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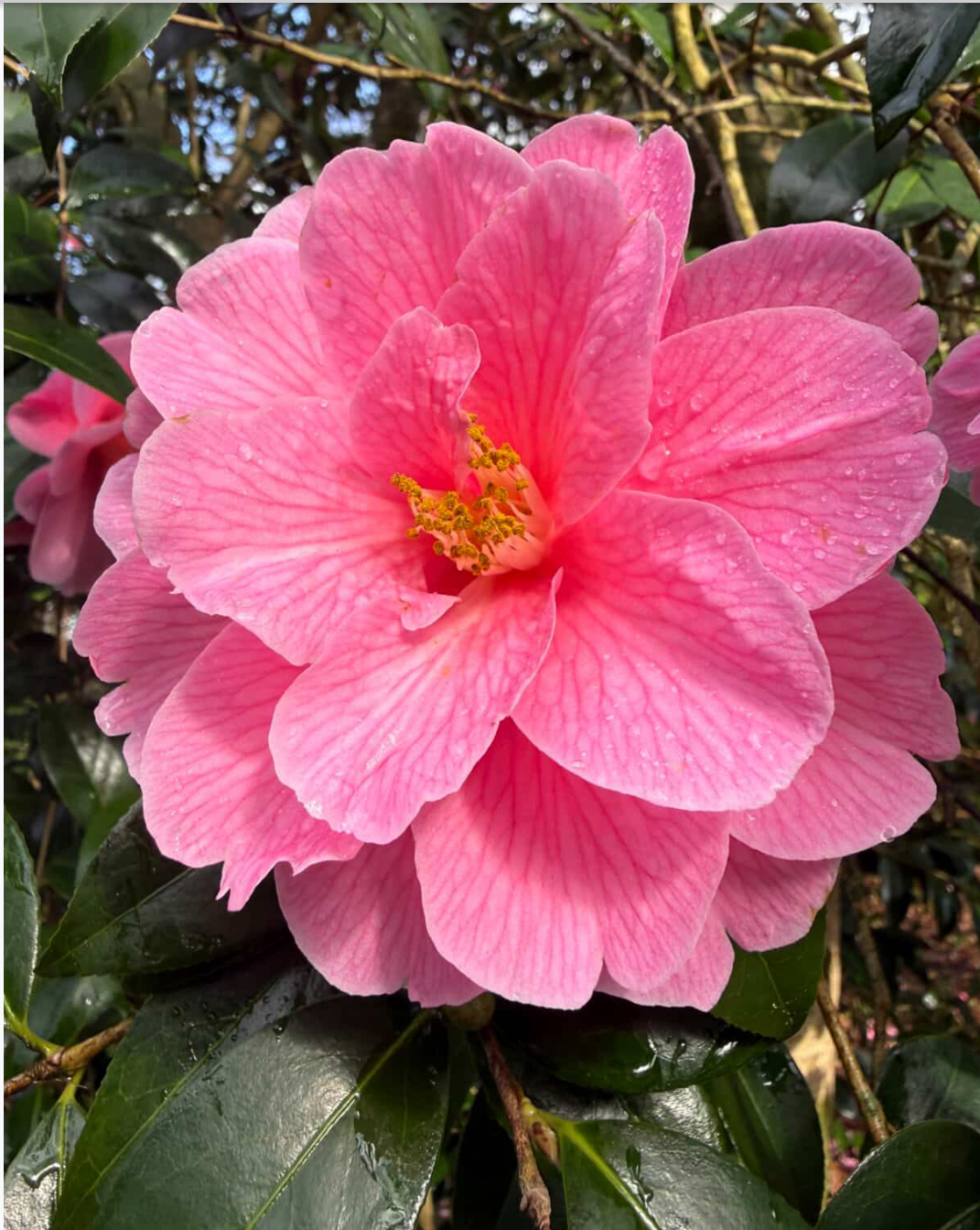
Newsletter

