’ X *wardii* Litiense
Flower Colour: Yellow-green
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Fred Wynniatt
fortunei X ‘Jalisco’
AM 1963 & FCC 1980
Flower Colour: Yellow-purplish-pink
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Tall

Galactic
‘Avalanche’ X *lacteum*
AM 1964 & FCC 1970
Flower Colour: Yellow-green
Flowering Time: Early April
Height: Tall

Gardis
‘Gladys Rillstone’ X *discolor*
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink

Gemstone
‘Bauble’ X *wardii*
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow

Gladys Rillstone
griersonianum hybrid

Happy Occasion
‘Snow Queen’ X ‘Crest’
AM 1985
Flower Colour: White-greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: Mid May
Height: Tall

Hermione Knight
yakushimanum X ‘Fusilier’
AM 1995
Flower Colour: Purplish-red-pink
Flowering Time: May

Hypermestra
hyperythrum X ‘Rosy Morn’
Flower Colour: Creamy-white

Indiridiva
‘Crest’ X ‘Snow Queen’
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow

Jancio
fortunei X ‘Crest’
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: Early May

Jan Steen
‘Fabia’ X ‘Lady Bessborough’
Flower Colour: Cream-pink-orange
Flowering Time: Late May
Height: Tall

Jerez
fortunei X ‘Jalisco’
Flower Colour: Lemon-yellow
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Tall

Jessica de Rothschild
‘Hotei’ X *decorum*
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: April-Early May
Height: Tall

Joyful
f*ortunei* X ‘Jalisco’
Flower Colour: Creamy-yellow
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Tall

Jungfrau
‘Marie Antoinette’ X unknown
AM 1966 & FCC 1992
Flower Colour: Creamy-white-tyrian-rose
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Lady Malmesbury
‘Carita’ X *wardii*
Flower Colour: Yellow-green

Lady of the Isles
‘Repose’ X ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Lady Romsey
yakushimanum X ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’
AM 1982
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Lady Wilcox
‘Prelude’ (AM Form) X *campylocarpum*
Flower Colour: Yellow-green
Flowering Time: April-May

Marcus Agius
‘Crest’ X ‘Loderi’
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: Mid May
Height: Tall

Marie-Louise Agius
eclecteum X ‘Avalanche’
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: Late March
Height: Tall

Mary Roxborough
discolor X ‘Saint Keverne’

Michael Hall
'Avalanche' X *eclecteum* x 'Avalanche'
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Milk Shake
'Repose' x 'Elizabeth de Rothschild' X 'Stanway'
AM 1998
Flower Colour: Yellow-green

Molly Buckley
'Aurora' X *fortunei*
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink

Mrs Alfred Taubman
'Aurora' X *campylocarpum*
Flower Colour: Purplish-red

Mrs Eddy
'Jibuti' X 'Gladys Rillstone'
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink

Mrs Ena Agius
'Aurora' X 'Idealist'
Flower Colour: Yellow-green

Mrs Marks
'Mrs G. W. Leak' X 'Stanway'
AM 1998
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: Late April

Mrs Sassoon
'Essex Scarlet' X *griersonianum*
Flower Colour: Scarlet
Flowering Time: Late May

Nimrod
irroratum 'Polka Dot' X *calophytum*
AM 1987 & FCC 1998
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Nubar
'Aurora' X *campylocarpum*
Flower Colour: Yellow-green

Our Kate
macabeanum X *calophytum*
AM 1963
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Paulette
'Bellerophon' X *kyawii*
Flower Colour: Crimson
Flowering Time: June

Pearl Betteridge
'Damaris' X *lacteum*
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Philippa de Pass
yakushimanum X unknown
Flower Colour: Yellowish-pink

Pink Sunset
'Jibuti' X 'Gladys Rillstone'
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Tall

Princess Michael of Kent
fortunei X 'Idealist'
Flower Colour: Creamy-yellow
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Pure Cream
hyperythrum X 'Crest'
AM 1998
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: Mid May
Height: Medium

Rajpur
'Jalisco' X 'Trianon'
Flower Colour: Yellowish-pink
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Tall

Renée Robeson
'Mrs G. W. Leak' X 'Stanway'
Flower Colour: Yellowish-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Revlon
cinnabarinum Roylei X 'Lady Chamberlain'
AM 1957
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Scheherezade
irroratum 'Polka Dot' X *calophytum*
Flower Colour: Creamy-white
Flowering Time: March
Height: Tall

Shangri La
'General Sir John du Cane' X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White-pink

Simita
fortunei X 'Jalisco' hybrid
Flower Colour: Maize Yellow

Stanway
fortunei X 'Jalisco'
AM 1971
Flower Colour: Yellow
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Tall

Stephanie Wilson
williamsianum X unknown
Flower Colour: Yellow-green-purplish-pink

Straver's Glory
yakushimanum hybrid
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Low

Tasco
catacosmum X *griersonianum*
Flower Colour: Scarlet
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Medium

Trianon
fortunei X ‘Jalisco’
AM 1992
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink-yellow
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Tall

Tzigane
‘Karkov’ X ‘Gipsy King’
Flower Colour: Scarlet-crimson

Vellum
‘Prelude’ X *wardii*
Flower Colour: Yellow-green

Victoria de Rothschild
‘Moonstone’ X *campylocarpum*
Flower Colour: Yellow-green

Vienna
‘Naomi’ X *wardii*
Flower Colour: Yellow

White Crest
‘Crest’ X *hyperythrum*
Flower Colour: White

Xanadu
‘Lady Chamberlain Apricot’ X *concatenans*
AM 1992
Flower Colour: Orange-purplish-red
Flowering Time: Late April-May
Height: Tall

Zelia Plumecocq
‘Rosy Morn’ X ‘Crest’
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall



R. ‘Anchorage’

R. ‘Anchorage’

R. ‘Anchorage’

R. ‘Ayton’



R. ‘Ayton’

R. ‘Birthday Girl’

R. ‘Birthday Girl’

R. ‘Birthday Greeting’ AM 1979

R. ‘Birthday Greeting’ AM 1979

R. ‘Bud Flanagan’

R. ‘Bud Flanagan’
ponticum hybrid
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H6 Late May-June 4m x 3m

From the get-go it was clear that an innate talent for breeding stunning rhododendrons had been passed down from father to son, but when Edmund de Rothschild named a self-sown *R. ponticum* seedling ‘Bud Flanagan’ in 1966, it became immediately apparent that the same flair for choosing a perfect epithet had also been inherited. For one glance at the chance hybrid spotted flowering in Witcher’s Wood at Exbury in 1962 confirms that the choice to borrow the vaudeville entertainer’s name was inspired.

R. ‘Bud Flanagan’ has flowers that mirror the stage personality of their namesake: sparkling and boisterous, bold and piratical. Carried in tight conical trusses of up to 20 corollas, pinkish-mauve with a to-die-for blotch of deep chestnut on their dorsal lobes, they appear enormous, larger than life, just like their music hall honouree.

The foliage and habit mirror *R. ponticum,* so too the need for a planting site in no more than dappled shade if a compact, free-flowering and well-filled bush is the desired end result.

- *opposite* -
Bud Flanagan at the height of his fame in the 1940s.



R. ‘Bud Flanagan’



R. ‘Bud Flanagan’

R. ‘Bud Flanagan’

R. ‘Cara Mia’ AM 1966

R. ‘Cara Mia’ AM 1966



R. ‘Cara Mia’

‘Aurora’ x ‘Crest’

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H6 Late April-May 5m x 4m

R. ‘Cara Mia’ is the result of pollen from Lionel de Rothschild’s signature yellow-flowering hybrid ‘Crest’ being placed onto the stigma of ‘Aurora’, a plant Exbury’s founder also named and introduced, but which Richard Gill at Tremough crossed in the early 1900s. Lionel’s eldest son, Edmund Leopold de Rothschild, made the new pairing in the mid to late 1950s and exhibited his creation in 1966, prompting the RHS to immediately gift it an Award of Merit. The honorific epithet - ‘my beloved’, in Italian - can only be for Elizabeth Edith Lentner (1923-1980), Edmund’s first wife.

Tall and open in habit, ‘Cara Mia’ has sturdy branches and fairly large, dark green, narrowly ovate-shaped leaves clustered at the tips. The flowers are carried in a truss of 9 to 15 funnel-campanulate corollas whose lobe margins are recurved. They start off deep rose-pink in the bud, open paler and shade to deep cream with a mimosa-yellow throat, which has a small crimson blotch circling the base. The outer surface retains its pink flush for a touch longer, before the whole fades to a creamy-white, which across a mature bush, produces a kind of two-tone effect, evidenced as the staggered opening reaches its peak.

The ‘Cara Mia’ epithet also recalls David Whitfield’s 1954 UK chart-topper recorded with the Mantovani Orchestra, though devotees might not want to hold their breath if hoping for a Bublé or Groban modern-day ‘rechording’.

- opposite left -

Elizabeth & Edmund de Rothschild - ‘ambassadors at large’ for N. M. Rothschild & Sons.



R. ‘Cara Mia’ AM 1966



R. ‘Cara Mia’ AM 1966

R. ‘Charites’

R. ‘Chateau Lafite’



R. ‘David Rockefeller’

R. ‘David Rockefeller’

‘Karkov’ x ‘Gipsy King’

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H5	May	2.5m x 3m

R. ‘David Rockefeller’ is certainly worthy of such an eminent honorific, the epithet chosen by an English merchant banker for his American contemporary, the two men, Rockefeller and the hybrid’s creator, Edmund de Rothschild, both high flying members of their respective financial communities as well as personal friends.

The botanic pairing fuses the genes of two of Edmund’s father Lionel de Rothschild’s best red-flowering crosses, pollen from the open-trussed ‘Gipsy King’ placed on the stigma of the globular ‘Karkov’. A flat-topped arrangement of ten gleaming crimson-red tubular-campanulate corollas is the result, each of the lobes liberally spotted darker. The calyx too is stained with the same vivid red hue, and its lobes are well-developed and cupular, but divided and projecting out from the corolla tube, a trait inherited from *R. haematodes* via the pollen parent.

The shrub’s foliage is elliptic-ovate in shape, sometimes quite narrowly so, dark green in colour and somewhat glossy, the blades held for two years or more. Mature bushes are of medium height and spread, but a little open if grown in too much shade, while hardiness is a touch more robust than the seed parent’s -12ºC, but still not sufficient to allow ‘David Rockefeller’ to be planted in central or northern areas of the UK, outwith those favoured, Gulf Stream-lapped west coast sites.

- below -

David Rockefeller, with Prince Hitachi and Princess Hanako Masahito of Japan, in 1984.



R. ‘David Rockefeller’

R. ‘David Rockefeller’

R. ‘David Rockefeller’

R. ‘Duchess of Rothesay’ AM 1983

R. ‘Duchess of Rothesay’

‘Hotei’ x *decorum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5-6 May 4m x 3m

The choice of epithet for this ‘Hotei’ x *decorum* cross - made by Edmund de Rothschild at Exbury in 1966, but only named in the early 1980s - is somewhat tangential for those not familiar with royal designations and to whom - and when - they apply. Thankfully, the candidate list is short, despite the title’s inception in 1398.

The most beautiful of those ladies in contention, was the late Diana Spencer, who, on July 29th, 1981, became Princess of Wales, Duchess of Cornwall, Countess of Chester, Baroness of Renfrew, and when physically north of the Scottish border, Duchess of Rothesay. And it was for her that the rhododendron was so named.

With pale yellow flowers shading deeper towards the centre of the lobes and into the throat, these held in domed trusses of 17 funnel-shaped corollas, the hybrid outshines both of its parents, the pure-toned, unspotted blooms as equally sublime as their namesake.

Ovate-elliptic, dark green leaves complete the picture, and are the perfect foil for the sweep of colour that covers a mature plant from early May onwards.

- below -

Princess Diana visiting Interconnection Systems in South Shields during 1992.





R. ‘Duchess of Rothesay’ AM 1983

R. ‘Duchess of Rothesay’ AM 1983

R. ‘Duchess of Rothesay’ AM 1983



R. ‘Edmund de Rothschild’ AM 1968 & FCC 1993

R. ‘Edmund de Rothschild’
‘Fusilier’ x ‘Kilimanjaro’
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5 Late May-June 6m x 4m

In 1946, when Edmund de Rothschild returned to Exbury after being discharged from the Royal Artillery at the end of the Second World War, he found the woodlands in a parlous state: strewn with fallen branches; brambles running riot; weeds everywhere. The army of gardeners employed to keep the estate grounds in a pristine state were long gone, called up into military service, and the few who remained were unable to do more than tinker at the edges of those 200 acres. Gone too was Francis Hanger, the head gardener through the war years, who was now curator at Wisley. Just as daunting was the fact that the woods had effectively been the sole preserve of his father Lionel, who had died in January, 1942, and at first, his eldest son was reluctant to take on the task of their restoration in parallel with his growing responsibilities at the family bank.

That he did, restoring the woods to their former glory not once, but again after the long summer drought and subsequent autumn deluges of 1976, and for a third time after the great storm of October 1987, are facts unknowingly appreciated by every one of the thousands of visitors who flock to Exbury during the flowering season. That he became an expert on the genus in the process and a master hybridiser in his own right is confirmed by the award of a Victoria Medal of Honour from the RHS in 2005 and the legacy of plants that now adorn rhododendron gardens all across the world: ‘Bud Flanagan’, ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’, ‘Fred Wynniatt’, ‘Galactic’, ‘Nimrod’ and ‘Our Kate’ to mention just a few of the favourites beloved by most rhodophiles. And he continued the quest begun by his father for a dark red rhododendron flower with no undertone of blue, his 1950s match of ‘Kilimanjaro’ and ‘Fusilier’ that resulted in the AM and FCC-awarded hybrid that bears his name - R. ‘Edmund de Rothschild’ - achieving that goal.

Between 22 and 24 large, openly funnel-campanulate corollas form the spherical, slightly pendent flower truss, with each of those components some 7.5cm long by up to 9cm across. Their hue is deep red, heavily spotted darker on the upper lobes, and the buds open late in the season, often not before the first week of June, so avoiding any frost.

Supporting such well-built trusses is a robust framework of branches, well-cloaked with long, oblanceolate-shaped leaves, dark green in colour, matt, each one 15cm in length and a third that in width; leaf blades moreover, that are held for at least two years.

The rhododendron is large and vigorous, with an upright habit that will become straggly and leggy in too much shade, so the balance between light and dark is critical. It must be set so the blooms are not bleached by too much sunlight; the shrub, not drawn-up by too little.

Hardiness values for R. ‘Edmund de Rothschild’ have been reassessed from the -10ºC figure initially quoted on its introduction in 1963, the H4 rating increased to H5 for mature specimens. Reports from the most recent hard winters are still being sought, but may well see survivability edge towards -18ºC/0ºF. Whether that will prompt a British rhododendron nursery to finally seek out a specimen to propagate is anyone’s guess, though reports indicate that potential customers passing through New Zealand may be able to pick up a youngster. However, emigration is probably a better option than a custodial sentence for breaching the plant importation regulations.

R. ‘Edmund de Rothschild’ AM 1968 & FCC 1993

R. ‘Edmund de Rothschild’ AM 1968 & FCC 1993

R. ‘Edmund de Rothschild’ AM 1968 & FCC 1993

R. ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’ AM 1965 & FCC 1992

R. ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’
‘Lionel’s Triumph’ x ‘Exbury Naomi’
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H6 May 6m x 6m

A ‘Lionel’s Triumph’ x ‘Exbury Naomi’ pairing made in the 1950s that is nothing short of stunning, ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’ is a connoisseur’s plant certainly, but not in any restrictive or elitist sense. For it is fully hardy and easy to grow, taking full sun even in the south, but at its best in dappled shade, with a modicum of shelter to protect the large leaves. Yet an aversion to rooting from cuttings will mean only a few highly priced grafted juveniles will be sporadically available from the specialist nurseries. A worthwhile long-term investment however, if a superlative shrub is desired. Moreover, one that can be allowed to develop without restriction.

For a number of years, devotees will only be rewarded with a symmetrical, well-branched bush, robust and fairly vigorous, bedecked with mid-green elliptic leaves, each around 16cm long by 5cm across, auricled at the base and held on thick red-flushed petioles. Then, when they first begin to form, over the next few seasons, the flower buds will be few in number, but at this point, the waiting game is almost over and an abundance of bloom will be about to burst forth: deep cream corollas, 7cm long and 11.5cm across, each with frilly margins and a chestnut-red flare of spots and streaks in the throat, held in a dense rounded truss of 18 openly-funnel-shaped trumpets.

In thirty years ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’ will develop into a dome 6m or more high and wide, arrayed each May with a multitude of football-sized blooms. But if space is at a premium and a pair of secateurs needed to keep a bush in check, seek out and admire the mature specimens at Exbury, Muncaster and a host of other rhododendron gardens, rather than cramp a Goliath into a shoehorn.

Introduced by Edmund in 1965 and named for his wife, Elizabeth Edith de Rothschild née Lentner (1923-1980), the cross was gifted an immediate showbench Award of Merit, but then had to wait another twenty-seven years for its First Class Certificate.



R. ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’ AM 1965 & FCC 1992

R. ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’ AM 1965 & FCC 1992



R. ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’ AM 1965 & FCC 1992

R. ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’ AM 1965 & FCC 1992



R. ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’ AM 1965 & FCC 1992

The 'Fred Wynniatt' Pride
fortunei x 'Jalisco'
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H6 May-early June 5m x 6m

Named Forms:
Bach Choir - AM 1988
(purplish-pink overlaid pale yellow).
Douggie Betteridge - AM 1986
(pale yellow-green flushed purplish-pink).
Fred Wynniatt - AM 1963 & FCC 1980
(maize-yellow flushed pale neyron-rose).
Jerez (pale lemon-yellow).
Joyful (creamy-yellow flushed carmine-pink).
Simita (maize-yellow, blotched and spotted brown).
Stanway - AM 1971 (pale yellow).
Trianon - AM 1992
(greyed yellow shading pink or purplish-pink).

Edmund de Rothschild likely made his *fortunei* x 'Jalisco' pairing in the mid 1950s, with the first of eight registered clones from the cross exhibited in 1963 and named for Exbury's then Head Gardener, Fred Wynniatt. The stunningly beautiful flowers secured the selection a showbench Award of Merit as soon as the RHS floral committee members saw them, those maize-yellow flushed neyron-rose corollas instantly appealing.

The blooms are carried in a flat-topped truss of 10, each widely-campanulate in shape and 7.5cm long by 11.5cm in width across the mouth. They have overlapping and wavy-edged lobe margins, plus a petaloid calyx that can be up to 2.5cm in length, with mature shrubs yearly displaying literally hundreds of trusses.

The shrub's habit is upright to 5m or more, with the ascending branches forming a dome not much wider than the shrub is tall. The large leaves it carries are elliptic in shape, around 16cm long by half that in width, and mid-green in colour. Unfortunately, they are only held for one year, so mature specimens can appear quite sparse when not covered in a sheet of bloom and the leaves are prone to chlorosis.

However, that leggy mien notwithstanding, the plants are completely winter-hardy in the UK and tolerant of a position in full sun even in the southern counties, though the corollas will bleach and the foliage occasionally scorch unless a modicum of midday shade is provided in such locales. In more northerly climes, an open planting site is de rigueur if fulsome flower bud production is to be maintained, although the leaves will require shelter from storm force winds.

Exbury introduced a quartet of new clones from the cross at the 1966 Chelsea Flower Show: 'Jerez', 'Joyful', 'Simita' and 'Trianon'.

'Stanway' was exhibited in 1971, the epithet borrowed from the village where Freddie Wynniatt was born, while 'Douggie Betteridge' - named for Wynniatt's successor as Head Gardener (and an equally legendary plantsman) - was first shown in 1986.

'Bach Choir', the final selection, was revealed in 1988.

Note too that the FCC-awarded specimen of 'Fred Wynniatt' is deeper toned than the AM plant, so it too should be treated as a separate clone, bringing the pride's membership total to nine (confirming this in situ, the actual plants at Exbury are individually labelled with their award citation).

Muddying the waters still further, avid followers of the *IRRC* texts may be aware of both a conundrum, and an enigma, with regard to the pride, because the official registration entries indicate that one or more of these hybrids might be the result of a repeat mating, as the date of their conception is not the same, and in addition, their parents may not be the same.

For instance, 'Fred Wynniatt' was conceived sometime prior to 1963, which according to the data set was the year 'Bach Choir' was actually birthed, while half a decade later in 1968, 'Stanway' supposedly popped out of a seed capsule.

Now, if correct, that would have allowed the latter just three years to develop into the AM-winning specimen unveiled in 1971, so the dates quoted probably need to be taken with sufficient salt to worry a dietician.

The second complication relates to the parentage of both 'Simita' and 'Trianon', as the *IRRC* equations for both show *R. fortunei* pollinated not by 'Jalisco', but by a 'Jalisco Group seedling'. Thus a different, or an unnamed clone of 'Jalisco'. Or the pollen came from a plant with a 'Jalisco' x 'unknown' heritage.

However, the veracity of both complications is open to challenge as the *IRRC* entries conflict with information detailed in *The Rothschild Rhododendrons* (Cassell, 1967), the authors of which - C. E. Lucas Phillips and Peter N. Barber - had direct access to the Exbury stud book and record the pedigree as it is detailed above. Moreover, they make no mention of multiple pairings.


R. 'Fred Wynniatt' AM 1963



R. ‘Fred Wynniatt’ AM 1963

R. ‘Fred Wynniatt’ AM 1963

R. ‘Fred Wynniatt’ AM 1963

R. ‘Fred Wynniatt’ FCC 1980



R. ‘Fred Wynniatt’ FCC 1980

R. ‘Jerez’


R. 'Jerez'

R. ‘Joyful’

R. ‘Joyful’

R. ‘Trianon’ AM 1992

R. ‘Trianon’ AM 1992



R. ‘Stanway’ AM 1971

R. ‘Stanway’ AM 1971

R. ‘Bach Choir’ AM 1988

R. ‘Bach Choir’ AM 1988

R. ‘Bach Choir’ AM 1988

R. ‘Bach Choir’ AM 1988

R. ‘Galactic’ AM 1964 & FCC 1970

R. ‘Galactic’ AM 1964 & FCC 1970



R. ‘Galactic’ AM 1964 & FCC 1970

R. ‘Galactic’

‘Avalanche’ x *lacteum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H6. March-April 6m x 4m

R. lacteum is known to be ‘difficult’ in cultivation, preferring colder, dryer sites in dappled shade to a coddled placement in a west coast woodland garden (where it often dies-off in stages over time). The species thrives at Blackhills, near Elgin, on the northeast coast of Scotland, for instance, as well as at Sir John Stirling-Maxwell’s experimental mountainside plantings above Loch Ossian, at Corrour Lodge, on the edge of Rannock Moor, the rhododendrons healthy and burgeoning despite residing between the 380 and 500m contours and taking on winter lows of -27ºC. So when hybridisers incorporate the species into their designs, they know that the potential genetic inheritance will not just include those dazzling yellow flowers, but the downside irritations too.

