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Newsletter

October 2025

Dear Member

Plants of the month - Autumn flowering camellia

We start this month by celebrating wonderful autumn flowering camellia. Most are sasanquas originating in Japan which provide impact, versatility, beautiful flowers and scent during the autumn/fall season. They are becoming increasingly popular with many new varieties available. We have been sent these stunning photographs by our member Gianmario Motto.

Plant more of them and you won't be disappointed.



cultivars of autumn and winter flowering camellias at Villa Motto, Lake Orta. Villa Motto is an International Camellia Society Garden of Excellence. Above is *Camellia hiemalis* or *sasanqua* 'Maiden's Blush' a single small flower. An old Japanese cultivar imported to Alabama USA in 1909. Registered in 1933 and rated as good for overall satisfaction in the 2015 ICS survey of autumn flowering camellia.



Camellia Award of Garden Merit

The RHS AGM Camellia list was published recently by the International Camellia Society with a total of 104 Camellias having an AGM.

One of the new plants listed was autumn flowering *Camellia sasanqua* 'Plantation Pink' AGM (photograph above) It is a large single pink which was given an AGM at the most recent round table review in 2022.

The full RHS Ornamental Plants AGM list from 2024 can be found [here](#).

Bred in Australia by EG Waterhouse in 1948 it has dark shiny leaves similar to japonica, large flowers and is very floriferous.



Gianmario Motto's photograph of *Camellia sasanqua* 'Gay Sue' AGM 2022 shows perfectly its cream colour and white double to semi double form.

It was bred in New Zealand by T Lennard in 1981.

We highly recommend to members The International Camellia Society's first and unique publication on these plants 'Splendid Sasanqua an International Ornament' as a valuable reference [to purchase from their website.](#)

Plant Propagation Working Group





Visit to Architectural Plants

On Wednesday the 15th October, the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Plant Propagation Working Group met for the first time – led by Mark Bobin, the group members are Phillip Eastell, David Millais, Lucy Bidgood, Jim Gardiner, Andy Fly, Steve Peters and Chris Loder.

Members gathered at Architectural Plants in West Sussex who were kind enough to both host our meeting and give us a guided tour around their propagation facilities. Guy Watts, owner and managing director greeted the group and gave an overview of what they all do at the nursery, which is extensive covering 32 acres and home to 40,000 trees and plants. Even the driveway is lined with huge planters with dramatic effect and architectural brilliance. The team at the nursery are all dedicated to providing plants of all shapes and sizes that would transform any garden, but also with a focus on propagating new varieties.

Special thanks to Alex and Ieuan for the tour round the different propagation areas. It was very interesting to see their fog tunnel, double layered and with high temperature that was home to many different cuttings of woody plants including the *Musa* banana plant, *Pseudopanax chatamica* and *Nerium olender*. Then on to the micropropagation lab. Here we were treated to view the lab and talk about the process.

The team at Architectural plants are exploring different methods to get the perfect combination and with time, will get the results. As with traditional propagation methods, different types of plants require tweaks in the method to achieve the most successful results.



David Millais and Mark Bobin all dressed up for propagation - [captions please here !](#)

Working Group Discussions and Actions

The propagation group sat down separately for our meeting and talked rhododendron, camellia and magnolia propagation. Many ideas and objectives were discussed that will bring the group forward:

- Education for RCMG members to propagate their collection
- Specific groups of plants to prioritise propagation by micropropagation
- Working towards identifying categories that meet The Group's range of interest

- Share propagation techniques and build a stronger propagation network
- Setting up new collections.

Thank you to Architectural Plants and all of the RCMG Plant Propagation Working Group for making this such an inspiring and productive first meeting.

To find out more about the work of our plant propagation working group and plant committee [contact us here](#)



The New Zealand Rhododendron Association Rhodenza 2025 Cambridge NZ 31st October - 3rd November

We wish our New Zealand members and colleagues well for Rhodenza 2025 this weekend based at Cambridge. Chris Hughes, President of the NZRA welcomes registrants today. The tour includes the internationally renowned Hamilton Gardens, many local Cambridge gardens including the Murdochs and Peter Millais's garden - photograph above and a visit to the stunning Maungatautari Mountain - photograph below. It finishes at the 'Takapoto Esate' on the banks of the Waikato River. We look forward to seeing the photographs.

Rhodenza 2026 is between 29th October - 1st November in Christchurch.



**The Plant Hunters - A lecture by Seamus O'Brien
'Captain Frank Kingdon Ward: Explorer and Plant Hunter'**



Since 1997 Seamus has been exploring routes in China, the Himalayas and Myanmar visited by Frank Kingdon Ward during his expeditionary lifetime between 1909 and 1956.

