

Maria Stewart's Rhododendrons

Created in memory of Maria Stewart.

Maria first encountered her love of plants in her grandmother's flower garden. She has nurtured students as a teacher in elementary school for 31 years and plants for her entire life. She is co-owner of the Dover Nursery in Sandy, which grows over 1,000 varieties of rhododendrons to supply garden centers and landscape companies. She has made numerous contributions to the ARS. Since she joined the Portland Chapter in 1980, she has held almost every position available, including two years as President. She has participated in organizing several Western Regional Conferences. She was Co-Chair of the 50th Anniversary Convention in 1995, and planned the 75th Anniversary Convention for 2020.

This collection of rhododendron descriptions was originally written by Maria Stewart for the Portland Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. Nearly every month she contributed wonderful details about her favorite hybrid or species in the Chapter's newsletters. This collection comprises her contributions that began in February, 2012 through October, 2023. Her works were extracted from newsletters starting in early 2012 and through to her last contribution in October of 2023. She provided inspiration while serving as Vice President and President of the Chapter.

This compendium of Maria's technical and personal insights about rhododendrons is a tribute for the leadership and inspiration she provided for the Portland Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society (PCARS) as well as to myself. It is her inspiration which led me to consolidate all her monthly rhododendron articles into this document.

Clarke G. Isackson
November 16, 2023

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Maria Stewart's Rhododendron Articles

This month, instead of writing a new article about my next most favorite rhododendron, I have decided to index the last 10 years of articles that have been published in the Portland Chapter ARS Newsletter. Hopefully you will find this index useful when your curiosity gets the best of you, and you wish to read about these more interesting and unusual rhododendrons.

Over these last 10 years, Mike and I have chosen to write about rhododendron varieties primarily from our own collection. So, much of the information in the articles comes from personal experience both from seeing and studying them in the wild, and from growing them for production purposes during our Dover Nursery business years.

Although we have been retired for several years, our passion centers around enjoying these plants, and further developing our collection and garden. From the extremely large leaf of *Rhododendron sinogrande* to the variety of intense flower colors found in deciduous azaleas, to the tiny leaves and flowers of dwarf rhododendrons, one can't help but to be fascinated with the diverse beauty of rhododendrons. You always are welcome to come visit, share a few stories and adventures, stroll through our display areas, and enjoy companionship and rhododendrons with us.

Best wishes to all of you, and happy reading.

—Maria Stewart

Species	NL
<i>R. albrechtii</i>	19-Mar
<i>R. anthopogon</i>	18-Jan
<i>R. argyrophyllum</i> ssp. <i>nankingense</i> 'Chinese Silver'	18-Nov
<i>R. barbatum</i>	20-Feb
<i>R. benhallii</i>	15-Apr
<i>R. calostrotum</i> ssp. <i>calostrotum</i> 'Gigha'	19-Feb
<i>R. calostrotum</i> ssp. <i>keleticum</i> <i>Radicans</i> group	18-Apr
<i>R. calophytum</i>	18-Mar
<i>R. campanulatum</i> ssp. <i>aeruginosum</i>	15-Jun
<i>R. camtschaticum</i>	18-Feb
<i>R. cephalanthum</i>	18-Oct
<i>R. cerasinum</i> 'Cherry Brandy'	20-Nov
<i>R. chamaeethomsonii</i>	17-Dec
<i>R. cinnabarinum</i> ssp. <i>xanthocodon</i>	15-Dec
<i>R. cinnabarinum</i> ssp. <i>xanthocodon</i>	22-Aug
<i>R. davidsonianum</i> 'Ruth Lyons'	18-May
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<i>R. glanduliferum</i>	19-Aug
<i>R. hanceanum</i> 'Nanum'	20-Mar
<i>R. haematodes</i>	20-Dec
<i>R. hodgsonii</i>	16-Jan
<i>R. hodgsonii</i>	22-Jan
<i>R. hodgsonii</i>	23-Feb
<i>R. huianum</i>	14-May
<i>R. insigne</i>	14-Jun
<i>R. insigne</i>	22-Feb
<i>R. kesangiae</i>	20-May
<i>R. lepidostylum</i>	18-Jun
<i>R. lutescens</i>	23-Apr
<i>R. macrosepalum</i> 'Linearifolium'	15-Oct
<i>R. mallotum</i>	14-Apr
<i>R. mallotum</i>	22-Apr
<i>R. mucronulatum</i>	19-Apr
<i>R. myrtifolium</i>	19-Nov
<i>R. ochraceum</i>	18-Dec
<i>R. pachysanthum</i>	14-Dec
<i>R. prevernum</i>	18-Mar

<i>R. proteodes</i>	18-Sep
<i>R. protistum</i>	21-Nov
<i>R. pseudochrysanthum</i>	18-Aug
<i>R. ririei</i>	21-Feb
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<i>R. roxieanum</i> var. <i>oreonastes</i>	17-Sep
<i>R. schlippenbachii</i>	21-Jan
<i>R. Sir Charles Lemon</i>	16-Apr
<i>R. spinuliferum</i>	21-Aug
<i>R. strigillosum</i> '	16-Dec
<i>R. sutchuense</i> var. <i>geraldii</i>	18-Mar
<i>R. thomsonii</i>	15-Sep
<i>R. trichostumum</i>	16-Jun
<i>R. tsariense</i>	16-May
<i>R. vaseyi</i>	16-Nov
<i>R. viscosum</i>	17-Jun
<i>R. williamsianum</i>	15-Nov
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Hybrids	
<i>R. arborescens</i> x <i>prunifolium</i>	23-Aug
'Autumn Gold'	17-Feb
'August Sunrise'	17-Aug
'Blaney's Blue'	12-Aug
'Blewbury'	21-Oct
'Bluette'	17-May
'Calfort'	15-Mar
'Chemainus'	13-Jan
'Cherries and Merlot'	14-Aug
'Cinnamon Bear'	22-May
'Cinnamon Bear'	17-Oct
'Cody'	15-May
'Cupcake'	21-May
'Cynthia'	17-Apr
'Dazzler'	19-Jun
'Delta Dawn'	20-Apr
'Elephant Ears'	23-Jun

'Evening Glow'	17-Feb
'Fantastica'	20-Oct
'Ginny Gee'	21-Dec
'Goldilocks'	17-Nov
'Golfer'	22-Sep
'Harold Greer'	21-Sep
'Honsu's Baby'	17-Jan
'Invitations Gift'	14-Sep
'Kimbeth'	22-Jun
'Loch Awe'	21-Mar
'Loderi King George'	16-Sep
'Maggie Brown'	12-Jun
'Maya'	14-Mar
'Morning Bells'	19-Oct
'Muncaster Mist'	16-Mar
'Naselle'	20-Jan
'Old Copper'	17-Feb
'Patriot's Dream'	22-Nov
'Patty Bee'	20-Jun
'Peggie Roberts'	21-Jun
'Pink Pearl'	17-Apr



Mike and Maria Stewart in the Deciduous Azalea collection at Dover Nursery. (Photo Mike Stewart)

'Pink Pinwheels'	14-Nov
'Seta'	16-Feb
'Seta'	22-Mar
'Silver Bear'	22-May
'Silver Bear'	17-Oct
'Snow Lady'	17-May
'Something Lovely'	17-Jan
'Songbird'	14-Oct
'Starry Night'	20-Sep

'Superflimmer'	21-Apr
'Teddy Bear'	22-May
'Teddy Bear'	17-Oct
'Vibrant Violet'	19-Sep
'Vulcan's Flame'	17-May
'Wee Bee'	15-Feb
'Wild Ginger'	15-Nov
'Winsome'	16-Oct
'Yaku Sunrise'	17-May



Maria and Mike Stewart with giant *R. sinogrande*. (Photo Mike Stewart)

2012-02

A Rhododendron Sweetheart: 'Something Lovely'

By: Maria Stewart

Picture a compact grower with handsome foliage and pretty pink flowers. What could be a better choice than "Something Lovely" to celebrate Valentine's Day? Thank you, Herb Spady, for hybridizing (circa 1980), growing, naming, and registering this beautiful rhododendron.

Here are some more descriptions of "Something Lovely":

It is an elepidote;

Its origin is from an open-pollinated "Lori Eichelser" (Smart bees, right?);

Each truss holds about 7 open funnel-shaped corollas. Each corolla has 5 wavy-edged lobes;

The bud is vivid red and opens to moderate pink inside each corolla and deeper vivid purple red on the out-side. Bloom time is mid-April;

The leaves are elliptic and rounded at the base. They are moderate green in color;

Depending on the placement, expect it to grow 1 1/2 feet tall and wide in 10 years.



2012-03

A Structural Beauty: Rhododendron 'Laramie'

By: Maria Stewart

With its textured deep green leaves, its large, very pale yellow flowers and its handsome branching pattern, 'Laramie' is a rhododendron that beckons you to take a closer look. Thank you, Jim Barlup, for crossing two notable parents to create this wonderful hybrid.

Here are some more details about 'Laramie':

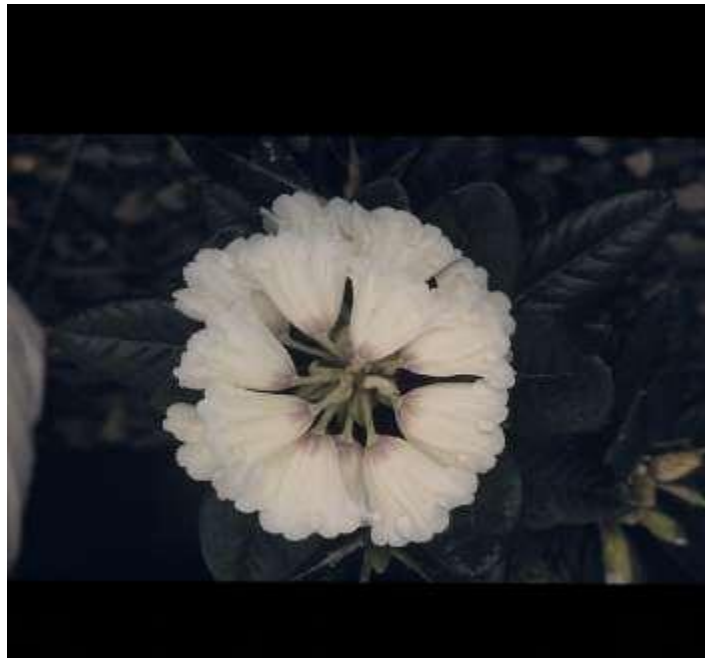
It is an elepidote.

The parents are yakushmanum (Exbury form) X macabeum.

It was hybridized in 1981 by Jim Barlup, grown on by Jim Barlup, named by Jim Barlup and registered by Jim Barlup in 1998.

The trusses imitate its macabeum parentage and are large, with funnel-campanulate corollas. The edges are wavy and deep inside each corolla is a dark purple-red flare. It blooms in April.

The dark green leaves are obovate and semi-glossy with tawny indumentum. Depending on its placement, 'Laramie' should grow to 3 feet by 3 feet in about ten years.



2012-04

A Cheerful Dwarf: Rhododendron 'Peter Bee'

By Maria Stewart

Imagine that a dwarf rhododendron grows so compactly that, after 33 years of growing, it measures only three feet high by three feet wide. Now picture bright yellow flowers completely covering this mounding rhododendron. „Peter Bee“ is a treasure to have in your garden. Thank you, Warren Berg, for hybridizing (1967), growing, naming (with Peter Cox’s help), and registering (2001) this fine dwarf rhododendron.

Of further historical interest is the fact that „Peter Bee“ was introduced by its namesake, Peter Cox, at Glendoick Gardens in Scotland. Here are some additional details to ponder: It is a lepidote; the parents are *R. hanceanum* Nanum Group (Cox form) X *R. keiskei* „Yaku Fairy“; its flowers are a vibrant yellow with a touch of green that does not take away from the brightness of the yellow; the leaves are a medium green and elliptic in shape with widely spaced scales on the undersides of the leaves; it blooms in late April into early May; depending on its placement, „Peter Bee“ should grow to about 1 1/2 feet tall by 2 feet wide in about ten years.



2012-05

'Seaview Sunset': A beauty that Celebrates the Return of the Sun

By Maria Stewart

You may have noticed that during the last five months, there have been articles about a few selected rhododendrons in the newsletters. The hybridizers of all these rhododendrons are from the Pacific Northwest region. These articles have saluted Frank Mossman, Herb Spady, Jim Barlup and Warren Berg for their hybridizing efforts. Now it is Frank Fujioka's turn to be thanked for his hybridizing of R. „Seaview Sunset“.

Here are some details about this eye-catching plant: it is an elepidote; its parentage is „Nancy Evans“ X 'Canadian Sunset'; it was hybridized in 1988 by Frank Fujioka; grown by Frank (1993); named by Frank (1997); and registered by Frank (1997). Each truss holds 16 flowers in a domed shape. The buds are vivid reddish-orange, opening inside light yellow and edged with a broad band of reddish-orange. The outside is deep yellowish pink. The calyx is light yellow and is 20 mm long. The bloom time is mid-April. The leaves are elliptic, semi glossy and dark green in color. Depending on the placement, expect it to grow 2 1/2 to 3 feet in ten years.



2012-06

Twice as Nice! With Fragrance and Double Petals

By Maria Stewart

R. 'Maggie Brown' is a wonderful deciduous azalea that was hybridized, grown and named (2008) by Frank Mossman. Then, Dick Cavender took the initiative to register „Maggie Brown“ in 2008. Dick continued to expound upon the plant's virtues, so that Briggs Nursery started micro-propagating it in 2009. Now the rest of the world can enjoy another meritorious Northwest rhododendron creation, thanks to Frank and Dick!

'Maggie Brown' is a deciduous azalea.

The cross is R. 'Cecile' X R. 'Leonard Frisbie'.

There are 10-15 flowers in a flat truss; each flower has 5 wavy-edged lobes; the flowers vary from single to semi-double to fully double; the semi-doubles and doubles have 1-5 petaloid stamens that vary from being fully formed to narrow lobes; all forms occur in the same truss and the overall effect is of double flowers; buds are deep pink, opening inside variably colored light and dark pink and orange-yellow; the outside of the flower has a deep pink tube and the lobes are variably colored light to deep pink. The bloom time is mid-May to mid-June. The flowers are strongly scented. The leaves are elliptic and are a moderate olive green.

The size, depending on placement in your garden, is three feet tall by three feet wide in 10 years.

Photograph of R. „Maggie Brown“ courtesy of Dick Cavender.



2012-08

A Beauty That Will Adorn Your Garden: R. „Melrose Flash“

By Maria Stewart

To Borrow Harold Greer's words, " This interesting hybrid introduced by Merle Sanders of Roseburg, Oregon has yellow-green flowers with "flashy" purplish-pink margins. Wow, how showy! It is a great plant with delightful foliage that will make a wonderful impression in your garden." Thank you, Merle Sanders for hybridizing, growing, naming, introducing and registering R. „Melrose Flash“ so that we all can enjoy it.

Here is more information about „Melrose Flash“:

It was hybridized in 1988 and registered in 1998 by Merle Sanders.

The cross is: „Scintillation“ X („Mrs. A.T. de la Mare“ x „King of Shrubs“) x „Holy Moses“

Each domed truss has 15 flowers which are pale yellow-green with moderate purplish-pink margins. It blooms in late May to early June.

The leaves are a glossy dark green on a well-branched and rounded plant. Its height is 4 1/2 to 5 feet in 10 years, depending on where it is sited.



2012-09

A Rhododendron For All Seasons: R. 'Blaney's Blue'

By Maria Stewart

We are fortunate to have a plant like R. „Blaney“s Blue“ because it is so versatile. You can place it in your garden to be a stand-alone specimen as shown in the photo below. Or, you can mass it in groups to make a striking color statement. Or, you can make a hedge of „Blaney“s Blue“. Whether it“s winter when the leaves have a bronze tone, or summer when the buds completely cover the plant, or spring when the buds explode into a huge mass of blue-purple, this rhododendron is one you will treasure in your garden. Thank you, Dr. L.T. Blaney and Dr. Robert Ticknor, for giving us R. „Blaney“s Blue.“

Here is more information about this choice rhododendron:

It is a lepidote.

The parents are: R. *augustinii* „Towercourt“ X „Blue Diamond“

It was hybridized by Dr. L.T. Blaney of OSU and then extensively tested by Dr. Robert Ticknor before it was introduced in 1978.

Medium blue-purple flowers will cover the plant and it buds at a young age.

The leaves are forest green in summer and change to a bronzy tone in winter.

Depending on where it is placed, it will grow vigorously to 4 or 5 feet in 10 years.



2012-11

The Marvelous R. "Mango Tango"

By Maria Stewart

What a perfect name for an outstanding rhododendron! Think about large golden yellow blooms with peachy margins that sit atop dark green leaves on a well-clothed plant. If you like the combination of yellow and light orange in your flowers, this is a rhododendron to consider. We thank the Thompson Nursery

in Waldport, Oregon for hybridizing this special plant.

More information about „Mango Tango“:

Parents: R. „Nancy Evans“ X (R. „Mrs. Lamot Copeland X R. „Tweedy Bird“)

Size: About 4 feet in 10 years, depending on where you place it.

Bloom Time: May

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.

Photograph of R. „Mango Tango“ courtesy of Mike Stewart



2012-12

An Ornament to Brighten Your Garden: R. 'Mary Briggs'

By Maria Stewart

Bright red campanulate flowers cover R. „Mary Briggs“ when it blooms in May. The striking color of this rhododendron practically begs us to choose a photograph of it for the December newsletter.

More information about „Mary Briggs“:

The cross: haematodes x „Elizabeth“

Flower : bright blood red; funnel-campanulate in compact trusses of 8-10 flowers. Bloom time: early to mid-May.

Foliage: medium to dark green leaves, 3" long. It likes a little shade to show off its best qualities.

Plant habit: low-growing, wider than tall; height in 10 years: 2 feet. Cold hardiness: 0 degrees F.

Classification: elepidote.

Hybridizer: Vernon Wyatt.

Photograph courtesy Mike Stewart.



2013-01

A Foliage Star That Glows All Year Long: R. 'Chemainus'

By Maria Stewart

When the enticing blooms of our rhododendrons are only a fleeting memory of spring's palette, it's the foliage of certain plants that draws us near in winter for a second look. Such is the case with R. „Chemainus“.

When Frank Fujioka planned this cross, he chose good foliage plants for three of the four parents. The result is a gorgeous rhododendron displaying very dark green and glossy leaves with thick indumentum underneath.

If R. „Chemainus“ never bloomed, it would still be a star in your garden.

More information about R. „Chemainus“:

The cross: Noyo Brave X (CIS x rex) x Hansel)

Flower : medium pink with darker pink in the throat

Truss: 19 flowers per truss

Foliage: dark green and glossy with thick, medium brown indumentum underneath

Plant habit: upright with good branching.

Height: 4 to 5 feet in 10 years

Hardiness: probably +5 degrees F.

Placement in garden: a little shade would be of benefit

Hybridizer: Frank Fujioka

Photograph courtesy Mike Stewart.



2013-02

A Brilliant Beauty for Your Garden: R. 'Candycorn'

By Maria Stewart

When asked to choose his favorite one among his many hybrids, Don Wallace says that R. „Candycorn“ stillstands out as his favorite. With its full dome trusses displaying all of the colors of the traditional Halloween candy of the same name, this rhododendron is sure to please. Briggs nursery is currently producing many of this clone, so it may be more readily available for you to acquire. Thank you, Don, for creating a wonderful rhododendron for us to enjoy. Here is additional information about R. „Candycorn“:

The cross: (Nancy Evans x Orange Marmalade) X (Orange Marmalade x Lem“s Cameo)

Flowers: All the colors of candy corn including cream blending with brilliant yellow, orange-pink edging and a red throat.

The truss: a full dome with 15 flowers per truss; height 4”, width 6”

Corolla shape: funnel campanulate; lobe margins are wavy

Buds: vivid red; heavy budding every year

Leaves: dark, strong green; 4” long, 2” wide, elliptic

Height in 10 years: 2 feet tall and 3 feet wide

Habit: low and mounding

Hardiness: plant hardiness is 0 degrees F and bud hardiness is 5 degrees F.

Exposure: Grows well in sun or shade

Photo courtesy of Don Wallace



2013-03

R. 'Freckled Friend' Displays Fascinating Flowers and Foliage

By Maria Stewart

Some names that are given to rhododendrons aptly describe their namesake plants. R. „Freckled Friend“ is an excellent name for the plant it describes. The light pink flowers are covered inside and out with deep pink freckles. The foliage shows strongly the R. bureavii parentage with its dark green leaves covered underneath with wooly indumentum.

