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Newsletter

June 2026

Dear Member

Welcome to the June Newsletter with news about our Centenary Cup and upcoming events. Thank you for sending in your news items. You will find it more enjoyable to read it in your browser and click on the 'read more' button if reading on your mobile phone.

Plant of the Month

Winner of The Centenary Cup 2026 - *Rhododendron viscosum*

Our plant of the month is *Rhododendron viscosum* RHS Recommended: Award of Garden Merit 1993 and winner of the Centenary Cup, brought to the competition by David Millais.

Congratulations to all the exhibitors for the 107 exhibits on a warm day at [Sir Harold Hillier Gardens](#). A full list of all the winners [can be found at the link here](#).

Congratulations to all the winners of classes and of course to David Millais. The scent of all the deciduous azaleas filled the room for members and guests to enjoy and the judges remarked on the number and high quality of exhibits. We were especially pleased to see Camellia exhibits as it had been exceptionally warm and dry in previous weeks.



Left to right David Millais, Jim Gardiner
VMH and Roy Lancaster VMH



Rhododendron viscosum RHS AGM
1993 H6. A scented, late flowering
deciduous azalea, native to E & S
USA.



Best in Class Camellia - Centenary Cup 2026.
Camellia japonica 'Eximia' RSH Garden Wisley

RCMG Centenary Cup 2026

Our thanks to Fran Clifton, Head Gardener and the team at SHHG for a superb event. We also thank our judges Jim Gardiner VMH and Roy Lancaster VMH, our steward Dave West, Robbie and Barbara Sampson for their support and the New Forest Branch members who supported the day.

Members were taken around the garden in the afternoon by Fran and the following day we visited Exbury and Lepe. A great weekend of plants, people and places.



Many thanks to Tom Clarke Head Gardener at [Exbury Gardens](#) and Emma Page owner, [Lepe Estate and Gardens](#) for their hospitality during the weekend.



Magnolia ashei Exbury Gardens



A rhododendron auriculatum hybrid Lepe Estate and Gardens

Extreme Heat in Europe

collections. The below image was taken yesterday 26th June from the interactive [Met Office website](#). It has been a week of temperature records and a reminder to us all of the conservation/ climate imperatives for our living collections.



RCMG Chairman's Award 2026

Miranda Gunn

The Chairman's Award has been given to Miranda Gunn, many congratulations and our thanks to Miranda for her years of contribution to the RCMG.

The Chairman's Award is given each year to a member for service and support to the RCMG.

Miranda's family first moved to Ramster Gardens in 1922. When the property was bought by Sir Henry and Lady Norman, Miranda's grandmother, Lady Norman was the daughter of Lord and Lady Aberconway and granddaughter of Henry Pochin, who started the famous gardens at Bodnant in 1875.

A very keen horticulturist like her mother and grandfather, Lady Norman greatly added to the garden at Ramster Hall, introducing many of the Rhododendrons and Azaleas for which it is famous today.

Miranda has been related to the Group since the 1970's. John Bond, Keeper of the Gardens at Windsor became a trusted friend and together they organised the Group Collection of Hardy Hybrids at the garden.

In 1997 Miranda took over as Chair of the Wessex Branch from Lady Adam Gordon and has continues being a committee member for over 40 years, hosting many events and shows at Ramster. Philip Eastell said at the AGM *'This award is well deserved and we extend our thanks to Miranda for all her years of support which she continues to give to the RCMG'*.



Miranda Gunn, Ramster Gardens pictured with Dr Hartwig Schepker Scientific Director of the Rhododendronpark Bremen at a Group visit in 2023

Rosemary Legrand retires as New Forest Branch Chair.

RCMG New Forest Branch committee members waved goodbye to their retiring chairman of nine years Rosemary Legrand at their summer meeting held at Exbury Gardens.

A botanical print of *Magnolia* 'Esther' painted for Lawrence Banks granddaughter of the same name by botanical artist Christine Battle was presented by incoming chairman Tom Clarke, Head Gardener at Exbury Gardens.

Commenting on her tireless work for the Group over the last nine years, Tom remarked on the large shoes he had to fill and together with the committee thanked Rosemary for her many years at the helm. Rosemary took over as New Forest chairman from Jennifer Trehane VMH in 2017.



New Social Media Coordinator for the RCMG - Chloe Knight

We are thrilled to introduce Chloe Knight as our new social media coordinator/ editor for the RCMG. Our thanks to Chloe who will be managing our Facebook and Instagram communications, producing reels and short digital films for our members and for our You Tube channel and this digital newsletter.

You can [contact Chloe here](#) if you have any ideas for content and questions.

Chloe currently works as a Horticulturist on the Herbaceous team at RHS Garden Wisley. Chloe previously studied with the Professional Gardeners Guild achieving Distinction grade in her diploma and undertook the RHS level 3 Diploma whilst working at Yeo Valley Organic Gardens.