In R. ‘Galactic’, Edmund de Rothschild used the species to pollinate one of his father’s most highly regarded hybrids, the exquisite R. ‘Avalanche’, and the resulting selection from the seedlings raised is graced with yellow-green blooms that are just as magnificent, for it combines the best traits from both its parents. Unfortunately, some of the miffiness has been assimilated too.

Like both its progenitors, ‘Galactic’ is a tall and upright grower, requiring the shelter and light shade of a wooded environment to fully prosper. It bears large, mid-green leaves on thick, sturdy branchlets, and although the whorl of blades is only held for one year, a well-grown shrub is usually adequately clothed nonetheless. Each leaf is up to 22cm in length, oblanceolate in shape, often with wavy margins, and close to 9cm in width as the apex is approached. And a thin plastered indumentum will be found on their underside.

The ‘Galactic’ corollas are carried in a tight, rounded truss of up to 22 individuals, each a widely-campanulate bell 7.5cm long and 9cm across at the mouth, deep cream in tone with flecks of crimson gathered into two rays at the base of the dorsal lobe. Held on 5cm long, flushed-red pedicels, the blooms are even slightly fragrant and their fleshy texture often allows a degree or two of frost to be shrugged-off without damage, an important consideration given the March-April flowering season.

‘Galactic’ was crossed in the early 1950s and the seedlings took many years to begin flowering, but when the first bloom did burst forth in 1964, the hybrid immediately secured an Award of Merit from the RHS on its introduction, with a First Class Certificate following six years later.

Grafted plants are occasionally available from one of the few surviving UK specialist nurseries, but given the above, prospective purchasers with deep pockets should note that R. ‘Galactic’ is widely regarded as a ‘collector’s plant’, even when set on a more amenable rootstock.



R. ‘Galactic’ AM 1964 & FCC 1970

R. ‘Happy Occasion’ AM 1985



R. ‘Happy Occasion’ AM 1985


R. ‘Jancio’


R. ‘Jancio’


R. ‘Jancio’

R. ‘Jancio’

R. ‘Jan Steen’

R. ‘Jan Steen’

R. ‘Jessica de Rothschild’

R. 'Jessica de Rothschild'
'Hotei' x *decorum*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5-6 April-early May 4m x 3m

A second selection from Edmund de Rothschild's 1966 'Hotei' x *decorum* pairing that produced the AM-awarded 'Duchess of Rothesay', this clone is named not for the late Diana, Princess of Wales, but for the daughter of Sir Evelyn de Rothschild and his second wife Victoria Schott, the theatre producer Jessica de Rothschild, who is also the wife of film director Sacha Gervasi.

The flower hue is light greenish-yellow, shading darker towards the throat. When first open, each of the lobe tips displays a blush of yellowish-pink, an enhancement that could be considered comparable to the beauty spot on the face of a goddess. Gathered into globular trusses of between 13 and 16 individuals, the seven-lobed, tubular-campanulate corollas are each 3cm long by 5cm across, so a touch smaller than those of their sister seedling, but with more petals. The leaves too are more petite, 7.5cm long by 3.5cm across, with an ovate profile.

When last in her presence, 'Jessica de Rothschild' was hidden away in the middle of a large planting at Exbury Gardens, overshadowed by lesser shrubs and thereby rarely spotted by the thousands of passing visitors, like the back of house technicians on a play, or the unseen crew on a film. Those with keener eyesight and a temptation to explore however, will be well rewarded for on closer inspection, the shrub is a stunner, on occasion even eclipsing its earlier-named but slightly later flowering sibling.


R. 'Jessica de Rothschild'


R. 'Jessica de Rothschild'

R. ‘Jessica de Rothschild’

R. ‘Jessica de Rothschild’


R. ‘Jungfrau’ AM 1966 & FCC 1992


R. ‘Jungfrau’ AM 1966 & FCC 1992


R. ‘Jungfrau’ AM 1966 & FCC 1992


R. ‘Jungfrau’ AM 1966 & FCC 1992


R. ‘Jungfrau’ AM 1966 & FCC 1992


R. ‘Jungfrau’ AM 1966 & FCC 1992

R. ‘Lady Malmesbury’

R. ‘Lady Malmesbury’



R. ‘Lady Romsey’ AM 1982

R. ‘Lady Romsey’

yakushimanum x ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H6	Late May	3m x 3m

On October 20th 1979, Penelope Meredith Eastwood married Norton Louis Philip Knatchbull and so became Lady Romsey. Three years later, in 1982, Edmund de Rothschild named a newly introduced rhododendron hybrid for her, a selection from a pairing made in 1965 that placed pollen from another of his award-winning crosses, ‘Elizabeth de Rothschild’, onto the style of *R. yakushimanum*. His pick of the seedlings displayed 7-lobed broadly funnel-shaped white corollas, each 5cm long by almost 8cm wide with a fan of greenish-yellow through crimson spots and speckles on the dorsal. These were gathered in flat-topped or globular trusses of up to twenty florets and the framework of a mature shrub supports a multitude of such, the sweep of bloom completely deserving of the Award of Merit gifted by the RHS in 1982.

R. ‘Lady Romsey’ has foliage that is dark green and somewhat shiny above, with a very thin covering of fawn indumentum below. Leaf shape is lanceolate through ovate, each blade extending up to 13cm in length while no more than 5cm in width. Branches and branchlets are stout, the habit upright or ascending, but the plant can become somewhat leggy if set in too much shade, and this is not helped visually by a leaf retention span of just two years.



R. ‘Lady Romsey’ AM 1982

R. ‘Lady Romsey’ AM 1982

R. ‘Lady Romsey’ AM 1982

R. ‘Lady Romsey’ AM 1982

R. ‘Molly Buckley’

R. ‘Molly Buckley’

R. ‘Nimrod’ AM 1987 & FCC 1998

R: ‘Nimrod’ AM 1987 & FCC 1998

R. ‘Nimrod’ AM 1987 & FCC 1998

R. ‘Nimrod’ & R. ‘Scheherezade’
irroratum x *calophytum*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H6 Mid March-early April 6m x 6m

‘Nimrod’ is an out-and-out stunner all year round, with large spear-blade-shaped dark green leaves densely filling a robust framework and commanding attention when the eye-catching flowers have faded. It is one of Edmund de Rothschild’s hybrid masterpieces. Yet the cross appears a simple one, a straightforward *irroratum* x *calophytum* F1 pairing.

In fact, it was a combination no one else had tried until pollen was applied to style at Exbury in the early 1950s, although the *IRRC* listings reveal that an unknown French hybridiser had made the reverse cross in the 1920s and horticulturalist and rhodophile Collingwood Ingram (1880-1981), had obtained one of the seedlings in 1934, naming it ‘Calotum’. It appears, however, not to have been distributed beyond Ingram’s own garden at The Grange, Benenden Green, Kent, and is possibly no longer in cultivation.

That fate will likely not befall ‘Nimrod’ due to the canny choice of clones E. de R. used in the match: one of Exbury’s own fine plants of *R. calophytum* providing the pollen; and the AM-awarded ‘Polka Dot’ selection of *R. irroratum,* raised by Edmund’s father Lionel de Rothschild, maturing the seed and virtually guaranteeing those heavily spotted flowers.

Individually 5cm long and wide, and funnel-campanulate in shape, those corollas are five-lobed, have wavy margins, and are purplish-pink in the bud. They open white flushed pink, with innumerable purplish-red flecks on all the lobes and five darker purple nectar pouches ringing the base of the throat. No fewer than twenty-two such trumpets are gathered into each domed or ball-shaped truss and while the hybrid is slow to start blooming as a youngster, mature specimens put on an annual floral extravaganza from mid March into April. But because the new growth too comes early, a woodland site offering protection from spring frosts, as well as wind shelter to avoid broken leaf stalks, will be essential despite the H6 hardiness rating.

The shrub’s dark green foliage is thick and substantial, the leaves showing deeply impressed veins above, a glabrous surface below, and an abaxial midrib that is prominent and often stained red for much of its length. Each blade is a narrowly elliptic dagger, pointed at the apex and tapering or rounded at the base, 18cm long and up to 5.5.cm broad. And they are held for between two to three years, so the sturdy framework of branches is demurely dressed rather than fully open to view. Habit is upright and spreading, a dome easily 6m high and wide with age, dimensions that will almost certainly be breached in west coast gardens where the growing conditions are more favourable or as the oldest shrubs become eligible for a pension.

As to the epithet:

The ‘Nimrod’ appellation could have been borrowed from the British Aerospace AEW3, or perhaps the biblical King of Shinar, with several locales around the world and even the ship used by Ernest Shackleton on his 1908 expedition to the Antarctic all possibilities.

Or perhaps Mr. Eddy was simply an admirer of Sir Edward Elgar.

Whichever the choice was, it would probably have remained an enigma had not a second clone been introduced in 1988, the slightly darker-flowered ‘Scheherezade’. For its appellative gives a musical nod to the *One Thousand and One Nights* adaptions of Rimsky-Korsakov or Ravel, despite the extra ‘e’.



R. ‘Nimrod’ AM 1987 & FCC 1998

R. ‘Scheherezade’

R. ‘Scheherezade’



R. ‘Our Kate’ AM 1963

R. ‘Our Kate’

macabeanum x *calophytum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5-6 March-early April 6m x 6m

Just like the *irroratum* x *calophytum* F1 pairing that birthed ‘Nimrod’ and ‘Scheherezade’, no one hybridising within the ranks of Genus *Rhododendron* had combined *R. calophytum* and *R. macabeanum* together before Edmund de Rothschild used the former to pollinate the latter in the late 1940s.

And that is a mystery.

For it seems an obvious pairing to make.

Especially given the plethora of crosses made between the species of Subsections Fortunea and Grandia.

Yet to date - incredibly, perhaps - no one has duplicated the match since. Nor reversed the parentage. And only two other hybridisers have ever matched *R. calophytum* with another member of the large-leaved rhododendron clans: Norman Colville, with *R. arizelum* in 1954; and Exbury’s own mythic former head gardener, Douggie Betteridge, with *R. sinogrande* in 1975.

Which is incredible given the absolutely knockout blooms of ‘Our Kate’.

Named for Mr. Eddy’s eldest daughter, the hybrid took fifteen years from sprouting as a cotyledon to setting its first flower bud, which it did in the early 1960s. And to say that anticipation was sky-high when that inflorescence finally began to swell, would be an understatement.

Twenty ventricose-campanulate corollas were ultimately revealed, held in a large, dome-shaped truss, each pure white bell 9cm long by 9cm across at the mouth. Their hue when first open is lightly flushed a pale yellow-green, but this quickly dissipates and only the crimson-purple blotch at the base of the dorsal lobe, often divided into three short rays, is left to catch the eye, along with the full stop punctuation mark of each style’s large yellow stigma.

A second plant from the cross was exhibited in 1963 alongside ‘Our Kate’.

This had very pale pink blooms, flushed deeper pink around the lobe margins at first, but again, the corollas age to white. These have a ruby-coloured blotch in the throat and a crimson-pink stigma. However, this second plant was not the clone registered as ‘Our Kate Marise’ in 2008, but may have been the form that was originally propagated and then commercially distributed. However, following a reassessment, ‘Our Kate Marise’ is now regarded by Exbury as being identical with the original ‘Our Kate’, with the epithet relegated to synonymic status (*IRRC* Eighth Supplement, RHS, 2014).

The foliage of ‘Our Kate’ is narrower than a typical specimen of *R. macabeanum* and the leaves are not as long as the maxima attained by either species, though a plant grown in a west coast garden may prove that statement incorrect. Oblanceolate through narrowly elliptic in shape, each dark green leathery blade can extend up to 28cm in length and be 10cm across at its widest point. The leaf upper surface is somewhat shiny, rugulose in texture, with a yellow midrib and deeply impressed veins, while the underside displays the same thin and detersile covering of indumentum as found on Mr. McCabe’s rhododendron. The shrub’s habit is upright and spreading, a dome 6m high with a similar spread the current dimensions of the oldest plant at Exbury, but again, a wetter locale will unlock the potential to turn a large shrub into a full-blown tree.

‘Our Kate’ was gifted an Award of Merit by the RHS when first exhibited in 1963.

R. ‘Our Kate’ AM 1963

R. ‘Our Kate’ AM 1963

R. ‘Our Kate’ AM 1963

R. ‘Pearl Betteridge’

R. ‘Pearl Betteridge’



R. ‘Renée Robeson’



R. ‘Renée Robeson’



R. ‘Renée Robeson’

R. ‘Renée Robeson’

R. ‘Shangri La’

R. ‘Shangri La’

R. ‘Tasco’

R. 'Tasco'

R. ‘Zelia Plumecocq’

R. ‘Zelia Plumecocq’

Roza Stevenson:

The Stevensons: An Acclamation and A Eulogy.

by Sir Eric Savill (Roza) & Henry McLaren (John Barr).

Roza Harrison, who died recently after a long and painful illness, was a happy and radiant woman whose gaiety and immense courage never forsook her. To spend a day, even an hour or two, in her company was always an enriching experience, for it was impossible not to take unto oneself some of her gaiety and spiritual exuberance.

After a severe operation in January, 1967, she endured the discomfort of the long journey, from her home in Cornwall, to London, to attend a Rhododendron Committee Meeting in Vincent Square, only to enter hospital again the very next day for further treatment. Such was her courage. This committee meeting was to be her last public engagement, but how appropriate a one it was.

Mrs Harrison was a beautiful woman of Danish extraction who first became known in this country as a member of the team of dancers in "Chu Chin Chow", the fascinating musical show of the early twenties. This she did in part training for the ballet, which, in early life, she intended to be her career. How she must have enjoyed all the gaiety and fun of such a life. However, when seventeen, she met and married John Barr Stevenson, later of Tower Court, Ascot, and immediately was transformed from a town girl into a country woman whose early interest and recreation was riding - she hunted regularly with the Garth. Entry into the great houses of the country could never change her innate simplicity; she was not too proud to use a push bicycle during the late War, and was often seen shopping in the village with all the impedimenta of string bags and baskets, always with a smile and a joke on her lips.

There must be very many rhododendron enthusiasts of the younger generation who did not see the magnificent garden at Tower Court created jointly by Jack and Roza Stevenson. Many would have said that the soil conditions could but lead to failure owing to its extreme acidity - fit only for Scots Pine and Sweet Chestnut. But the Stevensons overcame all difficulties and in fact were so successful that the Tower Court garden became world famous for its great collection of rhododendron species. In her work with rhododendrons Roza was in her element. Seed sent by the great collectors from China, from Burma and Tibet, and in fact from all over Asia (in a lesser degree from North America also) came pouring into this country. She had the knack and the green fingers to handle this mass of material, and was successful not only in growing plants from this seed, but in classifying and cataloguing all the resulting progeny to the extent that the Tower Court collection of rhododendron species was easily the best documented in the world.

However, Tower Court was not merely a garden devoted to species rhododendron. One has only to study Part II of the Rhododendron Hand-book to appreciate that the Stevensons produced many rhododendron hybrids of great merit. It would be correct to say that Roza was responsible for all these matings, and it is due to her that we have in our gardens today lovely plants such as R. 'Amor', R. 'Azor', R. 'John Barr Stevenson', R. 'Rozamarie', R. 'Robert Keir', R. 'Remo' and R. 'Tessa' (her own pet name) to name a few. Possibly her greatest achievement, however, was R. 'Polar Bear', a cross between *auriculatum* and *diaprepes*, a giant plant blooming in late July with huge trusses of scented white flowers which not only adorns the garden but pervades the evening air with sweetness.

Alas, great tragedy was to be Roza's lot, for in 1950 her husband was found dead in his chair. She was left penniless with a considerable mortgage on the property, and, because his signature had not been witnessed, Stevenson's will proved to be invalid according to English Law. She rose bravely to her greatest challenge. Luckily she was advised to seek counsel from a Scottish Writer to the Signet, and after much protracted



negotiations her husband's will was proved valid by Scottish Law and such as he left was hers absolutely.

Roza decided to sell the rhododendron species collection to the Commissioners of Crown Lands, as the Crown Estate Commissioners were then called. The story of these negotiations cannot yet be told, but the greatest in the land came to her aid and the collection moved to Windsor Great Park, where it stands as a lasting (we hope) testimonial to two great gardeners. This sale helped with the mortgage but Roza still had to live. Those who knew her in the fifties will forever remember her giant strength both of body and determination. Aided only by her splendid and loyal gardener, Robert Keir, she personally started a most successful selling business. The two of them, unaided, dug up some thousands of plants, some of then weighing many hundred-weights each, and loaded and despatched them; she also propagated thousands more. Thus she carried on for eleven years.

It rejoiced the hearts of all her many friends when in 1961, suddenly and unexpectedly, her engagement was announced to Major-General Eric Harrison, of Tremeer, St. Tudy, Cornwall, himself a keen and knowledgeable gardener. Tower Court was sold and many of her good plants found their way to her new and lovely home. Roza absorbed many of the local interests and became an expert dog handler, and in fact was successful in several field trials. She loved to work her labrador when out shooting with her husband. She joined him also on the river and caught many a salmon in their local river, the Tamar, and in Scotland.

"What a happy ending" all her many friends thought; and, in spite of the disease which took hold of her, thus it was.

Our sympathy goes out to Eric Harrison, the husband of one the gayest and most gallant of women.



J. B. Stevenson, V.M.H.

John Barr Stevenson, who died this spring, had an absorbing enthusiasm for Rhododendrons. He was a master, not only of their cultivation, but of the botanical side of that great genus.

In his garden at Tower Court, Ascot, he grew probably the most complete collection of the species in this country. He was not only content with growing one form of a species, but he grew plants, as far as possible, of the various sendings from China, so that if they varied, he had specimens of each type.

In the Dell, a partially wooded and picturesque depression near the house, he had a plant, as far as possible, of every species and of every type of that species, a scheme which might very well be adopted by a Botanic Garden.

A skilled seed raiser, with the help of Mrs Stevenson, he had, of course, many duplicates, and these he planted picturesquely about his large garden with its shallow valleys and pleasing contours. He planted them, not in a collection, but for effect, and most beautiful that effect was in the spring.

He tried few hybrids, but those that he made were of very great merit; notably his 'Polar Bear', a hybrid between *R. auriculatum* and *R. diaprepes*. Very fine too was his 'Azor', a hybrid between *R. griersonianum* and *R. discolor,* and his 'Amor', an unusual hybrid of *R. griersonianum* x *R. thayerianum*. There were also charming dwarf plants which he named 'Tessa' and 'Redcap'.

He did not plant lavishly of other people's hybrids, but he had a collection of a few of the very best.

Grown on sandy peaty soil, his Rhododendrons all looked flourishing, a dry summer being their only enemy.

Apart from Rhododendrons and Azaleas, he grew a very complete collection of Sorbus, of which he was very fond, and a number of Magnolias and other fine plants. It was, indeed, an education to be taken round the garden by him.

He had a distinguished business career, becoming Managing Director of the great firm of Holland, Hannen and Cubitts Ltd., from which he retired during the war when there was but little building to occupy them.

He was a most valued member of the Council of the Royal Horticultural Society, both from his knowledge of plants and his business and literary ability. His was the guiding spirit of that most useful and distinguished volume *The Species of Rhododendrons*. He was Chairman of the Publications Committee of the Royal Horticultural Society.

We have to mourn the loss of one, who not only helped us greatly, but who was the most pleasant of companions and the most able and generous of gardeners.

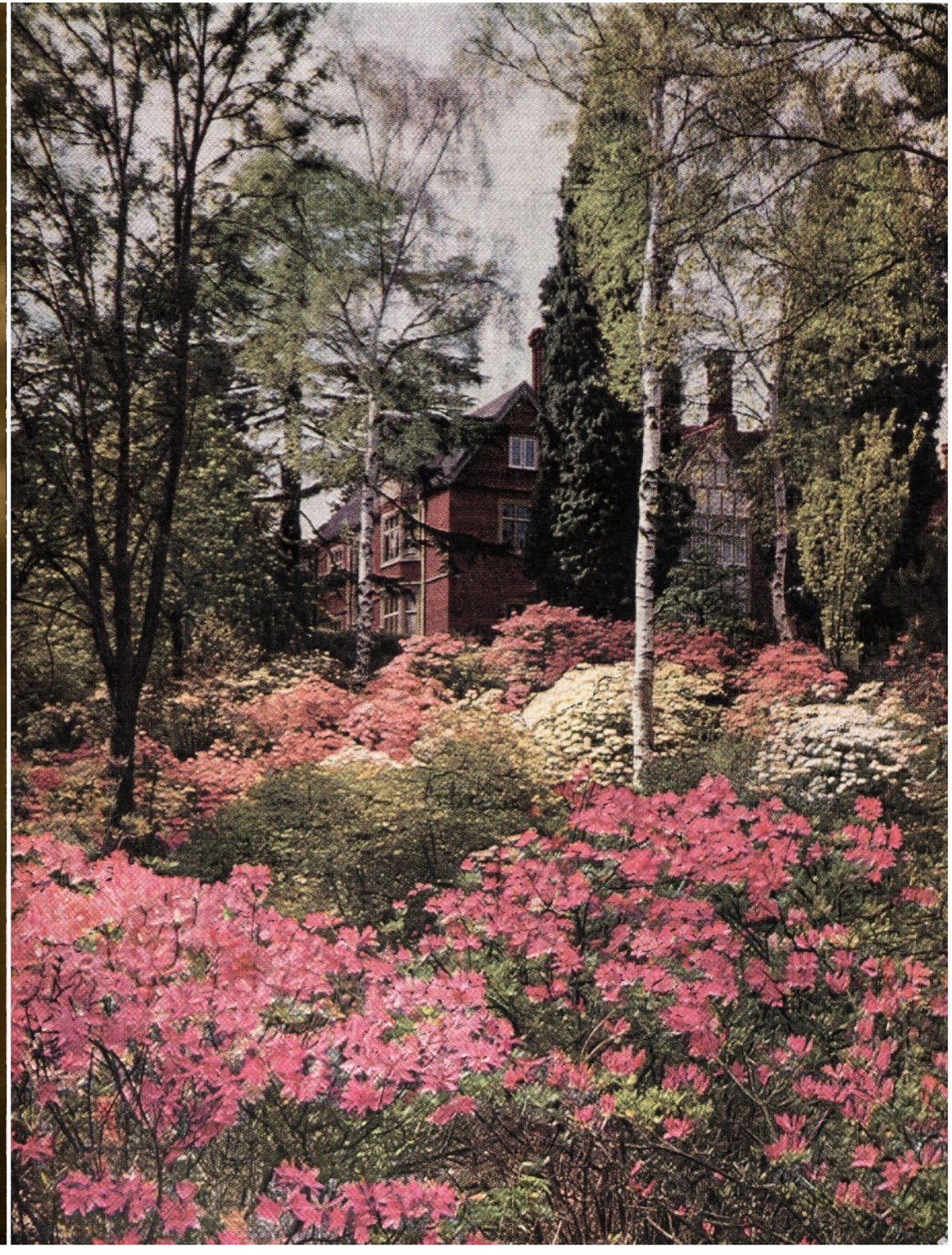
Sir Eric Savill's intimate appreciation of Roza Stevenson, for *The Rhododendron And Camellia Year Book 1968,* sets the record straight on the huge contribution that she made to both the Tower Court garden and the hybrids that were created in it (if only another five decades had not been required for a certain seismic societal shift to occur and the age of enlightenment and equality to finally dawn). The eulogy for Roza's first husband, John Barr Stevenson, was written by Lord Aberconway and published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1950.* Regrettably, Henry McLaren's narrative is a typically stilted 1950s obit that almost fails to acknowledge that John Barr Stevenson even had a wife, yet alone that she played any substantial horticultural role in their partnership. The analogy could be made that the latter text is pre-Weinstein chalk, the former, post-Harvey cheese.