Here is more about a rhododendron that you may want to call a “friend”:

The cross: (Fabia x thomsonii) X (smirnowii x bureavii)

Origin: It came from Halfdan Lem through Jim Elliott.

Height in 10 years: 4 feet

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

Bloom time: May

Placement in your garden: light shade

Culture: needs good drainage

Photo: Mike Stewart



2013-04 a

The Lovely *Rhododendron lutescens*

By Maria Stewart

There is a rotting five-foot Douglas fir stump about 10 feet from our front room. Growing in this naturally well-drained decaying wood are wild huckleberries, salal, ferns and a *R. lutescens*; we planted the *R. lutescens* at the base of the stump about 20 years ago. Lo and behold, it grew right through the stump and now we have plants on both sides of the stump. This species grows in a willowy and upright manner and looks at home when it is winding its way among other plants. *R. lutescens* is blooming now in late March with its yellow blossoms adding cheerful color to the surrounding landscape, which consists this time of the year of mostly pink and white blooming rhododendrons. After the blooms fade, this species puts on another show of color with its distinctive reddish new growth. The vibrantly colored leaves are like a second stage of blooming!

More information about *R. lutescens*:

Distribution: West Sichuan, Northeast Yunnan, Hubei and Guizhou in China, at 1,750 - 10,500 feet altitude, in the open in a thicket or among trees

Taxonomy: Subgenus: *Rhododendron*

Section: *Rhododendron*

Subsection: *Triflora*

It is a lepidote with a few scales on top of the leaves; the undersides of the leaves are paler.

The shape of the leaf is oblong or lanceolate.

The new growth is a bright reddish bronze.

Blooms: light to deeper primrose yellow; wide, funnel-shaped; 1-3 corollas per truss.

Hardiness: +5 degrees F. Depending on the clone, the larger the flowers, the more tender the plant according to *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species*, authored by Peter and Kenneth Cox.

(Our plant suffers somewhat during Arctic blasts; buds freeze and leaves burn, but it keeps coming back!)

Height: depends on whether it grows vertically or somewhat less vertically as it finds its way among your other plants. The books say it grows to 6 feet in 10 years.

Derivation of name: *lutescens*: becoming yellow

2013-04 b

The Lovely *Rhododendron lutescens*

Photograph courtesy of Mike Stewart



2013-05

A Small-Growing Rhododendron for Just the Right Place In Your Garden: *R. glaucophyllum*

By Maria Stewart

This dwarf rhododendron almost begs for attention. Not only does it show off with its dainty little bells for flowers, *R. glaucophyllum* may catch your eye with the glaucous undersides of its leaves. Then, you may notice that its bark is peeling in an attractive manner. If you look closely at the corollas, you will notice a leafy green and hairy calyx on each one that reminds you of a jaunty cap. If *R. glaucophyllum* var. *glaucophyllum* pleases you, you may want to search out the white form named *R. glaucophyllum* var. *album*, or the more tubular flowers of deeper pink of *R. glaucophyllum* var. *tubiforme*. Whatever your choice, these dwarfs are fun to grow.

Here is more information about *R. glaucophyllum*:

Its native region: forest clearings and rocky slopes in eastern Nepal, India, Bhutan and southern Tibet at 9,000 to 12,000 feet

Flowers: pink, white, rosy pink or pinkish-purple

Leaves: very glaucous with dense brown scales on undersides of leaves; strongly aromatic

Bark: peeling

Height in 10 years: about three feet

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.

Photograph courtesy of Mike Stewart



2013-06

A Charmer: *Rhododendron pendulum*

By Maria Stewart

Here is a species rhododendron that grows happily in a hanging basket or on a rotting stump or log. In the wilds of Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet, it can be found growing in the trees like orchids do, hence it can be epiphytic. *R. pendulum* needs very fast drainage and wants its roots to stay cool. Your other challenge is its hardiness, which is only + 10 degrees F. But, this plant's requirements seem to fade off into the distance when you see it.

Its little oval leaves are covered with white hairs and the overall visual effect is quite attractive. Some growers would not care if *R. pendulum* never bloomed, because the foliage is so decorative.

More information about *R. pendulum*:

Distribution: Eastern Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Southern Tibet at 7,500 to 12,000 feet; epiphytic or growing on steep slopes or cliffs.

Taxonomy: Subgenus: *Rhododendron*

Section: *Rhododendron*

Subsection: *Edgeworthia*

It is a lepidote. The oval leaves are densely covered with beige woolly indumentum underneath and white to light beige tomentum on top.

Form: It grows densely and its branches trail downward.

Height in 10 years: Perhaps 1.5 feet tall, but much wider than tall.



2013-11

A Beauty with Three Outstanding Attributes: R. 'Klondyke'

By Maria Stewart

This Exbury deciduous azalea has a long history. The Exbury hybrids were developed by Lionel de Rothschild in Southampton, England starting in the 1920"s and continuing through the 1930"s. Many of the seedlings were nearly lost during World War II, but, fortunately, the Exbury Gardens and the azalea seedlings were carefully restored after the War. The date recognized for R. „Klondyke“ is 1947, but that could be the year it was named.

Now here is more about R. „Klondyke“ and its three attributes of brilliant flowers, attractive foliage, and fragrance:

Flowers: golden yellow with orange tones; very showy. They attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

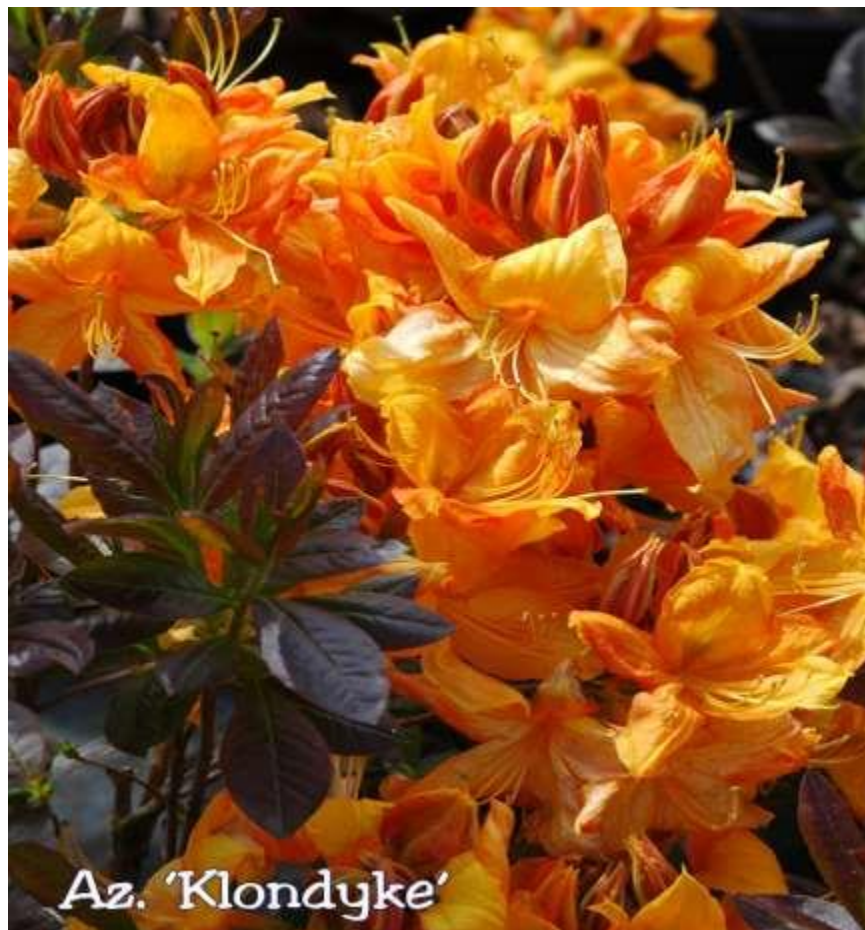
Fragrance: Yes!

Leaves: The new growth is bronzy and all the leaves are mildew-resistant.

Growth rate: moderate grower to 5 feet wide and tall at maturity.

Hardiness: -15 degrees F.

Sunlight needs: partial to full sun



2013-12

Celebrating the Season with the Bright Red Trumpets of Rhododendron Griersonianum

By Maria Stewart

It is fun to choose a red-blooming rhododendron to write about in December and *R. griersonianum* is an excellent choice. Its loose trusses of scarlet brightly decorate the green leaves that cover the plant. Many colorful hybrids have this species as a parent, and before *R. yakushimanum* was introduced, *R. griersonianum* was the most popular parent for hybridizing. It is a distinct species and has no close relatives

Here are more characteristics of this important species:

Flowers: loose trusses of about 12 corollas, ranging from bright geranium scarlet to bright rose. The corollas have long tubes tapering to funnels and are about 3 inches long. It blooms in June.

Leaves: narrow, lance-shaped and about 8 inches long; undersides are covered with whitish, loose and wooly indumentum.

Structure: 3 to 4 feet in 10 years. It is a spreading plant.

Hardiness: + 10 degrees F.

Location in your garden: not very hardy; some protection is desirable.

Native to: Western Yunnan, Northern Burma at 7,000 to 9,000 feet altitude.

Named after R.C. Grierson, a friend of George Forrest. It was introduced from 1917 to 1931.

Photo courtesy of Harold Greer.



2014-01

A Star in the Rhododendron Universe: R. 'Starbright Champagne'

By Maria Stewart

The flowers of R. „Starbright Champagne“ are strikingly different from other hybrid rhododendron flowers. You can imagine Frank Fujioka seeing his creation blooming for the first time and almost instantly thinking that the corollas look like five-pointed stars. Emphasizing the star-like quality is the dominant creamy color of champagne. Bursting out of the center of every champagne corolla is a fiery, deep orange-red flare. All of this visual energy sits atop a medium-growing, compact plant.

Here is more about this wonderful rhododendron:

Corollas: five pointed petals with creamy champagne background and a fiery, deep orange-red flare bursting out of the center; blooms in May

Leaves: medium green and somewhat pointed

Form: compact growing, dense and rounded; grows to about 4 feet in 10 years

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.

Parentage: ((„Yaku Sunrise“x „Hansel“) X „Lem“s Cameo“)

Hybridizer: Frank Fujioka; hybridized in 1983 and registered in 1995

Photograph courtesy Mike Stewart



2014-02 a

Handsome Foliage + Hardiness: *R. rex* ssp. *Fictolacteum*

By Maria Stewart

Remember that very cold weather in early December? And now we're in for several more days in February of that same dry cold air that our rhododendrons do not appreciate! Well, here's a species large-leafed rhododendron that does not seem to mind these Arctic blasts as long as its leaves are not whipped around by strong winds. *R. fictolacteum* grows into a small tree with quite large, shiny, dark green leaves.

The undersides of those leaves are covered with rusty brown or dark brown indumentum. This is a species rhododendron that will delight you year after year!

Here is more information about *R. fictolacteum*:

Its name means false lacteum

Its geographical location is: SE Tibet; NW Yunnan (China); and NE Burma.

Classification: Sub-Genus: *Hymenanthes* Section: *Ponticum* Sub-Section: *Falconera*

It is an elepidote, meaning that its leaves do not have scales.

Leaves: smooth, oblong-obovate to oblanceolate in shape, up to 12" long, and the undersides are covered with rusty brown or dark brown indumentum

Siting: It will grow happily under a tree canopy, but should be sheltered from strong winds so that its leaves do not get whipped around. Otherwise, it does not need winter protection in the Pacific Northwest.

Height in 10 years: 5 feet

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

Flowers: Each tight, ball-shaped truss holds 12-30 flowers in a range of colors from white to pale lilac to light pink to rose. Each bell-shaped corolla is decorated with a dark crimson blotch and sometimes the corollas are heavily freckled. The flowers are not fragrant.

Bloom time: Early May

2014-02 b

Handsome Foliage + Hardiness: *R. rex* ssp. *Fictolacteum*

R. rex ssp. *Fictolacteum*

Photograph courtesy Harold Greer



2014-03 a

An Early Bloomer to Enjoy: R. 'Maya'

By Maria Stewart

A few years ago, Mike and I had the pleasure of attending a Tualatin Valley Chapter summer potluck at Forrest and Rosemary Bump's home. After a delicious meal and congenial conversation, we exchanged rhododendron cuttings. We also enjoyed touring Dr. Bump's garden and hearing him talk about his special rhododendrons. Some of the cuttings from that day have become blooming plants. Two cuttings of R. "Maya" have grown to three feet high and three feet wide. They are blooming now inside a greenhouse, so outside, they would bloom probably about the third week in March. It is always so enjoyable to see early blooming rhododendrons. They brighten up the rainy season with their refreshing colors.

Here is more to know about R. "Maya":

The cross is R. rirei x R. sutchuenense.

It is an elepidote, meaning that its leaves do not have scales.

Leaves: medium green, smooth on the top and bottom sides; about five inches long.

Flowers are clear pink with just a hint of pale lavender and each bell-shaped corolla shows off a prominent deep purple

blotch. There are about 11 corollas in each very large truss. Blooms in March.

Placement in your garden: a tree nearby would help to protect the early blooms from frost.

Height in 10 years: 6 feet tall and wide.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

2014-03 b
An Early Bloomer to Enjoy: R. 'Maya'

Photo courtesy of Mike Stewart



2014-04 a

A Species to Treasure: *Rhododendron mallotum*

By Maria Stewart

It is hard to pass by a plant of *R. mallotum* without noticing its dark green foliage accented by its woolly, brownish-red indumentum. The combination of the deep green on the top sides and the striking indumentum underneath begs you to take a second look. Like frosting on a cake, the flowers are beautiful, also.

They form full trusses of crimson, scarlet or cherry-red.

Here is more about *R. mallotum*:

Classification: Section: *Hymenanthes* Subsection: *Neriiflora*. *R. mallotum* is so distinct from the rest of the

Neriiflora that it is one most easily recognizable of all the species in the subsection.

It is an *elepidote*, meaning that its leaves do not have scales.

Leaves: very thick and stiff, obovate, retained for 1 to 3 years, dark green on top and covered with a dense, woolly cinnamon-brown indumentum on the under- sides.

Flowers: usually crimson, sometimes scarlet or cherry-red in trusses of up to 20 corollas; blooms late March to early April.

Placement in your garden: needs protection from frost because of its early blooms.

Its natural origin is NE Upper Myanmar and Western Yunnan at 11,000 to 12,000 feet.

Hardiness: + 10 degrees F.

2014-04 b

A Species to Treasure: *Rhododendron mallotum*

Photo courtesy of Mike Stewart



2014-05 a

A New Species Introduction to Appreciate: *Rhododendron huianum*

By Maria Stewart

On April 25-26th, The Rhododendron Species Foundation celebrated its 50th Anniversary in Federal Way, Washington. During the Celebration, Mike and I had the pleasure of walking in the Rhododendron Species

Botanical Garden to view the many species and companion plants that have been collected over the last fifty

years. One of our favorite species, and there are many to call our favorites, is *Rhododendron huianum*. It was in full bloom at the RSBG when we visited.

Here is more about *R. huianum*:

Classification: Section: *Hymenanthes* Subsection: *Fortunea*. *R. huianum* is separated from its other *Fortunea* relatives by its pointed leaves and its noticeable calyx.

Natural origin: South and Southeast Sichuan, Northeast Yunnan, Northeast Guizhou at 3,250 to 9,000 feet elevation

in broad-leaved forests. It was introduced outside of China in 1994-5.

It is an *elepidote*, meaning that its leaves do not have scales.

Leaves: oblong-lanceolate with pointed tips and somewhat glaucous underneath.

Flowers: usually deep rose to purple with nectar pouches, Each corolla has a distinctive calyx that decorates it like

the "cap" of an acorn with its 7 rounded lobes. There are about 6 to 12 corollas in a loose truss that shows off the calyx

on each one. Blooms in April.

Height and structure: 6 to 9 feet in 10 years and grows into a small tree or large shrub.

Hardiness: 0 degrees F. ?

2014-05 b

A New Species Introduction to Appreciate: *Rhododendron huianum*

Photo courtesy of Mike Stewart



2014-06 a

A Remarkable Species: *Rhododendron insigne*

By Maria Stewart

Along about the second week in May, *Rhododendron insigne* shows off its pink and white flowers with pink stripes decorating the outside of each corolla. The foliage is handsome, also, with the stiff dark green leaves framing the flowers. The tawny indumentum is so plastered-on that it reminds you of skin and its coppery sheen is quite attractive.

Here is more about *R. insigne*:

Classification: Section: *Hymenanthes* Subsection: *Argyrophylla*

Natural origin: Apparently only grows on Wa Shan where it may be extinct, in Central Sichuan at 7,000 to 10,000 feet elevation in woodlands. May have been found recently in N.E. Yunnan and South Sichuan.

It is an *elepidote*, meaning it has no scales on its leaves.

Flowers: The bell-shaped corollas range in color from light pink to deep pink with distinctive deeper pink stripes on each lobe. Blooms in mid-May and later.

Leaves: The word “*insigne*” means remarkable and the foliage is certainly worthy of that epithet. The tops

of the thick leaves are shiny and dark green. They feel stiff and rigid. The undersides of the lance-shaped leaves are tightly covered with a shiny, coppery indumentum.

Height and structure: 3 feet in 10 years and grows slowly in the sun.

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: *R. insigne* grows best in sun to show off its compact form. It gets leggy in the shade.

2014-06 b

A Remarkable Species: *Rhododendron insigne*

R. insigne Photo courtesy of Mike Stewart



2014-08 a

Outstanding Flowers and Amazing Foliage: R. 'Cherries and Merlot'

By Maria Stewart

When you see this hybrid by Frank Fujioka for the first time, the colorful undersides of the leaves attract your attention so much that you forget to ask about the flowers. When you hear that the flowers are a deep, bright red, the combination sounds intriguing. In fact, the flowers are so rich in color that they meld well with the foliage to form a truly superb new hybrid.

Here is more about R. „Cherries and Merlot“:

It is an elepidote. It has no scales on its leaves.

The cross: („Pretty Baby“ x R. pachysanthum) X „Whid Bee“

The red flowers come from these parents in this cross: „Cornubia“, „Noyo Chief“, „Kilimanjaro“ „Rubicon“ and „Rosevallon“. The red-purple undersides of the leaves come from „Rosevallon“.

Flowers: The trusses are rounded and are constructed of deep, bright red corollas that are funnel-campanulate in shape. The bloom time is early April.

Leaves: Dark green on top, and red-purple on the undersides.

Height: 3 feet in 10 years

Hardiness: Unknown at this time. Two of the parents, R. pachysanthum and R. yakushmanum, may lend some hardiness to the cross.

Placement in your garden: Protect it from the cold until you know its hardiness. Some shade is desirable.

2014-08 b

Outstanding Flowers and Amazing Foliage: R. 'Cherries and Merlot'

R. 'Cherries and Merlot'. Photograph courtesy of Mike Stewart.



2014-09

A New Hybrid to Appreciate: Rhododendron 'Invitation's Gift'

By Maria Stewart

It is always fun to be introduced to the new hybrids created by Jim Barlup. He has given us many beautiful rhododendrons to enjoy. In the last two years, Mike and I have been watching one in particular with handsome, dark green foliage. This spring, we saw the flowers, too, and they are like frosting on a cake. Their clear medium yellow corollas perfectly compliment the lush foliage.

Here is more about R. „Invitation“s Gift“:

It is an elepidote. It has no scales on its leaves.

The cross is: („Invitation“ X {(R. yakushimanum x R. lacteum) x „Powder Snow“})

Flowers: medium clear yellow with a small red flare at the base of the corolla; the medium size truss is full and displays the corollas nicely.

Leaves: Dark green and of good substance; there is a very thin layer of indumentum covering the undersides of the leaves.

Structure: a fully-clothed plant that is wider than tall at the age of about 5 years.

Height and width in 10 years: probably about 4 feet x 4 feet

Placement in the garden: filtered sunlight

Hardiness: Unknown; however, R. „Powder Snow“ has survived our hard freezes down to 7 degrees F.

Hybridized by Jim Barlup. Photograph courtesy of Jim Barlup.



2014-10

A Joy to Behold in Spring: Rhododendron 'Songbird'

By Maria Stewart

There is so much hyperbole surrounding the gorgeous yellow and orange rhododendrons that are the newer hybrids today. They attract our attention even if their plant structure is not what it should be. So, this article is dedicated to a dwarf rhododendron that has been around for a long time and deserves some of our appreciation. Rhododendron „Songbird“ has deep green, shiny little leaves that cover the twiggy branches. Its compact form is decorated with bright purple blue flowers that seem to glow.