February 2026

Dear Member

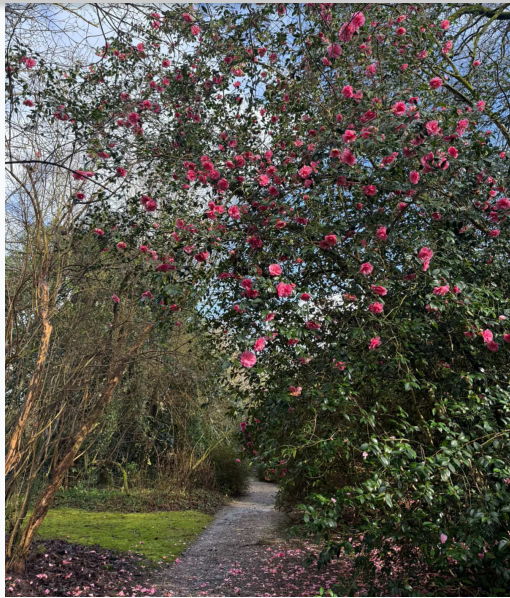
Plant of the Month

***Camellia x williamsii* 'Donation' RHS AGM**



We thank Gary Long, Head Gardener at [Trewithen Gardens](#), Cornwall for this outstanding image and story of the iconic *Camellia x williamsii* 'Donation' RHS AGM. A plant loved and adored around the world. Raised at Borde Hill Garden, Gary shared the story of it on social media.

"Seed collected in China by the great plant hunter George Forrest as part of a five garden syndicate (Caerhays, Lanarth, Werrington, Trengwainton and Trewithen from 1928 - 1932).



Camellia x williamsii 'Donation' RHS AGM celebrates its 85th anniversary

J C Williams VMH, Caerhays gave some of the seed to Colonel Stephenson Clarke VMH at Borde Hill who went on to produce the first of what is now called the ' x williamsii hybrids.

Seedlings were named 'Donation' and a plant was given to George Johnstone in 1941 at Trewithen. We pay tribute to its enduring legacy in camellia cultivation.

Members can [read the article here](#) about C. 'Donation' at Trewithen on page 52 of our 1956 Yearbook. Written by G.H. Johnstone OBE, VMH it includes his account of Charles Raffill's visit (former curator at Kew) and seeing it at its peak.



RHS Early Camellia Competition
South West Branch Early Magnolia Competition

14th/15th March 2026

Schedules and Entry Forms for RHS and Branch Competitions in 2026 are on our [website here](#). Please support your show at RHS Rosemoor on 13th/14th March. The entire RHS Ornamental Plant Show Schedule for 2026 [can be found here](#). The Schedule and Form for the RCMG Centenary Cup will be on our website soon.

***Calling all RHS or LANTRA apprentices
studying for level 2 or 3
horticultural qualifications***

Alongside the RHS Early Camellia Competition to be held at RHS Rosemoor on March 14th, there will be a brand new competition aimed at encouraging horticultural apprentices to enter the world of showing.

The International Camellia Society (UK) Apprentice Plate will be awarded for the best entry of a single camellia bloom exhibited by an apprentice working towards a level 2 or 3 horticultural qualification at any garden, public or private.

For details of entry [please email here](#)

Congratulations to those receiving RHS People Awards

The Group has the privilege of recommending individuals for four prestigious RHS annual awards. The nomination and voting procedure took place last Autumn and the chosen candidates were ratified by the RHS Woody Expert Group. In addition, the Group also makes an award.

Congratulations to all recipients. [You can read more about the work of recipients and why they were nominated by clicking here.](#)

A J Waley Medal - Jamie Harris

The David Trehane Cup - Lorraine Summers

The Loder Rhododendron Cup - David Millais

The Jim Gardiner Cup - John Marston

The Rothschild Challenge Cup - Glendoick Garden Centre and Nursery.



Registration Reminder

Message from the International Rhododendron Registrar Sharon McDonald

As we all eagerly await flowering season, it seems a good time to ask you all to bear registration in mind. Registration is a really useful bedrock for any genus. It provides a permanent record of a plant name and can provide a good description of, and photos of a plant, long after the breeder is gone. It can be a useful tool for identification, which, in turn, can help with the conservation of the cultivated plants of a genus and with finding names for plants within collections and gardens.