- opposite -

An avenue of *R. decorum* ssp. *diaprepes* and *Nyssa sylvatica* at Tower Court.

Rhododendrons At Tower Court.





by N. K. Gould and Patrick M. Synge.

Tower Court, the residence of Mr and Mrs J. B. Stevenson, stands on a small wooded ridge between Ascot and Bagshot. The highest point of this ridge, a short distance from the house, is 450 feet above sea level [137m], and it is the highest point in all the surrounding countryside. From here the ground descends in a series of valleys, several well-protected by spurs, and these have proved a very favourable situation for the cultivation of Rhododendrons. The acid top soil has a pH value between 4 and 5 and is made up of sand and peat and heath soil, having been derived from an old Pine Wood, with an intermingling of Birch and Spanish Chestnut. Fortunately the underlying soil is clay, which retains much water that would otherwise drain away from the surface soil.

Mr and Mrs Stevenson began to make a garden here in 1919. Previously there had been nothing but a lawn near the house, and four trees of flowering Cherries 'Ojochin', 'Kwanzan', 'Ukon' and 'Okumiyako'. These have grown very large and are a beautiful sight every spring. Many of the original Pines and other trees were left to form a background and to give shade in the garden and it has been found that Conifers, for the most part, grow to a considerable size here. Seedlings raised in the garden of *Abies grandis, A. Pinsapo* and *Tsuga heterophylla* have formed stately, symmetrical trees whose finely-coloured foliage is an indication of their perfect health.

The garden has been laid out in districts or compartments and this is regarded as a special feature in its design. There is a district for hybrid Rhododendrons, another which contains a remarkably complete collection of Rhododendron species, an area devoted to hybrid Azaleas and another to Kurume Azaleas, while in other parts there are districts for Magnolias, Heathers, Cotoneaster, Gaultheria, Vaccinium, Berberis, Crabapples and other genera. There is, however, little mingling between these parts, and in each case they have been planted so as to include as complete a collection as possible of the species and best varieties. The garden has been designed so that there is a contrast when going from one part to another and as far as possible each view has been framed with trees on either side. Thus, repetitive planting, which can greatly detract from the interest of a large garden, has been avoided.

From the house it is possible to look down a series of descending avenues leading down from the top of the ridge where the house stands and along two of these, viewed respectively from the drawing room and dining room, have been placed avenues of the fastigiate flowering Cherry 'Amanogawa', one interplanted with Kurume Azaleas and the other with species from Subsection Lapponica, Section Pogonanthum and others. These spread into the surrounding valleys, presenting in the spring a vista of most varied colouring, lapping in waves up to the terrace on which the house is built, from which one is able to look down on them.

THE HYBRID COLLECTION

The hybrid Rhododendrons are planted on some of the highest ground close to the house and in the gullies descending from Tower Hill. Many of these plants have now reached a very large size and flower freely. Almost all the varieties of R. 'Loderi' are represented. Among the best of them are the pink-tinted 'Stag's Head' and the paler 'Fairyland', two varieties not often seen. 'Stag's Head' is now 15 feet high and 25 feet across, while 'Fairyland' is 10 feet high and 14 feet across [4.6 by 7.6m, and 3 by 4.3m]. Other varieties of R. 'Loderi' in the collection include 'King George', 'Pink Diamond', 'Sir Joseph Hooker', pinker than most varieties in the earlier stages of flowering, and 'Sir Edmund', the variety named after the raiser. Close to the 'Loderi' varieties is a very large plant of R. 'Luscombei', 'Leonardslee' variety and it is a very deep pink form with flowers almost as large as those of R. 'Loderi'.

During a visit to Tower Court on a sunny morning in mid-April we had the good fortune to find the largest specimen of 'Penjerrick', an upright-growing plant over 15 feet in height [4.6m], framed in the shady green setting of a deep gully, with countless rosy buds opening to pale, pink-flushed, cream flowers. The bells are perfectly formed and hang in loose, regular trusses, so that it is possible to appreciate the beauty of each individual flower. A fortnight later this remarkable tree still carried most of its flowers, now of translucent ivory-white. 'Penjerrick' was raised in Cornwall by Mr S. Smith by crossing R. *campylocarpum* Elatum Group with *R. griffithianum*. It is also represented in the Tower Court collection by a lovely form of more lasting pink colour that is well grown and always greatly admired in the gardens at Bodnant.

Another notable hybrid flowering at the same time is the Logan variety of 'Damaris' ('Dr Stocker' x *campylocarpum*), whose slender, upright branches carry full trusses of Dresden-yellow blooms. This attractive variety received the Award of Merit this year. 'Rima' (*wardii* x *decorum*), 'Dairy Maid', 'Diane' and 'Unique' are all good plants in the pale yellow class, while among the whites are 'Dr Stocker', 'Carex White' and 'Bodartianum' which has grown up so that it almost resembles a white-flowered *R. arboreum*. 'Earl of Athlone' is pre-eminent among the deep crimson-scarlet varieties and 'Ascot Brilliant', a very old hybrid with local associations, still makes a fine display. At this season the last flowers were still hanging on 'Choremia', one of the very finest early-flowering hybrids, which was awarded an F.C.C. this year when shown by Lord Aberconway. An attractive small growing variety with crimson flowers is 'Venapens' raised by Sir John Ramsden from *R. venator* x *R. forrestii* Repens Group. 'Queen Wilhelmina', scarlet fading rosy-pink, also flowered well. Among the dwarf blue flowers were 'Blue Tit', 'Blue Diamond' and 'Bluebird'.

Early in May 'Mrs W. C. Slocock', 'Mother of Pearl' and 'Isabella Mangles' make a fine display. 'Isabella Mangles' is now a huge bush with large trusses of pale shell-pink flowers that are quite unspotted, and it presented a very beautiful sight. 'Beauty of Littleworth', white with a mauve blotch, has made a very tall plant with very full trusses. It has a faint scent. Another notable white-flowered plant is 'Lamellen' (*campanulatum* x *griffithianum*), whose large, bell-shaped flowers entitle it to a place among the best of Mr Magor's hybrids. This came to Tower Court through the kindness of the late Mr Lionel de Rothschild. The F.C.C. variety of 'Lady Chamberlain', the original 'Lady Rosebery' and 'Lady Berry', that graceful trio of distinguished ancestry, have found here the shade and shelter they so much appreciate, and all grow and flower with freedom.

Special features have been made of the June-flowering 'Amor', 'Azor' and 'Red Cap' and the July-flowering 'Polar Bear', all raised at Tower Court; the last a cross between *R. diaprepes* and *R. auriculatum*. This received the F.C.C. in 1946. The plants are now nearly twenty feet high and flower very freely [6.1m]. They are used as a boundary and windbreak along the northern marches of the estate. Another Tower Court Rhododendron is 'Tessa', a very early-flowering variety raised by crossing *R. moupinense* with R. 'Praecox', and a large planting has been made of this.

THE SPECIES COLLECTION

The Rhododendron species have been arranged here in their Series [Sections/Subsections],

- opposite left -
John Barr Stevenson, V.M.H.

- opposite right -
Evergreen Azaleas at Tower Court in 1948.

and the collection is an attempt to present in living form the Rhododendron book *The Species of Rhododendron.* It is probably the most complete collection of species of Rhododendron in the world, larger than that of any other garden in Europe that grows Rhododendrons for research purposes. Many botanic gardens and private gardens have contributed most generously to it, while numbers of plants have been raised from the seed collected by Farrer, Forrest, Rock, Kingdon-Ward and other collectors. The Species Collection now covers about four acres and occupies several small valleys running down from the south-western side of the house and terrace. It is a particularly sheltered situation.

Subsection Saluenensia is complete in the inclusion of all the species so far discovered and it is probably the only subsection that is absolutely complete in the collection, although the azalea subgenus is very nearly complete. In Subsection Fortunea there is one of the original plants grown from seed collected by Robert Fortune. One of these was planted at Noble's Nurseries, Sunningdale (now the Sunningdale Nursery) and the other at Sunningdale School. The former died in 1900; the latter is the plant that is now in the Tower Court collection. Next to this is planted *R. fortunei* 'Mrs Butler' which has a much finer flower. A very interesting plant in this section is a red-flowered *R. fortunei* which has only recently flowered for the first time and which is perhaps sufficiently distinct to merit description as a new species. There is also that very interesting plant, possibly of Subsection Irrorata, collected by one of Lord Aberconway's collectors (McL. T. 41), which is described elsewhere in this book and named after Lord Aberconway. It has white flowers opening wide into a saucer-shape and there is no tube whatever to the corolla. It is a very beautiful flower. Another white flowered species of great distinct is *R. hyperythrum*. This species was collected for Mr L. de Rothschild in Taiwan. It does not grow into a very tall plant but the flowers are beautifully shaped and a very pure white. This, like other white-flowered Rhododendrons, has a special value late in the day, for it remains conspicuous long after the brilliance of the dark-flowered kinds has been dimmed by the fading light.

Among the dwarf species *R. pemakoense* has proved a very free-flowering useful plant. There is also a notable potpourri of *R. forrestii* var. *forrestii* Repens Group and a number of different forms have been collected together. The plant to which an F.C.C. was given in 1935 is now 3 feet across [0.9m]. It was collected by Kingdon-Ward under the number 6832, and this particular specimen has proved the most free flowering of all the forms. It is interesting to observe the variation in habit and freedom of flowering among the different forms.

Another notable plant here is *R. pseudochrysanthum* (Wilson 10925). It has flowered only once, but proved very beautiful. It was collected by Wilson in Taiwan and given to the collection by the late Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour, and is now a plant 5 feet across [1.5m]. One of the few plants of the true *R. ponticum* is in the species collection here. It is not a very vigorous growing plant and it may be that the majority of the plants, which are grown so widely under the name *ponticum,* are hybrids, inheriting their vigour from *R. arboreum*. Another unusual plant is *R. keiskei*. It is a very slow-growing species and the Tower Court plant, over six feet across [1.8m], was said by the late Mr W. J. Bean to be probably the largest in Europe. The flowers are lemon coloured. Mr Bean also stated that the plant of *R. neriiflorum* could not be matched for size anywhere in Europe.





- above right -
R. forrestii var. *forrestii* Repens Group (Forrest 699) at Tower Court in 1951-52.

- below right -
R. forrestii var. *chamaethomsonii* (Kingdon-Ward 6935) at Tower Court in 1951-52.

R. forrestii var. *forrestii* Repens Group (KW 6832) at Tower Court in 1951-52

When the collection of species was started plants of some of the more tender ones were put out, and made satisfactory progress. *R. edgeworthii* reached a height of 6 feet [1.8m], and others that survived for some years were *R. megacalyx, R. kyawii* and *R. protistum*. During the past decade, however, all of these have been lost. Long and severe winters, late spring frosts and summer droughts have all contributed here, as in many other famous gardens, to the destruction of fine plants on the borderline of hardiness.

MAGNOLIA COLLECTION AND AZALEA SPECIES AND HYBRIDS

From the Rhododendron collection we come round through a magnificent glade of Magnolias where a large tree of *M. Brozzonii* is pre-eminent with its beautiful white flowers standing erect and appearing well before the foliage. This tree is now 15 feet in height and it is, perhaps, the finest of all the *denudata* hybrids [4.6m]. Another very fine plant here is *Magnolia soulangeana* 'Alexandrina', the flowers of which are delicately tinged with pink towards the base. Around the Magnolias Azalea species have been planted, among them a very fine form of *R. x mucronatum* 'Noordtianum' with larger white flowers than R. 'Mucronatum'. *R. schlippenbachii* is also represented by its finest pink form, which is greatly superior to many seen. It is a most beautiful species. *R. stenopetalum* 'Linearifolium', an Azalea with fine narrow petals and leaves, grows here, also *R. atlanticum,* a fine species of exceptional hardiness, making a very compact round bush, which should be in every garden. The white flowers are flushed with pale pink outside and are slightly fragrant. Other interesting species here are *R. serpyllifolium,* which has probably the smallest leaf of any Rhododendron, and *R. prunifolium,* bearing orange-scarlet flowers in July.

From there one enters a valley of the *molle-japonicum* hybrid Azaleas, a brilliant mass of colour in May, followed later in the season by the towering stems of *Lilium auratum* var. *platyphyllum*. The success of this planting has been assured by an opening made at the lower end to allow the frost to drain away. One passes now, by way of a dividing screen of tall bushes of *Eucryphia glutinosa* and its hybrid E. 'Nymansensis', to a cooler-coloured mass of *Rhododendron luteum,* whose soft yellow is a pleasing change from the more vivid hybrids. In this part of the garden there are several notable shrubs that have formed large specimens, such as *Halesia monticola* var. *vestita,* of which young plants have reached 10 feet and flower very freely [3m], the large white flowers opening from pinkish or brownish tinted buds. This is an outstanding plant of great merit. *Cornus florida* var. *rubra* is also a beautiful sight here each spring, while by the lake there is a very good form with darker flowers than those usually seen. There is also a very fine specimen of *C. florida* with unusually large and well-shaped bracts. Just below the terrace *Sorbus pekinensis* has formed a large tree and is most decorative both in flower and in fruit. The Pinnate sorbus collection, which includes every species at present obtainable, has been planted in the lower part of the garden and is a striking sight in the autumn. Among the conifers *Tsuga heterophylla* has made a huge tree and there are abundant self-sown seedlings. Trees of *Cupressus lawsoniana* var. *fraseri* have grown into fine columnar specimens in the Azalea section. There is also a fine collection of Acer species and specially noteworthy are the snake-barked *Acer davidii, A. forrestii* and *A. rufinerve* var. *albo-limbatum* with white-margined leaves; while Japanese Maples have been planted freely in the Kurume collection.



- opposite -
R. fortunei ssp. *discolor* at Tower Court in 1948.

- page 245 left -
R. 'Penjerrick' at Tower Court in 1948.

- page 245 right -
R. 'Amor' at Tower Court in 1948.







Ascending to the house again one enters a horseshoe walk of *Rhododendron yunnanense* ssp. *yunnanense,* one of the best of Rhododendron species and this leads to a large planting of *R. lutescens*. Notable in this area are the numerous self-sown seedlings of *Pieris forrestii,* whose bright red spring foliage is as handsome as its great panicles of white flowers. The indispensable, early-flowering *P. japonica, P. taiwanensis* and *P. floribunda* are, of course, all well represented here, and there is in addition a group of the less familiar *P. floribunda* var. *elongata,* a distinct plant with bold, erect inflorescences, also a magnificent tree of *Rhus potaninii*.

THE KURUME COLLECTION

Bordering one of the avenues of fastigiate Cherries leading down from the front of the house, plants of the fifty Kurume Azaleas brought by Wilson from Japan have been established and this is one of the very few complete collections in the country. Recently a similar collection has been planted at Wisley and many of the plants were raised from cuttings supplied from Tower Court. They are all colour forms of *R. x obtusum* and in most years present a most brilliant spectacle. Unfortunately they suffered severely in the winter of 1946-47 and in the summer drought of 1947. Yet another avenue is bordered by tall and shapely bushes of the varieties of *Enkianthus campanulatus,* which were covered this year with dainty, pale-coloured blossoms, and these are under-planted with *Rhododendron leucaspis,* an under-shrub of great merit in gardens that afford some shelter to its February flowers.

On the highest part of Tower Hill also has been planted a large collection of Kurume Azaleas that in flower mingle together as in the design of a Persian carpet and this part is known as the Kurume carpet. Among the Azaleas have been planted Japanese Maples and other shrubs. The Maples blend most harmoniously with the dwarf Azaleas and many of both the Azaleas and Maples are now very large specimens, especially the finely-coloured variety of *Acer palmatum* called 'Osakazuki'. Here also *Daphne mezereum* 'Bowles Variety' has made an enormous bushy plant about eight feet high [2.4m], while other notable plants are *Viburnum cylindricum,* and a very fine form of *Cotinus coggygria* (*Rhus continus*). Vertical interest is provided here by young specimens of the fastigiate Kilmacurragh Cypress. There are also a number of Euonymus species that are lovely in the autumn.

The Kurumes are followed by large beds of the 'Gumpo' Azaleas - forms of *R. eriocarpum,* a late-flowering race of great garden value. Their habit is compact, and the flowers vary in colour from white to many shades of pink and rose.

OTHER FEATURES

As we descend from the house in the direction of the lake, again by a different avenue, we pass a planting of R. 'Rima', another Tower Court hybrid raised between *R. wardii* and *R. decorum*. The flowers are a lovely deep cream colour. Through wide borders of Enkianthus we come to a large group of *R. oreodoxa* and further on where a wide walk, known as the Broadway, crosses the descending path, *R. diaprepes* has been interspersed with *Nyssa sylvatica*. Unlike *N. aquatica,* this last needs staking to secure a shapely specimen. By the lake we come to a group of *R. atlanticum* hybrids made with *R. atlanticum* and a large dark purple unnamed species. These are graceful, small flowered bushes with no trace of purple in their colour. There is also a planting of the *kaempfer*i hybrids 'John Cairns' and 'Orange Beauty' of dazzling scarlet shades. Unfortunately, their colour is liable to fade rather rapidly with full exposure to bright sunshine. Near here also in a damp position are plantings of Gentians and a Pinguicula brought back by Mrs Stevenson from the Pyrenees. The latter was originally planted on the mossy bank of a small ditch, and it has spread widely by self-sown seeds, forming drifts of Violet-like flowers in the paths and even between the timbers of a little footbridge.

Around the lake, where some very large bushes of the old hybrid Rhododendron 'Broughtonii' are effectively mirrored in the water, there are extensive collections of Berberis, Cistus, Cotoneaster, Gaultheria and Vaccinium, still rich in number of species, but showing the inevitable deterioration due to the enforced neglect of the war years.

In this short article we have drawn attention to a few of the finest specimen plants and collections contained in this extensive and delightful garden; there are very many more about which it would be possible to write at length. At almost every turn there is something of outstanding interest, such as the 16-foot tree of *Ceanothus arboreus* from the islands of Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz and Santa Catalina [4.9m], flourishing and flowering profusely near the north-west wall of the house; or the colonies of *Shortia uniflora,* seeding themselves about along the ditches in the lower parts of the garden.

Our pleasure in wandering around this lovely place, observing and noting its treasures, has on our many visits, been greatly enhanced by the unfailing kindness of those two accomplished gardeners, Mr and Mrs Stevenson, who have ungrudgingly placed their time and knowledge at our disposal.

- *opposite* -
R. hyperythrum at Tower Court in 1948.

The original article's text, published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1948,* has been updated to reflect the current Section-Subsection taxonomy and Edinburgh Revision synonymy rather than maintain the designations of yesteryear. Links to a two-part *JARS* article, written by Alleyne Cook, which, like the Eric Savill account on pages 14-21 herein, detail the move of the Tower Court rhododendron collection to the Valley and Savill Gardens in Windsor Great Park, may be found online at:

Part 1 - https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v51n2/v51n2-cook.htm

Part 2 - https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v51n3/v51n3-cook.htm

On the Trail of "Stevenson's Collection" of Kurume Azaleas.

by John M. Hammond.

Introduction

On the cover of a recent issue of *The Azalean* is a close-up of 'Haru-no-akebono' that is said to be "a Kurume introduction by the late J. B. Stevenson of England... the source is unknown".[1] While the "unknown" source is not exactly the whole story, it is well worth noting at the outset that there are currently very few records available in Britain regarding the collection of Kurume azaleas introduced by Stevenson. Most azalea enthusiasts will be conversant with the "Wilson's Fifty" collection of Kurumes, but few will have heard of "Stevenson's Collection", or be aware that the history of both collections is inextricably entwined. If you have an interest in superior varieties of evergreen azaleas then you may find this tale somewhat thought provoking.

There is little doubt, compared with the coverage of rhododendrons in the printed media in Britain, that in general terms azaleas are something of a "Cinderella", as over the years they have received scant coverage in the horticultural press. This situation is something of a paradox as many gardens, both public and private, contain a range of evergreen and deciduous types but their use has been mainly for decorative purposes and many enthusiasts in Britain do not regard them as being part of a rhododendron collection. So, while they provide a spectacular backcloth each spring they tend to receive less TLC than rhododendrons, and they are usually not labelled. Some reports have suggested that many of the Kurume azaleas do not perform very well in Britain, but in the author's experience this is quite subjective as their performance tends to be directly related to their geographical location and the level of exposure to the sun. While these notes have been compiled from many sources, the threads running through the narrative are intended to provide a perspective from the British side of the Atlantic and, in turn, perhaps they will generate some further discussion, as in this way we all benefit. As these notes have been written primarily for an American audience, some additional elements of historical background have been woven into the story to make the people and places covered by the article more readily identifiable.

"Wilson's Fifty" Kurume Azaleas

On April 24, 1919, two sets of the 50 varieties chosen by Ernest H. Wilson from 250 varieties in the garden of Mr. Kijiro Akashi in Kurume, Japan, arrived at the Arnold Arboretum. It was intended that these be propagated and distributed under the names given to them by Mr. Akashi. The origin of the Kurume azalea is attributed to Motozo Sakamoto, and, after his death, Mr. Akashi acquired his collection and then spent 40 years developing this group of hybrids. Little more needs to be said about the origin of "Wilson's Fifty", as their background and the process by which they were chosen are well documented by Wilson himself.[2]

Wilson ensured that all the 50 plants were correctly labelled, but later recognised that there was difficulty in pronouncing their Japanese names. In April 1926 he added English names to all but one plant, and this single plant was named in 1927. It is said that the plants were subsequently distributed under numbers only. Two sets of "Wilson's Fifty" made their way across the Atlantic to two famous private gardens: one set to J. C. Williams at Caerhays Castle in Cornwall, and the other to the Tower Court home of John Barr Stevenson. Wilson's "connections" with J. C. Williams at Caerhays were covered in a recent article in the *Journal ARS*.[11] It is likely that the two sets arrived at Caerhays Castle and Tower Court in the early 1920s. John Barr Stevenson began laying out the rhododendron gardens at Tower Court in 1919, immediately after the First World War, and in the early 1920s married Roza, his beautiful and "green-fingered" wife. Tower Court stood on a small wooded ridge between Ascot and Bagshot, the summit of Tower Hill being a short distance from the house. From the house the ground descended in a series of valleys and the Stevensons created avenues of plants leading downhill from the house. Bordering one of these avenues that contained fastigiate cherries, the plants of "Wilson's Fifty" were established. While Stevenson would later become the editor of *The Species of Rhododendron,* first published in 1930 and for many years the accepted textbook on the genus, his interests ranged well beyond the species.