Here are more descriptions about R. „Songbird“:

It is a lepidote, which means it has scales on the undersides of its leaves.

The cross is: (R. russatum x R. „Blue Tit“)

The hybridizer is Horlick, who made the cross in 1954.

The clustered corollas are bright purple blue and the bloom time is April.

The very small leaves are shiny and dark green.

Depending on its placement in your garden, its height should be around 3 feet in 10 years.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F. (or colder)

Photograph of R. „Songbird“ courtesy of Mike Stewart



2014-11

Flowers in Motion: Rhododendron 'Pink Pinwheels'

By Maria Stewart

When Frank Fujioka named this hybrid „Pink Pinwheels“, he must have seen the pink and white colors of the corollas as suggesting a twirling movement. The name is apt for the trusses do look like pinwheels with their ruffled edges and two-tone corollas. Supporting these amazing flowers are strong branches covered with dark green leaves. Each of these handsome leaves has a covering of beige indumentum underneath.

What a great combination of attributes: twirling flowers, handsome foliage and felty indumentum!

Here is more information about R. „Pink Pinwheels“:

It is an elepidote, meaning the leaves do not have scales.

The parents: R. „Flirt“ X R. arboreum ssp. nilagiricum „Noyo Chief“

R. „Flirt“: (R. „Britannia“ X R. degronianum ssp. yakushmanum „Koichiro Wada“

The hybridizer is Frank Fujioka, Whidbey Island, in 1983.

Trusses: are very full with strong pink on the outside of the corollas and along the very ruffled edges of the corollas. The inside of the corollas is white.

Leaves: are dark green on top with beige indumentum.

Bloom time is early May.

Height in 10 years: about 5 feet.



2014-12

Outstanding Foliage and Elegant Blooms: *Rhododendron pachysanthum*

By Maria Stewart

Rhododendron pachysanthum catches your eye when you walk near it and it stands out from other plants at a distance, also. The beautiful combination of the silvery tomentum on the tops of the leaves and the thick, tan indumentum on the undersides of the leaves makes this species one of the most desirable rhododendrons in the world.

Here is more information about *R. pachysanthum*:

Classification: it belongs to Subsection Maculifera

Distribution in the wild: Central Taiwan, at 10,000 - 10,500 feet in elevation, in full exposure above the treeline.

Structure: compact and dense in the sun, becoming somewhat less compact with age.

Flowers: white to pale pink and usually spotted. Expect to wait a few years for blooms.

Leaves: The foliage provides continual beauty throughout the year. The persistent silvery tomentum on the tops of the leaves and the thick, tan indumentum on the undersides of the leaves make a distinctive combination.

Height: 3 feet tall and wide in 10 years.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

Photo courtesy of Mike Stewart



2015-02

A Diminutive Rhododendron With Big Appeal: R. 'Wee Bee'

By Maria Stewart

Warren Berg hybridized many rhododendrons to admire and plant in our gardens. When he named them, he gave them rhythmic names such as „Patty Bee“, „Queen Bee“, „King Bee“, „Wanna Bee“, „Whid Bee“, „Peter Bee“, „Ginny Gee“, „Honey Bee“, „Must Bee“, „June Bee“, and „Wee Bee“. Warren Berg's hybrids are known for their excellent foliage characteristics. For example, „Queen Bee“, „King Bee“, „Wanna Bee“, and „Must Bee“ all have impressive indumentum. Another example of attractive foliage is „Whid Bee“ with its dark red undersides of the leaves combined with the dark green top sides. The rest of the hybrids mentioned above are mounding dwarfs with small leaves that densely cover the plants. That includes the dwarf R. „Wee Bee“.

Concerning R. „Wee Bee“:

Parentage: R. campylogynum „Patricia“ x R. keiskei „Yaku Fairy“

Flowers: pendant trusses of 3 to 5 flowers, strong reddish-pink on the outside of each corolla, with strong

pink fading to a lighter pink on the inside; each lobe has a ray of strong pink through the center.

Leaves: small leaves densely cover the plant; each leaf has thick scales on the underside, which makes it a lepidote rhododendron.

Structure: a well-branched plant, becoming twice as wide as tall. In ten years, expect it to be 12" high and at least 24" wide.

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: sun to partial shade.

Soil: wants good drainage. Photo courtesy of Mike Stewart



2015-03

Rhododendron 'Calfort': Gorgeous Leaves Crowned By Impressive Flowers

By Maria Stewart

During our trip to New Zealand in October, 2014, we experienced the pleasure of visiting many fine gardens. We soon found rhododendrons in these gardens that we also grow in the Pacific Northwest. It was fun to see that we shared a common interest with people living over 7,000 miles away from Oregon and in another hemisphere. One of the rhododendrons catching our eye was R. „Calfort“. It quite easy to see both parents in this beautiful hybrid. They are R. calophytum and R. fortunei. It may not be easy to find this rhododendron in the Pacific Northwest, however, finding it may lead you on an adventure!

Here is more about R. „Calfort“:

Parentage: R. calophytum (seed parent) x R. fortunei (pollen parent). Described as being part of the Calfort Group

Hybridizer: L. France, circa 1921

Leaves: Lanceolate in shape, medium green, similar in length to R. calophytum

Flowers: slightly scented; white with red blotch; blooms April to May

Height: about 12 feet in 10 years

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.

Placement: partial shade will be of benefit to this rhododendron.

Photo courtesy of Mike Stewart



2015-04 a

A Special Plant Given the Names of Two Honorable Men: *Rhododendron benhallii*

By Maria Stewart

In the late 1700's, a Scottish surgeon named Archibald Menzies made several trips on sailing ships to North America, Hawaii and China. On board the ships, he was in charge of keeping the sailors healthy, but he also found time to collect plants. His discoveries include *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Douglas fir), *Arbutus menziesii* (Pacific madrone), *Araucaria araucana* (Monkey Puzzle tree) and *Menziesia*, a genus of ericaceous shrubs.

For over 200 years, these botanical names have been honoring Menzies' discoveries. In the last 10 years, however, the entire genus of *Menziesia* has been moved into the genus *Rhododendron*. Today's research has verified that relationship to *Rhododendrons*. One of the shrubs in the former genus *Menziesia* is *Menziesia ciliicalyx*. Since that name was previously assigned to a *rhododendron*, *R. ciliicalyx*, a new name needed to be found for *Menziesia ciliicalyx*.

In honor of Dr. Ben Hall's work in genetics at the University of Washington, *M. ciliicalyx* has been renamed as *Rhododendron benhallii*. Dr. Hall runs the lab that has done much of the genetic research on *rhododendrons*. Furthermore, Dr. Hall has been very generous to the *Rhododendron Species Foundation* over many years.

Here is more information about *R. benhallii*:

Native to Japan, in woodland areas.

Flowers: small, nodding, urn-to-bell-shaped, 4 to 5 lobes per flower; white with purple-pink edges; blooms

late spring.

Leaves: deciduous; leaves are bright green and oval to obovate, about 3 inches long in clusters.

Habit: slow growing, bushy, a 3 feet wide and tall at maturity.

Placement in your garden: grow in moist, but well-drained, humus-rich, acidic soil in partial shade. Shelter from cold, drying winds. Likes cool, damp summers.

2015-04 b

A Special Plant Given the Names of Two Honorable Men: *Rhododendron benhallii*

Photo courtesy of Mike Stewart



2015-05

Glowing Color on an Attractive Plant: Rhododendron 'Cody'

By Maria Stewart

We are very fortunate in the Pacific Northwest to be able to grow H3 rhododendrons and even more tender ones, sometimes, in our gardens. The wonderful hues that they exhibit lure us into choosing plants from the hugely expanded color spectrum given to us by hybridizers such as Jim Barlup, Frank Fujioka, Don Wallace and the Thompsons. Through their hybridizing efforts, many newer rhododendrons are decorated with floral color combinations that impress us and make us wonder, "What's next?" Our friends in the Eastern U.S. do not have such an expansive palette as ours from which to produce hybrids that withstand the extreme cold, high heat and humidity that they experience. Hoping to expand that color range in combination with greater hardiness has been one of the goals of Jim Barlup. Jim has crossed some West Coast hybrids with East Coast hybrids to provide both color and hardiness. An excellent example of his work in that area is R. "Cody"

Here is more about R. "Cody":

It is an elepidote, which means that it does not have scales on the underside of its leaves.

The cross is: "Wind River" x "Janet Blair" ("Wind River" is a Jim Barlup H3 hybrid and is yellow. "Janet Blair" is a David Leach hybrid rated at -15 degrees hardiness and is a frilled light pink with a distinctive green flare.)

The leaves are oblong and medium green. They cover the structure of the plant nicely.

Each slightly frilled corolla is peachy pink with a large, bright tangerine flare. The corollas form a full truss.

This hybrid is well-branched. It will reach about 5 feet x 4 feet in 10 years.

The hardiness is untested; it is probably at least 0 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: It does well in full sun.

Photograph by Jim Barlup



2015-06

For Fabulous Foliage: *R. campanulatum* ssp. *aeruginosum*

By Maria Stewart

During our recent journey with members of the RSF to experience species rhododendrons in northern India we had the pleasure of seeing hillsides of *R. campanulatum* ssp. *aeruginosum* at an elevation of about 12,000 feet. In such an environment , this species was very compact, reaching only about 18 inches tall and growing more wide than tall. We were already familiar with two selected forms of *R. aeruginosum* at home, so to see large numbers of this species in the wild was fascinating.

Here is more about *R. aeruginosum*:

Classification: subsection Campanulata, subspecies *aeruginosum* (Some consider it to be a stand-alone species and not a subspecies of *R. campanulatum*.)

Distribution in the wild: Kashmir, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan at 9,000 to 14,000 feet.

Foliage: striking blue-green leaves, when new, with smooth cinnamon indumentum below

Flowers: white or pink and it blooms in early May

Structure: compact-growing, usually wider than tall, to 4 feet in 10 years

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: some light shade is fine.

R. campanulatum ssp. *aeruginosum*: photographer unknown.



2015-08

Unusual Flowers and Foliage: *R. macrosepalum* 'Linearifolium'

By Maria Stewart

When people first see *R. macrosepalum* 'Linearifolium', they say " Really? That's a rhododendron?" This cultivar's very narrow leaves and flowers can easily confuse observers as to its true identity. And to further add to the mystery about 'Linearifolium', it is not found in the wild. It is also classified as an azalea with the name *R. stenopetalum* 'Linearifolium'. We know that *R. stenopetalum* is native to Japan, but that knowledge does not lead us to the origin of 'Linearifolium'.

Here are a few facts about 'Linearifolium':

It is a selected form, clone or cultivar of *R. stenopetalum* and is unknown in the wild.

It was named by Philipp Franz von Siebold and J.G. Zuccarini in 1846.

The flowers are pink and are so deeply divided that they look like thin straps. They imitate the very narrow leaves. The overall effect is one of pink confetti tossed on the leaves.

The leaves are a light green with some puckering. They are only about 1/8 inch wide and about 2 inches long. When grown outside, it is semi-deciduous. Indoors, it sheds many of its leaves each year.

Its hardiness is about +5 degrees F. It needs shelter from strong winds and extreme cold.

In your garden, place „Linearifolium“ where tree branches will not fall on it and pets do not play. It is somewhat brittle.

Photographer: Mike Stewart



2015-09

An Amazing Species From the Himalayas: *R. thomsonii*

By Maria Stewart

If you are fortunate enough to travel to Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan or Tibet in search of species rhododendrons, a real treat will be to gaze upon groves of blooming *Rhododendron thomsonii*. From their peeling bark to their masses of deep red flowers, this species is an outstanding example of nature's artistry.

Here is more information about *R. thomsonii*:

Classification: section *Hymenanthes*, subsection *Thomsonia*, subspecies *thomsonii*

Distribution in the wild: Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet at 10,000 to 14,000 feet.

Flowers: 2 1/2 inches long, bell-shaped, deep red with a striking calyx of red, green or cream. The trusses are loose, but are displayed in great profusion on mature plants. Usually, it takes many years for *R. thomsonii* to reach maturity and to start blooming.

Foliage: The leaves are about 4 inches long and are orbicular in shape. The tops are dark green and the under-sides are blue-white to pale green and are glaucous.

Bark: In shades of red; the peeling bark is quite attractive.

Structure: Upright and open.

Hardiness: + 5 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: Some light shade is fine.

Photograph by Mike Stewart



2015-10

A Perfectly Rounded Plant with Beautiful Foliage: *R. williamsianum*

By Maria Stewart

So many hybrids have benefitted from the genes and chromosomes of *R. williamsianum*, that it is easy to overlook the species as an outstanding rhododendron in itself. The list is very long of hybrids such as *R. „Kimberly“*, *R. „April Glow“*, *R. „Bow Bells“*, *R. „Gartendirektor Glocker“* and *R. „Moonstone“* that have nicely rounded foliage and excellent mounding growth habits. When you see the species growing where it has well-drained soil and a little bit of shade from the hottest sun, you know why hybridizers have used it so extensively. The best forms of *R. williamsianum* are several times wider than they are tall and the leaves cover the plant right down to the ground. It really likes to grow into a mound.

Here is more about *R. williamsianum*:

Classification: section Hymenantes, subsection Williamsia

Distribution in the wild: Szechwan. China at 8,000 to 10,000 feet

Flowers: 2 inches long, bell-shaped, in loose trusses of 2 or 3 corollas, in a range of pink colors.

Although the trusses are loose, the flowers cover the plant generously.

Foliage: The leaves are orbicular or ovate in shape and are green on top and blue-green on the undersides.

An attractive feature is the bronze new leaves as they first appear.

Structure: compact and low, wider than tall

Hardiness: - 5 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: well-drained soil and filtered sunlight to full sun if protected from the hottest sun.

Photograph courtesy of Jens Birck



2015-11

R. 'Apricot Fantasy' x R. "Hill's Low Red" = R. 'Wild Ginger'

By Maria Stewart

There are two reasons why I chose R. „Wild Ginger“ for this article. First, the process of choosing the parents of hybrid rhododendrons is often fascinating and as Don Wallace told us at our October meeting, choosing the parents that meet your goals is the most important part of creating a new hybrid. I hope to show the complexity of the crosses that made R. „Wild Ginger“. We have Jim Barlup to thank for creating R. „Wild Ginger“. Before Jim's work, however, two other Washington hybridizers created the parents of this striking rhododendron. Ned Brockenbrough hybridized R. „Apricot Fantasy“ and Walter Hill hybridized R. 'Hill's Low Red'.

Secondly, the orange trusses of R. „Wild Ginger“ seem to be appropriate for a Fall newsletter, although, of course, this rhododendron blooms in the Spring!

The crosses that created R. „Wild Ginger“:

“Apricot Fantasy” x “Hill's Low Red” “Hotei” x „Brandt's Tropicana” (Unknown parentage)

“Goldsworth Orange” x (souliei x wardii) “Britannia” x “Goldsworth Orange”

(dichroanthum x discolor) (“Queen Wilhemina”x „Stanley Davies) (dichroanthum x discolor)

(griffithianum x ?) (Unknown red)

Flowers: distinctive reddish-bronze buds open to become full trusses of orange corollas

Foliage: medium-green leaves

Structure: 4 to 5 feet in 10 years

Hardiness: untested; most of the parents are rated at -5 or 0 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: some light shade is fine.

R. „Wild Ginger“.

Photo courtesy Mike Stewart.



2015-12 a

For Lovely Pendant Flowers: *R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *R. xanthocodon*

By Maria Stewart

The flowers of the Cinnabarina Subsection are so variable that their classification leads to interesting discussions. The colors range from yellow to orange to red to plum-crimson to purple and include bi-colored flowers.

Two species are recognized in this subsection: *R. cinnabarinum* and *R. keysii*. The three subspecies that are classified within the species *R. cinnabarinum* are: ssp. *cinnabarinum*, ssp. *tamaense* and ssp. *xanthocodon*. Within ssp. *cinnabarinum*, are the Blandfordiiflorum Group with its bi-colored corollas and the Roylei Group with its glaucous leaves and rich red to plum-crimson corollas. So where does *R. concatenans* with its pendant apricot corollas and glaucous leaves belong? It is classified under ssp. *xanthocodon* in the Concatenans Group. Also included within ssp. *xanthocodon* is the Purpurellum Group, which seems to be related to *R. oreotrepes*.

Not to be ignored, *R. keysii* is a distinct species from *R. cinnabarinum*, but is classified in the Cinnabarina Subsection. Its bi-colored and tubular flowers range from deep red to orange to green with yellow or orange lobes which hang from willowy branches with non-glaucous leaves.

Identifying the members of the Cinnabarina Subsection depends on recognizing their pendulous flowers with nectaries held in drops in the base of the corollas. Often, they have attractive glaucous leaves.

Classification: Subgenus *Rhododendron*, Section *Rhododendron* (most lepidotes), Subsection Cinnabarina, Species *cinnabarinum*, subspecies *xanthocodon*

Distribution in the wild: Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, South Tibet, 10,000 to 14,000 feet

It is a lepidote, which means its leaves have scales. (Small dots on the underside of its leaves.)

Flowers: fleshy and tubular-campanulate; yellow, orange, apricot; pendulous.

Foliage: oval leaves are gray-green and new leaves are blue-green; scales are plentiful on the undersides.

Structure: upright-growing and somewhat compact; 4 to 5 feet in 10 years.

Hardiness: +5 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: well-drained soil and filtered sunlight; protect from the coldest areas of your garden.

2015-12 b

For Lovely Pendant Flowers: *R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *R. xanthocodon*

R. cinnabarinum ssp. *R. xanthocodon* Photograph courtesy of Mike Stewart



2016-01 a

Handsome Foliage, Bark and Flowers: *R. hodgsonii*

By Maria Stewart

The species, *R. hodgsonii*, with its rounded structure, slowly grows into a small tree in the Pacific Northwest. So, to see this rhododendron growing to heights of 20 feet in its natural environment of the Himalayas, is a real treat. There, you may first notice the smooth trunks with peeling bark, because the trunks have a striking creamy to cinnamon color. Then, you see the large pink trusses displayed beautifully on the ends of its branches. To complete the impact of seeing *R. hodgsonii* in the wild, you discover its large, dark green leaves have a thin layer of silvery to tawny or cinnamon colored indumentum on the undersides.

Natural hybrids of *R. hodgsonii* in the wild merit attention also. They are *R. hodgsonii* affinity with its thick, dark chocolate-brown indumentum and *R. x decipiens* which is a natural hybrid of *R. hodgsonii* and *R. falconeri*.

Here is more about *R. hodgsonii*:

Classification: Subgenus *Hymenanthus*, Section *Hymenanthus* (most "typical" rhododendrons), Subsection *Falconera*, Species *hodgsonii*

Distribution: Nepal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, South Tibet, at 9,500 to 14,000 feet.

It is an *elepidote*.

Flowers: about 20 tubular-bell shaped corollas in a large and compact truss; pink through purple to cherry-red, with or without a blotch.

Foliage: large, oblong, dark green on top with a thin layer of silvery to tawny or cinnamon indumentum on the undersides.

Structure: rounded when young, growing erectly with age; in the Pacific Northwest, grows to about 5 feet in 10 years.

Hardiness: +10 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: well-drained soil, filtered sunlight; protect from the wind and cold of your garden.

2016-01 b

Handsome Foliage, Bark and Flowers: *R. hodgsonii*

R. hodgsonii. Photograph courtesy of Mike Stewart.



2016-02

An Early Bloomer To Enjoy: R. 'Seta'

By Maria Stewart

When February arrives, our thoughts turn to early blooming rhododendrons and companion plants. It's always uplifting to wander the garden; to breathe in the fragrance of *Sarcococca* and *Viburnum x bodnantense* "Dawn"; to enjoy the perky pink blooms of *Cyclamen coum* and the varied colors of the stalwart Hellebores; to see the swelling buds on R. "Cilpinense", R. moupinense, R. calophytum and R. sutchuenense; and to maybe see a little color on the dwarf R. mucronulatum and the R. mucronulatum "Cornell Pink". Another rhododendron that catches our eye in February, even before Valentine's Day, is R. "Seta" because it is blooming in a greenhouse. Its tubular, light and dark pink flowers remind us that spring is not too far away.

Here is more about R. "Seta"

It is a lepidote, which means that it has scales on the undersides of its leaves.