RCMG website - Plant Directory

The Plant Directory on our website has had a major update. Rhododendron plants are now defined by seven factors. RHS Recommended AGM, hardiness, eventual height, flower colour, flowering season, scent and interesting foliage. This means that you can search for rhododendrons by one or any combinations of these characteristics. For example a rhododendron plant with an RHS Recommended AGM, with red flowers and interesting foliage. [That search will reveal nine plants.](#)

New Forest Branch visit to the garden of Martin and Margaret Gates

On 7th May, members of the Group visited the garden created by Martin Gates and his wife Margaret. Martin served as an officer of the Branch for over 30 years as well as being a Group Officer as Treasurer. He took a leading role in volunteering to care for and cultivate the rhododendron collection at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens (see RCMG Bulletin 146). Martin died in November 2025 and Margaret invited us to tea to enjoy the beautiful plantsman's garden he created over many years.



New Zealand Rhododendron Association - Rhodenza 2026

Rhodenza 2026 takes place in Canterbury NZ 29th October - 1st November. Details, booking [and list of speakers can be found here](#). John Anderson VMM, Keeper of the Gardens at Windsor is the International special guest.

'Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh - Atlas of Botany

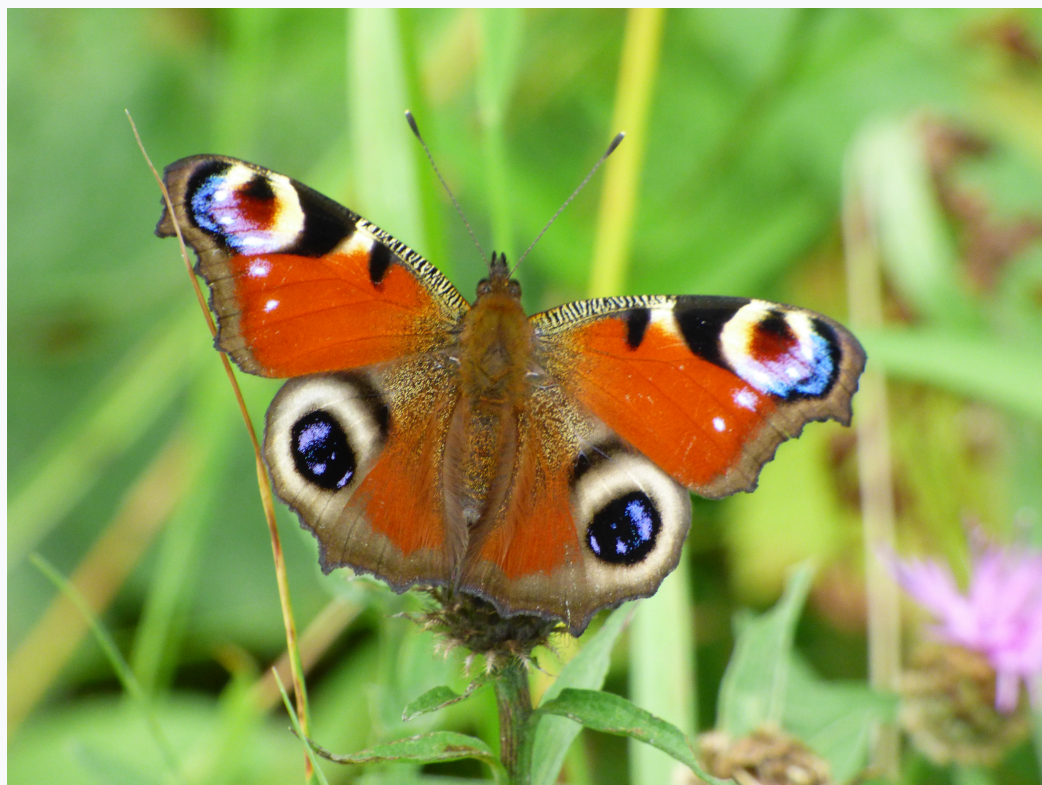
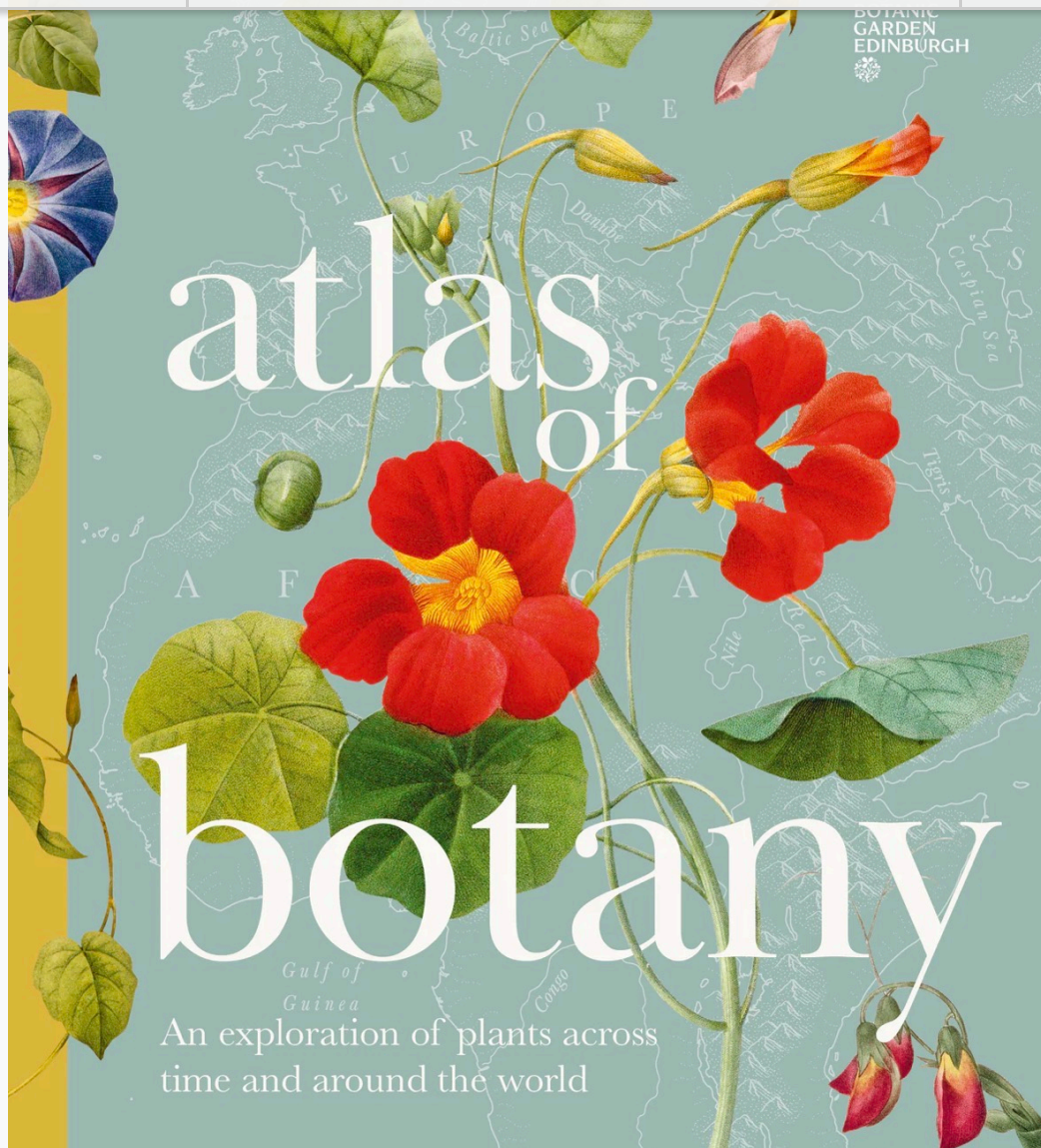
This month a new and beautifully illustrated botanical book by the RBGE with DK exploring how plants have evolved, spread and adapted across the world.