In July 1946, in the immediate aftermath of WWII, John Barr Stevenson and Charles Williams provided cutting material to the Royal Horticultural Society's (RHS) garden at Wisley with a view to establishing a further set of "Wilson's Fifty". The rooted cuttings were planted on the North side of Battleston Hill at Wisley in 1947, and their hardiness was monitored.[3] This collection was open to the full blast of the northeast wind, but sheltered from the north and west; more on the subject of hardiness later. The plants at Wisley generally performed well and were used to stage a large display at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show of 1958 where they created a great deal of interest.



Part of the remnants of a "Wilson's Fifty" collection at Lingholm, in the English Lake District (May, 1991).
Note how these Kurumes are far more open and leggy when grown in partial shade.
A second group can be found on the north end of the terrace, these low and compact due to their location in full sun.

In 1958 it was thought that the complete collections of "Wilson's Fifty" were restricted to the three sets mentioned above; however, it seems likely that three others existed at this time. At Exbury Gardens a set was planted around one of the ponds to provide a kaleidoscope of colour reflections in the water in early May. It is known from the recollections of Mrs. Lionel de Rothschild that the azaleas were in situ in the spring of 1923 when some distinguished visitors were visibly impressed while being shown around the newly completed gardens. This suggests that Lionel de Rothschild also received an early shipment of Kurumes from Wilson.

The remnants of what appear to be two further sets can be found, one at Lingholm Gardens, near Keswick, Cumbria, and the other at Colonsay House Garden at Kiloran on the Isle of Colonsay. There are probably others, and we will return to this aspect shortly.

John Barr Stevenson and the Kurume Azaleas from Yokohama Nurseries

On the highest part of Tower Hill was planted a large collection of Kurume azaleas, which in flower mingled together like a Persian carpet, and this area became known as the "Kurume Carpet". These were the 80 Kurume azaleas that Stevenson introduced direct from Yokohama Nurseries in 1927-29. For many years there had been suggestions that some of the plants in the "Wilson's Fifty" collection were not good performers, at least not in the British climate, and visitors to Japan had returned with suggestions that with hindsight a better selection was practicable. So, Koichiro Wada made a selection of Kurumes on behalf of Stevenson, who did not give English names to the collection. By the mid-1930s Tower Court had probably the most complete collection of rhododendron species in the world, but what was really special about this garden was the rhododendron species were arranged in their series so the plants raised from seed brought back by the great plant collectors could be directly compared. And, in the same way, the Kurume azaleas could be directly compared. Roza always maintained that those from Yokohama Nurseries were better performers than "Wilson's Fifty", a perspective that was not wasted on many of her visitors each spring.[5]

Over the years John Barr Stevenson had taken more than a passing interest in the rhododendron plantings in the Woodland and Valley Gardens in the Royal Park at Windsor. In 1946, when consideration was being given to developing a vast semi-circular amphitheatre area in the Great Park, he was shown the site by Eric Savill, the Deputy Ranger and Deputy Surveyor. Stevenson's first comment was, "What a wonderful site to grow Kurume azaleas". So it was that the plans quickly took shape, Stevenson then and there agreeing to provide the stock plants of "Wilson's Fifty" for propagation purposes. Of the original "Wilson's Fifty" around twelve were discarded, as possibly being liable to frost damage when planted in a bowl, and it is clear from later reports that these varieties were replaced by some of "Stevenson's Collection". The garden staff at Windsor rated Wilson's 'Kure no Yuki' and Stevenson's 'Ham no Kyokii' amongst the best performers and exhibited these at the RHS Rhododendron Shows in London. The "mixture" of Kurumes used to create the "Bowl" at Windsor would later cause some confusion as to the varieties that actually made up a full set of "Wilson's Fifty". Nevertheless, when planting was completed in 1950 over 50,000 plants had been used in creating the "Kurume Punch Bowl".[4] If you are visiting London in late April or early May, this is a location you should definitely consider including in your itinerary!

John Barr Stevenson died suddenly in 1950 leaving Roza virtually penniless, with a substantial mortgage outstanding, a financial nightmare. That she rose to the occasion and gradually disposed of a large portion of the rhododendron species collection, a major portion finding its way to Windsor as the foundation of the Valley Garden, is well documented.[4]

The Establishment of Other Collections of Kurumes Post-WWII

In 1949-50, James Fisher, Superintendent of Hampton Court Gardens, initiated work on the creation of a woodland garden at the Isabella Plantation, an area within Richmond Park that formed part of an ancient deer park. After three years of quiet transformation, from a bracken-covered impenetrable wilderness beneath a 19th Century canopy of mature oaks, beech, and chestnut, the gardens were opened without ceremony one morning in March 1953. At this date the gardens contained a new collection of rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias, and camellias. Isabella has become well-known for its stunning display of evergreen azaleas that transform the garden each spring, many of which are Kurume azaleas, and this led to a decision in 1991 to establish a collection of "Wilson's Fifty" there. To add to those already growing at Isabella, many varieties were acquired from Arthur George at Hydon Nursery, while John Bond, Director of Gardens at the Savill and Valley Gardens at Windsor, provided cutting material of others. So, through the generosity of others, who have themselves been helped in times gone by, the wheel has come full circle and another complete collection has been born. This set of "Wilson's Fifty" has subsequently been given National Plant Collection status by the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG) [but see the Addendum paragraphs on page 54 of *The Rhododendron Collectors: Ernest Wilson,* and the cultivars listing that follows].

It was inevitable that the development of the "Kurume Punch Bowl" at Windsor would create a great deal of interest in the Kurume azaleas, particularly amongst the key rhododendron enthusiasts of the era. But there was a problem; the Kurume collections were not readily available in the trade. Harry White, one of the great rhododendron growers, had been manager of Sunningdale Nurseries since 1898, and he had needed to cope with the vast inflow of species from China, Tibet, and Burma. The work involved in raising, classifying, and labelling collectors' seed would have brought White into regular contact with the Stevensons, who resided close by at Ascot. Sunningdale was a beautiful stylish nursery in the Victorian/Edwardian tradition. By the time of Harry White's death in 1936 some outlying areas of the nurseries had become overgrown and were no longer in use, while other areas had become rundown and neglected. Sir Hubert Longman, the publisher, had bought Sunningdale as an investment, but when he passed away in 1939, at the outset of WWII, most of the staff were sacked. Major Herbert Russell and his cousin, Neil Hamilton Smith, purchased the nurseries, but without any staff were unable to tackle its restoration until after the cessation of hostilities. However, Major Russell's son, James Russell, who became a highly regarded plantsman and garden designer, was invalided out of the Herefordshire Yeomanry in 1942 and resumed civilian life. Following a period of convalescence he was given the task of managing the nurseries. James Russell set about restoring the nurseries as and when staff could be secured, and he also sought to maintain the friendly relationship with Tower Court, as he had visited the gardens on a number of occasions prior to the onset of WWII.

In the early 1950s James Russell obtained plant material of Stevenson's Yokohama introductions and in an article written in 1984, he confirmed that he had also obtained plant material of "Wilson's Fifty" from Roza Stevenson.[7]

Roza used the firm of Strathern & Blair, solicitors, of Edinburgh, to handle her affairs following the death of her husband. An invoice dated August 1951, with a covering letter dated 3 October 1951, was forwarded to James Russell seeking payment for items that Sunningdale Nurseries had been supplied with from Tower Court. Included in this listing is an item for an unspecified quantity of scions, taken on 2 August 1951, for which the charge

was £47-15-00; the plants involved are not identified. This appears to be the first transaction that Russell had with Tower Court. In regard to the transactions that took place sometime later, the plants involved are all rhododendrons, and these are identified. The timing of this first transaction suggests that this was with respect to "Stevenson's Collection" and "Wilson's Fifty". Looking at the later transactions, Roza charged an average price of one shilling each for scions, so the original transaction probably represented a total of around 1000 scions.[12]

It makes sense that Roza Stevenson would not have wanted to be involved in propagating these plants for wider distribution. So, Sunningdale Nurseries propagated the Kurumes, listed them in their catalogue, and supplied them to the key gentlemen enthusiasts of the era with gardens large enough to accommodate them, either as groups of plants or as part of one of James Russell's many garden design projects that increasingly occupied his time in the years after 1950.[9] There were five of "Stevenson's Collection" that Russell did not list in the catalogue, and it is assumed that these were not considered suitable for distribution. This included the oddly named 'Shjuchuke'. However, it would be pertinent to note that while the "Wilson's Fifty" collection has become synonymous with the "Kurume Punch Bowl" at Windsor and has thus enjoyed wide media coverage, the converse is true with regard to "Stevenson's Collection", which thus remains relatively little known.

The Kurumes Find a New Home

Roza's many friends rejoiced when it became known in 1960 that she was moving to Cornwall and her engagement to Major-General Eric Harrison, of Tremeer, was unexpectedly announced. Not only was this "green fingered" lady an expert at raising plants from seed and cuttings, she could classify and document all the material that passed through her hands. So, Tower Court was sold, and many of the remaining plants found their way to her new home, an historic 14th Century property near St. Tudy, Cornwall. Roza takes up the story in 1965:

> When I arrived in Cornwall in 1961 to my new abode Tremeer, I brought some of my favourite rhododendrons and plants from my late home Tower Court, Ascot, Berks. My husband and I wanted some colour on the lawn beneath the terrace wall, but whatever we chose had to be ultimately of moderate height.
>
> I suggested Kurume azaleas for they love the sun, flower abundantly each year and possess an added glory, namely variation of foliage not only in shape but when shedding their secondary foliage. They also have most beautiful autumn tints from yellow, gold, bronze, red, etc.
>
> I also felt these plants in the Cornish climate would stand full exposure, as compared with the Berkshire climate where it is essential to have dappled shade; there the atmosphere is very different. It can be extremely hot and the sun's rays can scorch the delicate shades, in particular the salmon and flame colours.
>
> We made two beds each to contain twenty-five plants of the Yokohama lot… these Kurumes are the original ones which my late husband imported from Yokohama Nurseries from 1927 to 1929, so we can say that they are around forty years old and now measure 5 to 7 feet across [1.5 to 2.1m].
>
> To come to a quite different climate as fully mature plants speaks well for their constitution; they have behaved remarkably well during these last four years; only one thing worries me, the climate here being more humid, particularly during winter months, their sap never goes down, consequently, flowers burst forth at odd times! I always fear some appalling frost will appear during February, then bark split is likely to ensue.
>
> However they withstood the drastic 1963 winter, when nearly everyone all over the British Isles suffered burst pipes! And many other calamities and upon thinking back, I recollect we had a superb October (Indian Summer) which ripened their wood and young growths, followed by a normal very cold November which sent down their sap, consequently they withstood that very severe period. I may say I crowed a little for they had done what I hoped they would do, and they did not let me down![6]

So, 50 of the original large plants of the Yokohama Nursery introductions found a new home at Tremeer, and all survived the move. Roza had made a selection from the original 80 varieties that had been imported, but at the time of writing there is not a list available of the plants at Tremeer. In 1969, Patrick M. Synge, reporting on a visit to Tremeer, noted:

> In the two main beds were planted Kurumes… amongst the finest I noted were:
> 'Shino Miyagino', deep pink, slightly deeper than 'Hinomayo' and very floriferous.
> 'Senjo', apple blossom pink, very lovely.
> 'Fude Tsukata', pretty pale pink, late flowering.
> 'Hino Tsukasa', deep scarlet red.
> 'Gyokuko', apricot-red with small flowers.
> 'Harumiji', white.
> 'Yozakura', deep pink.
> 'Shintsune', a good white.
> 'Haru no Akebono', pink, late flowering.
> 'Iwato Kagami', pale pink.
> These are comparatively little known but are all good plants, capable of spectacular effect.[8]



We know from the above report that Roza took 'Haru no Akebono', with her to Tremeer and there is little doubt that she would have been thrilled to see one of her favourite azaleas on the cover of *The Azalean*.

This leaves us to speculate what happened to the other 30 original plants of "Stevenson's Collection". In 1960, faced with the disposal of the Tower Court property, Roza decided to have a sale of the remaining plants. When James Russell became aware of the pending sale he wrote to Roza on 14th September and indicated he was interested in acquiring some of the rare plants left in the garden as he felt it was important they should be kept together as a group and he suggested a date for a visit. He also indicated he was interested in the evergreen azaleas as Tower Court was possibly the only source. Roza replied on 28th September in a positive way, but there is no record of the plants that James Russell subsequently acquired.[12] Shortly before Roza sold Tower Court, Arthur George of Hydon Nurseries was also given the opportunity of acquiring the remaining rhododendrons and azaleas in the garden that were surplus to Roza Stevenson's needs at Tremeer. This offer was enthusiastically accepted; and, along with a large number of rhododendrons, around half of a full set of "Wilson's Fifty" found their way to Hydon Nurseries, near Godalming, Surrey. Roza had taken the other half of "Wilson's Fifty" with her to Tremeer and planted these in a separate bed.[6]

The Distribution of "Stevenson's Collection" in Later Years

Sadly, Roza Harrison passed away in 1968 after a long illness that she fought with tremendous spirit. General Eric Harrison stayed on at Tremeer for another 10 years until maintaining the garden became too much for him.

In 1978 the Haslam-Hopwood Family acquired the property, and they continued to look after the garden, adding new plantings that helped the garden survive in a reasonable condition. In 2001 the property was purchased by Lord and Lady Edward George, who immediately commenced renovating the house interior and intended to restore the garden at a later date.

The George Family value their privacy and, in the Spring of 2002, by means of a "one-time" special arrangement with Lady Vanessa George, the author took a group from the Scottish Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society to Tremeer for a conducted tour with the Head Gardener. In many ways it was just as though time had stood still; the two beds of Kurumes that originated from Yokohama Nurseries were still very much in evidence beneath the terrace, as were many of Roza's rhododendron hybrids. Unfortunately, there was not time during the visit to search for labels on the azaleas, although by chance several original labels were located on the rhododendrons.[10]

When Russell sold the Sunningdale Nurseries in 1968, as a result of a disagreement with his cousin, and went to live at Castle Howard near York, he took 21 varieties of "Wilson's Fifty" with him and 21 of "Stevenson's Collection". What is interesting is that three of the latter were mature plants. For example. 'Mikaera Zakura' is noted as being 4' x 3' [1.2 x 0.9m], and this suggests that Russell did acquire the remaining 30 plants from Tower Court. Also, Russell chose to take with him six plants raised from cuttings of the oddly named 'Shjuchuke', so this plant must have intrigued him in some way.[7] Some of the Kurumes were planted in Ray Wood and others around his home, but many of the plants at Castle Howard were relocated during Russell's lifetime; an exercise is currently in hand to reassess the whole of the Russell Rhododendron Collection and to identify all the extant plants. It would appear that the availability in the trade of Stevenson's introductions ceased at the time Russell sold Sunningdale.

James Russell visited Fred C. Galle at Callaway Gardens, Georgia, on 28-29th October, 1980, and he returned to Castle Howard with a listing of 33 Kurume azaleas that Galle was looking to obtain. This listing included 19 of "Stevenson's Collection", but as Russell had only taken 21 of the collection with him to Castle Howard he was only able to supply Galle with 12 of those on the list. In a letter dated 10th November, 1980 Russell wrote:

> I also enclose a photocopy of the colour descriptions of the Azaleas I used to grow at Sunningdale. These were pretty carefully recorded. The evergreen azaleas had, some of them, been at the nursery since around 1910, Macrantha (and Amoenum) had been introduced by the nursery through Fortune in the 19th Century. A great bulk of the collection came from Tower Court and a certain number from my old cousin Hamilton Smith, who also did a lot of importing from Japan. It is sad to think that the source of all this has now been destroyed.[12]

Galle then wrote to Russell indicating he was heavily involved in taking forward an update of *The Azalea Book* by Frederic Lee and sent Russell a specimen data sheet to be completed for each of the azaleas in the Sunningdale listings, previously supplied. This information was collated and returned with a letter dated 30 September, 1981. A batch of Kurume cuttings was sent to Galle by Russell on 29 September, 1981, and was received in good condition. Unfortunately, while nearly all the cuttings rooted, there were other problems, as Galle explains in a letter dated February 28, 1983:

> I made a visit to Japan for azaleas and plants and asked that your azaleas be re-labeled and moved to the lath house. The plants were moved. In fact I found out twice before getting to the lath house, and when I found them last fall, only one plant of each had a label nearby, instead of wired on. I am not sure I can straighten them out this spring. Frankly, I was sick, mad and damned disgusted but we have had considerable changes here and I guess it's par.

In his reply Russell offered to root a further batch of cuttings to straighten out the labelling, but Galle did not take up the offer in his later letters; neither is there any indication that Galle was able to correct the labelling himself. Russell also invited Galle to come over to visit the gardens and see the azaleas, but Galle's response indicated that while he would have loved to take up the offer he was unable to do so due to other commitments.[12] No other records have been found to date that indicate other shipments of plants were sent to the US of "Stevenson's Collection" of Kurumes.

Records of "Stevenson's Collection"

Under a "grand-fathering" clause, the names of John Barr Stevenson's Kurume introductions that were considered to have been available "in the trade" were registered in 1958 by the then International Registration Authority/Royal Horticultural Society (IRA/RHS) and were included in *The International Rhododendron Register* published in that year by the RHS. Whilst doubts have been expressed about the correctness of the spellings and transliteration of some plant names, what really matters is that the IRA/RHS had the foresight to "put a stick in the sand" and record the names and details of what plants were thought to have been commercially available at that particular point in time. Stevenson and Russell both supplied information at the time the 1958 edition was being compiled, and the

- *opposite* -

The long terrace at Tremeer provides an ideal sunny location for the colourful "Stevenson's Collection" of the fifty varieties planted by Roza Stevenson in 1961 (photographed in April 2002).
The deep red is 'Hinode-no-kumo', that Roza rated as a better color than Wilson's No. 42, 'Hinodegiri'.

content of the IRA/RHS records suggest they were based on this information, which, presumably, the RHS archived for future reference. Minor revisions were made to the names in the registration process where they did not accord with the expected format and spelling of Japanese epithets.[13]

Frederic P. Lee in *The Azalea Book,* Second Edition, makes passing mention of Stevenson, but only names 28 of his introductions.[14] Irrespective of problems with the transliteration of Japanese names, Lee's flower details correctly replicate the details for Stevenson's introductions in Britain.

As noted earlier in this article, James Russell sent Fred Galle a copy of the listing of azaleas that were available from the Sunningdale Nurseries prior to its closure, together with further details of their origin on Galle's data sheets. This listing included "Wilson's Fifty" and "Stevenson's Collection". Fred C. Galle in *Azaleas,* Second Edition, details 60 varieties in his listing of Stevenson's introductions from Yokohama Nurseries.[15] However, the relegation of this listing to Appendix J at the back of the book and the comment, "but most are uncommon in the U.S.A." suggests that Galle's book was compiled primarily for an American audience, which is most unfortunate. Galle's listing is incomplete, some spellings have been changed, some flower details do not correlate with the known characteristics of the plants that Stevenson introduced in Britain, and a Knap Hill introduction is included in the list. It is difficult to understand why this listing is significantly different from the information that James Russell supplied to Galle, as Stevenson's introductions preceded those of Beattie and other subsequent introductions in the United States.

To confuse the matter further, at the time of writing, in many instances the transliteration of names and the flower details available on the Internet in photographs taken in Japan do not correlate with either Galle's listing or the known details available in Britain for the Stevenson introductions. This suggests that other names have been duplicated in more recent years.

The table opposite provides details compiled from sources on this side of the Atlantic, as referred to above, for the 80 varieties introduced by Stevenson from Yokohama Nurseries. From the author's perspective the spellings, use of capital letters, and the flower details in the table replicate the names under which the plants were propagated, supplied, and planted in gardens in Britain and Ireland; so this should form a viable basis for plant identification work in old British gardens. The consistency of both the spellings and the use of capital letters in the plant names in past articles written on this side of the Atlantic suggests that these were the names under which the plants were selected by Koichiro Wada and supplied by Yokohama Nurseries. At some future date it may also be possible to take up an invitation to return to Tremeer and look more closely at the collection with a view to verifying the names and details of the extant plants. In the meantime it should be noted that this is the first attempt to collate a more accurate listing of these plants from the scant information available and any comments on the contents of the table, or any other aspects of this article, would be most welcome. In this way we all benefit.

It seems inexplicable that the 2004 Second Edition of *The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist* is significantly less specific than the original edition; and, with the exception of `Banzai', Yokohama Nurseries has not been recorded as the origin of the plants, Koichiro Wada has not been mentioned as being responsible for their selection, and neither has John Barr Stevenson been credited with their introduction.[16] There may well be some underlying reason for this approach, but it is unhelpful and is counter-productive with regard to the efforts of those individuals who are endeavouring to clarify the British introductions and groupings within the Kurume azaleas. Mention is made in the *Introduction* of the Second Edition, Note (J), *Informal Groupings,* of the informal azalea groupings, and the subsequent listing includes the Kurume azaleas. The note continues, "These groupings and many more can be found listed in F. C. Galle's *Azaleas,* where their origin and characteristics are described".

John Barr Stevenson's Kurume introductions were made directly to England from a well known Japanese nursery and were selected by a highly regarded Japanese plantsman, so there is little point in removing any of these details from the registration records unless more specific information can be inserted. To suggest that the reader refer to Galle's records, which are incomplete and are inconsistent with the plant material that exists in Britain, is not a viable alternative.