A couple of things to be aware of before deciding to register a plant are:

Plants should have had a least two or three flowering seasons, so that you can be sure that the plants are durable, stable and uniform.

Plants should have been propagated vegetatively; a single plant cannot be registered.

Decent, reasonable sized photos are really useful. They make building a description much easier and produce much better prints.

Rhododendron registration is free and a certificate of registration can be provided, also free of charge, if required.

I'm hoping that 2026 will be a bumper year for registrations. I have a number of Ken Cox's registrations (44) still waiting to be processed from last year and have received another 21 registrations, so far, this year. They come from China, Australia and the USA. The first five registrations of 2026 came from the Chongqing Nanshan Botanical Garden and included the very pretty 'Twilight Grace' (above).

I am hoping to get to at least one of the Shows this year and would be happy to discuss registration, including helping with colour charting and descriptions and,

If you are unsure about the registration process or what is needed to register a plant, then do [please contact me here](#).

Registration forms [can be found here](#) or, if you would rather work with a Word document, [then email me](#) and I can send one to you.

Finally, please don't forget that *Camellia* and *Magnolia* also have registrars.

For *Camellia* [the link is here](#) . For *Magnolia* [the link is here](#)

Full notes of 2025 *Rhododendron* registrations will appear in the 2026 Yearbook



A Kingdon Ward 1924 SE Tibet discovery. The plant above was exhibited at the RHS Rosemoor Competition in 2022 from Lawrence and Elizabeth Banks's garden Hergest Croft. Photographed by the late Seamus O'Brien which he described as '*one of the most exciting rhododendrons I have seen this year, like its near relative Rh. barbatum, it has wonderful 'bearded' petioles and attractive, peeling, reddish brown bark. It's rarely seen in gardens and needless to say the Hergest Croft plant won a much deserved award.*'

Contributions in memory of Seamus O' Brien to Trees and Shrubs Online

At a recent RHS Woody Exert Group meeting, which includes members of our Plant Committee, it was suggested that contributions be made to TSO in memory of our late friend and colleague Seamus O'Brien.

We very much support this and any such contributions from RCMG members would be used to support text on the genus *Rhododendron*, given Seamus's love and passion for rhododendrons.

If you wish to donate to this fund, you can make a payment to the International Dendrology Society (charity 1178252)

Account Name: International Dendrology Society

Bank Name CAF Bank Limited

Account Number 00032068

Sort Code 40-52-40

Please use reference **RCMG Seamus**

Alternatively, [you can donate here](#) and make sure to place the reference RCMG Seamus in the comments section.



RHS Recommended: Award of Garden Merit

The longstanding RHS award which has existed since 1922, has been given a new name and logo. Details [can be found here](#) along with the new logo which is available to register for and use.

Celebrating our genera in Art “Seeds of Exchange” Canton and London in the 1700’s 12 Feb - 10 May 2026 Garden Museum, London

Our chairman Philip Eastell visited this wonderful new exhibition at the Garden Museum in London.

You can discover the relationship between John Bradby Blake (1745-1773), an English botanist who worked as a supercargo for the East India Company in the 1770s, his Chinese interlocutor Whang At Tong, and Mak Sau, the botanical artist who Bradby Blake commissioned to document plants native to Canton.

The exhibition explores the exchange of botanical knowledge shared between Canton (now Guangzhou) and London between 1766-1773, displaying a collection of Chinese botanical art and research for the first time in Britain since it was commissioned 235 years ago.

Featuring thirty botanical paintings by the artist Mak Sau together with herbals, maps, models, a portrait of Whang At Tong by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), and watercolours and drawings of Canton from the V&A museum. There are watercolours of Camellia, one of *sinensis* and two of *japonica*.





Bradby Blake worked in Canton in the late 1760s until his death in 1773, during which time he commissioned more than 150 botanical paintings of Chinese plants. In his garden in Canton, he grew local plants such as *Camellia japonica*, and tangerines from seeds and cuttings, documenting and recording information about seed germination and growing conditions, sending seeds and plants to England.

If you are in London or plan to visit, [you can find out more information here.](#)



Thank you for locating plants for Trebah and Stanley Rivlin's family

Over the last couple of months we have asked for your help to locate plants which have been lost.