RCMG members provided photographic images for this publication. The Carl Linnaeus quote 'All plants show an affinity with those around them, according to their geographical location' invites us to explore plants from this perspective.

Five rhododendrons are described: *Rh. groenlandicum* of Boreal Forests, subarctic America and native to Greenland, *Rh. ferrugineum* the alpenrose found in the ericaceous shrublands of the European Alps, *Rh. arboreum* for altitudinal adaption in the low mountains, *Rh ponticum* hybrid of urban areas of which the species is native to Iberian coast and Black Sea, *Rh himantodes* accompanied by a beautiful image, found in the Borneo cloud forest habitat and in protected areas.

Magnolia sprengeri also features in the low mountains section.

[Details can be found on the RBGE website.](#)



The Big Butterfly Count 17th July - 9th August

Kent. The charismatic butterfly the Duke of Burgundy's story can be found here.

RHS Director of Gardens and Horticulture - Dr Tim Upson

Following the news that, after 40 years of being a professional horticulturist and being in the Director role since 2014, Dr Tim Upson will be stepping down from his role, we would like to send a message of personal thanks.

On behalf of Philip Eastell our chairman, we would like to thank Tim for all of his support to us, his thoughtful insight and help to us whether that be around the shows, plants, conservation and generally being a supporter of the Group. We wish Tim well for the future and plan to recognise and celebrate this personal milestone with him in due course.

Events for your diary

South West Branch - 2nd August Branch Picnic at Upper Gorwell

More Branch events for the rest of the year will appear in our July Newsletter. To book for branch events please contact branch chairs. Details on [our website here](#)

RCMG Bulletin Editor

We send another request to members for a volunteer for this editor support. We will offer help and guidance if you are new to writing copy and editing. At the moment we have no one to carry forward this element of our activity.

Contributions for our Monthly Newsletter

Our newsletter provides news and communicates updates on our work in a timely manner for members. Thank you for your positive feedback about it. Please send [your contributions for July here](#)



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