In the author's view it is high time that the duplication of Japanese plant names, transliteration inconsistencies, and plant description variations were recognised by the International Cultivar Registration Authority (ICRA) in the same way as it has dealt with the duplication of English names; these variants, with all their known details, should be listed in *The International Rhododendron Register.* It is intended to revise the transliterated versions of Japanese epithets to bring them in line with the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* (ICNCP).[17] This could be a disaster in horticultural terms, as it will only serve to exacerbate the confusion that already exists in the real world, unless both the original name under which the plant was introduced and the ICNCP revised name are listed together for reference purposes in the registration details so some correlation can be maintained with the original labelling of plants in gardens. Previous attempts to eradicate inconsistencies with names that are similar, or do not adhere to their expected format and spelling, have led to the current confused situation on both sides of the Atlantic as to what plant is actually being referred to when a particular name is used. This problem, coupled with the direct introduction into the United States of plants with similar names as those in Britain (but not necessarily the same plants that exist in Britain under those names), may well go a long way to explaining why Galle's listing does not correlate with the plants that Stevenson introduced. Many Japanese names are difficult for someone from the Western World to interpret. Take, for example, the Stevenson introduction 'Fuji no Asahi' whose meaning is said to be "Sunrise on Mount Fuji" and could be thought to relate to a plant with pink or reddish flowers; but, 'Fuji no Asahi' is white, flushed rosy lilac. A more precise translation by a Japanese interpreter is said to be "Sunrise on (snow-covered) Mount Fuji"; now the flower characteristics begin to make sense. Care needs to be taken that transliteration revisions do not alter the meaning of the original name given to a plant. Unfortunately, as far as records are concerned, there appears to be no single point of reference that provides a full listing of the "Stevenson's Collection" of Kurume azaleas and the details of their origin.

Some Thoughts About Cultivation and Hardiness

Some authorities in the United States recommend using little, if any, fertiliser on Kurumes. This may have more to do with avoiding feeding routines that could delay the onset of dormancy in colder areas of the East Coast rather than with the actual nourishment required by the plant. In Northern England, where the soil is often heavy clay, experience over many years suggests that a scattering of bone meal, and the application of a handful of magnesium sulphate dissolved in a two-gallon bucket of water per four mature plants, applied when the new growth starts in the spring, is all that is required to maintain good looking specimens and avoid damage from the late spring and fall frosts. No adverse effects have been noted from the calcium content of the bone meal. Where bark or other forms of organic content have been added to the soil, an application of inorganic fertiliser is

A listing of Kurume Azaleas selected by Koichiro Wada, supplied by Yokohama Nurseries,
and introduced in 1927-29 by John Barr Stevenson of Tower Court, Ascot.

‘Agamujin’	Pure white, frilly with slight green spots. (a)
‘Arziemakie’	Vivid salmon pink, deeper spotting.
‘Asahiryn’	Flame pink, deep red tube.
‘Augigasana’	Shell pink, edges deeper, spotted brown.
‘Ayahime’	Bright rose.
‘Azafujin’	Shell pink, deeper streaks, greenish ground.
‘Banzai’	Bright salmon pink, darker spotting.
‘Chigo no Mai’	Rose pink, paler centre, bright red spots.
‘Chiyo no Akebono’	Brilliant rose pink on slightly blue ground.
‘Choraku’	Lavender pink, greenish white throat.
‘Fude Tsuka’	Rose, greenish cream centre, brown spots. (a)
‘Fude Tsukasa’	Clear rose pink, paling to greenish white.
‘Fuji no Asahi’	White, flushed rosy lilac on edges. (a) (e)
‘Fukuhiko’	Vivid crimson red flowers and anthers.
‘Gaeshi’	Deep salmon pink, white anthers.
‘Gyokoko’	Apricot red.
‘Had no Sato’	Soft lilac pink, paler anthers, large calyx.
‘Haru no Akebono’	Salmon rose, paler throat, crimson blotch.
‘Haru no Kyokii’	White, light green buds, odd crimson petal.
‘Haru no Shiou’	Blush, flushed deep lilac edges. (a)
‘Harumiji’	White, no spots, with a large calyx.
‘Hatsuki’	No description found.
‘Hatsuoto’	Lilac blush. (b)
‘Hikkasen’	Pale salmon, pink centre, dark blotch.
‘Hino Tsukasa’	Deep scarlet red. (b)
‘Hinode no Kumo’	Rich crimson.
‘Ima Zuma’	Pale lilac rose, deeper edges, faint red spots.
‘Ishiyama’	Creamy white, broad lilac border.
‘Itten’	Pale lavender.
‘Iwato Kagami’	Pale pink. (e)
‘Izumi Gawa’	Rose lilac, pale throat, reddish spots.
‘Jukachi Ko’	Salmon red, bright red anthers.
‘Keinohana’	Deep lilac pink, white anthers.
‘Kinjo no Tama’	Deep rose pink, rose red anthers.
‘Kodai Nishiki	White. (a)
‘Kogasane’	Soft carmine, deep band down petal centre. (f)
‘Kojo no Odorikaraka’	Vivid tomato red.
‘Kokinran’	Flesh pink, white throat, crimson spots.
‘Komachi’	Pale pink, rose lilac edges, brown spots.
‘Koranyuke’	Vivid tomato red. (c)
‘Kumagaya’	Pale flame red, red anthers, large calyx.
‘Kumoidori’	No description found.
‘Maihime’	White shading to greeny-yellow throat.
‘Maikojaku’	No description found.
‘Maimsode’	Rose pink on slightly blue ground.
‘Metake’	Bright red.
‘Mikaera Zakura’	Pure white.
‘Mikatanishiki’	Blush petals with vivid pink edges.
‘Mizu no Yambuki’	Creamy white. (e)
‘On no Sora’	Lavender, white anthers, odd brown spot.
‘Ouchi Shisti’	White, creamy tinge at centre. (b)
‘Ouchiyama’	Lilac crimson.
‘Paikune’	Bright pink, pink anthers.
‘Rankyoken’	Vivid orange red, red anthers, white stigma.
‘Sahohime’	White, flushed rose, deeper spots. (b)
‘Senju’	Apple blossom pink, crimson spots.
‘Senka’	Deep flame pink, darker spots. (b)
‘Shikishima’	Lilac pink, darker spots, light centre. (b)
‘Shintsune’	White, freely sports salmon pink.
‘Shino Miyagino’	Rose Magenta, white anthers. (a)
‘Shi no Ito’	Cream flushed lilac, lilac tips, brown spots.
‘Shi no Noe’	Pale greenish white, pink margins.
‘Shi no Uye’	White, slight chestnut brown spots.
‘Shinsagino Kagasane’	Pale rose madder, pale throat, crimson spots.
‘Shjuchuke’	No description found. (d)
‘Soroi’	White, flushed and edged rose madder.
‘Susuganioto’	Deep rose pink, red anthers.
‘Takamakie’	White, with greenish eye.
‘Tokoharu’	White, deep crimson striping. (a) (e)
‘Tonkonatsu’	Pure white. (b)
‘Toun’	White, faint flesh tints, chestnut brown spots.
‘Unma’	No description found.
‘Usugukari’	White, rose lilac edges, white anthers. (b)
‘Wakalia’	Salmon orange, pale anthers.
‘Yezo Nishiki’	Creamy white, deeper throat, white anthers.
‘Yoro’	White, no spots.
‘Yoshi Migatake’	Bright rose madder, large ragged calyx.
‘Yozakura’	Pale magenta. (b) (f)
‘Yugire’	Lilac pink. (b)
‘Yukachiko’	Salmon red, bright red anthers. (g)

Notes:

(a) Hose-in-hose variety. (b) Large flowers.
(c) Very similar to ‘Kojo no Odorikaraka’. (d) Listed in 1958 by IRR, but the spelling probably incorrect.
(e) A plant with a similar name was introduced to California by Domoto Brothers *c.* 1918, but it may not be the same plant as that in Britain.
(f) A plant with a similar name was re-introduced by USDA in 1929, but it may not be the same plant as that in Britain.
(g) Synonym of ‘Jukachi Ko’

needed to increase the nitrogen, but take care and apply sparingly until the correct dosage has been determined. In the author's garden an unexpected heavy frost one night in mid-November 2005, accompanied by an east wind, seared across the tops of the more exposed evergreen azaleas. Several plants lost most, or all, of their flower buds, and two plants were killed outright. Thankfully, as Roza Stevenson had predicted almost half a century ago, the Kurumes were undamaged.

In general terms the Kurume azaleas are not difficult to grow, very few are tender in the British climate, and experience suggests that they are resistant to bark-split. It is absolutely correct that several varieties of "Wilson's Fifty" can be lost in a bad winter, as can many other varieties of azaleas and rhododendrons. So, these Kurumes occasionally need to be replaced in gardens where full collections are held; however, this is not a problem that needs to be handled by the average enthusiast, as these varieties are not readily available in the trade in Britain. For the record these are:

No. 6 'Tancho', flesh coloured.
No. 7 'Hachika-tsugi', white, suffused with lavender.
No. 10 'Sul-yohi', flesh-coloured.
No. 13 'Bijinsui', pale pink.
No. 17 'Osaraku', white, suffused and margined with lavender.

For further details see the hardiness report by Francis Hanger.[3] [An updated version of this list will be found on pages 55-57 in *The Rhododendron Collectors: Ernest Wilson*]. This report also provides a useful listing of "Wilson's Fifty" by number and name; it also notes that whereas young plants are susceptible to winter damage, mature plants are hardy. No hardiness problems have been recorded with the collection of Kurumes that Stevenson introduced, despite their having endured ten particularly severe winters since their arrival in Britain (1928-29, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1947, 1954, 1956, 1961, 1962-63, and 1981). In other words, they are much hardier than some reports would suggest.

From the Lake District in the North to Cornwall in Southwest England the collections of Kurumes established over the past 80 years or so have performed reasonably well despite the impact of WWII on gardens and the difficult times that followed the cessation of hostilities. Those in the author's garden, a windy, exposed location in Northern England on the edge of the West Pennine Moors, have also performed well when grown in full sun, as they did at the author's previous home that was also an exposed location a few miles to the south. There are suggestions that Kurumes do not perform as well north of the border, but this may be due to the lower light levels in Scotland adversely affecting the setting of flower buds and causing the wood to only partially ripen. It is also said that Kurumes perform better in countries where the summer and winter seasons are clearly defined.

The most spectacular aspect of Kurumes is their flowers. They more readily cover themselves with color than most other groups of azalea and when in full-flower it is often impossible to see the leaves. They perform best when placed in full sun as this tends to ensure that they achieve a good bud-set, remain compact, and most varieties will spread and form a mound that is 4' to 6' in width [1.2 to 1.8m]. Because they tend to be early flowering, the Kurumes usually get a head start on seasonal growth, so a good measure of sun also provides an opportunity for the wood to ripen in the fall, which the Kurumes appear to need. In deeper shade the plants grow much more leggy, with an open plant habit that can reach over 6' [1.8m]; they are also more prone to wind damage, lichen problems, and fewer flowers.

The only boundaries in horticulture are those that are man-made. The above comments on hardiness and cultivation are intended to encourage you to have a go at growing these most rewarding plants. Only by your own experience will you learn the approach that best suits your climatic conditions and thus enable you to enjoy the stunning performance of the Kurume azaleas as each new flowering season comes around.

And, out there in the real world, there are plants of "Stevenson's" superior Kurumes waiting for you to find and collect for use in your hybridisation projects, or for you to simply enjoy as spectacular garden plants in their own right.

Conclusion

This tale has taken us on a journey across the latter 80 years of the last century and has been a means of bringing together a diverse number of reference sources to enable a more cohesive perspective to be written on the Stevenson introductions. In this journey some thought-provoking items, including the letters and documents connected with Roza Stevenson, Fred Galle, and Jim Russell, have played an important role in the tale, and provide us with a fascinating glimpse of times gone by.

Undoubtedly, plants of "Stevenson's Collection" will exist in old gardens in Britain and Ireland, some of which Jim Russell will have been commissioned to landscape, whereas owners of other estates will have purchased plants direct from Sunningdale Nursery. At the time of writing only four of "Stevenson's Collection" introductions are available "in the trade" in Britain; however, some nurseries may well have stock plants available to them that are not being propagated. While it is now around 40 years since the collections of Stevenson's introductions were broken up at both Tower Court and Sunningdale Nurseries, it should still be practicable to re-establish a significant collection of these plants and gain NCCPG status for what is an historically significant group of Kurumes.

Perhaps the last word belongs to Jim Russell, who played the role of facilitator in this story for the better part of 40 years. In 1992, towards the end of his life, when reminiscing about his visits to the gardens at Tower Court at the invitation of John and Roza Stevenson, to compare the performance of various forms of rhododendrons and azaleas, he recalled:

> During the great influx of collected seed between the wars there were many large gardens able to grow very large numbers of seedlings and to select the best form with the largest and most brightly coloured flowers. The inevitable neglect caused by the war destroyed or damaged these collections and the only one to survive more or less intact was the late J. B. Stevenson's at Tower Court. Here, in dry, sandy, acid soil at 300' (91m) above sea level, some 80 acres (32ha) were planted in expeditions, with anything up to 50 plants from a single collection [number]. Your host was apt to ask, "Shall we go for a walk in Kingdon-Ward 1926 this afternoon?"
>
> It would be wonderful to be able to say that again today.

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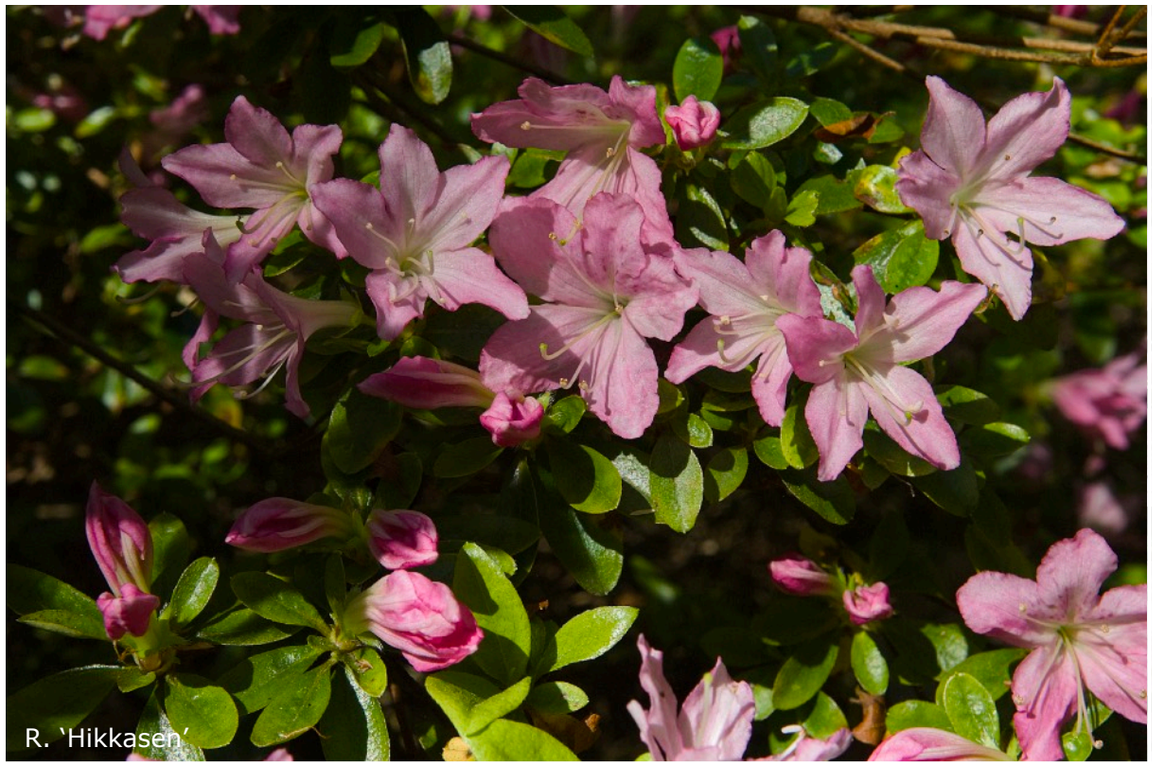
John Hammond's interests in propagating and cultivating azaleas and rhododendrons stretch back over 30 years, although he has been involved with gardens for considerably longer. He is particularly interested in the history of old azalea and rhododendron gardens and encouraging their restoration. He is Vice-President of the Scottish Rhododendron Society, ARS Alternate Director at Large, and a frequent contributor to the *Journal, ARS*. His thoroughly researched and detailed two-part review of the "Stevenson's Collection" of Kurume azaleas was published across the Fall 2006, and Winter 2006, editions of *The Azalean.*

"Stevenson's Collection" - two of the plants at RHS Wisley.


R. 'Asahiryn'


R. 'Banzai'

"Stevenson's Collection" - ten of the plants at Ray Wood, Castle Howard.


R. 'Hikkasen'


R. 'Ima Zuma'


R. 'Kokinran'


R. 'Koranyuke'


R. ‘On no Sora’


R. ‘Rankyoken’


R. ‘Senka’



R. ‘Shikishima’

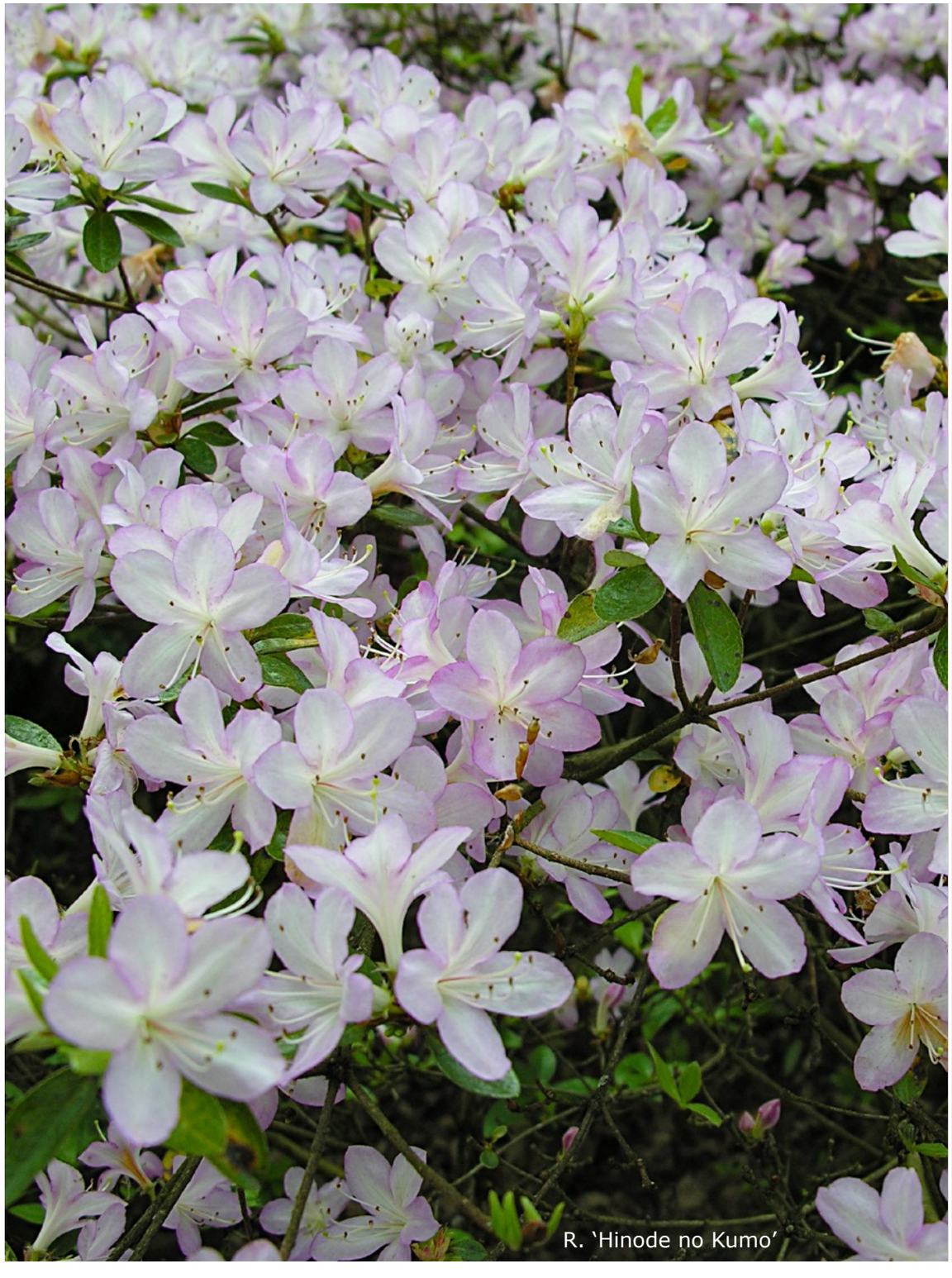


R. ‘Yezo Nishiki’



R. ‘Shino Miyagino’

“Stevenson’s Collection” - three of the plants at the Savill Gardens, Windsor Great Park.



R. ‘Hinode no Kumo’



R. ‘Kojo no Odorikaraka’



R. ‘Shintsune’

“Stevenson’s Collection” - two of the plants at Benmore Botanic Garden, Argyll.



R. ‘Keinohana’



R. ‘Soroi’

Rhododendron Species.

A lecture given by Mrs. R. M. Harrison on March 6th, 1962, with Sir Eric Savill, K.C.V.O, V.M.H., in the Chair.

Last year the late Mr. Hanger gave us a splendid lecture upon rhododendron species in which he covered most of the important points. I also doubt if there is another genus of plants more interesting and more varied than the species of rhododendron. Because it is such a large genus and so extremely varied, the botanists have had much work in putting the species in order, and they are still working on the various series and sub-series of this genus to try and simplify them.

However, the most outstanding point is: this genus is divided into two sections, namely, lepidotes and elepidotes, and in case many of you do not know what this means, I will explain.

Lepidote rhododendrons have small scales beneath the leaves. A great many are aromatic, for instance, the *Saluenense* series, *Lapponicum* series, and *Cinnabarinum* series. In particular in this last series are two very fine species - *R. concatenans* and *R. xanthocodon;* both give off on a damp warm day an aroma that can be smelt quite a distance away. Various other lepidote series have these qualities.

In the elepidotes the leaves have hairs instead, or most of them have.

These two groups very rarely hybridise. Knowing these important points helps a great deal to the enthusiastic hybridist, for they will not mate normally. We have already learnt that these species come from the northern hemisphere, right across North America, through Europe, Central and Eastern Asia, the Caucasus, to the Himalayas, Northern India, Tibet, Burma, Western China and Southern Japan.

Rhododendrons will not grow on alkaline soil, preferring the other side of neutrality, namely, acid soil. Those people who are lucky enough to live on neutral soil, or close to it, can be blessed with many other genera such as primulas, snowdrops, etc., which are very lovely companions.

To return to my subject, I would like to mention my own feelings and ideas upon the species. Up till recent years most people had the wrong idea that the species in general were too tender for their gardens if they were outside the milder counties of the South and West. This is not so. Having lived and worked with them from many expeditions - I may mention I have handled Forrest's, Farrer's, Kingdon-Ward's, Rock's and Ludlow and Sherriff's seeds, many thousands direct from the native countries - I have been able to draw my own conclusions. By slight experiment (for my life is not long enough to proceed!) I re-mated some of the species in order to improve their form by taking the best forms of a species; also in order to acclimatise their seeds in our country, my theory being that by doing so the species became much hardier and better able to withstand our topsy-turvy climatic conditions.