We thank the many people who contacted us. The lost *Rhododendron* 'Edmondii' at Trebah will be returned (photograph above - thank you Mike White) and the Rivlin family look forward to having a plant again in the name of their father.



A new addition to Worth Park, Sussex and update on Nuccio's Nursery.

***Camellia* 'Nuccio's Cameo' — A modern classic with Californian roots.**

We were all pleased to see photographs a week ago on social media of Tom and Jim Nuccio in their plant filled nursery, keeping the nursery running. Great news from Altadena CA.

Plant Heritage National Collection holder Worth Park has a new addition. *Camellia japonica* 'Nuccio's Cameo' is one of the most admired formal doubles of the late 20th century, introduced and was registered in 1983 by the celebrated Nuccio's Nurseries.

Steve Peters described Nuccio's Cameo as “*serene, sculpted flowers of soft coral-pink, also sometimes described as “shell-pink” or “cameo-pink”, are perfectly layered, and exquisitely symmetrical which has made it a favourite among gardeners, collectors, and show exhibitors across the world*”



Charles Williams VMH takes us through a new German magnolia collection at Caerhays. Filmed a few days ago and a six minute watch. Thank you Charles.

2026 Events for your diary

North West and North Wales Branch

7th March Paul Cook - former curator at RHS Harlow Carr

Planning for the future and preserving historic collections. A talk at Ness Botanic Garden.

6th May Ned Lomax - a tour of Bodnant Garden.

Wessex Branch

6th March Tour of the camellia collection at Nymans NT Garden in Sussex followed by a visit to High Beeches Garden.

18th March Private garden visit - hosts are Mr and Mrs Sampson in Surrey.

South East Branch

18th April Private garden visit **jointly with Wessex Branch** - hosts are Mr and Mrs Wotton in Kent.

6th May Visit to Mark Oddy's garden

20th May Visit to Wakehurst Place

South West Branch

18th March Bickton Gardens, Devon

25th - 27th March Camellia Festival

2nd August Branch Picnic at Upper Gorwell

To book for branch events please contact branch chairs. Details on [our website here](#)

RHS Main Camellia Competition – Wisley 11/12 April
RHS Early Rhododendron Competition – Wisley 11/12 April
RHS Main Spring Ornamental Plant Competition – 11/12 April
RHS Main Rhododendron Competition – Rosemoor 25/26 April
Harlow Carr Rhododendron Competition – Harlow Carr 2/3 May
Autumn Ornamental Plant Competition - Hyde Hall 2/4 October

Branch Competitions

SW Branch Early Magnolia Competition – Rosemoor 14/15 March
SW Branch Ornamental Plants Competition – Rosemoor 14/15 March
SW Branch Rhododendron Competition – Rosemoor 14/15 March
NW & N Wales Branch Show – Ness Botanic Gardens 18 April
SW Branch Camellia Competition – Rosemoor 25/26 April
SW Branch Main Magnolia Competition – Rosemoor 25/26 April
SW Branch Floral Display Competition – Rosemoor 25/26 April
Wessex Branch Flower Show – Leonardslee 9 May

Group Competitions

Centenary Cup Competition – Sir Harold Hiller Gardens, Romsey 30/31 May

For information and show schedules please [email here](#)

Sandling Park, Kent Open Garden 9th May 10.00 - 16.00

Members may wish to visit Sandling Park, Kent in May for its Open Garden in aid of Pilgrim Hospice. [Details can be found here.](#)

Message from our Bulletin, Newsletter and Yearbook Editors

Please contact us to with your copy for **Bulletin 150** by 23rd March. Publication is in May. We rely on your copy to publish and do not want to delay publication. The Bulletin Editor and team welcome and encourage member input of 300 - 400 word articles and images - [please send them here.](#)

Our **2026 Yearbook** will be published in June.

The 2027 Yearbook is in planning stage by the Editor and we have a new Expert Advisory Group in place for the Yearbook enabling a forward look to 2028. Please send your [ideas for articles here.](#)

Our March Newsletter will be published 27th March.





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