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Newsletter

May 2026

Dear Member

Welcome to the May Newsletter. It has news about RHS shows and medals awarded to our members. We congratulate them all .

We also include news of 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

Rhododendron 'Goldlack'

Our plant of the month was seen two weeks ago by members at the Rhododendron Park and Botanic Garden, Bremen.

Ireland and Wessex members visited Bremen and Ammerland in West Germany. We thank Dr Hartwig Schepker and Martin Monthofer for a fantastic rhododendron filled day seeing the largest collection of rhododendrons and azaleas world wide.

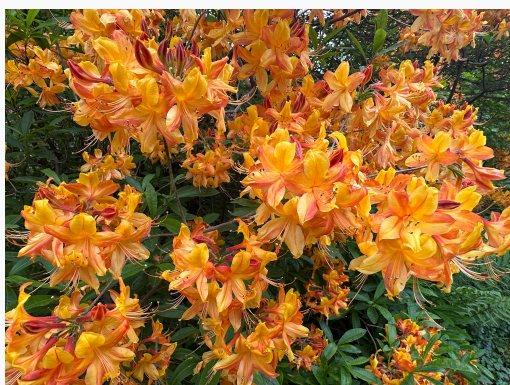


This deciduous azalea was one of the very last of the old hardy Ghent azaleas introduced. It was raised by Hermann Albrecht Hesse in 1900, one of the pioneers of hybridisation of the Ghent azaleas. Hesse (1852 -1937) founded the H.A. Hesse tree nursery in 1879 in Weener on the River Ems, North Germany.

This area of West Germany has a rich history of German plant and tree breeders. Hesse took seed from the great plant hunters Wilson and Forrest.

More information about the nursery and an image of a catalogue is at the end of this newsletter.

Parentage is unknown. The large trusses are golden orange, with dark brown markings and sweetly scented. The name Goldlack is translated as gold lacquer in English. A beautiful plant living up to its name.



***Rhododendron* 'Goldlack' at the Rhododendron Park, Bremen**

Details of upcoming competitions and RHS Shows

RCMG Centenary Cup - 30th - 31st May

Sir Harold Hillier Gardens. [Details are here.](#)

Sandringham Estate, Norfolk. [Details are here.](#) An opportunity to visit the garden of our Patron, His Majesty King Charles III. [Read here about the plants his Head Gardener Jack Lindfield couldn't be without.](#)

RHS Autumn Ornamental Plant Competition 2nd - 4th October

RHS Hyde Hall, Essex. [Details and entry form are here.](#)



RCMG Visit to Wentworth Castle Gardens and AGM

Members attended an excellent day at Wentworth Castle Gardens National Trust to see the gardens, including the National Collections of *Rhododendron* spp (reference), *Magnolia* spp (horticultural) and *Camellia x williamsii* (reference) as well as the renovated historic glasshouse.

members from Nottingham and the Southeast of England.

The AGM took place earlier in the day and the minutes will be placed on our website. Those officers who stood for re election were elected and Lucy Bidgood was officially elected as our Plant Coordinator. Thank you to all those who supported these elections.

We thank all our volunteers - in branches, as officers and as trustees for all your support. A call was made again by our Chairman Philip, for an Editor for our Bulletin.



Wentworth Castle Gardens, North Yorkshire



Botanical Art & Photography Show

Botanical art and photography from around the world will be presented at the Saatchi Gallery, London this summer. Staged across three galleries, the best in contemporary botanical art and photography is presented by exhibitors from across the world.

that emerge after wildfires in northwest England, to the colourful mushrooms that grow in Japan- fungi seen growing on woodland walks in Cornwall, to the abundant wildflowers of protected nature reserves of Jeju island off the coast of Korea and the endangered endemic limestone fynbos found only in South Africa's Grootbos, to the knotty roots of well - loved plants in our gardens at home, there is an abundance of illustration and photography to intrigue and delight.