For example, *R. diaprepes* in *The Rhododendron Handbook* is classed as C. I selfed Forrest's form 11958, and its progeny has proved at Tower Court in Berkshire to be extremely hardy. Incidentally, out of this seed one plant, an unusual one, became named *diaprepes* 'Gargantua': this is also very hardy [but see page 302 below].

One is always being told that the hybrids as a whole are hardier than the species. Does this not prove my own theory, namely, hybrids are bred in this country, the seed conceived here: therefore by re-mating the species within themselves, their seed also being conceived here would stand the same chances.

I wish that I could live for another three generations. I would then proceed with all the species, for they are so magnificent in every way. I cannot see why one should try to improve them, or think one can, by hybridising. Needless to say, I am also guilty of having tried my hand at hybridising in my early days, but soon returned to the species, for once having contracted "the species bug", may I call it, one becomes more and more engrossed and fascinated by them. For instance, they can give us joy for practically twelve months in the year; forget their flowering period, which on the whole lasts some three to four weeks, and think of the joy they can give us for the other eleven months through their foliage and form, also their characters (for like humans they certainly have character!).

Take for instance the *Falconeri* series (elepidote) or the *Grande* series (elepidote): not only have these species shape and form, but magnificent foliage, with lovely indumentums - by this I mean the underside of their leaves - some tawny brown, others silvery, which show up when the wind blows them back, or one is walking beneath them as I do now. Then they have lovely flowers, and above all superb young growths: to me they look like candles on a Christmas tree.

Then take the *Anthopogon* series (lepidote), highly aromatic with very small leaves and daphne-like flowers, a remarkable contrast to the large-leaved types. I think I should add a further quality of the species: because of their varied foliage in size and shape, when winter arrives and one is fortunate to have a snow period, the tracery of the various foliage with their "snow caps" is too fascinating. I can see and imagine beautiful lace work.

Rhododendrons are wonderful plants, for they can be transplanted at any age and size within reason. I may mention up to thirty feet is possible [9.1m], and they still live; provided they are on an acid and not an alkaline soil, the texture of the soil is immaterial.

One other point I would like to mention: the flowering period can vary according to (*a*) the series, and (*b*) climatic conditions. Some series are tremendously floriferous, such as the *Triflorums, Lapponicums,* etc., but the tree-like forms in the *Fortunei* series, also in the *Arboreum* series and the *Barbatum* series, although extremely floriferous on the whole, I would count as having bumper three-year periods, with moderate flowering in between. These bumper periods, so causing over-flowering and consequently much seed bearing, can produce a lot of dead wood: but the dead wood is nature's control, and not a sign, on the whole, that the plant is dying, as many people fear. Just knock off the dead wood, and the plant looks perfect again, or will do so.

Dead-heading, although advisable, is not always a guarantee to produce a good crop of flowers for the following season. It certainly helps the health of the plant by preventing seed bearing which naturally takes a lot out of the plant.

When planting, give plenty of space between the larger specimens, and certainly no nearer to trees than twelve to fifteen feet [3.7 to 4.6m]. If you wish to fill in the ground space between larger specimens, then use medium or dwarfer forms, or any other acid-soil loving genus.

Rhododendrons begin to flower with *R. mucronulatum* in January, continuing through to August with *R. kyawi.*

One of the most important points about species rhododendrons is to get them true to the species from seed. One should avoid indiscriminate collecting of seed, because an insect, or even the wind, can cross-pollinate. The surest and safest way is by pollinating very carefully either direct on one bush (which is "selfing") or by selecting two forms of any one species, and fertilising them. The collectors' seeds from an expedition, so the explorers told me, were very carefully selected from the middle of a large batch of any one species, so ensuring no overlap of other rhododendrons. Many people take seeds from a species in this country thinking they will be sure to get the correct thing: this is not so, especially with those that flower during late April through May, when there are many various series and species in flower. Only is it at all possible for those that flower during the very early part, or late part, of the season.

Returning to the planting of rhododendrons, they should never be planted too deep, for they have surface-loving roots. The top surface of their roots should be on the level of the top surface of the soil. One should always see that their roots are well protected from the sun's heat by a good covering of leaf mould, bracken, heather, or anything. That is the most important of all: by doing this several good points are served; the mulch becomes food for them, stops evaporation, and acts as a sun shade. One only needs to look at a hedge of *R. ponticum* to see what magnificent leaf mould it makes for itself when it sheds its secondary foliage. Again, one notes a well covered bush spreading it branches around and down to the ground; how well it is looking after and shielding its own roots from hot sun rays.

Now I will discuss some examples, taking them series by series. These I have arranged alphabetically rather than by their natural affinities.

ANTHOPOGON SERIES

R. cephalanthum var. *crebreflorum.* That is what you might call a nice bush, making a low plant, compact, and suitable for a rock garden. This form has pink flowers whereas *cephalanthum* has white flowers.

R. sargentianum. Again suitable for a rock garden, very neat with small lemon-yellow or white flowers and small leaves.

AZALEA SERIES

R. luteum. It is a magnificent thing in itself with a wonderful crop of yellow flowers, very fragrant, and then brilliantly coloured autumn foliage. This azalea you can put anywhere, under trees, close to anything: it is as hardy as you could wish to have, and very lovely.

Sub-series Obtusum

At Tower Court we have a valley of *R. obtusum* in the azalea species valley. They are very hardy indeed, and come in at a period after the usual Kurumes. The Kurumes on Tower Hill are very happy and most floriferous. They flower for about three to four weeks, then again in the autumn they have their secondary foliage, with most beautiful colours, so giving a second crop.

We use the yellow azalea *R. luteum,* a distinguished plant, to divide any section of azaleas. You can put the deep yellow or orange azalea *R. molle* next to it, and then *R. obtusum. R. amoenum* is one of the most floriferous of all the *obtusums.* Beyond, there is *R. yunnanense,* and all must agree these are very floriferous.

R. simsii. A very fine form from Windsor Great Park was given the F.C.C. It is a very lovely species, magnificently floriferous and with lovely foliage. It is not altogether hardy, but I maintain if it was re-set and re-crossed it would pick up again for our climatic conditions.

R. kaempferi: which is also supposed to belong to the sub-series *obtusum,* again it is floriferous and deciduous, producing lovely foliage after the flowers have finished, very delicate and very light. It is the parent of many fine hybrids.

Sub-series Canadense

R. albrechtii. At Bodnant, by taking and selecting the best forms and mating them, they have selected a very fine deep pink form which is now called 'Michael McLaren'.

BARBATUM SERIES

Sub-series Barbatum

R. barbatum: there we have a very early flowering species. It is next door to being extremely hardy, and has great character. Look at the hanging foliage, and the perfect trusses of the flowers. Although small compact trusses, their bright scarlet shows up at a long distance away. All belonging to the *Barbatum* series have little hairs on the leaves or stem.

R. smithii also belongs to the *Barbatum* series. Another red-scarlet-crimson closely allied to *R. barbatum* but distinguished by the indumentum on the under surface of the leaves.

Sub-series Maculiferum

Here we have quite another type in the *Barbatum* series: it includes *R. morii,* which is to my way of thinking one of the most beautiful of the *Barbatum* series. Flowers white or white-flushed rose with crimson spots.

R. pseudochrysanthum, quite a distinct bush. Later on the foliage is exceptional, quite lovely, glaucous looking, with petiole and midrib below covered with woolly indumentum, very floriferous with equally lovely dark pink flowers with deeper rose lines outside, spotted crimson inside.

R. strigillosum is exceptionally floriferous and has been the parent of many good hybrids. It is sometimes called the Chinese *R. barbatum.* The foliage is most striking and the flower trusses are of a most brilliant crimson-scarlet.

BOOTHII SERIES

R. leucaspis: this to my way of thinking is one of the most lovely species, though not altogether hardy. If we could re-mate it, it would probably become hardier to our climate. It flowers very early, but if placed in the right situation it can come through many frosts and its large milky-white flowers will still look lovely.

Another plant in the same series, called *R. tephropeplum,* is quite a contrast to *R. leucaspis* but very lovely. There are many different forms; varying in size of flower, in different shapes, deeper pinks, and paler pinks, some highly aromatic and very scented.

CAMPANULATUM SERIES

R. campanulatum is exceptionally hardy, one of the ewe lambs; people try to show this at the Show and vie with each other doing their best to win for its colour varies in shades of purple, rosy-white, or white, spotted - one of the best forms is 'Knaphill', which is almost blue.

R. fulgens is a very superb red and has good foliage, with great character.

CINNABARINUM SERIES

R. xanthocodon, lemon shade: this is the one I mentioned in my talk. When in its flowering state it does not show its leaf which later becomes beautifully blue and highly aromatic. The flower is scented, also highly aromatic and can be most floriferous. This lemon shade was raised from expedition seed at Tower Court by me - it was the most outstanding yellow. I promptly named it 'Daffodilly' - the shades vary from white, cream-yellow and yellow.

Another is called *R. xanthocodon* lilac-mauve, but is under question at Edinburgh because it is quite different from the yellow form. I raised it direct from the expedition's seed. Whether it is a new species or not, we do not know, but it is uniform throughout the whole batch. We call this at the present the lilac-mauve form.

R. cinnabarinum var. *roylei* has unusual, long, bell-shaped flowers. That has been the

parent of many lovely hybrids.

DAURICUM SERIES

R. mucronulatum: this is the start of the genus, the earliest flowering of the whole lot with bright rosy-purple flowers usually in the first week of January in a cold garden. It is worth growing.

FALCONERI SERIES

[The photograph opposite above left] shows a big *R. falconeri* at [Muncaster, rather than] Logan in Scotland. That is the head of that family. What do you think of it as a tree? I always ask myself: when does a shrub stop being a shrub and when is it a tree? *R. arizelum* is a smaller addition of *falconeri* with the same good qualities.

R. basilicum: this is another species in the *Falconeri* series. It has larger leaves than *arizelum,* pale-yellow or creamy-white flowers with a crimson blotch at the base, sometimes pink or tinted crimson and notable young growths [the photograph opposite above right].

R. fictolacteum also belongs to the *Falconeri* series. They all have a lovely indumentum, and again wonderful young growths, white, creamy-white or tinted rose flowers with a dark crimson blotch.

R. rex has a shiny leaf which is larger than that of *R. fictolacteum,* large trusses of rose or white flowers with a crimson blotch and spots.

FERRUGINEUM SERIES

R. ferrugineum is known as the Alpine rose: it is very hardy.

FORTUNEI SERIES

Sub-series Calophytum

R. calophytum: you should notice the the character of the foliage hanging long and narrow with large trusses of white or pink with a deep blotch and the most beautiful set of the head on the top of the branch. It becomes a very large but shapely tree [the photograph opposite below left].

Sub-series Fortunei

R. decorum has some forms which flower late such as those from Kingdon-Ward. The whole of the Fortunei series has seven petals, which is very different from the other series. There is only one exception to this among the sub-series, and that is *griffithianum* which has five petals. It was sometime known as *aucklandii.*

Another feature is its beautiful scent, and *fortunei* crossed with *griffithianum* made the famous hybrid 'Loderi'.

Sub-series Orbiculare

R. orbiculare. An unusually good deep pink form. This slide was shown by the late Mr. Hanger last year, and those who were here them may recognise the identical photograph (*R.H.S. Journal,* October 1961, Fig. 138). Flowers rose pink.

R. fargesii is very closely related to *R. oreodoxa:* they are so close together they ought to be named one or the other in my opinion.

This is in the sub-series *Oreodoxa* and is the first to flower; it is exceptionally hardy. The leaves have a lovely habit of curling up in the frost and in the heat, so it is rather full of character. They unfurl and curl up like little cigarettes. Flowers range from rose, rosy-lilac, pink or white and it is extremely floriferous.

GRANDE SERIES

This most magnificent plant you also saw last year, *R. macabeanum* from Trewithen in Cornwall (*R.H.S. Journal,* October 1961 Fig 137). One of the species of the *Grande* series. When you look at the flower, with its lovely foliage, you should notice the magnificent set of the flower and the truss. The young growth I mentioned is also very notable. It is very silvery, like little candles on a Christmas tree.

R. praestans, one of the species of the *Grande* series. A magnificent flower with magnificent stigma.

R. sinogrande has the largest leaf of all. On the Isle of Colonsay the late Lord Strathcona planted a grove of these. It is almost a forest tree [overleaf page 266].

HELIOLEPIS SERIES

R. rubiginosum is one of the strongest growers. There is a plant so magnificently shaped, as I said, with its "clothing" protecting its own roots. No need to do much more to that plant, it shades itself, and its own secondary foliage will drop and give it its own leaf mould. The picture I showed was taken as far north as Inverewe in Scotland. One could not wish to see more flower than that. It is also aromatic.

IRRORATUM SERIES

Sub-series Irroratum

R. irroratum can vary tremendously in colour. They were in magnificent show right in the woodlands last year, well shaded, but in good flower.

There is a fine spotted form of *irroratum* which won an Award of Merit when shown by Mr. de Rothschild who called it 'Polka Dot'. Most beautiful. If you go near that bush it will shower you with honeydew, which is very sweet, so no wonder the bees come to it.

R. aberconwayi is one of the finest in the *Irroratum* series - named after the late Lord Aberconway, it has a flat white flower like a saucer. I do not think you could try to improve upon that.

LAPPONICUM SERIES

This is a very hardy race, suitable for the rock garden, and very early flowering. There are fifty-two different species in this series, some very rare and unobtainable.

The true *lapponicum* grows in the Royal Botanic Garden at Edinburgh. Edinburgh is very cold, and yet there it is growing. We tried it at Tower Court, but it died.

(The Chairman: the true *lapponicum* is about the most difficult rhododendron to grow in this country. It is remarkable to see a plant as healthy as that. We cannot grow it; we are too soft).

Edinburgh is too hard; that may be the answer.

R. impeditum; a plant reproduced at Tower Court, the cushion form from Forrest seed. It has flowers in shades of mauve or light purplish blue.

NERIIFLORUM SERIES

Sub-series Forrestii

R. chamae-thomsonii in the *Forrestii* sub-series is a little bush, not creeping or crawling, but an upright bush.

At Tower Court *R. forrestii* var. *repens* grows in full exposure on the top of the hill along with the species Narcissi. Do you see how well they go together? The species Narcissi



R. falconeri ssp. *falconeri* - tree or shrub?



R. basilicum (Farrer 873) - young growth



R. calophytum var. *calophytum* - hanging foliage, large trusses



R. macabeanum - magnificent flower and truss

R. sinogrande - the grove of trees at Muncaster, rather than on Colonsay

grow well on an acid soil: at Tower Court although we can never grow the ordinary larger daffodils, they died, but the species live, and it is a good complement with var. *repens.* You must admit that is very lovely. Talking of different forms, there is also *R. forrestii* var. *tumescens;* I showed it, and it got an Award of Merit. It has two flowers to the truss, or three, sometimes four. The flower is much larger than *repens.*

Sub-series Haematodes
R. chaetomallum is one of the best of this sub-series. If you try to re-make this and have great fun in re-crossing inside the species you would probably get an even better form altogether.

A fine form of *R. chaetomallum* var. *hemigymnum* won an Award of Merit in 1957. It is a little dark, but it is a different form of *chaetomallum.* In a species you can get these different forms, often ranging in a series. Underneath the leaves are brown.

R. mallotum. Flowers very early. In all the species of the series *Neriiflorum* you see the "juice" from the flowers which are dark crimson. Those are honey drops having fallen out of the flower, which draws all the bees and insects. This shrub is noted for its shape, the branchlets are densely hairy and the undersides of the leaves are covered with cinnamon-brown woolly tomentum.

PONTICUM SERIES

Sub-series Caucasicum
In the *Ponticum* series there are no less than sixteen different known species, twelve in the sub-series *caucasicum.*

In the *Caucasicum* sub-series is *R. metternichii* (usually pink) but there is also a white form, again very lovely.

There is another one, *hyperythrum,* which would almost beat that, but not quite.

(The Chairman: And *yakushimanum*?)

Yes, a lovely one, and again in sub-series *caucasicum* occurs *chrysanthum,* a dwarf, not an easy doer, but it is a good example showing the variety in any one series.

SALUENENSE SERIES

There are eight species belonging to this series, *R. radicans* being one of the best and most interesting, very deep purple: I nicknamed the flowers "pansy face". Flowering in May, the leaf is extremely small and prostrate in habit.

Then comes *R. keleticum,* a semi-prostrate spreading shrub, June flowering.

SCABRIFOLIUM SERIES

R. spiciferum. This is in the *Handbook* as C. I would like to re-make this and get it hardier in this country. It is very floriferous, and, if in anybody's garden there is normally a cosy corner, and one could grow it, I would advise it. It is most beautiful.

TALIENSE SERIES

Sub-series Roxieanum
R. roxieanum, one of the hardest of any, is always a shy flowerer, but it has beautiful young growth, and they look like little candles on this little round bush. Look at the leaf, quite narrow, quite small with a thick indumentum.

Another one of the same series, *R. wiltonii,* is exceptionally hardy, very beautiful, with lovely foliage and beautiful texture of flower. Small trusses of whitish or flesh-pink flowers with red spots or a small blotch.

THOMSONII SERIES

Sub-series campylocarpum
We have several bushes of *R. callimorphum* at Tower Court, grown from expedition seed. They are amazingly floriferous. I have not re-mated it. It is quite hardy and is remarkably floriferous in dense woodland, but it is not necessary to have dense woodland for shelter. Flowers pink or deep rose, with or without a crimson blotch at the base inside.

Sub-series Souliei
R. wardii named after the late Captain Kingdon-Ward, one of our famous explorers, another beautiful rhododendron with yellow flowers, saucer shaped, sometimes has a crimson blotch at the base.

Sub-series Thomsonii
R. meddianum, the Chinese *R. thomsonii,* is next door to being hardy although marked C in the *Handbook.* One of the best in this series I feel *meddianum* beats *thomsonii* in many respects; it is much more floriferous, with rich deep-crimson or bright-scarlet flowers on a shapely bush.

R. thomsonii may be considered the head of the family: it has a heart-shaped leaf which applies through all this series, and a magnificent calyx, deep red bell-shaped flowers; another distinctive character is the smooth, peeling bark.

Sub-series Williamsianum
R. williamsianum in the *Thomsonii* series has a sub-series to itself. It has clear shell-pink flowers. After it has flowered, and sometimes when flowering, its young copper foliage is a most wonderful combination. It can be grown in the rock garden or any other part of one's garden.

TRIFLORUM SERIES

Sub-series Hanceanum
R. hanceanum nanum. It has lovely pale-yellow flowers and is an excellent compact-growing plant. This is more or less what you would call the dwarf class in the *Triflorum* series. It makes a most lovely little bush and is suitable for the rock garden.

Sub-series Yunnanense
R. chartophyllum in the sub-series *Yunnanense* is very close to *yunnanense.* They would like, at Edinburgh, to join it up with *yunnanense;* it is most floriferous.

R. yunnanense does very well at Tower Court. The trusses are very big and our best form has a good red blotch. We have obtained a very round truss through breeding, again the three flowers have joined up and made a tremendous truss of multiples of three. *R. yunnanense* at Tower court looks almost like a hedge; it is tremendously floriferous. It makes an upright bush, more shrubby than the little *hanceanum nanum.*

R. davidsonianum was re-bred by selection at Bodnant. Again I want to find out if it is improved over the actual species. The flowers are deep pink, with a lovely blotch, and beautiful in multiples of three, which have turned into a complete round truss.

Sub-series Augustinii
R. augustinii is beautifully floriferous. These are really blues, if you see them in the Hall and outside. I re-bred it to give a pale form and named it 'Mist Blue'. *Augustinii* will flower magnificently every third year, as thick and heavy, but in between they also give a splendid

flowering. You cannot dead-head if you have a quantity, it is almost impossible.

Sub-series Triflorum
R. keiskei grows well at Leonardslee, and is again a small shrub. There is a very compact type in the main "Species Collection" which is now at Windsor Park.

UNIFLORUM SERIES
R. imperator in the series *Uniflorum* is a wonderful rock garden plant, flowering its head off. It has tiny leaves and grows close to the ground, yet it is most floriferous practically every year. This plant should not, in my opinion, be confused with *R. uniflorum,* for that grows more upright.

VIRGATUM SERIES
R. racemosum in the *virgatum* series is a very hardy plant. I have proved at Tower Court that you can grow that in boggy ground, on very dry and hard ground, under shelter, and in full exposure, and it will do its best at every point. It is well worth having, early-flowering, very hardy, and frost-resistant, up to a point. You cannot expect anything to stand frosts like we have been having lately.

FOLIAGE CONTRASTS
Most of the sub-series *Taliense* have beautiful young blue foliage, and nearly all of the *Taliense* series form round and shapely bushes with magnificent indumentum to their foliage.

One of the gems of the whole of the foliage plants is *R. lepidostylum* in Series *Trichocladum,* noted for its magnificent young foliage. A beautiful compact round bush. There is a wonderful plant at Brodick in the Isle of Arran. Flowers are funnel-shaped in pairs, pale yellow. There is another magnificent bush of that variety at Edinburgh, and it is also to be seen at other gardens.

CAMPANULATUM SERIES
Again noted for its foliage, in particular var. *aeruginosum.* The young foliage has a metallic lustre, and the unfolding leaves are quite glabrous above.

Roza Harrison's lecture transcription was published in *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1963.* The botanic nomenclature and classification system reflect the methodology in place at the time of writing. A short question-and-answer session followed the lecture and is included in the *Year Book* transcript.



R. lepidostylum - at Benmore Botanic Garden

R. campanulatum ssp. *aeruginosum* - at Muncaster Castle Gardens

The Deciduous Azalea Registrations:

Cote
atlanticum X unknown
Flower Colour: Cream-pink

Tower Beauty
atlanticum X unknown
Flower Colour: Salmon



R. 'Tower Dexter'

Tower Dainty
atlanticum X unknown
AM 1983
Flower Colour: White-purplish-pink

Tower Darling
atlanticum X unknown
FCC 1999
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Tower Dexter
atlanticum X unknown
AM 2000
Flower Colour: Apricot
Flowering Time: Mid May

Tower Dragon
atlanticum X unknown
Flower Colour: Salmon
Flowering Time: Mid May
Height: Medium



R. 'Tower Dexter'

The Evergreen Azalea Registrations:

Eira
'Kirishima' X 'Malvaticum'
Flower Colour: Magenta-pink-mauve-red

Katisha
'Kirishima' X 'Malvaticum'
Flower Colour: Lilac-pink
Height: Low

Moira
kaempferi X *simsii*
Flower Colour: Salmon-pink

Nanki-Poo
'Kirishima' X 'Malvaticum'
Flower Colour: Crimson

Peep-Bo
'Kirishima' X 'Malvaticum'
Flower Colour: Silvery-pink

Pooh-Bah
'Kirishima' X 'Malvaticum'
Flower Colour: Reddish-purple
Height: Low

Princess Ida
'Kirishima' X 'Malvaticum'
Flower Colour: Rose-mauve

Roma
scabrum X *kaempferi*
Flower Colour: Salmon-flame

Titipu
'Kirishima' X 'Malvaticum'
AM 1989
Flower Colour: Reddish-purple
Flowering Time: Mid April
Height: Low

Tit-Willow
'Kirishima' X 'Malvaticum'
AM 1989
Flower Colour: Purple-pink
Height: Semi-Dwarf



R. 'Katisha'

R. ‘Peep Bo’

R. ‘Peep Bo’

The 'Eira' Pride
'Kirishima' x 'Malvaticum'
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5 Mid April-May 0.5-1.6m x 1.5-2.5m

Named Forms:
Eira
(multiple shades from magenta to pink to mauve to red).
Katisha
(lilac-pink, with deeper spotting and white stamens).
Nanki-Poo
(bright crimson, with crimson stamens).
Peep-Bo
(silvery-pink, with white stamens).
Pooh-Bah
(strong reddish purple, the dorsal lobe spotted deep red, the stamens crimson).
Princess Ida
(rose-mauve, crimson stamens).
Titipu - AM 1989
(reddish-purple, very lightly flushed strong reddish-purple,
the upper half of the throat spotted deep purplish red).
Tit-Willow - AM 1989
(light purple, flushed pink, the dorsal half of the throat speckled strong purplish red,
with the long stamens coloured white).