On November 12th at 19.30 he is delivering this lecture at the Royal Geographical Society building South Kensington. Seamus is chair of our Ireland Branch.

The lecture has been organised by The Tree Register and is open to all.

The Royal Geographical Society will also have an exhibition of items that once belonged to explorers like Joseph Dalton Hooker and Frank Kingdon Ward on display.



Autumn/Winter International Dendrology Society Webinar Series

The annual series of Zoom Webinars by the IDS has begun and will run fortnightly, on Wednesday evenings at 18:00 hrs GMT over Autumn /Winter months 2025- 2026. Members and Guests are invited to join the presentations live. Whilst no charge is made for the webinar we ask that you use the donate button on the IDS website to make a donation for it.

links to [booking can be found here.](#)

A recording will be available on the IDS website for a short period following. Some of our members are speaking at these webinars and upcoming highlights are:

The Genus Fagus in The Wild and Collections: Phillipe de Spoelberch 26th Nov

Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh: Lucy Bidgood and Andy Jackson 10th Dec -
Photograph above with thanks

Rhododendrons for Alkaline: David Rankin and Dr John Grimshaw 7th Jan

How do I donate seed to the RGMG ?

Many thanks to those of you from the UK sending in seed to Plant Heritage. They and we are very appreciative.

If you are collecting seed this Autumn and wish to donate it, please label each packet with the common and botanical (latin) name of the seed, the year of collection and where it was collected (eg in your garden). Include your name and address when you send it and post your seed to **Plant Heritage, First Floor Offices, Stone Pine, Wisley Lane, Wisley, Woking GU23 6QD, Surrey. Please only send seed from the UK. Seed collected in 2025 will be available until Spring 2027.**

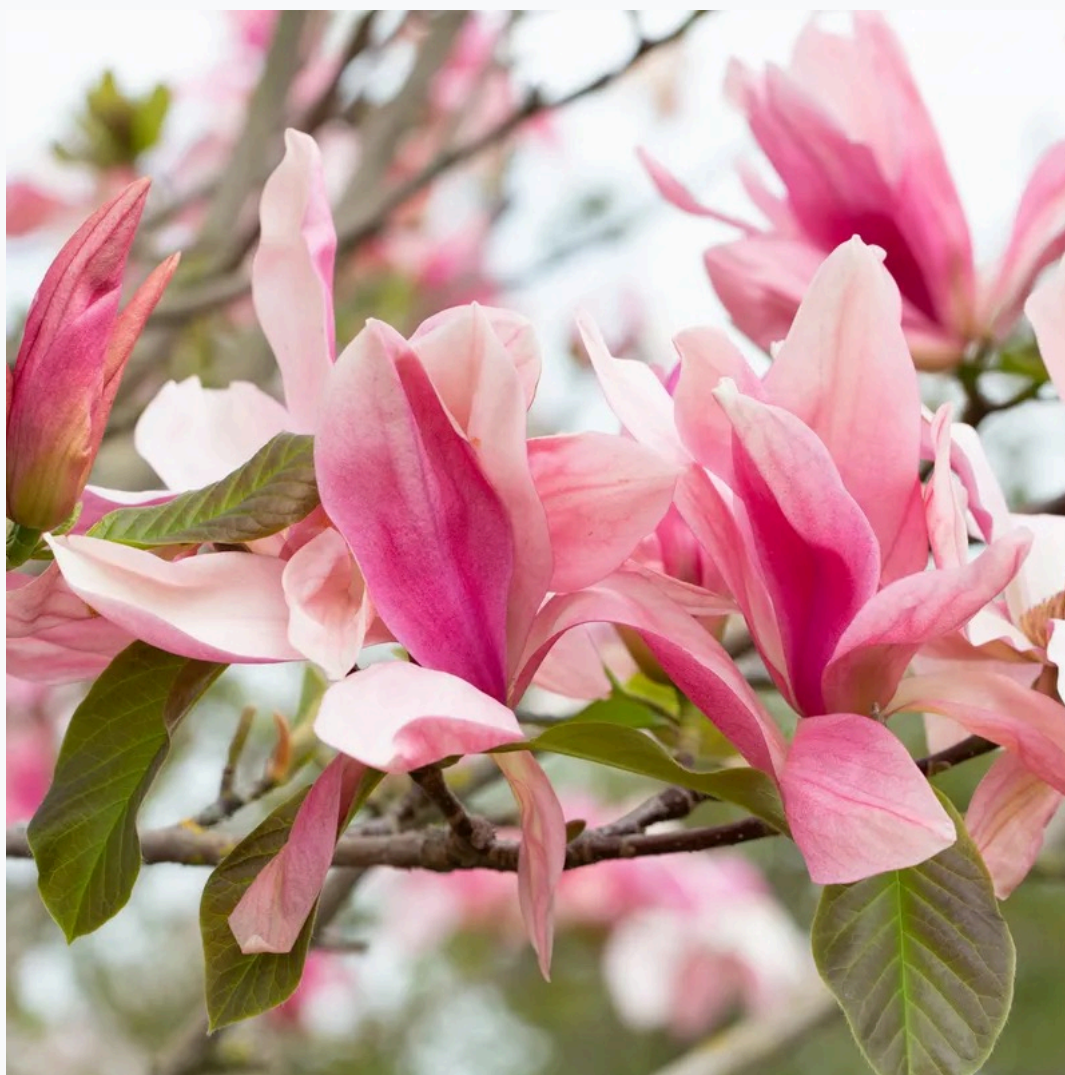
collected from the wild and state that the seed may have been open pollinated and so it may not be true to type. For more information on legislation and the Nagoya Protocol see [the legislation page](#)