The exhibition will include artwork and photography of our genera and is free to members of the RHS and Saatchi Gallery. [Details can be found here.](#)



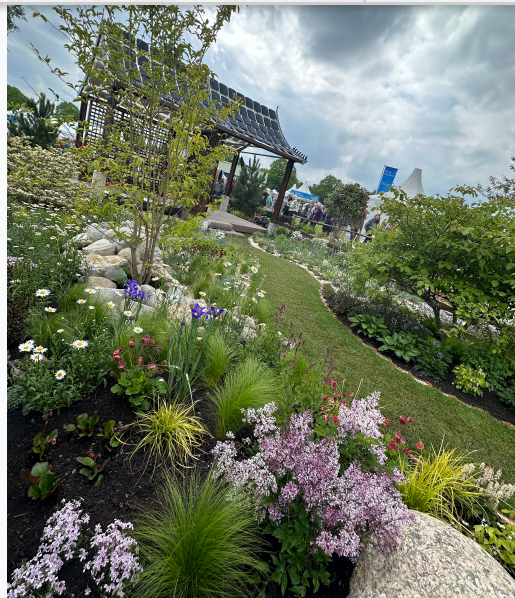
Chollipo Arboretum Show Garden at the Malvern Spring Show

The Blessings from the Sea

In honour of Carl Ferris Miller, founder of the arboretum, Sun Kyung Jung, Keehyeok Kang and Jaeheon Kim designed this Show Garden at the Malvern Spring Show.. It secured best_construction of the show for the design and construction of the Korean inspired and fully sustainable pavilion - a traditional hanok.

The garden and pavilion will be going to the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens in Hampshire, continuing the longstanding relationship between Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Carl Ferris Miller and the Chollipo Arboretum. Read more [about the garden and pavilion here.](#)

Chollipo has an outstanding collection of magnolia and camellia as well as many woody plants and trees which were featured in their Show Garden. Our collaboration as a Group with them is highly valued.



Chelsea Medal Winners

Congratulations to our members who secured medals at RHS Chelsea this month.

Burncoose Nurseries, Cornwall secured a gold medal for a glorious and extensive display of woody plants and trees including some rhododendrons. In their 42nd year it was their 29th gold medal. Called Over The Garden Hedge it took inspiration from a traditional Cornish hedge. Charles Williams VMH owner of the nursery said, "We wanted to demonstrate gardens are a wonderful place to create microclimates and spaces that support diversity, both from an ecological and sociological perspective; think of the hedge, not as a barrier, but as a point of connection."

Miles Hayward owner of Miles Japanese Maples based in West Sussex also secured a gold medal for a Lindley educational display about growing Acer trees from seed alongside a display of trees he had grown in the nursery. Miles grows grafted and seed grown trees and is Vice Chair of The Maple Society of Britain and Ireland. After a very busy week being interviewed many times by the BBC, Miles said "Thank you so much to everyone who came over to say hello, bought seeds, plants or just wanted some advice - your support means a lot to a small grower like me"

We also congratulate Jeremy Wilson, Street Gate Camellias who was awarded silver gilt. Many congratulations to all.



Rh 'Goldlack' and the catalogues of Herm.A.Hesse Baumschule.



Herm.A.Hesse Baumschule 1905/6 Front Cover - Reference Internet Archive

Our plant of the month *Rhododendron* 'Goldlack' appeared in the Hesse catalogues from 1905/6.

In the 1908 edition, Hermann Albrecht Hesse said of the plant " *this beautiful azalea was introduced to the market by me in 1900. The shrub is vigorously growing, with narrow dark green foliage. The blossoms are magnificently shimmering, orange with dark brown spots. The flower heads are very large and so numerous that the shrub appears literally covered in blossoms* '.