Roza Stevenson's 1938 'Kirishima' x 'Malvaticum' pairing spawned eight selections, with 'Eira' presented first in 1951, the remaining seven between 1966 and 1967, this septet propagated and distributed from Arthur George's Hydon Nurseries in Godalming, Surrey. Fans of Gilbert and Sullivan will know that six of the Hydon introduction epithets were borrowed from their 1885 comic opera *The Mikado* - 'Katisha', 'Nanki-Poo', 'Peep-Bo', 'Pooh-Bah', 'Titipu' and 'Tit-Willow' - while 'Princess Ida' opened at the Savoy at the start of 1884. 'Eira' is anyone's guess, though she does get taken to a G&S production by Warrick Synclaire in the Tinnean novel *Destiny's End,* but as this was only published in 2016 its relevance to the subject at hand is tangential at best. More piquant is the *IRRC* description of the plant, which details it's flower colour ranging from magenta to pink to mauve to red, with an etc., appended after the latter hue. Whether this means 'Eira' is a coverall 'Group' name for the other seven and not an actual introduction is not known. Equally, as the grown by, named and introduced credits in the entry go to J. B. Stevenson, with that 1951 date added to the last of these, the factual data presented is open to challenge. Given that John Barr exited the Earth's physical realm in 1950.

'Pooh-Bah', 'Titipu' and 'Tit-Willow' are the most widely distributed of the seven Hydon clones, but 'widely' needs to be taken with a pinch of salt.

The flowers of the former are reddish-purple in tone and spotted deep red on the dorsal lobe. Each is 2.5cm long by 4cm across, with three or four tubular-funnel corollas per truss. Stamens and style are flushed crimson. Glossy green leaves 3cm long by 1.5cm wide complete the picture, though these will barely be visible beneath the sheet of bloom that covers the shrub during May.

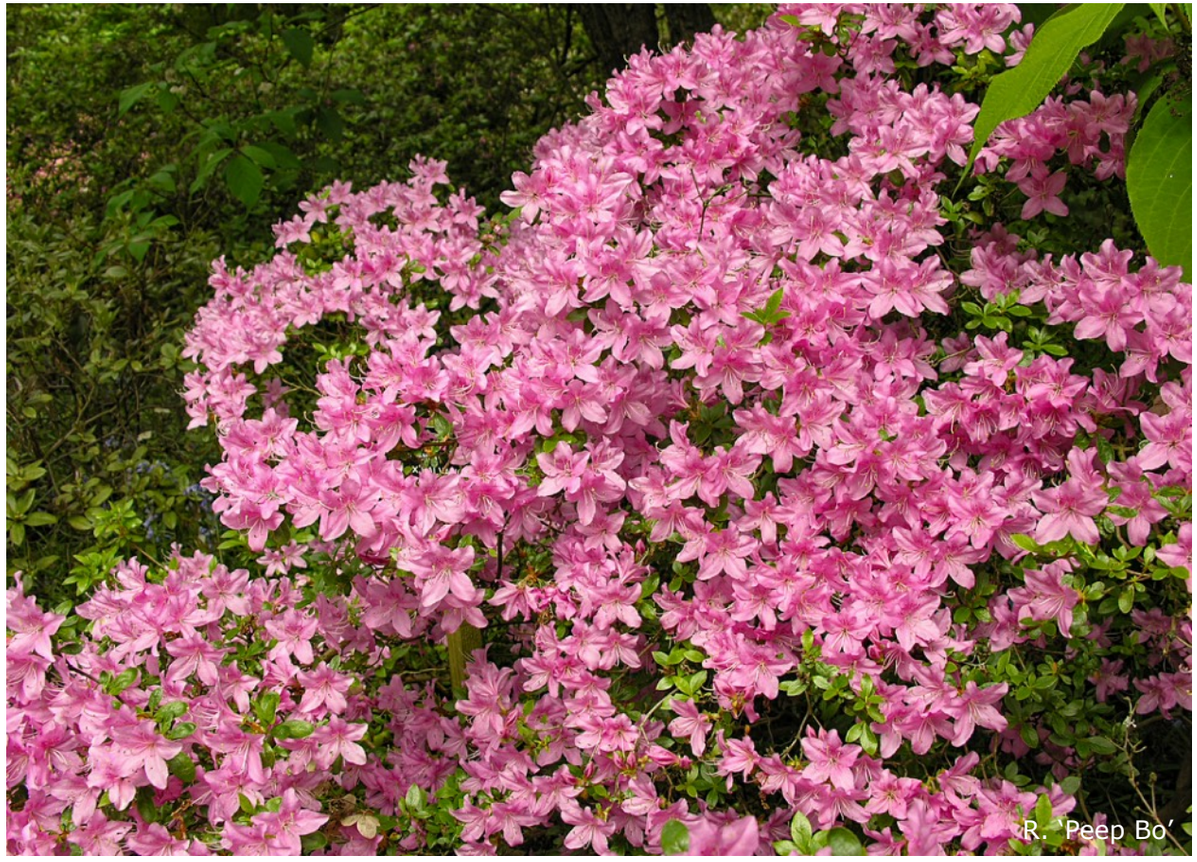
Had 'Hatsu-giri' not already taken the evergreen azalea world by storm - it was first sent to England from Shanghai by Robert Fortune in 1850 or 1851 - each spring, pots of 'Pooh-Bah' would otherwise have been filling the racks of the gardening section in every DIY warehouse from Land's End to John O'Groats, ready to be snapped-up by hordes of impulse purchasers. Regrettably, despite being the better plant with truly deep mauve flowers, it has been commercially overlooked. An also-ran.

'Titipu' - the alternative title for *The Mikado* being T*he Town of Titipu* - has flowers that are held in a compact domed truss of between 5 and 10 corollas, these tubular-funnel-shaped and individually 2.5cm long by 3cm wide. They are reddish-purple in colour, with a fan of darker, purplish-red spots and speckles extending halfway up the dorsal lobe. And of course, the blooms are produced in profusion, with the whole bush a dazzling sheet of colour, therefore from mid April through to mid May, depending on the weather, don't expect to see all that many leaves.

That foliage is mid green in tone, the blades glossy above and 2.5cm long by 1cm wide. Mature specimens will eventually ascend to around 1.6m in height with a 2.5m spread.

The final member of the trio, 'Tit-Willow', has four funnel-shaped corollas in each of its compact, domed trusses, each of the flowers 2cm long by 3cm across at the mouth. Their colour is a light purple flushed pink, with the dorsal lobes spotted darker, the white stamen filaments a pleasing contrast. The shrub's leaves are pale to mid green in tone, semi-glossy, with each 2cm long by 1cm wide, and a mature plant will have formed a dome around half a metre high by around three times that in width.

'Titipu' and 'Tit-Willow' are the only members of the heptad - or octad, if 'Eira' does indeed exist - to have been gifted Awards of Merit by the RHS, both in 1989.


R. 'Peep Bo'

R. ‘Pooh Bah’

R. ‘Pooh Bah’

R. ‘Princess Ida’

R. ‘Princess Ida’

R. ‘Princess Ida’

R. ‘Titipu’ AM 1989

R. ‘Titipu’ AM 1989



R. ‘Tit-Willow’ AM 1989

R. ‘Tit-Willow’ AM 1989

R. ‘Roma’

R. ‘Roma’

The Lepidote & Elepidote Registrations:

Amor
griersonianum X *thayerianum*
AM 1951
Flower Colour: White-pink
Flowering Time: June
Height: Medium

Amrie
catacosmum X *chaetomallum*
Flower Colour: Red

Armia
concatenans X *lutescens*
Flower Colour: Yellow

Azamia
russatum X *augustinii*
Flower Colour: Blue-mauve

Azma
griersonianum X *fortunei*
Flower Colour: Salmon-pink
Height: Tall

Azor
griersonianum X *discolor*
AM 1933
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: Mid June-July
Height: Tall

Azor Sister
griersonianum X *discolor*
FCC 1960
Flower Colour: Rhodamine Pink
Flowering Time: Mid June-July
Height: Tall

Azrie
griersonianum X *diaprepes*
Flower Colour: Salmon-pink

Beatrice Keir
'Logan Damaris' X *lacteum*
AM 1974
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: April-Early May
Height: Medium

Brünhilde
wardii X 'Loderi'
Flower Colour: Cream
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Cinzan
cinnabarinum Blandfordiiflorum X *xanthocodon*
Flower Colour: Coral Pink

Choremia Tower Court
haematodes X *arboreum*
Flower Colour: Crimson-scarlet
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Coer
'Romala' X *delavayi*
Flower Colour: Red

Conyan
concatenans X *concinnum* Pseudoyanthinum
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: Early May
Height: Medium

Eudich
dichroanthum X n*eriiflorum* Euchaites

Fabia Tower Court
dichroanthum X *griersonianum*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Gargantua
diaprepes X *diaprepes*
AM 1953 & FCC 1974
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: June-July
Height: Tall

Golden Orfe
concatenans X 'Lady Chamberlain'
AM 1964
Flower Colour: Yellow-orange
Flowering Time: Early May
Height: Low

Hilde
fulvum X *lacteum*
Flower Colour: Yellow-pink
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

John Barr Stevenson
lacteum X 'Logan Damaris'
AM 1971
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: April-Early May
Height: Tall

Lactombei
'Luscombei' X *lacteum*
Flower Colour: Yellow-pink

Mai
decorum X *campylocarpum*
Flower Colour: Cream

Maroze
'Red Admiral' X *meddianum*
Flower Colour: Red

Mira
beanianum X *meddianum*
Flower Colour: Reddish-purple

Moiza
'Avis' X *meddianum*
Flower Colour: Red

Monica Wellington
cinnabarinum X unknown
AM 1980
Flower Colour: Purplish-red

Mozari
concatenans X *ambiguum*
Flower Colour: Yellow-pink

Ninette
discolor X *makinoi*
Flower Colour: Pink

Omar
catacosmum X *beanianum*
Flower Colour: Red

Pall Mall
'Loderi King George' X 'Socrianum'
Flower Colour: Pink

Piccadilly
'Loderi King George' X 'Socrianum'
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Polar Bear
diaprepes X *auriculatum*
FCC 1946
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: Late June-July
Height: Tall

Red Cap
didymum X *facetum*
Flower Colour: Blood Red-Plum-red
Flowering Time: Late July-August
Height: Medium

Remo
valentinianum X *lutescens*
Flower Colour: Yellow
Flowering Time: April
Height: Semi-Dwarf

Rima
wardii X *decorum*
Flower Colour: Cream-yellow

Robert Keir
lacteum X 'Luscombei'
AM 1957
Flower Colour: Yellow-pink
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Roc
barbatum X *fulgens*
Flower Colour: Red

Rocket
meddianum X *strigillosum*
AM 1954
Flower Colour: Blood Red
Flowering Time: March-Early April
Height: Tall

Romarez
kyawii X *griersonianum*
AM 1953
Flower Colour: Geranium Lake

Romari
'Coer' X *meddianum*
Flower Colour: Red

Roza Stevenson
'Loderi Sir Edmund' X *wardii*
FCC 1968
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Rozamarie
wardii X 'Penjerrick'
Flower Colour: Yellow

Rozie
'Romala' X *discolor*
Flower Colour: Rose-pink

Snow Fairy
moupinense X *mucronulatum*

Socrianum
scyphocalyx X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Apricot

Tessa
'Praecox' X *moupinense*
AM 1935
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: March-Early April
Height: Low

Tessa Roza
'Praecox' X *moupinense*
AM 1953
Flower Colour: Rosy Pink
Flowering Time: March-Early April
Height: Medium

Wardanthum
dichroanthum X *wardii*

Zarie
catacosmum X *meddianum*

Zora
souliei X *wardii* var. *puralbum*
Flower Colour: White

R. ‘Amor AM’ 1951

R. ‘Amor AM’ 1951

R. ‘Azor’ AM 1933

R. ‘Azor’

griersonianum x *discolor*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5 June 5m x 3m

Several gardens have made a match between *R. griersonianum* and *R. discolor,* with the Stevensons of Tower Court, Ascot, getting in first and transferring pollen to style in 1927. They introduced and named the hybrid in 1933, with ‘Azor’ - for those non anagram-savvy rhodophiles - being Roza’s name spelt backwards. Yet although Mrs. Stevenson was a true gem and is today acknowledged as Tower Court’s sole hybridiser in residence, her reverse namesake has drawn mixed reviews.

For many forms of ‘Azor’, though of upright habit, are untidy plants, open and sparse, due to the shrub’s long, oblanceolate through lanceolate-shaped, matt green leaves falling after just one year of life. And even while still in place, those blades are often chlorotic, so edged with yellow. The flowers too can be second-rate, opening a decidedly poor bluish-pink. On the plus side however, some clones have very fine salmon-pink corollas with brownish-red markings in the throat, although prospective purchasers will need to search these out from amongst the clones on offer at the specialist rhododendron nurseries, as the usual commercial mix-up of forms has occurred.

So step up, R. ‘Azor Sister’, the recipient of an FCC award in 1960, which may or might not be a clone from the original cross, or alternatively, a second pairing of the two species, or even the reverse cross, as the parentage has not been registered. Yet expert opinion - namely the 1976 team of authors updating *Bean’s Trees & Shrubs* - places it within the old ‘Azor’ Group and J. B. Stevenson is listed in the Second Edition of the *IRRC* as being responsible for breeding, naming, introducing and registering the cross, the latter two functions taking place in 1960 and 1962 respectively, some ten and twelve years after John Barr passed on to that great rhododendron garden in the sky.

The flowers of ‘Azor Sister’ are considered to be a much superior rhodamine-pink, the corollas stained turkey-red at the petal base and speckled currant-red on the dorsal lobes, but a labelled specimen of such has yet to be encountered by this author, so the guesswork of others has not induced a ‘pride’ tag to be appended to the epithet.



R. ‘Azor’ AM 1933

R. ‘Azor’ AM 1933

R. ‘Azor’ AM 1933

R. ‘Beatrice Keir’ AM 1974

R. ‘Beatrice Keir’ AM 1974

R. 'Choremia Tower Court'

R. ‘Choremia Tower Court’

R. ‘Choremia Tower Court’

R. ‘Choremia Tower Court’

R. ‘Gargantua’ FCC 1974

R. ‘Gargantua’ FCC 1974



R. ‘Gargantua’ FCC 1974 - deformed style and stigma

R. ‘Gargantua’

diaprepes x *diaprepes*

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H4-5	June-July	6m x 4m

Virtually every published account concerning R. ‘Gargantua’ details the plant as being raised by John Barr Stevenson and his wife, Roza, at Tower Court, Ascot, from George Forrest’s 1913 type introduction of *R. decorum* ssp. *diaprepes* under the field number F 11958. Indeed, it has been regarded as a selected form of that subspecies by most doyens ever since its germination. But such reporting fails to take cognisance of the following two paragraphs extracted from page 37 of *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1960,* written by Roza herself:

> ‘In the species collection, which has now been moved to Windsor Great Park, we had in the Fortunei Series one plant only of *R. diaprepes* F. 11958, which looked, and was, very sick; my husband was afraid it would die, so he asked me to self pollinate it, to make sure it would be true *diaprepes;* this I did, the pods ripened and produced a tremendous amount of seed and eventually we planted the seedlings out; all are fine trees and extremely hardy - whereas the original *diaprepes* from this expedition were considered to be very tender; in fact we destroyed a whole batch of another lot of *diaprepes* F. 27727 for the same reason.
>
> ‘I feel sure now if I had taken the trouble with this F. 27727 number its progeny would have been the same as F. 11958. Incidentally our *R. diaprepes* var. *gargantua* A.M. was among my seed of F. 11958’.

So ‘Gargantua’ did not directly germinate from Forrest’s wild collected seed, but arose via a selfed pollination initiated on one of those grown-up seedlings. It was then spotted by the Stevensons as a rogue in that pan of otherwise normal *diaprepes* x *diaprepes* clones.

As something different from the rest.

So far more interesting.

Because in fact, it was an elepidote triploid.

This was known as early as 1950, when it was listed as the only 2*n* = 39 member of Series Fortunei, in an article *Chromosome Numbers in Species of Rhododendron,* written by E. K. Janaki Ammal, D.Sc., I. C. Enoch, B.Sc., and Margery Bridgewater, and published by the RHS in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1950*.

Yet a far more startling fact is that of all the 152 Elepidote species the team examined, ‘Gargantua’ was the only non-diploid amongst them.

Of course, there were tetraploids and hexaploids aplenty amongst the Lepidote rhododendrons, along with an octoploid - a plant having 104 chromosomes, in this case *R. pholidotum;* and even a dodecaploid - where each of the individual plant cells has 156 chromosomes resident within its nucleus, namely *R. pseudomanipurense* (see *Temperate Rhododendrons, V*olume 5, page 312).

But only one other triploid was reported in the team’s findings, a seedling of *R. rupicola* ssp. *russatum* under Rock 11294.

However, from the 1960 *Year Book* article we now know that R. ‘Gargantua’ was not conceived in the wilds of Yunnan, as was Joseph Rock’s find, but in rural Berkshire. And moreover, without Mother Nature’s help. Therefore whatever stress factor was influencing that sickly plant at Tower Court, it almost certainly initiated the chromosome increase via an unreduced gamete, be it the egg or the pollen grain.

If we jump forward seventy-five years to take on board our current understanding of chromosomes, the DNA and genetic information they carry, and the absolutely fundamental

role they play in the process of evolution, those seven decades have seen our knowledge progress in scintillating leaps and bounds along an exponential curve, allowing scientists to now tell us that:

> 'In contrast to the gradual evolutionary process whereby new species evolve from isolated populations, new species of plants can arise abruptly. The most common mechanism for abrupt speciation is through the formation of natural polyploids. Once a tetraploid arises in a population, it can generally hybridise with other tetraploids. However these tetraploids are reproductively isolated from their parental species. Tetraploids that cross with diploids of the parental species will result in triploids that are typically sterile. This phenomenon provides a "reproductive barrier" between polyploids and the parental species - a driving force for speciation'.
> *Understanding Polyploidy: Insights into the Evolution and Breeding of Azaleas,*
> Thomas G. Ranney and Jeff R. Jones, North Carolina State University.
> *The Azalean,* Winter 2008.

'Gargantua' is therefore not a form of *R. decorum* ssp. *diaprepes*.

Yet neither is it a new 'species'.

Because even allowing for the accepted modern-day practice that treats rogues germinating in pans of wild-collected seed as natural hybrids, this was a hand-pollinated selfed conception.

That the rest of the seedlings were all true ssp. *diaprepes* juveniles is irrelevant, and basically a feature of a rhododendron's reproductive process whereby each ovule requires the entry of an individual pollen grain to become a fertilised seed (as detailed and illustrated in *The Pollination Process,* beginning on page 26 of *Temperate Rhododendrons,* Volume 1).

So while most of the pollen that Roza Stevenson applied to the stigma of her ailing specimen of ssp. *diaprepes* - or all of the eggs bar one in the ovary chambers at the bottom of the style - were bog standard haploid gametes, each with 13 chromosomes, one was a mutant with 26. And once fertilised, that egg defied the odds and developed into a viable seed even though it had 39 chromosomes.

In consequence of the science set out above, R. 'Gargantua' is treated herein as a straightforward hybrid rhododendron.

Which is a touch hardier than the seed and pollen parent in British gardens, and succeeds at sites where ssp. *diaprepes* often fails to thrive. That increase in toughness however is only modest, H3-4 advancing into H4-5 territory, with mid-winter lows down to around -12ºC tolerated. The flowers and leaves are of course much larger than those found on the true subspecies, with each corolla around 12.5cm across at the mouth and the leaf blades 20cm long and obovate-oblong in shape.

As per the *Understanding Polyploidy* statements on sterility, the hybrid has only been of limited value to hybridisers, its pollen involved in just four successful pairings, plus a single occurrence where it matured the seed. For it is basically an infertile mule.

'Gargantua' is also genetically unstable - see the three photographs opposite (left and right) - the style and stigma often emerging from the flower bud severely deformed, this phenomena not - as others might have you believe - the result of frost damage or some other environmental stressor.


R. 'Gargantua' FCC 1974 - deformed style and stigma


R. 'Gargantua' FCC 1974 - deformed style and stigma

R. ‘Gargantua’ FCC 1974

R. ‘Gargantua’ FCC 1974

R. ‘John Barr Stevenson’ AM 1971

R. ‘John Barr Stevenson’ AM 1971

R. ‘John Barr Stevenson’
lacteum x ‘Logan Damaris’
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5. April 5m x 4m

‘John Barr Stevenson’ must surely be one of the most beautiful, yellow-flowering rhododendron hybrids created to date.

The cross placed pollen from one of Edward Magor’s ‘Damaris’ selections - the AM-accorded ‘Logan Damaris’, which was introduced by Stevenson himself in 1948 - onto the style of the best form of *R. lacteum* then growing at Tower Court. This was the Stevensons’ home and garden near Ascot, Berkshire, which while substantial, if compared to an estate such as Exbury, was minute, barely a hundredth of the size. Yet through the interwar years and into the 1950s, it contained the best species rhododendron collection in the whole of Great Britain.

Stevenson died in 1950, before the new cross bloomed, but his wife Roza, who we now know was responsible for creating all the Tower Court hybrid introductions, took the seedlings to Tremeer, in North Cornwall, when she remarried in 1961, and the plant was introduced by her second husband, Major-General Eric Harrison, another breeder of fine rhododendrons.