The cross is (*R. spinuliferum* x *R. moupinense*). It blooms in late March outside. *R. spinuliferum* blooms in late April and is hardy to +5 degrees F. *R. moupinense* blooms in February or March and is hardy to 0 degrees F. (Ed.: it is in bloom now at Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden.)

Flowers: tubular funnel-shaped; combinations of light pink and darker pink; three to four corollas per each lax truss; very floriferous.

Foliage: dark green, oblong, about 2 inches long and 1 inch wide.

Height in 10 years: about 4 to 5 feet; pruning helps to create more branches.

Hardiness: +5 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: Needs protection from frosts, but also some sun to bloom well

Here is a photograph of R. "Seta", courtesy of Dick Cavender:



2016-03 A Statuesque Beauty: R. "Muncaster Mist"

By Maria Stewart

When Spring arrives, there is a rhododendron that draws me nearer to admire its beauty both for its structure and its flowers. Even without the flowers, the dark green leaves and well-appointed branches of R. "Muncaster Mist" draw your attention. In ample sunlight, this plant grows compactly, however in shade, it stretches out in all directions to grow into a stately focal point in your garden. Then, when it blooms, its light lavender blue flowers are like frosting on a cake. The foliage and flowers are a perfect complement to each other.

Here is more about R. "Muncaster Mist":

It is an *elepidote*, which means that it does not have scales on the undersides of its leaves.

The cross is (R. *campanulatum* x R. *floribundum*) The handsome foliage of R. *campanulatum* and the fine branch structure of R. *floribundum* explain why the hybrid resulting from them looks so good.

Leaves: Oblanceolate in shape; dark green on top; creamy-fawn colored indumentum on the bottom; about 5 inches long and 2 inches wide.

Flowers: light lavender blue corollas with darker purple markings inside; conical trusses; blooms between mid-April and the first of May.

Height in 10 years: 4 to 5 feet, depending on the amount of sun it gets.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: filtered sun to full sun.

Photo of R. "Muncaster Mist" courtesy of Jeannie and Calvin Parsons:



2016-04 a

A Regal Rhododendron: R. 'Sir Charles Lemon'

By Maria Stewart

Every time I walk by R. "Sir Charles Lemon" during these last two weeks, it seems to say, "Look at me!" Probably its magnificence, during this early Spring, was created by the mild winter. All the buds have opened into full trusses of white and the leaves show no damage from the weather. Since its hardiness is only about

+5 degrees F., this rhododendron really likes mild winters!

From its dark green leaves with their undersides covered in bright cinnamon-colored indumentum to the white flowers held in large trusses, R. "Sir Charles Lemon" is a handsome plant.

Here is history from www.hirsutum.info about R. "Sir Charles Lemon". "Rhododendron Sir Charles Lemon is sometimes labeled in gardens as R. arboreum ssp. cinnamomeum "Sir Charles Lemon". This is in fact a natural hybrid of R. arboreum ssp. cinnamomeum x R. campanulatum. Seed pods were harvested by Sir Joseph Hooker during his trip to Sikkim, Assam and East Bengal in 1849-1851, and sent to England. The plant grew in Sir Charles Lemon's gardens, in Carclew, Cornwall. During a trip to Cornish gardens, Henry McLaren, Lord Aberconway, spotted the rhododendron and took cuttings for propagation in 1937.

As the plant had no name, he called it Sir Charles Lemon in memory of his grower and owner. Grown from cuttings, all the plants distributed worldwide come from this specimen. Unfortunately, the original plant was deliberately destroyed after WWII. Though being more than 100 years old, it was in good condition."

Here is more about R. "Sir Charles Lemon":

It is an elepidote.

The cross is (R. arboreum ssp cinnamomeum x R. campanulatum) It is a natural hybrid found in the wilds of Sikkim, Assam and East Bengal.

Flowers: white with a few light spots; held in large trusses of about 16 corollas.

Foliage: dark green on top with bright cinnamon brown indumentum on the underside. (The indumentum in the photo is a bit too orange, but bright cinnamon brown really does describe it.)

Height in 10 years: 5 feet

Hardiness: about +5 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: needs some shelter from the coldest weather

2016-04 b

A Regal Rhododendron: R. 'Sir Charles Lemon'

Photograph of R. "Sir Charles Lemon" courtesy of Mike Stewart.



2016-05

A Species for Beautiful Foliage and Flowers: *R. tsariense*

By Maria Stewart

As it is an early spring bloomer, you will be able to enjoy the white with light pink flowers of *R. tsariense* in April. Following the flowers, this species puts on a second show, of new foliage. These new leaves are covered with changing colors of white to fawn indumentum and are white on their undersides. They contrast perfectly with the established leaves that are dark green on their topsides with dense and dark cinnamon-brown indumentum on the undersides. Once the new leaves become established, you can appreciate, also, the compact structure and the slow-growing habit of *R. tsariense*. This species is a good choice for smaller gardens.

Here is more information about *R. tsariense*:

Classification: Subgenus *Hymenanthes*; Section *Hymenanthes*; Subsection *Lanata*; Species *tsariense*. It is an *elepidote*. This is a variable species and includes the *Poluninii* Group and the *Trimoense* Group.

Differences are seen in the size of the leaves and the color of the indumentum in these two groups.

Distribution in the wild: SE Tibet, Arunchal Pradesh, Eastern Bhutan at 10,000 to 14,500 feet.

Found in conifer and rhododendron forests and on open hillsides, cliffs.

Origin of its name: derived from the area of Tsari in SE Tibet.

Flowers: white, flushed pink, often with crimson spots; bell-shaped; 1 1/2 inches long; held in loose trusses of 3-4.

Foliage: dark green on topsides with dense, dark cinnamon-brown indumentum on undersides; 2 1/2 inches long.

Structure: broadly upright and slow-growing; well-branched; 3 feet tall in 10 years.

Hardiness: 15 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: needs well-drained soil; filtered sunlight to protect the early blooms.

Photo of *R. tsariense* courtesy of Jens Birck.



2016-06

A Dwarf Rhododendron With An Intriguing Name: *R. trichostomum*

By Maria Stewart

Sometimes it is fun to discover the meaning of the name for a rhododendron species. In this case, *R. trichostomum* translates to: “with a hairy mouth”. If you examine the tiny throats of the flowers of this species, you will find that the throats are shaggy. With this knowledge in hand, you will be able to distinguish *R. trichostomum* from other dwarfs, even if the colors of the flowers of some forms are white and others are pink or rose. Apart from identifying the species, however, experiencing the dense daphne-like flowers perched on the ends of twiggy branches with narrow, dark green leaves offering a contrast, is the best encounter to have.

Here is more information about *R. trichostomum*:

Classification: Subgenus *Rhododendron*; Section *Pogonanthum*; Species *trichostomum*.

This is a variable species that includes the *Ledoides* Group. Some introductions could be natural hybrids with *R. primuliflorum*. It is a lepidote (has scales.)

Distribution in the wild: North and Northwest, Yunnan, Southwest and Central Sichuan;

Found at 10,000 to 13,000 feet in forest, scrub or open slopes, with habitats that are often surprisingly dry.

Flowers: white, pink or rose; daphne-like trusses with up to 16 corollas per truss; free-flowering.

Foliage: dark green, narrow leaves with recurved margins; aromatic; scaly on top and light brown with overlapping scales on the undersides.

Structure: upright growing and rangy in shade, but wide and compact in sun; 3 feet in 10 years.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: likes well-drained soil and can be a rock garden plant; likes some sun.

Photo of *R. trichostomum* courtesy of Mike Stewart.



2016-09 a

The King Among the Loderi Hybrids: R. "Loderi King George"

By Maria Stewart

Why do you suppose that Sir Edmund Loder, in the early 1900's, chose to cross *R. fortunei* ssp. *fortunei* with *R. griffithianum*? Was it the wonderful fragrance that both species provide? Was it the tree-like stature of the *R. fortunei* that drew his attention? Was it the handsome, peeling, reddish brown bark of the *R. griffithianum*? Was it the large flowers of both species that convinced him? Here is an excerpt from the *Rhododendron Yearbook*, 1950, written by Sir Giles Loder that gives us some background about Sir Edmund's thoughts. "This cross was made in 1901 by the late Sir Edmund Loder, who in his later years, turned his versatile brain to gardening...At that time, little had been done or was known about the hybridizing of rhododendrons beyond the various nurseryman hybrids amongst the caucasicum and kindred species. Even at this relatively early date Sir Edmund foresaw what is often overlooked now days--the importance of selecting the very best possible material for the intended cross. In this case, he selected a particularly sweetly scented and large flowered *R. fortunei*, amongst the several he had, as the seed parent. But as he did not consider as good enough any of the *R. griffithianum* which he had, Colonel Fred Godman kindly allowed him to use the pollen from a particularly fine plant of that species which as growing in the cold house at South Lodge."

And so the Loderi "grex" was born! From R. "Loderi Game Chick" to R. "Loderi White Diamond", there are at least 13 that are named and still popular. Perhaps the best known Loderi is R. "Loderi King George".

Here is more about this rhododendron:

It is an elepidote.

The cross is (*R. fortunei* ssp. *fortunei* x *R. griffithianum*).

Flowers: opening pale pink and turning white; large (about 4 inches in diameter); nicely scented.

Foliage: medium green on top and lighter on the bottom; oblong and about 7 inches long.

Height in 10 years: 6 feet. Allow plenty of room so that it can become a tree.

Hardiness: about +5 degrees F. The *R. fortunei* gives hardiness to the cross, but *R. griffithianum* is more tender.

2016-09 b

The King Among the Loderi Hybrids: R. "Loderi King George"

Photograph of R. Loderi "King George" courtesy of Susan Light- burn



2016-10

Attractive and Charming Fits the Description of R. 'Winsome'

By Maria Stewart

Always interesting are the histories of rhododendron hybrids and their hybridizers. In the case of R. "Winsome", it was created by a prolific hybridizer, Lord Aberconway of Wales. He is credited with hybridizing 259 rhododendrons, mostly in the 1920"s and 30"s, but also continuing into the 40"s and 50"s on a lesser scale. Other hybrids of his that you may have in your garden are R. "Bluebird", R. "Cilpinense", R. "Elizabeth", R. "Ethel", R. "Fabia", R. "Medusa", and R. "Seta". Quite a few of his hybrids have remained in Groups such as the Fabia group, the Medusa Group, and the Seta Group, meaning that there could be several different-looking hybrids with the same name in each Group. For example, we should not be surprised to see R. "Fabia" in one garden looking dissimilar to one in another garden. Today"s hybridizers, thankfully, choose one hybrid out of a seed lot to name. I like Harold Greer"s description of R. "Winsome". "The plant is compact with healthy looking, small, pointed foliage. It sets attractive, reddish flower buds that you will enjoy all winter. It flowers extremely heavily with beautiful, rosy cerise flowers."

Here is more about R. "Winsome":

It is an elepidote.

The cross is: "Humming Bird Group" X R. griersonianum
(R. haematodes ssp. haematodes x R. williamsianum)

Flowers: red flower buds in winter and deep rosy-red bells in late April or early May.

Foliage: medium to dark green, small pointed leaves

Height in 10 years: 3 feet and a compact grower.

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.

R. "Winsome" Photo by Rinus Manders, courtesy hirsutum website.



2016-11 A Beauty in Spring and Autumn: *R. vaseyi*

By Maria Stewart

When autumn arrives in the Pacific Northwest after a fairly dry summer, as it did this year, we are often privileged to experience a “second blooming” of our deciduous azaleas. The beautiful color of their leaves, which will soon decorate the ground below them, can be soft pinkish-red, yellow, orange or dark red. And so it is with *R. vaseyi* with its pinkish-red fall leaves. Or is the color turning more to a striking orange when the sun shines through them? Best of all, this azalea does not get mildew to spoil its attractive foliage.

Here is more about *R. vaseyi*:

Classification: Subgenus *Pentanthera*: Section *Rhodora* (There are only 2 species in *Rhodora*, the other species being *R. canadense*.)

Distribution in the wild: North Carolina, in ravines and wet sites at 1,000 to 3,000 feet.

About its name: Named after George S. Vasey, a plant explorer, who found it in 1878. His family emigrated from England to the U.S. and settled in New York State.

Flowers: The flowers display before the leaves; they range from white to deep pink with greenish throats and a few red and bronze spots. A selected clone is *R. vaseyi* „White Find“, but the dominant color is a range of pinks. The corollas are 2 inches wide and are widely funnel-shaped. Each corolla has 5 wing-like lobes and the lobes are arranged in the two-lipped shape like *R. canadense*. (However, the two-lipped shape is about the only trait that they share.) Bloom time is April to May. No fragrance.

Foliage: Elliptic, tapering at each end of the leaves; green with paler undersides; 5 inches long.

Structure: Upright growing and bushy; 5 feet in 10 years.

Hardiness: -15 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: likes moist soils with filtered sun but not shade.



2016-12

A Species to Brighten the Early Spring: *R. strigillosum*

By Maria Stewart

There are two beautiful rhododendron hybrids that are well-known in the Pacific Northwest. They are "Taurus", hybridized by Dr. Frank Mossman and "Grace Seabrook", hybridized by Seabrook. What do they have in common besides their great foliage and red flowers? They are both "Jean Marie" x *strigillosum* hybrids. Hybridizers know that *R. strigillosum* contributes strong red color and an earlier blooming time to their crosses. In fact, *R. strigillosum* blooms from the middle of March into early April. There are other traits to enjoy about *R. strigillosum*, such as its dark green recurved leaves, its noticeable bristles and its somewhat rounded limb structure.

Here is more about *R. strigillosum*:

Classification: Subgenus *Hymenanthes*; Section *Hymenanthes*; Subsection *Maculifera*

Note here that *R. strigillosum* is closely related to the newly introduced *R. ochraceum* which has smaller leaves and indumentum covering the lower leaf surface.

Distribution in the wild: Szechwan and NE Yunnan at 7,000 to 11,000 feet, in thickets or in the open on cliffs and slopes.

About its name: It means "with short bristles".

Flowers: deep red; 8-12 corollas in a truss; flat-topped trusses.

Note here that if a rhododendron looks like *strigillosum*, but is blooming pink to white, and it has shorter leaves, it is *R. pachytrichum* instead.

Foliage: distinctly bristly; dark green; oblong lanceolate; strongly recurved edges; bristles on young leaves are white.

Structure: grows into a shrub or small tree; rounded in habit; branchlets covered with bristles.

Hardiness: +5 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: early flowers and new growth need some protection in most climates.



2017-01

Two Rhododendron Beauties for Your Garden: R. "Honsu"s Baby" and R. "Something Lovely"

By Maria Stewart

It is with pleasure that I say there will be several articles this year touting the virtues of hybrids created by our own Portland Chapter members. For this newsletter, we feature those of Herb Spady, a long-time member of the ARS, Gold Medal winner, Past ARS President and Past Portland Chapter President. His hybrid, R. "Honsu"s Baby", is named after his property in the Willamette Valley, Honsuchachac Rhododendron Garden. This dwarf grows wider than tall, showing its R. keiskei "Yaku Fairy" parentage. Herb also grew, selected, named and registered R. "Something Lovely" from a group of open-pollinated R. "Lori Eichelser" seed. This rhododendron grows compactly, with its pink trusses adorning its attractive foliage. To see a previously-written article about R. "Something Lovely", go to rhodies.org, click on Newsletters, then click on Maria Stewart"s Portraits of Rhododendrons.

Here is more about R. "Honsu"s Baby":

It is a lepidote..

The cross is: R. keiskei var. ozawae "Yaku Fairy" X R. scabrifolium var. spiciferum
(note: R. keiskei cordifolia became renamed as R. keiskei var. ozawae in 1997)

Flowers: White centers with pastel pink edges opening from strong pink buds; the flowers cover the plant so well that the leaves are hidden. It blooms in April.

Foliage: Small, medium green leaves, with scales on the back, covering the entire plant. Height in 10 years: 1 to 1.5 feet; the width is double the height.

Structure: a low-growing dwarf..

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: Morning sun, afternoon filtered sunlight.

Photograph of R. "Honsu"s Baby" courtesy of Dick Cavender.



2017-02

The Glowing Colors of Three Van Veen Hybrids: E. "Autumn Gold", R. "Evening Glow", and R. "Old Copper"

By Maria Stewart

Continuing on with a series of articles about hybrids created by Portland Chapter members, this month we feature three hybrids with vibrant colors. In the late forties and fifties when yellow and orange rhododendrons were not generally available, Theodore Van Veen, Sr. and Ted Van Veen hybridized and grew these to expand the interest in new colors. Other hybrids of theirs are R. "Lucky Strike" and R. "Anna Rose Whitney". The cross for both of these is: R. griersonianum X R. "Countess of Derby". The radiant color pigments running through R. "Autumn Gold", R. "Evening Glow" and R. "Old Copper" are contributed by the R. "Fabia Group" at 50% of the genes. And notice how R. griersonianum adds strong color to all five of the hybrids, also.

"Autumn Gold" = R. fortunei ssp. discolor X R. "Fabia Group"

"Evening Glow" = R. fortunei ssp. discolor X R. "Fabia Group"

"Old Copper" = R. "Vulcan" X R. "Fabia Group"

("Vulcan" = R. "Mars" x R. griersonianum) X ("Fabia Group" = R. dichroanthum x R. griersonianum)

Here is more about R. "Autumn Gold", R. "Evening Glow" and R. "Old Copper":

They are elepidotes...

Flowers: "Autumn Gold" is salmon orange with a deeper-colored center. "Evening Glow" is medium yellow and "Old Copper" is orange. They all bloom late May into June..

Foliage: All have medium green, pointed leaves, and usually are quite dense when well grown.

Height in 10 years: 5 feet.

Structure: upright. Hardiness: -5 degrees F. Siting in your garden: They like filtered sun, but not too much shade or they will not bloom well.

R. "Old Copper" Photographer Garth Wedemire



2017-03 a

Persistent, Woolly, Plastered, Tomentose...Oh My!

By Maria Stewart

Species rhododendrons have adorned themselves with attractive indumentum through the ages for a variety of reasons. One, indumentum plays a role in protecting species from the extremes of heat and cold. Secondly, the hairs break up the flow of air across the plant surfaces thereby reducing transpiration during dry and windy weather. Additionally, insects such as the pesky lacebugs find indumentum difficult to eat, as do deer and other browsers who avoid rhododendrons with significant indumentum.

There are many elepidote species and hybrids with some amount of indumentum, so let's learn some terminology. In biology, indumentum (Latin: "garment") is a covering of trichomes (fine "hairs") on a plant. If a leaf, stem and branch surface is described as glabrous or glabrate, it is lacking hairs. If the leaf, stem or branch surface is pubescent, it has hairs. It is fairly easy to describe a glabrous surface, but the terms that have been developed for pubescent surfaces make quite a list. Here are a few:

fimbriate —-fringed

hirsute —-coarsely hairy *R. hirsutum* means "hairy"

compacted—-dense

cup-shaped hairs—like a daiquiri glass

discontinuous—broken up by interruptions

fuzzy—fuzzy

metallic—metallic

plastered—flattened hairs and shiny surface

persistent—upper leaf surface hairs that remain until maturity

rufous—rust-colored

strigillose—minutely strigose *R. strigillosum* means "with short bristles"

strigose—having straight hairs all pointing in the same direction

tomentose—covered with dense, matted, woolly hairs

woolly—woolly

There are many more names for the shapes of the hairs, such as **capitellate**, **dendroid** and **ramiform**, but here is an interesting fact to ponder. The hairs of indumentum are finer than human hair with some of the larger types being only 1/10th the size of a human hair.

Now that our tutorial is finished for this newsletter, please enjoy some photos of rhododendrons with indumentum.

R. metternichii hybrid. Photo courtesy Mike Stewart.



2017-03 b

Persistent, Woolly, Plastered, Tomentose...Oh My!