How can I access seed from the Seed Shop?

Next year we will notify members of how they can access seeds at in person events in return for a donation to Plant Heritage. This will be at RHS Shows and we will consider extending this to branch/ regional seed events if there is enough seed, a demand and support from RCMG volunteers.

Last February RHS Wisley held a successful seed exchange event (normal garden entry requirements applied) and we will notify members of this event when it is broadcast for 2026.

Posting of seeds to members is no longer possible and the seed shop is aimed at UK members to comply with legislation.



Magnolia 'Daybreak' AGM. *M. brooklynensis* 'Woodsman' x *M. 'Tina Durio'*

A new AGM at the last RHS review of magnolia, described by Maurice Foster VMH in our 2013 Yearbook as 'the most startling bright pink with a suggestion of orange'.

Raised by August Kehr, NC, USA. Registered in 1991. Thank you to Frank P Mathews Nursery for the photograph.

This month we had an engagement meeting with the RHS team who support the Woody Expert Group. We discussed AGM reviews, exchanges of information and our mutual aims.

This is a partnership we will build on and the next meeting of our plant committee will discuss these matters. if you have questions for our plant committee [please contact us here](#)

New Edition of RHS Plant Finder published

The new edition of The RHS Plant Finder was published this month. This is Britain's best plant directory and in this edition over 1,200 plants of the 64,000 in it are new. AGM's from recent reviews of our genera are included. Thank you to all the UK specialist nurseries and suppliers who contributed to it and using it is the best way we can support our specialist nurseries.

2027 RCMG Yearbook

Thank you to Pam Hayward and the team who have produced the 2025 Yearbook. Many of us have received this and for the rest it is in the post.

The communications team agreed content for the 2026 Yearbook recently and this will be in production from next month.

We now ask for applications for content for our 2027 Yearbook. Please send your ideas - even if you cannot write these yourself tell us what you would like to see.

[Send the ideas you have here.](#)

This gives an opportunity for a year of planning and production to take into account the season changes across the world and the photographs we need.

November Branch Activity - Four historic locations

New Forest Branch 15th November at Sir Harold Hillier Gardens

Tom Clarke Head Gardener at Exbury Gardens will give a talk 'Exbury -The First 100 Years' The challenges of managing a historic woodland garden in an ever changing climate. Contact [Emma Page here](#)

Wessex Branch 27th November at Ramster Gardens and Hall

A Japan themed day of talks on our genera, maples, propagation, The Story of Trees from Japan and insights from a recent trip to Japan by Dave West and Kevin Hobbs. Opportunity to walk around the garden. A talk by our member Miles Hayward on Japanese Maples and Jim Gardiner VMH who is our special guest on Japanese Magnolia. There will be a feature on *Camellia sasanqua* Contact [Sian Thomas here](#)

Wessex Branch 28th November at Sheffield Park and Gardens

Branch members will meet up for a late autumn walk through acres of the Grade I listed landscaped garden and lakes. Considered by many as the ultimate autumn

North West Branch 29th November at Ness Botanic Gardens

Taking place in the historic location of Ness Botanic Garden. It was founded by Arthur K. Bulley who sponsored Frank Kington Ward the plant hunter on his historic trip to China in 1911. Ned Lomax Head Gardener at Bodnant Gardens will give a talk on his own visit to China over a hundred years later 'A Botanical Trip to Sichuan' 2025

**RHS**Rhododendron, Camellia
& Magnolia Group

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