Rhododendron ‘John Barr Stevenson’ is a wide-spreading small tree in habit, graced with large, broadly elliptic dark green leaves that are carried in sizeable whorls at the branch tips, each blade up to 15cm long and 6.5cm across. Flower trusses are produced in quantity on mature specimens and comprise 14, 15 or 16 widely-campanulate corollas, in a flat-topped, tiered arrangement almost 18cm across. Each individual bell is 5cm long and up to 8cm wide at the mouth, pure lemon-yellow in tone, with a small crimson-purple blotch at the very base of the dorsal lobe.

And in combination, leaf and flower are simply sublime.



R. ‘John Barr Stevenson’ AM 1971

R. ‘John Barr Stevenson’ AM 1971

R. ‘John Barr Stevenson’ AM 1971

R. ‘John Barr Stevenson’ AM 1971

R. ‘Mozari’

R. ‘Mozari’

concatenans x *ambiguum*

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H5	May	2m x 3.5m

Bred by Roza Stevenson in 1941, ‘Mozari’ is a straightforward F1 *concatenans* x *ambiguum* pairing, so the genes responsible for an apricot pigmentation would have been input into the equation from the seed parent, to do battle with the yellow ones delivered by the pollen parent. The resulting corollas show the contest was evenly matched, a pastel mix of those tones, usually darker on the outside and with a few crimson-apricot flecks on the dorsal. The blooms are tubular-funnel-shaped, carried in open and drooping trusses of six, the lobes often gifted reflexed margins. En masse their appeal is obvious; up-close, less so.

The leaf blades of ‘Mozari’ are elliptic in outline, dark green in colour, and scaly both above and below, but they are only held for one year, so the intricate framework of branches will clearly be on display unless a foreground-masking planting is put in place. Leaf spot is a problem, with the ravages of winter also clearly apparent on many of the blades until they are shed soon after the new growth emerges.

As to the epithet… Mozari Point is one of the scenic viewpoints close to Chikhaldara Hill Station in the Satpura Mountain Range of Maharashtra, in eastern India, though it is unknown if the Stevensons ever visited. Alternatively, another anagram might once again have been chosen - ‘Mi Roza’. Otherwise the appellation’s origin is obscure.

And one last fact: according to a *QBARS* article published in the Volume 16, Number 3, July 1962 edition, the hybrid is reportedly lime tolerant, being listed in Friedrich Heiler’s report: *There Are Also Lime Tolerating Rhododendrons*.



R. ‘Mozari’



R. ‘Mozari’

R. ‘Mozari’

R. 'Mozari'

R. ‘Polar Bear’ FCC 1946

R. ‘Polar Bear’ FCC 1946

R. 'Polar Bear'

diaprepes x *auriculatum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H6 July 6m x 8m

Roza Stevenson is the only hybridiser to date to have made and registered a *diaprepes* x *auriculatum* pairing, placing pollen onto style in 1926. The combination resulted in her most widely known and planted hybrid, R. 'Polar Bear'. Fusing two late blooming species, the cross begins to open its inflorescences after most clones of *R. diaprepes* have finished their display and two or three weeks before the buds of *R. auriculatum* conclude the flowering season, so bridging that gap. A First Class Certificate was gifted to the hybrid by the RHS when it was exhibited in 1946, but although many labelled plants in gardens up and down the country claim this provenance, 'hundreds of seedlings were grown at Tower Court and many distributed'. And given that garden's ultimate demise after John Barr's death early in 1950, 'it is likely that the FCC clone no longer exists, or at any rate, is not commercially distributed'. It also means a degree of variation within the 'Polar Bear' flock, especially with regard to flowering time, which can vary significantly between clones. For instance, Peter and Kenneth Cox of Glendoick Gardens, Perth, report that 'one of ours flowers two to three weeks before the other' (all three quotes are in fact taken from their *Encyclopaedia of Rhododendron Hybrids,* published by Batsford in 1988). Nevertheless, and despite its other faults, for those rhododendron lovers with a garden that is big enough to accommodate the hybrid, 'Polar Bear' is a must-have. For it is simply the best late-flowering hybrid available.

The H6 rating shown above deems the shrub hardy enough to succeed in all but the coldest of UK gardens, but potential purchasers of 'Polar Bear' will need to allocate space sufficient for the 8m-wide spread of a mature specimen. In addition, the chosen site must also offer dappled shade throughout the day and protection from early autumn frosts and strong winds, all of which effectively equate to a woodland locale, which is where the foliage will attain its stated dimensions of 22.5cm in length and 7.5cm in width. Those blades are oblong-elliptic through elliptic in shape, pale green in hue, deeply veined but quite thinly textured, with a prominent abaxial midrib.

Growth is vigorous, especially in west coast gardens with high summer rainfall totals, and the young branchlets can often exceed 0.4m in length as they extend. Yet they still form a sturdy framework. The leaves, however, are only carried for one year, falling shortly after the new growth begins to emerge. Juvenile specimens therefore can often appear somewhat inadequately clothed as a consequence, but the long branch-tip whorls of a mature plant provide more than sufficient attire, especially if the hybrid has developed into a very large shrub rather than a small tree.

'Polar Bear' takes quite a while to set its first flower bud and even longer to begin flowering freely, but the wait for those pure white corollas is more than worthwhile. Tubular-funnel-shaped, each 7-lobed trumpet is 9cm long and more than 11cm across at the mouth of the bell, with eight to ten of them carried in each flat-topped truss. They are also sweetly scented. The extent of any green speckling in the throat varies from clone to clone, but all will have a yellowish-green smudge of colour encircling the ovary, this sometimes shot with reddish-brown streaks on the dorsal lobe. And the wash of bloom across a mastodon-sized specimen will stop onlookers in their tracks, particularly as this encounter will take place in mid July, when of course the rhododendron flowering season will long have been considered over by the majority of garden visitors.

Regrettably, a number of flaws may mar the display:

The first is a ramification of the thinly-walled corollas, which are decidedly flimsy, so brown in hot weather and become badly marked and often crumpled if hit by anything close to heavy rain.

The second is due to the vegetative growth kicking-off at the same time or shortly after the flower buds have begun to expand: so while the crimson leaf bracts may be eye-catching highlights across the sea of white, the newly emerging foliage is a blight.

Equally sullying are the old leaves, yellowing horribly before they drop, but retained throughout most of the floral pageant, this the final detriment.

If those three negatives have somewhat tarnished the hybrid's appeal, mention can be made of the famed 'Polar Bear Walk' at Castle Howard. Now, aged relatives may wrongly assume this to be North Yorkshire's version of the old Mappin Terraces at London Zoo and expect to see psychologically stunted specimens of *Ursus maritimus* endlessly trudging backwards and forwards over the same ground, clearly distressed - trust me, on both counts it happened - but of course, this is the rhododendron equivalent of Benmore's Redwood Avenue or the wide boulevard of Monkey Puzzle trees at Castle Kennedy, albeit on a somewhat smaller scale. A floristic folly that has undergone recent restoration, the uphill walk to the circular reservoir that powers the Atlas Fountain, was indeed spectacular when the double row of 'Polar Bear' were in full flower, and will be again.



R. 'Polar Bear' FCC 1946



R. ‘Polar Bear’ FCC 1946



R. ‘Polar Bear’ FCC 1946

R. ‘Polar Bear’ FCC 1946

R. ‘Polar Bear’ FCC 1946

R. 'Polar Bear' FCC 1946

R. ‘Polar Bear’ FCC 1946

R. ‘Remo’

R. ‘Remo’

R. 'Rima'

R. ‘Rima’

R. ‘Roza Stevenson’
‘Loderi Sir Edmund’ x *wardii*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5-6 Late April-early May 4m x 6m

John Barr and Roza Stevenson were renowned for the exceptional species rhododendron collection they built up in the garden of their home, Tower Court, near Ascot, during the first half of the last century. Having such an array of plants from all across the genus, it would have been impossible for any rhodophile not to have dabbled in match-making, and it was Roza who became the largely unacknowledged expert, evidenced by the listings of her registered introductions above, many of them award winners, which were incorrectly deemed to have been crossed by her husband in publications such as the *IRRC,* with even the Second Edition of that text, published in 2004, continuing such disinformation.

John Barr Stevenson died unexpectedly in 1950 and the resulting financial circumstances forced Roza to sell off nearly the entire species collection, which thankfully, after lobbying by King George VI, was purchased for the realm by the Crown Estate Commissioners and moved to the Valley Gardens in Windsor Great Park, where visitors today - free of charge, no less - can see the now mature shrubs along with a vast range of other woodland plants. In the early 1960s, Roza married Major-General Eric Harrison, another exceptional rhodophile and hybridiser, and she moved to his home, Tremeer, in Cornwall. This explains why the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew, initially named a selection they grew from her ‘Loderi Sir Edmund’ x *wardii* pairing, as ‘Roza Harrison’. This was when it won a First Class Certificate from the RHS in 1968, the year after its honouree’s death, though the epithet was later amended to reflect her surname when the cross was created.

‘Roza Stevenson’ the rhododendron opens flat-topped through globular trusses that hold between ten and twelve saucer-shaped corollas. These are usually 7-lobed and though just 4.5cm long, each can be up to 11.5cm across at the mouth. Their tone is an unblemished lemon-yellow, this deeper within the throat.

Glossy and dark green leaf blades are the perfect foil, oblong-elliptic through narrowly ovate in shape, 12.5cm long by up to 7cm wide. But as they are only held for one year, much of the upright yet well-branched superstructure is on display. The fact that the leaves are also susceptible to chlorosis is equally regrettable. However, a mature plant will usually form a dome, the base wider than the shrub is high, and the whole will be absolutely smothered in bloom from late April onwards.

Hardiness is more than sufficient for the hybrid to be grown in sheltered gardens all the way up the east coast, as the fantastic specimen of ‘Roza Stevenson’ growing at Edinburgh Botanic confirms, though an unseasonal late frost may hit both the flowers and the expanding young growth. But as the full page photographs that follow show, when Jack’s ruinous clutches are avoided, there is probably no finer pale yellow-flowering rhododendron hybrid within the entire genus.



R. ‘Roza Stevenson’ FCC 1968

R. ‘Roza Stevenson’ FCC 1968

R. 'Roza Stevenson' FCC 1968

R. ‘Roza Stevenson’ FCC 1968

R. ‘Roza Stevenson’ FCC 1968

R. ‘Roza Stevenson’ FCC 1968

Photographic Acknowledgements:

Mirroring the earlier volumes in this series, details of where each of the plant portraits was photographed is set out below, along with the website details of those collections visited. Thanks is again extended to each establishment for allowing images taken in a private-use capacity, to be reproduced herein. Gratitude is also due the institutions, organisations and individuals who allowed the portrait photographs of historical and noted figures associated with the genus to appear alongside the text.

Key: AL - above left; AC - above centre; AR - above right; BL - below left; BC - below centre; BR - below right; L - left; R - right.

Arduaine Garden, Oban, Argyll:
https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/arduaine-garden
p. 7.

Benmore Botanic Garden, Argyll:
https://www.rbge.org.uk/visit/benmore-botanic-garden/
p. 261 - L, R; p. 268 - R; p. 312; p. 313 - AR, BC; p. 314; p. 315.

The Crown Estate, Windsor:
https://www.thecrownestate.co.uk/our-business/the-windsor-estate
p. 10 L - Thomas Hope Findlay; p. 15 R - Sir Eric Savill; p. 69 R - Hope Findlay and Sir Eric Savill. Photographed together, and herein, also cropped apart, the creators of the Savill and Valley Gardens were captured in a formal shot likely taken during the late 1960s, shortly before Sir Eric's retirement in 1970, or at Hope's departure a few years later.

Exbury Gardens, Hampshire:
https://www.exbury.co.uk/
p. 5; p. 89; p. 106; p. 107; p. 108; p. 109; p. 125; p. 126 - BL, BR; p. 137; p. 138; p. 139; p. 140; p. 141; p. 142; p. 143; p. 144; p. 145; p. 150; p. 151; p. 153; p. 154; p. 155; p. 156 - L; p. 157; p. 158; p. 159; p. 160; p. 161 - R; p. 162; p. 163; p. 164 - L; p. 165; p. 166; p. 167; p. 168; p. 171; p. 173; p. 174 - BR; p. 178; p. 180; p. 181; p. 182; p. 183; p. 186; p. 187; p. 188; p. 189; p. 190; p. 191; p. 196; p. 199; p. 200; p. 201; p. 202; p. 203 - BL, R; p. 204; p. 205; p. 206 - L, AR, BR; p. 207 - AL, BL, R; p. 208; p. 209; p. 210 - BR; p. 211; p. 212; p. 214; p. 215; p. 216; p. 217; p. 218; p. 219 - R; p. 220; p. 221; p. 222 - L; p. 223; p. 224; p. 225; p. 226; p. 227; p. 228 - AL, BL, R; p. 229; p. 230; p. 231; p. 232; p. 233; p. 338 - AL.

John M. Hammond:
p. 248 BR - part of the remnants of a "Wilson's Fifty" collection at Lingholm, in the English Lake District (May, 1991). Note how these Kurumes are far more open and leggy when grown in partial shade. A second group can be found on the north end of the terrace, these low and compact due to their location in full sun. Photographed by John Hammond and published in the fall 2006 edition of *The Azalean;* p. 250 BR - the long terrace at Tremeer provides an ideal sunny location for the colourful "Stevenson's Collection" of the fifty varieties planted by Roza Stevenson in 1961 (photographed in April 2002). The deep red is 'Hinode-no-kumo', that Roza rated as a better color than Wilson's No. 42, 'Hinodegiri'. John Hammond's photograph *was* published in the fall 2006 edition of *The Azalean*.

Muncaster Castle Gardens, Ravenglass, Cumbria:
https://www.muncaster.co.uk/
p. 23 - AL, AR, BL, BR; p. 24 - AL, AR, BL, BR; p. 25 - R; p. 146; p. 147; p. 148; p. 149; p. 169 - R; p. 170; p. 172; p. 176; p. 177; p. 179; p. 184; p. 185; p. 210 - L; p. 213; p. 265 - AL, BL, BR; p. 266; p. 269; p. 292; p. 293; p. 316; p. 317; p. 318 - BR; p. 319 - L, R; p. 320; p. 321; p. 322; p. 323.

Paul Popper/Popperfoto:
www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/circa-1970s-a-portrait-of-edmund-de-rothschild-decendant-of-news-photo/82138632?adppopup=true
p. 118 L - Edmund de Rothschild.

Public Domain:
p. 152 L - Elizabeth and Edmund de Rothschild, 'ambassadors at large' for N. M. Rothschild & Sons, press photo courtesy of Vintage Press (https://www.amazon.fr/Elizabeth-Edmund-Leopold-Rothschild-Vintage/dp/B07QXM2BBJ); p. 156 BR - David Rockefeller, with Prince Hitachi and Princess Hanako Masahito of Japan, in 1984, photographed by Bernard Gotfryd, courtesy of the Library of Congress Photographic Collection (https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2020729830/); p. 161 BL - Princess Diana visiting Interconnection Systems in South Shields during 1992, courtesy of Newcastle City Libraries (Accession Number 058792).

Ray Wood, Castle Howard, North Yorkshire:
https://www.castlehoward.co.uk/visit-us/the-gardens/the-woodland-garden
p. 36; p. 65; p.100; p. 101; p. 102; p. 103 - L, R; p. 234; p. 235; p. 256 - AL, AR, BL, BR; p. 257 - L, AR, BR; p. 258 - AL, BL, R.

The Rothschild Archive:
https://family.rothschildarchive.org/people/127/portraits
p. 119 BRL - Edmund de Rothschild in later life, the original photo from his autobiography *A Gilt-edged Life: A Memoir,* published by John Murray Ltd in 1998.

Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh:
https://www.rbge.org.uk/visit/royal-botanic-garden-edinburgh/
p. 130; p. 131; p. 132; p. 329; p. 330; p. 331; p. 332; p. 333.

Royal Botanic Garden, Wakehurst Place:
https://www.kew.org/wakehurst
p. 50; p. 338 - AR.

Royal Horticultural Society, Wisley:
https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley
p. 11 - Hope Findlay at work in the Savill Gardens during the 1950s, photograph published online on the RHS website; p. 14 - the Falconeri Series at Tower Court, photographed by R. W. End in May 1952 (*R. falconeri* had been moved from the centre of the bed in March 1951), published in *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1954;* p. 16 AL - a view of the site cleared at Windsor for the Arboreum Series, the photograph, looking south-south-east, was taken by R. W. End in April 1951, published in *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1954;* p. 16 AR - the Arboreum Series in Windsor Great Park on December 3rd, 1951, photographed by R. W. End, published in *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1954;* p. 16 BL - *R. diaprepes* at Tower Court prepared for transport, the root ball measuring 18ft [5.5m] in circumference, photograph taken by R. W. End, published in *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1954;* p. 16 BR - *R. diaprepes* ready to be moved on March 11th, 1953, photographed by R. W. End, published in *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1954;* p. 17 R - *R. floribundum* 'Borde Hill' (left), largest plant in the Arboreum series, 14 ft. x 12 ft., loaded on a trailer with *R. argyrophyllum* (right), 12 ft. by 11ft., on October 17th, 1951, photograph taken by R. W. End, published in *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1954;* p. 18 AL - *R. diaprepes* being eased into its new home in Windsor Great Park, photograph by R. W. End, published in *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1954;* p. 21 BL - self-sown seedlings of *R. sinogrande* at Inverewe Gardens, photographed by Hope Findlay and published in *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1956;* p. 21 BR - the method of pruning R. saluenense, photograph taken by J. E. Downward and published in *The Rhododendron and Camellia Year Book 1959;* p. 28 - L, R; p. 29 - AL, AR, BL; p. 30; p. 31; p. 37 - R; p. 38; p. 39; p. 93 - AL, BL, R; p. 175; p. 198 - AL, BL, R; p. 238 R - Roza Stevenson, photograph taken by Pearl Freeman and published in *The Rhododendron And Camellia Year Book 1968;* p. 239 BL - an avenue of *R. decorum* ssp. *diaprepes* and *Nyssa sylvatica* at Tower Court, the photograph was taken by R. W. End, and published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1948;* p. 240 L - John Barr Stevenson, V.M.H., photograph published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1950;* p. 240 R - Evergreen Azaleas at Tower Court in 1948, photograph taken by N. K. Gould and published as the frontispiece of *The Rhododendron Year Book 1948;* p. 242 AR - *R. forrestii* var. f*orrestii* Repens Group (Forrest 699), photograph taken by P. M. Synge and published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1951-52;* p. 242 BR - *R. forrestii* var. *chamaethomsonii* (Kingdon-Ward 6935) photograph taken by P. M. Synge and published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1951-52;* p. 243 - *R. forrestii* var *forrestii* Repens Group (KW 6832), photographed by J. E. Downward and published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1951-52;* p. 244 R - *R. fortunei* ssp. *discolor* at Tower Court in 1948, photograph taken by R. W. End, published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1948;* p. 245 L - R. 'Penjerrick' at Tower Court in 1948, photograph taken by R. W. End, published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1948;* p. 245 R - R. 'Amor' at Tower Court in 1948, photograph taken by R. W. End, published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1948;* p. 246 - *R. hyperythrum* at Tower Court in 1948, photograph taken by N. K. Gould, published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1948;* p. 255 - AR, BR; p. 270 - L, BR; p. 275; p. 276; p. 277; p. 278; p. 279; p. 283; p. 338 - BL.

Savill Garden, Windsor Great Park:
https://www.windsorgreatpark.co.uk/en/experiences/the-savill-garden
p. 26 - AR, BR; p. 29 - BR; p. 35; p. 44; p. 45; p. 53 - AR; p. 60 - L, AR, BR; p. 61; p. 64; p. 68; p. 70; p. 71; p. 82; p. 83; p. 87 - BR; p. 88; p. 98 - L, AR, BR; p. 99; p. 105; p. 110; p. 111; p. 112; p. 113; p. 114; p. 115; p. 192; p. 193; p. 194 - L; p. 195; p. 259 - L, R; p. 260; p. 272; p. 273; p. 274 - BR; p. 280; p. 281; p. 282; p. 284; p. 285; p. 296; p. 297; p. 299; p. 338 - BR.

Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Ampfield, Romsey:
https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/hilliergardens
p. 40 - L; p. 41; p. 87 - AR; p. 127; p. 128; p. 129; p. 133; p. 288; p. 289; p. 290; p. 291 - R; p. 294; p. 295; p. 324; p. 325; p. 326; p. 327; p. 328 - R.

Shutterstock:
https://www.shutterstock.com/editorial/search/edmund-de-rothschild
p. 119 BRR - Edmund de Rothschild, photographed at Exbury by Murray Sanders (ANL) in 1994; p. 120 - Edmund de Rothschild, walking in the gardens at Exbury, photographed by Murray Sanders (ANL) in 1994.

Spitalfields Life:
https://spitalfieldslife.com/2014/01/02/bud-flanagan-in-spitalfields/
p. 147 R - Bud Flanagan at the height of his fame in the 1940s, photograph included in the article *Bud Flanagan In Spitalfields* by the gentle author*,* posted online on January 2nd, 2014.

The Telegraph Online:
https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/4292138/Edmund-de-Rothschild.html
p. 119 AL - Edmund de Rothschild, at his desk in N. M. Rothschild and Son Limited, *c.* 1960.

Valley Gardens, Windsor Great Park:
https://www.windsorgreatpark.co.uk/en/experiences/the-valley-gardens
p. 1; p. 9; p. 18 - visitor map of the Valley Gardens, displayed in the car park on Money Hill, back in 2010; p. 34; p. 40 - BR; p. 42; p. 43; p. 46; p. 47; p. 48 - L; p. 49; p. 51; p. 52; p. 53 - B; p. 54; p. 55; p. 56; p. 57; p. 58 - BL, BR; p. 59; p. 62; p. 66; p. 67; p. 72; p. 73; p. 74 - L; p. 75; p. 76; p. 77; p. 78; p. 79; p. 80; p. 81 - BL; p. 84; p. 85; p. 90; p. 91; p. 92; p. 94; p. 95; p. 96 - BL, AR, BR; p. 97; p. 104; p. 152 - BR; p. 197; p. 265 - AR; p. 298; p. 300; p. 301; p. 304; p. 305; p. 306; p. 307; p. 308 - R; p. 309; p. 310; p. 311.

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About the Author.

Julian Taylor-Whall was born in Lowestoft at the end of November, 1957. He received a grammar school education before embarking on a three-decades-long career with the BBC at Television Centre. During that time he worked on many of the now classic shows made in the production facilities there, the studios at Lime Grove and Elstree, and at the Television Theatre.

He retired early in 2008, moving to a small village in West Cumbria, just outside the Lake District National Park.

His interests include landscape and plant photography, music, film, writing, and of course, the cultivation of rhododendrons. His previous multivolume treatise on that genus can be freely downloaded at:

https://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/publications/books/temperate-rhododendrons.

- above -
Atop Great Gable, a self portrait against cloud.

- back cover images -

R. ‘Cara Mia’	R. ‘Chink’
R. ‘Princess Ida’	R. ‘Galactic’