R. kesangiae. Photo courtesy Jens Birck



2017-04 a

Two Grand English Ladies From the Past Are Still Putting On a Show: R. "Cynthia" and R. "Pink Pearl"

By Maria Stewart

The mature age of 'Cynthia' and 'Pink Pearl' never diminishes their beauty despite the fact that they have been on this planet for more than a century. 'Cynthia' was hybridized in the 1850's by the Standish and Noble Nursery when the idea was to create very hardy rhododendrons. From the Appalachian mountains, *R. catawbiense* had made its way to England in 1809 and was being used to create stalwart hybrids. Not only hardiness, but also the attributes of tolerance of wind and sun, and of flowering with full and upright trusses

were desirable. However, by 1900, the hardy rhododendrons had gone out of favor and such species as *R. thomsonii*, *R. arboreum* and *R. fortunei* had replaced or reduced the amount of *R. catawbiense* found in hybrids. Joseph Hooker's prominence as a plant hunter in Sikkim and as the Director of Kew Gardens led to the dissemination of these choicer species for trials in private gardens. Gardeners and owners hybridized with enthusiasm. As a result, in the 1890's, 'Pink Pearl' was created by the Waterer Nursery. Let's take a look at the crosses of these two rhododendrons:

'Cynthia' (1856)

R. catawbiense X *R. griffithianum*

= 'Pink Pearl' (1892)

= George Hardy' X 'Broughtonii'

R. griffithianum x *R. catawbiense* *R. arboreum* x ?

Yes, 'Pink Pearl' still has *R. catawbiense* in it, but its genes are reduced to 25 percent instead of 50 percent.

Did 'Cynthia' lose favor with rhododendron lovers when the more —exotic|| hybrids came along? Not at all; the magenta color of 'Cynthia' and the name and color of 'Pink Pearl' made them both popular choices for Victorian front lawns. On large estates, the hybrids were grouped along the edges of lakes and in the center of driveways in front of great houses.

What other traits do these hybrids share?

They are both hardy. 'Cynthia' is rated at -15 degrees F and 'Pink Pearl' is rated at -5 degrees F.

They both have triploid trusses (more substance than usual)

Both are large growers

They both do well in the sun, warm climates and exposed areas.

They are both still considered to be good hybrids.

They have both won the Award of Garden Merit given by the Royal Horticultural Society.

Both, and especially 'Pink Pearl', are parents of other hybrids (See page below.)

2017-04 b

Two Grand English Ladies From The Past



R. 'Cynthia' Photograph by Steve Henning from the 'hirsutum' website.

When Crystal Springs Lake Island became the American Rhododendron Society Test Garden in 1950, two forty-year-old 'Cynthia' rhododendrons were planted there. Already large plants at that time, they grew into amazing monuments to the glory and beauty of rhododendrons.



R. 'Pink Pearl' Photograph by Hank Helm from the 'hirsutum' website.

2017-05 a

Wonderful Hybrids from Ben Lancaster: R. 'Bluette', R. 'Snow Lady', R. 'Vulcan's Flame' and R. 'Yaku Sunrise'

By Maria Stewart

Do you know that Ben Lancaster was a Charter Member of the American Rhododendron Society? Ben and his wife, Rose, lived in Camas, Washington and eventually their granddaughter, Ellen, joined the Portland Chapter in 2007. Occasionally, Ellen attends our events. Ben caught a case of —rhododendronitis|| in about 1937 while recovering from an accident, and for 33 years after that, his attention was focused on the genus. He created at least 36 hybrids and just possibly you may have a Lancaster hybrid in your garden. Ben based his hybridizing on planning the objectives of each cross. He used parents that have positive attributes such as cold and heat tolerance, good form, good foliage and rooting ability. Among his hybrids, you will see his use of R. williamsianum and R. yakushmanum that produced excellent garden sized plants. Hybridizing to get late bloomers, using the fragrance of R. occidentale and creating large-leaf hybrids with R. macabeum were other goals that intrigued Ben Lancaster.

Here are some details about Bluette, Snow Lady, Vulcan's Flame and Yaku Sunrise:

Bluette (R. augustinii x R. impeditum) a lepidote dwarf about 3 feet high in 10 years; light blue trusses; leaves are medium green on dense, interwoven branches; hardiness of -5 degrees F.; try filtered sun for best performance. (Lancaster, 1958)

Snow Lady (R. leucaspis x R. ciliatum) a lepidote growing to about 30 inches in 10 years; snow white trusses; leaves are medium green and covered with noticeable hairs; hardiness of -5 degrees F. But you should plant it where there is protection from frost to save the early blooms. (Lancaster, 1958) P.A., 1955

Vulcan's Flame (R. griersonianum x Mars) This is the reverse cross of Vulcan. Ben found merit in making reverse crosses because the seed parent is important in creating plants with good form and growth habit. Glowing red trusses; an elepidote growing to about 5 feet in 10 years; dark green pointed leaves with red stems; hardiness of -15 degrees F.; blooms in late May into June. (Lancaster before 1955)

Yaku Sunrise (Vulcan's Flame x R. yakushmanum Koichiro Wada) an elepidote growing to about 3 feet tall and wide in 10 years; pink with a subtle blend of peach and deeper pink on the outside of the petals; deep green leaves are recurved slightly; hardiness of -10 degrees F.; blooms in May. (Lancaster registered 1966)

2017-05 b

Wonderful Hybrids from Ben Lancaster: R. 'Bluette', R. 'Snow Lady', R. 'Vulcan's Flame' and R. 'Yaku Sunrise



R. 'Bluette'

R. 'Yaku Sunrise'



Photographers:

Odo Tschetsh is the photographer of R. 'Bluette'

Mike Stewart is the photographer of R. 'Snow Lady'

Garth Wedemire is the photographer of R. 'Yaku Sunrise'

Coen Zonneveld is the photographer of R. 'Vulcan's Flame'
Coen Zonneveld is the photographer of R. 'Vulcan's Flame'

R. 'Snow Lady'



R. 'Vulcan's Flame'



2017-06 a

As Sweet As Its Name "Swamp Honeysuckle": *R. viscosum*

By Maria Stewart

When June approaches, we look forward to smelling the sweet fragrance of *R. viscosum* and for that reason, we planted it close by a walkway. We can easily say that it is one of our favorite deciduous azaleas among the fifteen American azalea species. Plant explorers recognized the value of *R. viscosum* and it was the first American azalea grown in England in 1680 from seed collected by John Bannister, an English missionary. This species played an important role during the early 1800's in the hybridizing of the Ghent azaleas in Belgium, the Ornatum and Viscosepalum Hybrids by J.R. Gowen and the Anthony Waterer hybrids in England.

The early hybrids were consolidated and called the Ghent-type hybrids, some of which are *R. "Daviesii"*, *R. "Altaclarensis"* and *R. "Narcissiflora"*, a Rustica Floro Pleno Hybrid. In 1870, the Waterers started improving the Ghent-type azaleas by crossing them with *R. molle* from Asia and other species from North America such as *R. calendulaceum* to produce large flowers with great color and substance. These hybrids became the Knap Hill azaleas named after their nursery. In 1922, Lionel de Rothschild of Exbury acquired several Knap Hill seedlings. Among them was *R. "George Reynolds"*, a parent of *R. "Hotspur"* which was introduced in 1934. As much more hybridizing continued at Exbury and around the world, the Knap Hill (Exbury) group developed into the largest number of cultivars with the greatest range of colors. There are five sub-groups of the Knap Hill azaleas: the Knap Hill, the Slocock, the Ilam of New Zealand, the Exbury and the Windsor.

Ultimately, *R. viscosum* had a great influence on the history of deciduous azalea hybridization that continues to this day!

Classification: Subgenus Pentanthera; Section Pentanthera; Subsection Pentanthera

Distribution in the wild: From southern Maine, down the East Coast to Florida, along the Gulf Coast to Mississippi; also found 400 miles inland at some high-elevation areas in the southern Appalachians; also found west of the Mississippi River, in Missouri, eastern Texas, eastern Oklahoma and northern Louisiana. It is North America's most variable species depending on where it grows in the wild, from damp ditches to swampy margins to sandy fields to dry ridges.

About its name: it means "sticky" which refers to its sticky glandular tube and stem hairs. The hairs are so sticky that flying insects are easily caught on them.

Flowers: white, rarely pink, with slender tubes; flowers open after leaves; fragrant; June through September.

Leaves: Shape varies from small and narrow to large and rounded; color varies from gray-green to glossy dark green to glaucous gray-green to blue-green; can be rough or smooth to the touch.

Structure: Low-growing, high elevation type is montanum group. Low elevation type is low-growing also and named aemulans group. The dwarf type is coryi group. The other 2 types are oblongifolium group and serrulatum group. Our plant is 3 feet high and 5 feet wide in 20 years.

Hardiness: -15 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: filtered sunlight would be ideal.

2017-06 b

As Sweet As Its Name "Swamp Honeysuckle": *R. viscosum*

R. viscosum , the "Swamp Honeysuckle" Photo courtesy of Hank Helm



2017-08 a

R. arborescens x *R. prunifolium* = A Late Summer Bloomer

By Maria Stewart

A rhododendron that is blooming in August? With all this hot weather? And it still catches your eye with its beauty? The genus *Rhododendron* never ceases to amaze us with its diversity and in this case, we see a

pleasing extension of the blooming season. Appropriately, this deciduous azalea is named 'August Sunrise'

and its hybridization is credited to Fred Galle of Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia. These special gardens were created to protect American species azaleas, certainly a group of rhododendrons to treasure.

To explain the summer blooming of 'August Sunrise', let's first talk about *R. prunifolium*, which blooms from July to September. Called the 'Plumleaf Azalea', it has orange-red to red flowers, smooth leaves and stems and dark green leaves. The traits of this species are stable because of its late blooming time.

Grow-

ing quite tall, up to 20 feet or more, *prunifolium* likes cool places along creeks and in ravines. It is found in

a very small range covering only eleven counties along the Alabama-Georgia border.

Now *R. arborescens* has fragrant white flowers, often with yellow blotches and prominent red pistils and stamens. Called the "Sweet Azalea", it blooms from May to August. The leaves are smooth to semi-glossy and vary from medium green to dark green with glaucous undersides. Growing to fifteen feet and very sto-

loniferous, *R. arborescens* is one of North America's most recognizable species. However, there is another

form of *R. arborescens* named variety *georgiana* that grows in the low elevations of Alabama, Georgia and

Mississippi. It blooms in August and September instead of May to August like its cousin in the highlands, Its leaves are not glaucous and this variety is not stoloniferous, although its flowers are white with the dis-

tinctive red pistils and stamens. The interesting trait in common with *R. prunifolium* is the location of *R. arborescens* var, *georgiana* causing botanists to explain the pink or salmon shades of a few *R. prunifolium*

to close encounters between to two species. That is why *R. 'August Sunrise'* is listed as a possible open-pollinated hybrid on the website *hirsutum*.

Here is more information about *R. 'August Sunrise'*:

Classification: Subgenus *Pentanthera*; Section *Pentanthera*

It is an *elepidote*.

Flowers: medium pink with a gold blotch that combines with the pink to look slightly tangerine; five petals

with five long red stamens; mildly fragrant,

Foliage: medium green and semi-glossy; smooth surfaces; deciduous.

Height in 10 years: 5 to 8 feet, growing upright and bushy.

Hardiness: -10 to -15 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: morning sun, afternoon filtered sunlight.

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2017-08 b

R. arborescens x R. prunifolium = A Late Summer Bloomer

Source: Dick Cavender grew the plants of 'August Sunrise' that we received from Fran and Ed Egan



R. 'August Sunrise'. Photographer Mike Stewart



R. prunifolium. Photographer John R. French



R. arborescens. Photographer Tjis Huisman

2017-09 a

One of Taliensia's Gems: *R. roxieanum* variety *oreonastes*

By Maria Stewart

When Dennis Bottemiller speaks to the Portland Chapter this month, it will be enlightening to find out how he propagates *R. roxieanum* var. *oreonastes*. We have found that it roots weakly for us and every plant that survives the rooting process is a treasure. This rhododendron, however, is worth all the efforts to propagate it. It has the most narrow leaves of all the *roxieanums*, a quite variable group of forms, and is striking in a garden setting. Tan to cinnamon-colored indumentum covers the underneath of each leaf as a bonus. Who needs flowers when the foliage is so wonderful? OK, so a little frosting on the cake is desirable, even if you have to wait a number of years for it to bloom.

Here is more about *R. roxieanum* var. *oreonastes*:

Classification: Subgenus *Hymenanthes*; Section *Hymenanthes*; Subsection *Taliensia*

As suggested above, *R. roxieanum* presents itself with varying sizes from dwarf and compact to a small tree. Its foliage varies in size and shape also.

There is evidence that *R. proteoides* is related to *R. roxieanum* and that *R. roxieanum* var. *parvum* is an intermediate hybrid of the two species. It is also suggested that *R. globigerum* is a form of *R. roxieanum*.

Distribution in the wild: N.W. Yunnan, S.W. Sichuan, Tibet-Yunnan border at 11,000-14,000 feet, above and below the tree line.

About the name: named after Mrs. Roxie Hanna of Tali-fu, China, a friend of George Forrest.

Flowers: white or creamy and usually spotted red; funnel-campanulate corollas with 6 to 15 corollas in a truss.

Foliage: very narrow and linear shaped; dark green on the upper surface with tan to cinnamon indumentum on the lower surface; new leaves have white indumentum which gradually turns to tan or cinnamon.

Structure: slow growing shrub

Hardiness: -10 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: any exposure with good drainage.

2017-09 b

One of Taliensia's Gems: *R. roxieanum* variety *oreonastes*

R. roxieanum* var. *oreonastes

Photographs courtesy *hirsutum*
website. Top right image, photographer:
Garth Wedemire.

Lower image, photographer:
Susan Lightburn.



2017-10 a

A Trio of Bears: 'Teddy Bear', Cinnamon Bear' and 'Silver Bear'

By Maria Stewart

To make this article into a story, 'Goldilocks' would have to be included. However, 'Goldilocks' deserves her own article, therefore, November's newsletter will feature that fine lepidote. Meanwhile, back to the bears. All three have striking indumentum of the woolly type underneath their leaves which makes you think of bear fur. And 'Silver Bear' has discontinuous white indumentum on the tops of its leaves which leads you to think of the color silver. You will see shared characteristics among these three rhododendrons, mainly because of their parentage. Notice that each "bear" grows with a different stature, however.

Here are descriptions of the three bears:

'Teddy Bear' grows wider than tall and makes a large specimen in fifteen years of 4 feet in height and 7 feet in width. Its leaves are dark green on top and have orange-brown indumentum on the undersides. The same indumentum extends down the petioles of the leaves and then down the stems. It blooms in late April into early May and the 8 to 10 corollas are light purplish pink fading to white with red spotting in the throat. Its hardiness is -5 to -10 degrees F. It appreciates filtered sunlight and good drainage. The cross is (**Lem's bureavii hybrid x R. yakushmanum**) but the hybridizer is unknown. Briggs introduced this hybrid in 1991.

'Cinnamon Bear' grows a bit taller than wide in ten years to about 6 feet in height and 5 feet in width. Its leaves are dark green on top with small remnants of discontinuous fawn-colored indumentum on the previous year's leaves. The undersides of the leaves give this rhododendron its name because the indumentum is a rich cinnamon color. Also, fawn-colored indumentum covers the petioles and the stems. It blooms in late April into early May with full trusses of about 20 white corollas. It is hardy to -5 to -10 degrees F. It appreciates filtered sunlight and good drainage. The cross is (**R. bureavii x R. yakushmanum 'Koichiro Wada'**) and the hybridizer is Cecil Smith who registered it in 1989.

'Silver Bear' is more compact growing than the other two bears. It grows to about 3 feet tall and wide in ten years. Its leaves are dark green on top and are decorated with white discontinuous indumentum. The undersides are covered with woolly orange-brown indumentum and the indumentum covers the leaf petioles and the stems, also. It blooms in late April into early May with full trusses of white corollas. It is hardy to -5 to -10 degrees F. It also appreciates filtered sunlight and good drainage. The cross is (**R.yakushmanum x R. bureavii**) and the hybridizer is in question. We purchased this rhododendron from Lansing Bulgin about 25 years ago when it was simply (**yak x bureavii**). The hybridizer could be Cecil Smith, but that is not confirmed. We named it **'Silver Bear'** after growing it for several years under the cross name only.

2017-10 b

A Trio of Bears: 'Teddy Bear', Cinnamon Bear' and 'Silver Bear'



R. 'Teddy Bear'

Photo by Garth Wedemire from the
hirsutum website.



R. 'Cinnamon Bear'

Photographer unknown, courtesy
hirsutum website.



R. 'Silver Bear'

Photographer: Mike Stewart

2017-11 a

Really? There are Three Rhododendrons named 'Goldilocks'?

By Maria Stewart

In October's newsletter, I wrote about the Three Bears: R. 'Cinnamon Bear', R. 'Silver Bear' and R. 'Teddy Bear' and promised that R. 'Goldilocks' would come along in the November issue. Well, not only does R. 'Goldilocks' finish the story, two other R. 'Goldilocks' are joining her. The small growing lepidote hybrid with dark green leaves and bright yellow flowers is the R. 'Goldilocks' that is most familiar to Americans. It is not registered because there is another R. 'Goldilocks' that was hybridized at about the same time and it is registered. This rhododendron is an elepidote hybrid with parentage that produces a 5 foot plant in ten years. Not to be outdone by the other two R. 'Goldilocks', there is also a Vireya hybrid with golden flowers and dense foliage that draws your attention. So, here is more information about these 3 rhododendrons with the same name and not much else in common:

R. 'Goldilocks' is a lepidote hybrid with attractive scales on the tops and undersides of its dark green leaves. It tends to grow to about two feet in ten years if it is grown in enough sun. The flowers are bright yellow and cover the plant in early May. This is the R. 'Goldilocks' that Americans grow most often. Its **parentage is R. xanthostephanum x R. rupicola variety chryseum** and the hybridizer is Howard Kerrigan. It likes good drainage and its hardiness is 0 degrees F. This rhododendron is protected from commercial propagation without permission by a U.S. Patent.

R. 'Goldilocks' is an elepidote hybrid which shows its 50 percent R. campylocarpum parentage with pastel yellow flowers and loose trusses of eight to ten corollas. The leaves are medium green and are somewhat larger than the species. It grows to about 5 feet in ten years. The **parentage is R. 'Dr. Stocker' x R. campylocarpum Elatum Group** and it was hybridized by M. Haworth-Booth of Surrey, England in 1974. As for hardiness, an estimate of 0 degrees F. is only a guess based on R. campylocarpum's hardiness.

R. 'Goldilocks' is a lepidote hybrid Vireya with rich yellow and yellow-orange tubular funnel-shaped corollas. The flowers are further enhanced with dense, dark green foliage. The **parentage is R. christinae x R. macgregoriae**. This Vireya was hybridized by B. Clancy and registered by G.L.S. Snell. During the summer, your containerized Vireyas can live outside, but they will need greenhouse or indoor protection during the winter in the Pacific Northwest.

2017-11 b

Really? There are Three Rhododendrons named 'Goldilocks'



R. 'Goldilocks' Photographer: Dick Cavender



R. 'Goldilocks' Photographer: unknown



Hybrid Vireya R.
'Goldilocks' Photographer unknown.

2017-12 a

Exploring the Complexity of Subsection Neriiflora:
With a Focus on *R. chamaethomsonii*

By Maria Stewart

The organizational divisions that you find in Subsection Neriiflora serve to group species into five alliances: Haematodes, Mallotum, Sanguineum, Forrestii and Neriiflorum. The species in each alliance share characteristics such as leaf size, corolla color, truss shape and whether there are hairs or not on stems and leaves. Sounds very organized, right? Not so fast! Because the plants in this subsection grow together in the wild and they hybridize readily with each other, their classification is often confusing. Let's take *R. chamaethomsonii*, for example. "Chamae" means dwarf, low, or on the ground, so that translates into "low-growing thomsonii". However, *R. chamaethomsonii* is most accurately placed in the Forrestii Alliance where it shares *R. forrestii* traits. The plants growing nearby can be considered to be natural hybrids of *R. forrestii* crossed with *R. sanguineum*, *R. parmulatum*, *R. eclecticum*, *R. selense*, *R. aganiphum* and others. It can be said that most of the plants named *R. chamaethomsonii* are natural hybrids of *R. forrestii*. Furthermore, *R. thomsonii* is not even in Subsection Neriiflora, it is classified in Subsection Thomsonia. Thank you to Peter and Ken Cox for writing in The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species about the need for a further "sorting out" of Subsection Neriiflora.

Here is more about *R. chamaethomsonii*:

Classification: Subgenus *Hymenanthes*; Section *Hymenanthes*; Subsection *Neriiflora*; Alliance *Forrestii*

Distribution in the wild: East and SE Tibet, NW Yunnan, North Burma (Myanmar); 11,000 to 15,000 feet; often growing with *R. forrestii* on steep slopes.

About the name: translates into "low-growing *R. thomsonii*"

Flowers: Crimson to pink, 1 to 5 corollas; blooms March to May.

Leaves: broadly obovate to elliptic; upper surface glabrous, lower surface glabrous or with a sparse, white, plastered indumentum.