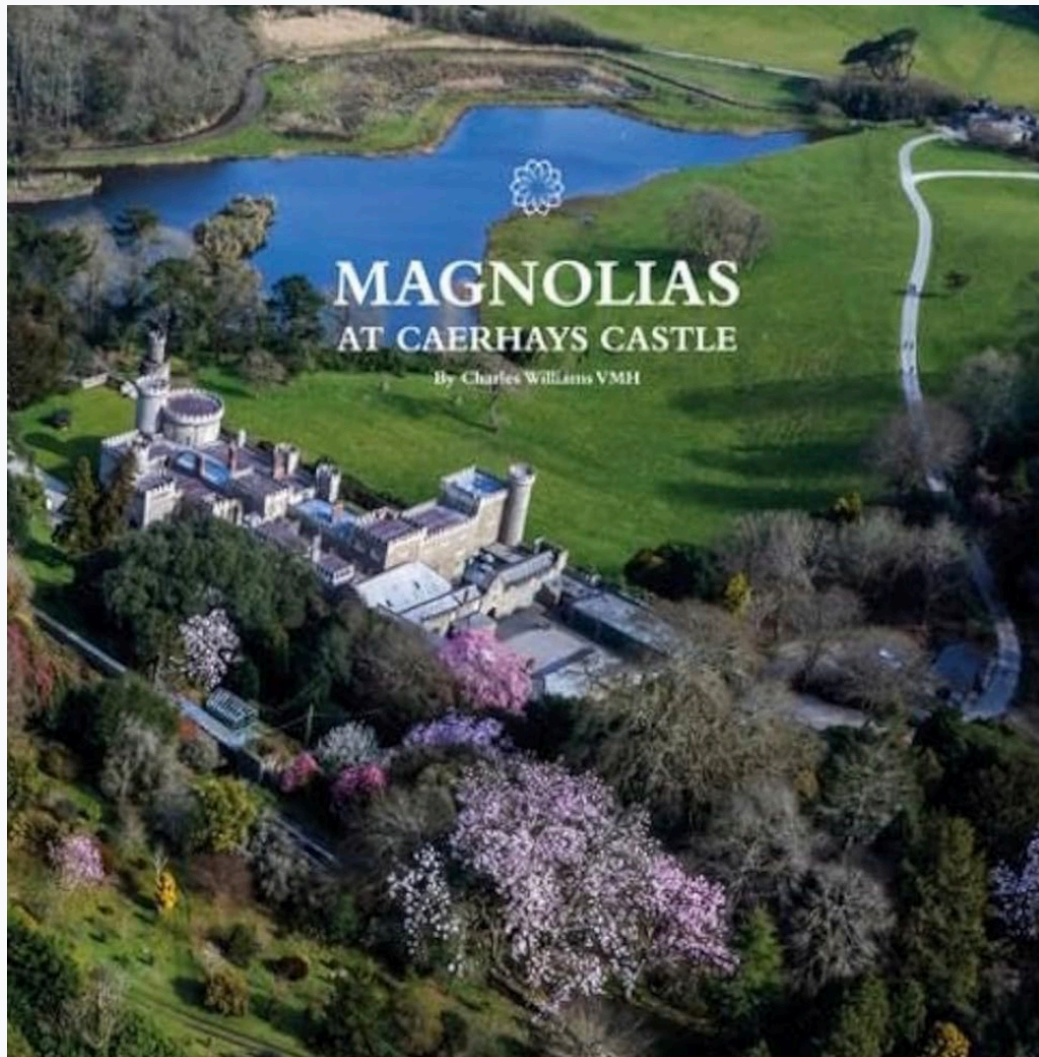
This is so true of the plant we saw in the Park at Bremen. You can see this entry in [the 1908 catalogue here](#).

As well as the two entries in 1905, and then in 1908 the plant also appeared in the 1913, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1937/8, 1949/50 catalogues and the last one has

Hesse was selling trees and plants throughout WWI. In 1919 he was succeeded by his nephew Otto and Hesse remained active in the nursery world.

Members can read about the azalea hybrid cultivation story in the book *The Rhododendron Story* on [our website here](#).

Grateful thanks to the archive work of our members for this research and especially Dr Francesca Murray and Dr Hartwig Schepker for bringing more about this fantastic plant, breeder and nursery to our attention which seemed a favourite of the nursery and certainly was a stand out of our trip.



Magnolias at Caerhays Castle

We know that many members are enjoying the outstanding and landmark book by Charles Williams VMH.

Published in March it includes the history of magnolia cultivation at Caerhays as well as more recent introductions. A unique high quality publication, it has over 1000 beautiful photographs across 480 pages including Ariel images, showing the trees in this historic setting.

A once in a generation publication of a genus which we all love.

We thank Charles very much for bringing it into our homes and a valuable addition to our collection. We also thank Jim Gardiner VMH for his informative and enjoyable foreword to it.

and Eisenhut as the images are much bigger and it is in English, as well of course the older publication by Jim Gardiner VMH. One for the birthday or Xmas list.

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 June Newsletter.

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

Contributions to 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 June here](#)



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Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group · Tregoning Mill · St. Keverne · Helston, Cornwall TR12 6QE · United Kingdom