Varieties of this species:

***R. chamaethomsonii* var. *chamaethomsonii*:** deep crimson or crimson corollas, 1-5 per truss; blooms March to May; leaves are oblong, upper surface is dark green and glabrous, lower surface is usually glabrous or with thin, discontinuous indumentum

***R. chamaethomsonii* var *chamaethauma*:** color of corollas is very variable, from deep crimson to pale pink, the only stable population has pale to deep pink corollas; blooms March to May; has smaller leaves than var. *chamaethomsonii*.

***R. chamaethomsonii* var *chamaedoron*:** color of corollas is variable; mature leaves have thin, discontinuous indumentum on lower surface; most likely a natural hybrid.

Structure: more upright than *R. forrestii*; can be very compact and dense; sometimes rangy.

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: needs very well-drained soil and the most cool part of your garden; does not like hot summers.

2017-12 b

Exploring the Complexity of Subsection Neriiflora:
With a Focus on *R. chamaethomsonii*



R. chamaethomsonii var. *chamaethomsonii*
Photographer Coen Zonneveld, courtesy hirsutum



R. chamaethomsonii var. *chamaethauma*
Photographer Rinus Manders, courtesy hirsutum



R. chamaethomsonii 'Little Vixen'
Photograph courtesy RSBG

2018-01 a

A Species from Higher Altitudes: *R. anthopogon*

By Maria Stewart

Do you enjoy the challenge of growing a rhododendron in your garden that always prefers cool, moist weather, is sensitive to fertilizer and wants a less acid soil than most other rhododendrons? If you are so inclined, *R. anthopogon* presents that challenge. To grow it successfully, is to imitate the environment of its origin.

On the other hand, the merits of this dwarf include flowers that have been compared to tissue paper and leaves that are covered with scales both on the tops and the bottoms of the leaves. When we saw it growing at about 12,000 feet in Sikkim, we noticed that tissue paper “look” that set it apart from other dwarfs in the area. Other features include stamens and a style that are hidden in the throat of each small corolla and leaves that are very aromatic when touched.

Here is more about *R. anthopogon*:

Classification: Subgenus: *Rhododendron* Section: *Pogonanthum*

The *Section Pogonanthum* also includes these dwarfs to consider growing:

R. cephalanthum, *R. collettianum*, *R. kongboense*, *R. laudandum*, *R. primuliflorum*, *R. sargentianum*, *R. trichostomum*.

Distribution in the wild: Eastern Nepal through Bhutan to South and S.E. Tibet at 9,000 to 16,000 feet elevation and found on open ground or rocks.

About the name: translates into “with bearded flowers” because the throats of the corollas have a ring of hairs in them.

Flowers: white, pale yellow, pink to deep rose; tubular with flaring lobes; is shy to flower even after several years; blooms in April.

Leaves: very aromatic, elliptic or oval shaped; dark green and scaly, or not scaly, on top and thick, reddish- brown overlapping scales on the bottoms.

Subspecies of this species: *Ssp. hypenanthum* which is found west of *R. anthopogon*, has smaller leaves and flowers at a young age.

Structure: about two feet in height; fairly compact.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: needs sun, but needs cool and moist conditions; needs fast drainage.

2018-01 b

A Species from Higher Altitudes: *R. anthopogon*

R. anthopogon:



R. anthopogon, photograph by Hank Helm, taken at the RSBG. Courtesy hirsutum website.



R. anthopogon, photograph by Mike Stewart.

2018-02 a

From the Cold, Harsh Northern Latitudes: *R. camtschaticum*

By Maria Stewart

During the winter months, those who see *R. camtschaticum* may think it is dead. First, it is deciduous and second, it gives no indication that it is going to leaf out in the spring. However, this amazing species dramatically comes to life with new leaves in the very early spring. Then unlike nearly every other rhododendron, the flowers also burst into bloom on leaf-like bracts! It seems to know that there is a very short growing season ahead to grow, to flower and to set seed.

Growing *R. camtschaticum* in your garden requires rocky soil, cool summers and some sun. In the wild, it grows in full sun, in gravelly loam and crevices and on the tops of mountains. Maybe, on hot summer days, you could put ice cubes around it.

A smaller version of this species is *R. redowskianum*. It has smaller flowers and a shorter calyx. Its distribution in the wild is E. Siberia, Manchuria and Korea. This species is difficult to keep alive in cultivation.

Here is more about *R. camtschaticum*:

Classification: Subgenus: *Therorhodion* Species: *R. camtschaticum* Subspecies: *R. camtschaticum*

Distribution in the wild: The Kamchatka Peninsula, N. Japan, Alaska, the Aleutian Chain, the Bering Strait, the Sakhalin through Kurile Islands and the shores of the Okhotsk Sea.

About the name: named after the Kamchatka Peninsula.

Flowers: rosy-purple usually, but can be red, pink and rarely white. About 1 1/2 inches wide with hairs on the outside and some on the inside.

Leaves: obovate and deciduous; the margins are hairy; quite thin; good fall color.

Structure: Either prostrate or bushy; roots as it spreads; can reach a height of 1 foot.

Hardiness: -25 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: needs very fast drainage and cool conditions but needs good light, also.

2018-02 b

From the Cold, Harsh Northern Latitudes: *R. camtschaticum*

R. camtschaticum:



Photographer: unknown Location: possibly Kamchatka, Russia.



Autumn foliage color.

Photographer: David Ledsham

2018-03 a

Three Magnificent and Early Blooming Species: *R. calophytum*, *R. praeevernum* and *R. sutchuenense* var. *geraldii*

By Maria Stewart

During those two weeks of cold and snowy weather in late February, one of the rhododendrons in our garden continued to swell its buds and to look as if Spring was approaching. The cold weather does not faze our hardy *R. sutchuenense* var. *geraldii* and you can count on *R. calophytum* and *R. praeevernum* to be just as hardy. Keep in mind, however, that all three species will prefer being sheltered from strong winds that might break the leaf petioles of their attractive long leaves. All three will command rather large spaces with *R. praeevernum* growing somewhat smaller and more slowly than the other two. Adding to their grand stature are their early and large flowers, prominently displayed on the tips of their strong branches.

Here is more about each of these species which are all members of Subgenus *Hymenanthes*; Section *Hymenanthes*; Subsection *Fortunea*:

R. calophytum* var. *calophytum is the most cultivated of the *R. calophytum* varieties. (As a side note, variety *R. openshawianum* is considered by some to be an inferior form of *R. calophytum*.) It will eventually become a beautiful tree, showing off its large, light pink flowers, each one displaying a deep red blotch. Considering that *R. calophytum*'s medium green leaves can be as long as a foot, you will want to plant it out of strong winds in your garden. When a hint of spring comes, watch for *R. calophytum* buds to swell and bloom as early as February. We have a photo of a *R. calophytum* blooming with snow on the ground. It is hardy to -15 degrees F. You will find it in the wild in Szechwan and NE Yunnan at 6,000 to 13,000 feet in elevation.

R. praeevernum is slower and lower-growing than *R. calophytum* and *R. sutchuenense*. Its lance-shaped leaves are smaller than the other two species, also. You should still place it out of strong winds for the sake of the leaves. Some experts consider *R. praeevernum* to be closely related to *R. sutchuenense*. With its handsome form, it eventually becomes a small tree in a more compact manner than the other two species. And its large white or pink flowers with wine-red blotches, decorate it wonderfully. Blooming as early as February, you will want to site it slightly under a tree to protect its flowers. The leaves, stems and roots, however, are quite hardy, to -5 degrees F. You will find it in the wild in W. Hubei and E. Szechwan at 5,000 to 8,000 feet in elevation.

R. sutchuenense* var. *geraldii seems to be related to *R. praeevernum*. This fine and hardy rhododendron originated from E.H. Wilson seed and he considered it to be "midway" between *R. praeevernum* and *R. sutchuenense*. It grows into a very large shrub with foot-long, medium green, lance-shaped leaves. Each clear pink corolla has a large dark red-purple blotch. The overall effect is spectacular. Blooming as early as February, some frost protection is desirable. Its hardiness is -10 degrees F. You will find it in the wild in Western Hubei and Eastern Szechwan at 5,000 to 8,000 feet in elevation.

The distinguishing feature that separates *R. sutchuenense* from *R. sutchuenense* var. *geraldii* are corollas that have a few red spots but no blotches. Also, *R. sutchuenense* has a range of colors from very light pink to mauve pink. Both species are magnificent!

2018-03 b

Three Magnificent and Early Blooming Species: *R. calophytum*, *R. praevernum* and *R. sutchuenense* var. *geraldii*

R. calophytum, *R. praevernum*, and *R. sutchuenense* var. *geraldii*:

(1)



(2)



- (1) *R. calophytum* var. *calophytum* (Garth Wedemire)
- (2) *R. praevernum* (Garth Wedemire)
- (3) *R. sutchuenense* var. *geraldii* in bud (Mike Stewart)
- (4) *R. sutchuenense* (Coen Zonneveld)

(3)



(4)



2018-03 Three Magnificent and Early Blooming Species: *R. calophytum*, *R. praevernum* and *R. sutchuenense* var. *geraldii*

2018-04

Tiny Leaves With Flowers Many Times Larger: *R. calostrotum* subspecies *keleticum* Radicans Group

By Maria Stewart

If you have an affection for small-growing rhododendrons, Subsection *Saluenensia* is an excellent subsection to explore. The only two species in this subsection are *R. calostrotum* and *R. saluenense*. However, within their subspecies, cultivars and Groups, there are differences such as the height of growth ranging from prostrate to erect and the colors of the corollas ranging from pink to purple-crimson. *R. radicans* is a favorite of ours for its dense, prostrate form with tiny, deep green leaves that slowly creeps over the contours of the ground and any object it encounters. Attractive deep purple-red, open-faced, and many times larger than the leaves, the solitary flowers stand above the leaves supported by their pedicels. This rhododendron easily wins a place in a sunny part of your garden.

Here is more about *R. calostrotum* ssp. *keleticum* Radicans Group:

Classification: Subgenus: *Rhododendron* (*lepidotes*) Section: *Rhododendron* (most *lepidotes*)

Subsection: *Saluenensia* Species: *R. calostrotum* Subspecies: *R. keleticum*

Group: Radicans Group

Distribution in the wild: N.W. Yunnan and S.E. Tibet at 11,000 to 15,000 feet elevation..

About the name: It translates into "rooting" which the branches do to creep along the ground..

Flowers: deep purple-red; open-faced like pansies and held above the leaves on their pedicels.

Leaves: dark green; only 1/4 to 1/2 inch long; lance-shaped; dense, reddish brown scales underneath.

Structure: prostrate; grows only 3 to 5 inches tall;; spreads slowly and indefinitely.

Hardiness: -10 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: likes sun and excellent drainage.

R. calostrotum ssp. *keleticum* Radicans Group

Photo courtesy Peter Norris, from *hirsutum* website



2018-05

A Treat From Subsection Triflora: *R. davidsonianum* 'Ruth Lyons'

By Maria Stewart

When the month of April arrives, our gardens show us that Spring is really here and if the winter has been kind to our rhododendrons, our reward is a bounty of blooms. One such reward is an upright grower with clouds of pink flowers, *R. davidsonianum* 'Ruth Lyons'. This named form is one of four that have been selected from the species *R. davidsonianum*. The other forms are the 'FCC' form, 'Serenade', and 'Caerhays'. The trait that separates 'Ruth Lyons' from the other forms is its clear, medium pink flowers. Other forms of *R. davidsonianum* may be spotted red and the color range is from very light pink to pink to light purplish rose.

Here is more about *R. davidsonianum* 'Ruth Lyons':

Classification: Subgenus: *Rhododendron* Section: *Rhododendron* Subsection: Triflora .

Species: *R. davidsonianum*

Distribution in the wild: Szechwan and Yunnan at 6,000 to 11,500 feet elevation..

About its name: named after Dr. W.H. Davidson who was part of a Friends Mission in China.

Additionally, Ruth and Marshall Lyons were early rhododendron people in Eugene.

James Barto, the earliest well-known rhododendron hybridizer in Oregon, gave this form of *R. davidsonianum* the name of Ruth Lyons.

Flowers: clear, medium pink; corollas are about 2 inches across; long white anthers extend beyond the corollas; may be a polyploid..

Foliage: fairly narrow and about 2 and one half inches long; dark green with a few scales on top and dense scales on the undersides.

Structure: upright growing and somewhat open, but still a handsome plant, especially when in bloom. It is hard to see the leaves then, because the flowers are so abundant..

Hardiness rating: 0 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: likes both sun and filtered sunlight.



R. davidsonianum 'Ruth Lyons'

Photographs by Mike Stewart

2018-06

A Standout Dwarf for Foliage and Flowers: *R. lepidostylum*

By Maria Stewart

When you think of colors that complement each other, do blue and yellow come to mind? If they do, then possibly you will be attracted to *R. lepidostylum*'s foliage and flowers. Its young leaves are unusually blue and glaucous. Two rhododendron experts have described this species as the most blue and one of the finest of all dwarf rhododendrons. Its flowers, although somewhat hidden under the leaves, are bright yellow. Furthermore, this dwarf is compact and grows wider than tall. The overall effect is striking because *R. lepidostylum*'s compact structure emphasizes the color combination.

Here is more about *R. lepidostylum*:

Classification: Subgenus: *Rhododendron* Section: *Rhododendron* Subsection: *Trichoclada*

About the name: Translates into "with scaly styles". Notice that *R. lepidostylum* is classified in a subsection that means "with hairs" which its leaves certainly have. Take a close look at this plant to notice its hairs and scales.

Distribution in the wild: Yunnan, China at 10,000 to 12,000 feet elevation..

Flowers: Somewhat hidden under the leaves; about 1 inch long and wide funnel-form; 1 to 3 corollas per truss; the style that holds the pistil will have scales on it, hence its name. It will bloom in early June.

Leaves: blue and glaucous with bristles along the edges and scales on the undersides.

Structure: grows to 15 inches high in ten years and is wider than tall.

Hardiness : -5 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: likes sun and good drainage..

R. lepidostylum: Photograph courtesy Gerdy Van der Lans



2018-08 a

R. pseudochrysanthum and a Hybrid That Retains Its Attributes

By Maria Stewart

When nature gives us a rhododendron species like R. pseudochrysanthum with its persistent silvery tomentum on the tops of its leaves, its attractive compact form and its neatly arranged foliage, hybridizers can only hope that some of those attributes will carry over to their hybrids. That hope was realized when Warren Berg created R. 'Golfer'. Furthermore, both the species and the hybrid have trusses worthy of being displayed on these fine foliage plants. Here is more about both of them:

Classification of R. pseudochrysanthum: Subgenus: Hymenanthes Section: Hymenanthes Subsection: Maculifera

About the name: Translates into "false R. chrysanthum". Incidentally, R. chrysanthum is the former name of the current R. aureum which further confuses the meaning of this nickname.

Parentage of R. 'Golfer': R. yakushmanum x R. pseudochrysanthum

Both of these parents are in the Subgenus Hymenanthes and Section Hymenanthes but R. yakushmanum is in the Subsection Pontica and R. pseudochrysanthum is in the Subsection Maculifera as noted above. Both are elepidotes which means that they do not have scales.

Distribution in the wild: R. pseudochrysanthum: Taiwan at 6,000 to 13,000 feet

R. yakushmanum: Yakushima Island, Japan.

Flowers: R. pseudochrysanthum has light pink or white, usually spotted, corollas held in loose trusses of 9 to 15.

R. yakushmanum has pink, fading to white over time, corollas held in full trusses of 10 or more.

R. 'Golfer' has light pink, faintly spotted, corollas held in dome-shaped trusses of 13.

Leaves: R. pseudochrysanthum's new growth has silvery tomentum that persists through the summer. After the tomentum disappears, the thick and rigid leaves are glossy and dark green in maturity with indumentum only along the midrib on the undersides.

R. yakushmanum's new growth is furry and gradually matures to glossy, dark green leaves which have a thick covering of beige to tan indumentum on the undersides.

R. 'Golfer's new growth has silvery tomentum that persists through the summer. Mature leaves are glossy and dark green with a layer of light beige indumentum on the undersides.

Structure: R. pseudochrysanthum grows compactly to about 3 feet in 10 years.

R. yakushmanum, depending on the form, grows compactly to about 4 feet in 10 years.

R. 'Golfer' grows to about 4 feet in 10 years.

Hardiness: R. pseudochrysanthum is hardy to about -5 degrees F.

R. yakushmanum is hardy to about -25 degrees F.

R. 'Golfer' is hardy to about -15 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: R. pseudochrysanthum and R. 'Golfer' need partial shade/sun.

2018-08 b

R. pseudochrysanthum and a Hybrid That Retains Its Attributes



R. pseudochrysanthum. Photographer: Stuart Imrie



R. pseudochrysanthum. Photographer: Mike Stewart.



R. 'Golfer'. Photographer: Mike Stewart

2018-09 a

A Collector's Prize: The Diminutive *R. proteoides*

By Maria Stewart

If one of your goals is to grow rhododendrons with fine foliage, Subsection Taliensia is the subsection in which to look. Most members of Taliensia are very hardy and the greater part of them have silvery, white, or reddish-brown indumentum on their leaves. You may even consider growing some of the Taliensia for their foliage alone because the flowers may take quite a few years to appear. Such is the case with *R. proteoides*. It is shy to flower. However, its fuzzy and reddish-brown new growth decorates this rhododendron as wonderfully as the flowers will do. When the foliage matures, the small leaves turn to a deep green color on top with thick brown indumentum underneath. Furthermore, these attractive leaves form on a densely compact habit. Now, all you must do is find a special place in your garden where the drainage is excellent so your *R. proteoides* can grow slowly more beautiful for many years to come.

Here is more about *R. proteoides*:

Classification of *R. proteoides*: Subgenus: *Hymenanthes* Section: *Hymenanthes* Subsection: Taliensia

About the name: "resembling a *Protea*" (A *Protea* is a South African plant.).

Distribution in the wild: SE Tibet, NW Yunnan and SW Sichuan at 12,000 to 15,000 feet on very steep hillsides, rocks and cliffs. It lives above *R. roxieanum* in the same area.

Flowers: Corollas are white to creamy pale pink with spots; about one inch long; 5 to 10 corollas in a compact truss.

Leaves: Dark green on top with thick reddish-brown indumentum beneath; the length varies from about one to two inches; elliptic in shape. .

Structure: grows very slowly and compactly to one foot high and wide..

Hardiness: - 10 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: likes excellent drainage; could be a rock garden plant if protected from the afternoonsun.

2018-09 b

A Collector's Prize: The Diminutive *R. proteoides*



R. proteoides foliage, photo courtesy Jens Birk.



R. proteoides flowers, photo courtesy J. Anderson

2018-10 a

Another Section Pogonanthum Gem: *R. cephalanthum*

By Maria Stewart

You will have to forgive me for writing about another species from the Pogonanthum Section, especially when *R. anthopogon* was featured in January's newsletter. At least I gave you a break of a few months from reading about their distinctive daphne-like flowers and their small, densely scaly and aromatic leaves. Although the flowers will intrigue you and the dark green leaves will draw your attention, these lovely dwarfs has certain requirements: perfect drainage, cool roots, very little fertilizer and soil with a near neutral pH. Think about alpine plants living in scree with mist floating all around them. Achieving that niche in your garden will be a challenge well worth exploring!

Here is more about *R. cephalanthum*:

Classification:: Subgenus: *Rhododendron* Section: Pogonanthum

About the name: "with flowers in a head"

Distribution in the wild: Yunnan, Szechwan, SE Tibet, North Burma (Myanmar) and Arunachal

Pradesh at 9,000 to 16,000 feet in elevation; found on rocky slopes, cliffs and on limestone. .

Flowers: 5 to 10 corollas per truss formed in a daphne-like head; each corolla has a narrow tube with spreading lobes; pale pink to rose colored; ssp. *Platyphyllum* has white flowers; the Nmaiense Group has cream to pale yellow flowers and the *Crebreflorum* Group has pink flowers.

Leaves: Dark green with many scales beneath and some forms have scales on the top surfaces, also; strongly scented; elliptic or oblong-elliptic .

Structure: The *Crebreflorum* Group is the smallest growing and almost prostrate; the other forms can grow to 2 feet in ten years. The best forms are tightly compact.

Hardiness: - 5 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: needs excellent drainage; cool roots, very little fertilizer and soil with a pH near neutral.

Guide to the photographs on page below:

- (1) *R. cephalanthum* ssp. *cephalanthum* (Hans Eiberg)
- (2) *R. cephalanthum* ssp. *cephalanthum* *Crebreflorum* Group (J. Birck)
- (3) *R. cephalanthum* ssp. *platyphyllum* (Danish Chapter)
- (4) *R. cephalanthum* ssp. *cephalanthum* Nmaiense Group (Hans Eiberg)

2018-10 b

Another Section Pogonanthum Gem: *R. cephalanthum*

(1)



(4)



(2)



(3)



2018-11 a

Hardy and Showy: *R. argyrophyllum* ssp. *nankingense* 'Chinese Silver'

By Maria Stewart

If you are looking for a rhododendron species with hardiness, beautiful foliage and excellent flowers, a selected form of *R. argyrophyllum* ssp. *nankingense* named 'Chinese Silver' may interest you. This form is easier to grow than the other forms of *R. argyrophyllum* and eventually becomes a small tree. The leaves are dark green on top and the indumentum on the undersides of the leaves is compacted into a silvery covering. Becoming free-flowering at maturity, 'Chinese Silver' covers itself with large, clear pink blooms.

Here is more about *R. argyrophyllum* ssp. *nankingense* 'Chinese Silver':

Classification:: Subgenus: *Hymenanthes* Section: *Hymenanthes* Subsection: *Argyrophylla*

About the name: "with silver leaves"

Distribution in the wild: Guizhou and Fan-jin-shan at 7,500 feet.

Other forms of *R. argyrophyllum*: Ssp. *argyrophyllum* is found in Szechwan and NE Yunnan at 6,500 to 12,750 feet.

Ssp. *hypoglaucom* is found in E. Szechwan and W. Hubei at 5,000 to 9,000 feet. Ssp. *omeiense* is found in C. Szechwan and Emei Shan at 6,000 feet. There is debate about *R. pingianum*.

Should it be classified with *R. argyrophyllum*? .

Flowers: 4 to 12 corollas in a truss and each is about 2 inches across; larger corollas than the other subspecies; clear pink to lilac purple.

Leaves: about 7 inches long; elliptic; dark green on top and a silvery covering on the undersides.

Ssp. *hypoglaucom* has glaucous undersides. Ssp. *argyrophyllum* has a thin indumentum of white to fawn-colored indumentum and Ssp. *omeiense* is similar to Ssp. *argyrophyllum*.

(Some experts consider ssp. *omeiense* to belong in Ssp. *argyrophyllum*.)

Structure: 10 feet at maturity; becomes a rounded shrub or small tree.

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: makes a great woodland plant with enough light to produce the flowers.

Guide to the photographs on page below:

(1) *R. argyrophyllum* ssp. *nankingense* 'Chinese Silver' - flower

(2) *R. argyrophyllum* ssp. *nankingense* 'Chinese Silver' - leaves

(3) *R. argyrophyllum* ssp. *nankingense* 'Chinese Silver' - trusses

Photographs courtesy OSU, College of Ag. Sciences, Dept. of Horticulture.

2018-11 b

Hardy and Showy: *R. argyrophyllum* ssp. *nankingense* 'Chinese Silver'

(1)



(2)



(3)



2018-12 a

A Species to Captivate Your Interest: *R. ochraceum*

By Maria Stewart

Since 2011, when I started writing articles about rhododendrons for our newsletter, I frequently chose those with red blooms for the month of December. *Rhododendron ochraceum* certainly follows that Christmas “theme”. Never heard of this one? In terms of rhododendron exploration, *R. ochraceum* is a fairly recent discovery. Steve Hootman introduced it into cultivation in 1995, with the I.D. number of SEH #080, after he and Peter Cox found it in the Jin Pin Mountains of southern Sichuan, not far from the Yangtze River. Ken Cox says that this species is one of the most important introductions in recent years.

R. ochraceum is related to *R. strigillosum*, except *R. ochraceum* has indumentum that covers the undersides of its leaves. It even resembles *R. strigillosum*. However, its leaves are smaller than *R. strigillosum* and it slowly grows into a low or medium size structure that sets it apart from its “cousin”.

Here is more about *R. ochraceum*:

Classification:: Subgenus: *Hymenanthes* Section: *Hymenanthes* Subsection: *Maculifera*

Distribution in the wild: Central, Southern, SE Sichuan, and NE Yunnan at 5,500 to 10,000 feet in broadleaf forests, on cliffs and rocky slopes and in thickets along stream banks. .

Flowers: tight and rounded trusses of 6 to 12 corollas; rich scarlet to dark red; has deep purple nectaries in the base of each corolla; blooms in March to April. .

Leaves: Oblanceolate and medium green with light brown indumentum that covers the undersides of the leaves. (In the Subsection *Maculifera*, *R. ochraceum* and *R. pachysanthum* are the only two members that have indumentum persistently covering the leaves.)

Structure: grows slowly and compactly into a low to medium height..

Hardiness: -10 to -15 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: The blooms are fairly early, so a light canopy would protect them. Otherwise, this rhododendron is hardy!

2018-12 b

A Species to Captivate Your Interest: *R. ochraceum*



R. ochraceum. Photo courtesy of the RSBG.

2019-01 a

Subsection Falconera: A Group of Splendid Species

By Maria Stewart

In the words of Ken Cox: "These large-leaved species make magnificent foliage plants and are a must for every garden in moderate areas, as long as you can provide wind shelter." The members of Subsection Falconera are *R. arizelum*, *R. basicilicum*, *R. coriaceum*, *R. falconeri*, *R. galactinum*, *R. heatheriae*, *R. hodgsonii*, *R. preptum*, *R. rex*, *R. rothschildii*, *R. semnoides* and *R. sinofalconeri*. For this article, I will concentrate on *R. falconeri* and its subspecies *eximium*. *R. falconeri* has been described as one of the most magnificent of the *Rhododendron* genus. It can live for over a hundred years in your garden and its flowers will last for almost a month each year. With its trusses of up to 20 corollas and its large, dark green leaves with rust to brown indumentum underneath, *R. falconeri* grows into a strikingly large shrub or tree.

Here is more about *R. falconeri* and *R. falconeri* ssp. *eximium*:

Classification: Subgenus: *Hymenanthes* Section: *Hymenanthes* Subsection: Falconera

About the names: *R. falconeri* is named after H. Falconer and ssp. *eximium* means "excellent".

Distribution in the wild: *R. falconeri* is found in E. Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and W. Arunachal Pradesh at 9,000 to 11,000 feet in elevation. Ssp. *eximium* is found in Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh at 9,000 to 11,000 feet.

Flowers: *R. falconeri* has 12 to 20 corollas in colors of white, cream, or pale yellow with a purple basal blotch. Ssp. *eximium* has 12 to 20 corollas which open as rose-colored, then fade to creamy pink. The corollas sometimes have blotches.

Leaves: *R. falconeri*'s thick and handsome, somewhat wrinkled green leaves can be as large as 12" long by 10" wide. Their undersides are covered with attractive rusty brown indumentum. Ssp. *eximium*'s new leaves make quite a contrast with the green leaves of previous years. Their upper surfaces are covered with a semi-persistent rusty-brown indumentum and the undersides are covered with a deep cinnamon-colored indumentum.

Structure: As noted above, *R. falconeri* will grow into a large shrub or tree. Some experts say that it can grow into a tree that is 40 feet high. Ssp. *eximium* generally does not grow as large, but it is still a magnificent foliage rhododendron.

Hardiness: +10 degrees F. for both species.

Siting in your garden: They both make fantastic woodland garden plants where they are protected from the wind.

2019-01 b

Subsection Falconera: A Group of Splendid Species

U. falconeri in a New Zealand garden.
Photo courtesy of Mike Stewart.



New growth on *R. falconeri*
ssp. *eximium*. Photo
courtesy RSBG.



2019-02

A Favorite in Subsection Saluenensia: *R. calostrotum* ssp. *calostrotum* 'Gigha'

By Maria Stewart

Imagine your rock garden providing a beautiful structure for your compact-growing dwarf rhododendrons. One of your choices to plant there may be *R. calostrotum* ssp. *calostrotum* 'Gigha'. Its gray green leaves and pedicels covered with attractive scales contrast nicely with its bright rosy red flowers. And those flowers cover the plant! With enough sun, this dwarf is quite dense.

Here is more about *R. calostrotum* ssp. *calostrotum* 'Gigha':

Classification: Subgenus: *Rhododendron* Section: *Rhododendron* Subsection: *Saluenensia*

Species: *calostrotum* Subspecies: *calostrotum* Selected clone: 'Gigha'

About the name: "with a beautiful covering"

Gigha is an island west of Scotland for which this clone was named.

Distribution in the wild: Northern Burma, Western Yunnan at 10,000 to 14,000 feet in elevation.

Flowers: large, rosy red and saucer-shaped corollas held by pedicels heavily covered with light colored scales. This clone is free-flowering and makes a bright spot in your garden.

Leaves: less than an inch long and about a half inch wide; gray green or glaucous with light colored scales on top; densely covered with cinnamon colored scales on the undersides.

Structure: 1 foot in height and wider than tall; grows compactly.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: provide good drainage in adequate sun to grow a compact plant.



R. calostrotum ssp. *calostrotum* 'Gigha' Photographer: Mike Stewart

2019-03

R. albrechtii: A Richly Colored Beauty

By Maria Stewart

In the Subgenus Pentathera, you will find many beautiful deciduous rhododendrons. To name only a few members of this subgenus will reveal the fine merits of the entire group: *R. arborescens*, *R. luteum*, *R. occidentale*, *R. quinquefolium*, *R. schlippenbachii*, *R. vaseyi* and *R. viscosum*. Some of your favorites may be included in this classification. Growing in the wild in North America, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, China, Japan, Korea and Manchuria, they are well-suited for our Pacific Northwest gardens. This article focuses on *R. albrechtii*, considered to be one of the best of Subgenus Pentanthera.

Classification: Subgenus: Pentathera Section: Sciadorhodion

About the name: named after Dr. Michael Albrecht, a Russian naval surgeon.

Distribution in the wild: grows at 3,300 feet in Central and Northern Japan.

Flowers: 2 to 5 corollas bloom before or with the new leaves; each corolla is very open and about 2 inches wide with a rich rose to deep rose-purple color; blooms in March to early April. Its early blooms make a great display!

Leaves: alternating, but sometimes the terminal leaves look like whorls of 5 leaves; hairy margins on upper and lower sides of leaves.

Structure: About four feet in 10 years; grows slowly.

Hardiness: -15 degrees F., but needs frost protection for its early blooms and leaves.

Siting in your garden: Grows best in woodland conditions; prefers the coolest area of your garden.

R. albrechtii

Photo: Arboretum Mustila, Finland



R. albrechtii

Photo: Hirsutum



2019-04 a

A Late Winter Treat: *R. mucronulatum*

By Maria Stewart

Just when you think that Spring will never come, out pops *R. mucronulatum* with its bright flowers first and its leaves unfolding after the flowers are spent. Yes, it is deciduous, however, *R. mucronulatum*'s light brown bark is smooth and does not collect moss in partial shade. An added feature that makes this rhododendron a three season performer is the autumn colors of its leaves. They turn shades of red, orange and yellow before they fall. Our favorites are *R. mucronulatum* 'Cornell Pink' because of its clear pink flower color and the dwarf forms such as 'Crater's Edge'.

Here is more about *R. mucronulatum* and its other forms:

Classification: Subgenus: *Rhododendron* Section: *Rhododendron* Subsection: *Rhodorastra*

The forms: Var. *Taquettii* and 'Crater's Edge' are dwarfs. 'Cornell Pink', 'Pink Panther', 'Storr's Pink' and 'Bright Pink' are upright growers.

About the name: "with a small point"

Distribution in the wild: E. Siberia, Hubei and Shandong in China, Mongolia, Korea and Japan at 1,000 to 5,500 feet

Flowers: single flowers bloom from multiple buds; colors range from rosy-purple to rose-pink to white; corollas are widely funnel-shaped and about one inch across. Depending on your climate, *R. mucronulatum* can bloom anytime from February through March.

Leaves: deciduous; medium to light green; usually pointed on both ends; thin texture with a few hairs on the top surface and scales on the undersides.

Structures: upright growers will reach 5 to 6 feet in 10 years; dwarfs are much slower growing; if your upright *R. mucronulatum* is too open-growing, pruning will help.

Hardiness: -15 degrees F. but some frost protection might be necessary.

Siting in your garden: As noted, a frost-protected area might be necessary. Ours is doing well at the edge of a wooded area but has enough sun to bloom there. (See photos.)

2019-04 b

A Late Winter Treat: *R. mucronulatum*



R. mucronulatum, 2 views.

Photographs: Mike Stewart.



2019-05

Handsome Foliage and Classic Flowers: *R. yuefengense*

By Maria Stewart

Here is a new species whose foliage and flowers complement each other beautifully. The combination of *Rhododendron yuefengense*'s thick, rounded leaves and its white to light pink trusses are a fine example of nature's artistry. Adding to the fascination with this rhododendron is its compact form and its striking blue-green new growth. Will you have to be patient to acquire your own? Maybe. Contact The Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, an excellent resource to ask about finding this very special species.

Here is more information about *R. yuefengense*:

Classification: Subgenus: *Hymenanthes* Section: *Hymenanthes* Subsection: *Fortunea*

Distribution in the wild: Guangxi Province in China, which is near Vietnam. Elevation: 1,800 to 2,100 feet.

Flowers: free-flowering and begins blooming at a young age; 5 to 10 white to light pink bell-shaped corollas form a loose truss; blooms in early June.

Leaves: thick and rounded leaves with very attractive blue-green new growth; an outstanding foliage plant!

Structure: compact and dense; low growing and wider than tall; about 2 feet tall and 3 feet wide in 10 years.

Hardiness: best suited for temperate climates; reports say that it has survived in sheltered areas on the East Coast; hardiness has not been clearly determined, but -5 degrees F. has been suggested.

Siting in your garden: morning sun is fine or very light shade all day.

R. yuefengense, photo courtesy of the RSBG



2019-05 A Name That Enhances the Description: R. 'Dazzler'

By Maria Stewart

When this rhododendron comes into bloom, it is easy to understand why it was named 'Dazzler'. The trusses are a deep red-orange color and are quite large, so they are striking from a distance. Furthermore, the contrast between the dark green leaves and the flowers makes a handsome combination. If you want a rhododendron to brighten up a somewhat shady area of your garden, this rhododendron could work for you.

Here is more about the hybrid R. 'Dazzler':

Parentage: R. dichroanthum, griersonianum and probably other species.

Hybridized by: Jim Elliott

Its name: Be aware that there is a Waterer rhododendron (1935), an evergreen azalea and a deciduous azalea that are all named 'Dazzler'.

Flowers: deep red-orange color; 12 funnel-shaped corollas in each almost full truss; There are many large trusses on this rhododendron and it blooms in mid-May.

Leaves: deep green and about six inches long.

Structure: upright growing to about four feet high and four feet wide in ten years.

Hardiness: +5 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: This is not a rhododendron for full sun. The leaves may become spotted in too much sun. It will bloom well in shade with light coming from the west and south.

R. 'Dazzler' Photo: Mike Stewart



2019-08

Subsection Fortunea Gives Us Another Gem: *R. glanduliferum*

By Maria Stewart

It is the middle of July and we are enjoying our hydrangeas, heathers and astilbes. But wait! Are there blooms on the *R. glanduliferum*? Yes!! As we walk closer to this eight feet tall and eight feet wide rhododendron, the white trusses with a small greenish-yellow flare in the throat of each corolla, come more into focus. Each loose truss holds four or five large funnel-campanulate corollas which are pleasantly scented. Another attractive feature of this rhododendron is its foliage. The narrow leaves are quite large measuring eight to ten inches long and are hairless on their undersides.

Here is more about *R. glanduliferum*:

Classification: Subgenus: *Hymenanthes* Section: *Hymenanthes* Subsection: *Fortunea*

Distribution in the wild: N.E. Yunnan at about 7,250 feet in elevation. Its habitat is threatened by logging.

History: Not introduced into cultivation until 1995, so is not well known.

Flowers: either white or pale pink corollas, each with a small greenish-yellow flare in the throat; funnel-campanulate shaped corollas with 7 to 8 lobes each; scented; 4 to 7 corollas in each loose truss; the outer surfaces of the corollas, the stamens, the ovary and the style are all glandular, thus giving this rhododendron its name.

Foliage: Only one and a half to two and a half inches wide but eight to ten inches long, these medium green leaves with their glabrous undersides, are distinctive.

Structure: a large grower; give it plenty of room.

Hardiness: still in question, but a guess is 0 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: Give it lots of room to grow. A woodland garden is a fine location.

Rhododendron glanduliferum, photograph by Mike Stewart



2019-09

Great Foliage, Form and Flowers: R. 'Vibrant Violet'

By Maria Stewart

When I think about Frank Fujioka's hybrids, R. 'Seaview Sunset' comes to mind first because its foliage is so beautifully dark green and its flowers are so bright. Well, R. 'Vibrant Violet' comes to mind next because its small leaves are also dark green and its violet flowers are beautifully bright. Additionally, the form of 'Vibrant Violet' is compact. The leaves densely cover the branches and form an attractive plant that is wider than tall. This is a rhododendron that would complement any garden.

Here is more about R. 'Vibrant Violet':

Hybridizer: Frank Fujioka in 1986.

Parentage: R. impeditum x R. augustinii 'Towercourt'

Flowers: vivid violet color with orange anthers; clusters of 4 to 5 trusses, each with 5 to 6 flowers.

Foliage: small, pointed and dark green leaves cover the plant and make a great background for the flowers. The bloom time is mid-April.

Form: grows wider than tall to about 3 feet in 10 years; the branches form a rounded plant.

Hardiness: 0 degrees F. (Some writers say -5 degrees F hardiness.)

Placement in your garden: does well in full sun.

R. 'Vibrant Violet', photographed in Frank Fujioka's garden; photographer unknown.



2019-10 A Compact and Floriferous Beauty: R. 'Morning Bells'

By Maria Stewart

What do you get when you cross two compact-growing and floriferous species such as *R. williamsianum* and

R. yakushimanum with each other? When Ben Lancaster made this cross, he created a wonderfully rounded plant that covers itself with pastel pink "bells". Mike and I called the plant by its cross name for many years and then gave it the name of *R. 'Morning Bells'*. The name just seemed to make sense.

Here is more about *R. 'Morning Bells'*:

Parentage: *R. williamsianum* x *R. degronianum* ssp. *yakushimanum* (probably the K. Wada form)

Hybridized by: Ben Lancaster

Its name: As described above, Mike and I used the cross name for this plant for many years before deciding to name it.

Flowers: pastel pink bells, four to seven corollas in a lax truss; when the flower buds start to show color in the Spring, they are deep pink. (See photo.)

Foliage: rounded (ovate) and deep green leaves; there is a thin layer of beige indumentum on the undersides of the leaves. The mid vein shows handsomely on each leaf, In the Fall and Winter, the red bud scales contrast beautifully with the leaves.

Structure: forms a compact and mounding plant and grows to 3 feet high and wide in 10 years.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: more sun than shade is better for a more compact plant.

Photo: Mike Stewart



2019-11 A Species From the Mountains of Eastern Europe: *R. myrtifolium*

By Maria Stewart

Imagine our delight, while hiking in the rocky Carpathian Mountains of Romania, to come upon dwarf rhododendrons growing at about 7,200 feet in elevation. Their shiny, dark green leaves with rust-colored scales underneath drew our attention. Their dwarf form, created to withstand the harsh environment in which they live, is attractive, also. Hidden alongside small rock outcrops and shielded by scarce remains of elk moss and native grasses, this beautiful gem of a rhododendron stands alone representing its genus in the Carpathians. To find it elsewhere, you will need to travel to the mountains of Bulgaria, Macedonia, Slovenia and south-western Russia at elevations of 5,000 to 8,000 feet.

Here is more about *R. myrtifolium*:

Classification: Section: *Rhododendron* Subsection: *Rhododendron* (This subsection is very different from other subsections and is found only in Europe's high mountain ranges. The other two members of the subsection are *R. ferrugineum* and *R. hirsutum*.)

Its name: Formerly named *R. kotschyi*. Not to be confused with the hybrid *R. Myrtifolium*.

Flowers: narrowly tubular and spreading lobes; rose pink or pinkish purple, rarely white; blooms in late May or June.

Foliage: shiny, dark green on top and reddish-brown scales covering the bottom side; very small leaves are 1/8 inch wide and 1/2 inch long.

Structure: low growing dwarf to less than one foot in height.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F. Siting in your garden: full sun and fast-draining soil.

Photograph of *R. myrtifolium* in the Carpathian Mountains of Romania by Mike Stewart.



2019-12 An Early Bloomer With Handsome Foliage: *R. fulgens*

By Maria Stewart

To celebrate Christmas, my tradition is to write about a red blooming rhododendron. Certainly, *R. fulgens* fits nicely into that theme. With its deep red to scarlet trusses and rounded leaves decorated with fawn-colored indumentum, this rhododendron is attractive! Furthermore, if given enough light, its form is fairly compact.

Here is more about *R. fulgens*:

Classification: Section: *Hymenanthes* Subsection: *Fulgensia* as the only member, or placed in a combined Subsection *Fulgensia/Barbata* which includes *R. argipepelum*, *R. barbatum*, *R. erosum*, *R. exasperatum*, *R. fulgens* and *R. succothii*. All these species share glowing red flowers, colorful bark and early blooming times.

Where it grows in the wild: Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet at 10,500 to 14,000 feet; not commonly found.

Its name: means "shining" Both the flowers and the tops of the leaves have a shine.

Flowers: 10 to 15 tubular bell shaped corollas form a compact and rounded truss; deep blood red to scarlet corollas with dark nectar pouches; blooms in middle of March, the beginning of April or the first of May. Needs frost protection.

Foliage: dark and shiny green on top with fawn to reddish-brown indumentum on the undersides; oval to oblong-shaped leaves.

Structure: If given enough light, grows slowly into a fairly compact shrub or small tree; grows to about 3 or 4 feet in 10 years.

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: needs good drainage and the early blooms need frost protection.

Photographs of *R. fulgens* taken by Mike Stewart, in Sikkim:



2020-01 a

One of the Best Cameo Hybrids: R. 'Naselle'

By Maria Stewart

Imagine corollas of rose-pink with yellow centers and orange spots formed into large trusses on a nicely rounded rhododendron. This is R. 'Naselle' which is named after both a town and a river in the state of Washington. By the way, the word Naselle was derived from a Chinookan tribe named Nisal. Descriptions of R. 'Naselle' say that the new leaves are pale maroon. When they mature, the leaves are medium green and elliptic. The Award of Excellence was given to R. 'Naselle' in 1992.

Here is more about R. 'Naselle':

It is an elepidote which means that it does not have scales on the undersides of its leaves.

The cross is: ('Big Sam' x 'Lem's Cameo') in one version of the parentage. Another version is ('CIS' x unnamed hybrid) X 'Lem's Cameo'). Jim Elliot hybridized it in 1987.

The leaves are elliptic and medium green when mature. They cover the plant nicely.

Each large truss holds up to 15 beautiful corollas of rose-pink with yellow centers and orange spots. It has been described as one of the most striking of the 'Lem's Cameo' hybrids.

This hybrid is well-branched and looks rounded in shape. It will grow into a four feet high by four feet wide plant in ten years.

The hardiness is 0 to -5 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: filtered sunlight with enough sunlight to produce those wonderful blooms.

2020-01 b

One of the Best Cameo Hybrids: R. 'Naselle'

R. 'Naselle' Photograph courtesy of 'Great Plant Picks' program.



2020-02 a

A Rhododendron to Brighten Our Cold and Rainy Days: *R. barbatum*

By Maria Stewart

In the very early spring, even before the official start of spring on March 20th, *R. barbatum* will brighten the gray skies with its scarlet flowers. These compact trusses beautifully adorn the branches of dark green leaves making *R. barbatum* a show-stopper in your early garden. Furthermore, the bark of this species will peel to reveal a smooth, reddish-purple surface that will add beauty to the tree-like structure of this fine rhododendron.

Here is more about *R. barbatum*:

Classification: Subgenus: *Hymenanthes* Section: *Hymenanthes* Subsection: *Barbata* (There have been discussions about whether *R. fulgens* and *R. sherriffii* belong in this subsection, also. Currently, they are both in Subsection *Fulgensia*.)

Distribution in the wild: Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan at 8,000 to 12,000 feet in mixed forests.

Its name: The stems and petioles have bristles. Even if there are no bristles, as sometimes is the case, the flowers, leaves and bark classify the rhododendron as *R. barbatum*.

Flowers: light scarlet to crimson-scarlet; compact trusses of 10 to 20 corollas; corollas are tubular-campanulate shaped; calyx is medium to large.

Foliage: dark green; elliptic and somewhat convex; glabrous; bristles on petioles.

Bark: peeling and revealing a colorful surface of reddish-purple.

Structure: grows like a small tree to six feet in ten years.

Hardiness: about 0 degrees F.

Finding a place in your garden: Although *R. barbatum* is fairly hardy, you need to protect it from the wind. Also, because it blooms so early, it needs protection from frosts.

2020-02 b

A Rhododendron to Brighten Our Cold and Rainy Days: *R. barbatum*



R. barbatum flowers; photographer unknown.



R. barbatum in Nepal, photo courtesy of Mike Stewart.

2020-03

A Delightful Dwarf with Vigorous Growth: *R. hanceanum* 'Nanum'

By Maria Stewart

In the month of March, St. Patrick's Day is celebrated and the dwarf rhododendron that blooms near that holiday is *R. 'Shamrock'*. One of the parents of that festive rhododendron is *R. hanceanum* 'Nanum'. The other parent is *R. keiskei* (dwarf form). This month, we will concentrate on *R. hanceanum* 'Nanum'. It is so handsome with its dark green leaves, compact habit and bronze new growth. Although it does not bloom until the middle of April, this dwarf welcomes Spring by covering the entire plant with yellow blooms.

Here is more about *R. hanceanum* 'Nanum':

Classification: Subgenus: *Rhododendron* Section: *Rhododendron* Subsection: *Tephropepla* It is a lepidote.

Distribution in the wild: central Szechwan at 5,000 to 10,000 feet in thickets and on cliffs.

Its name: named after H.F. Hance, a British Consul at Canton.

Flowers: faintly scented; funnel-shaped corollas: creamy white to bright yellow; many corollas in each truss.

Foliage: leaves are 3 or 4 inches long; dark green on top and lighter on the undersides; ovate-lanceolate in shape.

Structure: compact and attractive; 10 to 12 inches high (lower if in full sun); grows vigorously in width to 3 or 4 feet in 20 years.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

Placing in your garden: filtered sunlight is good; more sun gives more blooms.

Photograph courtesy of Mike Stewart



2020-04 a

Delta Dawn, what's that flower you have on?

"Delta Dawn, what's that flower you have on?"

Could it be a special bloom from days gone by?

And do you see the best, your foliage keeps you dressed

So your flowers can decorate the sky.

By Maria Stewart

Please forgive my feeble attempt at song writing. After all, this article is really about a beautiful rhododendron named 'Delta Dawn'. Hybridized by Don Wallace, the attributes of this rhododendron go on and on. First, let's consider its parentage. With *R. pachysanthum* providing 50 percent of the genes, the structure and foliage of this rhododendron are bound to be outstanding. Such is the case with 'Delta Dawn'. Its form is rounded, strong and very attractive. The foliage is sophisticated with brown indumentum on the undersides and the new growth is striking with its fuzzy, long-lasting, light copper indumentum on the tops of the leaves. And the flowers? They are creamy yellow with red speckles in their throats and are loosely formed into trusses of bells. What more could you want in a rhododendron either to stand alone or to meld with other plants in your landscape?

Here is more about *R. 'Delta Dawn'*:

It is an *elepidote* which means that it does not have scales on the undersides of its leaves.

Don Wallace is the hybridizer. His nursery is Singing Tree Gardens Nursery in Northern California.

The cross is: *R. pachysanthum* x *R. 'Fabur'* *R. 'Fabur'* is (*R. bureavii* x *R. 'Fabia'*)

The new leaves are long-lasting with lots of attractive light coppery indumentum. The topsides gradually turn to green and the undersides have rich brown indumentum when mature. Another positive attribute is that the leaves are retained for three years.

The corollas are creamy yellow with red freckles formed into a group. Each truss has about 10 to 20 corollas that remind you of bells.

Because *R. pachysanthum* contributes 50 percent of the genes, the structure of 'Delta Dawn' is rounded, well-formed and is nicely covered with leaves. It may grow to 5 feet in 10 years, and is usually wider than tall.

Its hardiness is -5 degrees F.

For placement in your garden, you should think about a well-drained site in plenty of light, but not in hot sun.

2020-04 b

Delta Dawn, what's the flower you have on?



Photograph of R.' Delta Dawn' by Don Wallace.



Photo dated April 1, 2020

Courtesy of the National Trust for Scotland, Inverewe Garden, home of the world's first 'Rainbow' rhododendron...link:

<https://www.nts.org.uk/stories/inverewe-rainbow-rhododendron-is-world-first>

2020-5 a

A Beauty With Handsome Foliage and Impressive Trusses: *R. kesangiae*

A Beauty With Handsome Foliage and Impressive Trusses: *R. kesangiae*

By Maria Stewart

In the country of Bhutan in the Himalaya Mountains, surrounded by Tibet, Sikkim, and northern India, lives the large-leafed species of *R. kesangiae*. It is found in coniferous forests at elevations of 9,500 to 11,500 feet. Imagine hiking through this mountainous country and discovering the large rose-pink, purple-pink or white trusses displayed prominently among the dark green leaves of this recently described species. For years, this rhododendron was not separated from the natural hybrids of *R. hodgsonii* x *R. falconeri*. Now, it is firmly identified as a separate species because of its traits of non-peeling bark, lighter indumentum and more pink corollas. These traits are different from *R. hodgsonii* and *R. falconeri* although *R. kesangiae* hybridizes with both in the wild. Understandably, it took some time to sort out these natural hybrids and to declare that *R. kesangiae* was a separate species.

Here is more about *R. kesangiae*:

Classification: *Subgenus*: Hymenanthes *Section*: Hymenanthes *Subsection*: Grandia

Distribution in the wild: Bhutan only, at elevations of 9,500 to 11,500 feet in coniferous forests with other rhododendrons and bamboo.

Flowers: pink fading to lighter pink, purple-pink or white; 15 to 20 corollas per compact truss; blooms in late April into May.

Foliage: dark green leaves with thin, beige colored or no indumentum; up to a foot long;

Bark: fissured, but non-peeling and brown.

Structure: grows like a small tree to ten feet in 10 years; will grow to 30 feet eventually.

Hardiness: 0 degrees F.?

A place in your garden: needs shelter from strong winds to protect the leaf petioles.

2020-05 b

A Beauty With Handsome Foliage and Impressive Trusses: *R. kesangiae*



R. kesangiae. Photo courtesy of Mike Stewart.

2020-06

A Dwarf That Brightens Up Your Day: 'Patty Bee'

A Dwarf That Brightens Up Your Day: R. 'Patty Bee'

By Maria Stewart

We certainly are fortunate that Warren Berg hybridized dwarfs such as R. 'Wee Bee' and R. 'Patty Bee' and semi-dwarfs such as R. 'Peter Bee' and R. 'June Bee'. For this article, it is R. 'Patty Bee's' turn to be in the spotlight. Here is a dwarf that will densely cover itself with attractive leaves and clear yellow flowers. Nestled in your rock garden or decorating a border are choices that you will have to make because R. 'Patty Bee' will be happy in several places in your garden. It likes bright light which helps it to grow compactly. Because of its parentage, it will grow wider than tall. R. 'Patty Bee' is an award winner and one of the best dwarf yellows.

Here is more about this special dwarf:

Hybridized by Warren Berg in 1970 and registered in 1977.

It is a lepidote. This means that the undersides of its leaves have scales.

Parentage: R. keiskei 'Yaku Fairy' x R. fletcherianum

The small leaves cover the many branches and are a healthy color of green.

The flowers are a clear yellow without any markings and are abundant. It blooms in April in the PNW, so it may need some frost protection. However, the plant, during winter, is hardy to -10 degrees F.

Structure: It grows wider than tall to about 20 inches wide in 10 years.

Placement in your garden: It likes well-drained soil and plenty of light.

R. 'Patty Bee'. Photographer: Mike Stewart.



2020-08

A Trio of Beautiful Foliage Rhododendrons: 'Whid Bee', 'Cherries and Merlot' and 'Wine and Roses'

A Trio of Beautiful Foliage Rhododendrons: 'Whid Bee', 'Cherries and Merlot' and 'Wine and Roses'

By Maria Stewart

Through the years, you have probably admired R. 'Rosevallon' for its leaves with red undersides. Joining R. 'Rosevallon' are three more special rhododendrons with those colorful leaves. Warren Berg hybridized R. 'Whid Bee' to further add to the interest in fine foliage hybrids. We have Frank Fujioka to thank for R. 'Cherries and Merlot' and Ken Cox created R. 'Wine and Roses' for us to enjoy.

R. 'Whid Bee', cross (R. 'Rosevallon' x R. 'Rubicon'), grows wider than tall and its handsome leaves are dark green with red undersides. When the buds are swelling before blooming, the red bud scales predict the beautiful red trusses that are soon to appear. Protect 'Whid Bee' from severe cold and the hot afternoon sun.

Frank Fujioka carried on the quest for fine foliage rhododendrons by creating R. 'Cherries and Merlot'. Its parentage is ('Pretty Baby' x R. pachysanthum) x 'Whid Bee'. Its light red flowers go nicely with leaves of dark green on top and reddish purple on their undersides. It grows to 3 feet in 10 years. Some light shade is desirable.

The third member of this trio is R. 'Wine and Roses' and Ken Cox hybridized it. The glowing pink trusses are set against dark green leaves. Furthermore, the undersides of the leaves are reddish purple! It grows to about three feet in 10 years and blooms in April. Plant it out of the hot afternoon sun.

(1)



R. 'Whid Bee' Photo by Mike Stewart

(3)



R. 'Wine and Roses' Photo diary.caerhays.co.uk

(2)



R. 'Cherries and Merlot'

Photo by Mike Stewart.

2020-09

Attractive Flowers, Foliage and Size: R. 'Starry Night'



Attractive Flowers, Foliage and Size: R. 'Starry Night'

Are you looking for a purple blooming rhododendron with small leaves that grows to about three feet in ten years? Possibly, R. 'Starry Night' or 'Gletschernacht' (the original German naming of it) may excite your interest. Yes, R. 'Starry Night' was hybridized by H. Hachmann and G. Stuck in Germany. The deep violet flowers are displayed very well against the green and slightly twisted foliage. With this plant's hardiness and its fine structure, you may have multiple places to plant it in your landscape.

Hybridized by H. Hachmann and G. Stuck, registered in 1983. Originally and currently also named R. 'Gletschernacht' which translates as 'Starry Night'.

It is a lepidote and the backs of the leaves are heavily covered with attractive scales.

Parentage: *R. russatum* x R. 'Blue Diamond'

Foliage: The green leaves show flecks of bronze and are somewhat twisted producing an attractive effect.

Flowers: They are deep violet in shade and violet in the sunlight. Their display on the plant is excellent.

Hardiness: rated at -5 degrees F.

Structure: It grows to about 3 feet in 10 years into a well-formed and dense plant.

2020-10

So Why Is This Rhododendron Named 'Fantastica'?



R. 'Fantastica' (photos by Mike Stewart)

So Why Is this Rhododendron Named 'Fantastica'?

There are several reasons why *R. 'Fantastica'* deserves its name. Let us start with the foliage of this cold-hardy plant. The elliptic-shaped leaves cover the branches well and are dark green with a layer of tan indumentum on their undersides. If 'Fantastica' never bloomed, it would still be a handsome foliage plant. Of course, it blooms! The pink corollas with white centers and light greenish-yellow spots inside are another reason for its name. Now, consider the structure of 'Fantastica'. The leaves densely cover the branches and it will grow to a height of approximately three feet in 10 years. Think about all these attributes and then realize that its hardiness is -5° F. Now, you know why this fantastic rhododendron earned its name.

Here is more about *R. 'Fantastica'*:

Hybridized by: H. Hachmann and G. Stuck in 1985.

Parentage: *R. 'Mars'* x *R. yakushimanum 'Koichiro Wada'*

Foliage: dark green, long, elliptic-shaped, with a thin layer of tan indumentum on the undersides.

Trusses: up to 20 corollas; trusses open with deep pink corollas with lighter pink in the center; gradually, the deep pink changes to a lighter pink with white in the center; greenish-yellow spots decorate the insides of the corollas.

Structure: 3 feet tall and close to 3 feet wide in 10 years.

Placement in your garden: well-drained soil and plenty of light.



2020-11

R. cerasinum 'Cherry Brandy' Nice Feature: Blooms in the Fall

R. cerasinum 'Cherry Brandy'

Nice Feature: Blooms in the Fall

By Maria Stewart

Imagine my surprise while weeding in our garden in **October**, to find a few beautiful blooms on our *R. cerasinum* 'Cherry Brandy'. So, I looked the plant up in our rhododendron books and yes, it is known to partially bloom in the fall. The corollas are special because they are white or pale pink with dark pink edges. Deep-purple nectar pouches decorate the inside of each corolla. The other *R. cerasinum* is 'Coals of Fire' and its corollas are pure cherry-red. Both species have oblong or oval medium-green leaves with waxy bluish-green undersides.

Here is more about *R. cerasinum*:

Classification: *Subgenus:* Hymenanthes *Section:* Hymenanthes *Subsection:* Thomsonia
Species: *cerasinum*

Distribution in the wild: SE Tibet, Northern Burma and Arunachal Pradesh at 10,000- 12,000 feet.

Their names: Frank Kingdon-Ward named them 'Cherry Brandy' and 'Coals of Fire'.

Flowers: three to five corollas in a loose truss; corollas are thick and fleshy; to 2 inches long; calyx is very small or non-existent.

Foliage: 2 to 4 inches long and 1 to 1.5 inches wide; rounded at both ends; retained for one year.

Structure: grows to three feet in 10 years; upright and rounded form.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: Provide frost protection in the Fall for the partial blooming.



R. cerasinum 'Cherry Brandy'
(Photo: Mike Stewart)



R. cerasinum 'Coals of Fire'
(Photo: Chimacum Woods)

2020-12

R. haematodes: About a Red Flower for December

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron of the Month

When December arrives, I like to write about a red rhododendron and this idea has become a tradition. So, besides being a fine-looking species, *R. haematodes* has three characteristics that help to create interesting hybrids. It is compact and a low grower. Its leaves are dark green and have thick indumentum underneath. The flowers are dark red and it is enjoyable to see all year. I did not know how many hybrids have haematodes in them until I made a list from Harold Greer's and Ken Cox's books. Here are twenty-two that I found to have haematodes as 50 per cent of their genes and of course, there are others that have 25 per cent!

'Acclaim'	'Fred Peste'	'Maxhaem Yellow'
'Always Admired'	'Gipsy King'	'May Day'
'Blitz'	'Grosclaude'	'Ovation'
'Bremen'	'Hill's Low Red'	'Pyrex'
'Charmaine'	'Hummingbird'	'Redwax'
'Choremia'	'Mary Briggs'	'Suede'
'Ellie Sather'	'Maxhaem Salmon'	'Thor'
'Fandango'		

Classification: *Subgenus*: Hymenanthes *Section*: Hymenanthes *Subsection*: Neriiflora *Species*: haematodes

Subspecies: chaetomallum and haematodes

Distribution in the wild: West and NW Yunnan at 11,000 to 14,000 feet

Its name: translates into "blood-like"

Flowers: scarlet to crimson, often with a calyx, lax trusses of up to 10 to 12 corollas

Foliage: dark green with thick, woolly, brownish-red indumentum underneath

Structure: low-growing, compact, and wider than tall

Hardiness: -5 to 0 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: needs good drainage and filtered sunlight



R. haematodes

President's Award to Peter Kendall, 2013
(Photo by Ann Clack)

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron of the Month

One of the finest azalea species: *R. schlippenbachii*

How was such a favorable opinion formed? This species has gained acclaim for its attractive foliage, good fall color and handsome flowers. And when you choose *R. schlippenbachii* 'Sid's Royal Pink', your plant has the deepest pink color of the species. Being very hardy is one of its positive attributes. Its early new foliage growth, however, needs some light shade protection from frost. You will like the structure of *R. schlippenbachii* because it grows in an upright and well-branched manner.



R. schlippenbachii

Here is more about *R. schlippenbachii*:

Classification: *Subgenus*: Pentanthera *Section*: Sciodorhodon

Distribution in the wild: Korea, NE Manchuria and eastern areas of Russia close to Manchuria, growing in open woodlands.

Its name: named after Baron von Schlippenbach who was a naval officer and traveler.

Flowers: 3 to 6 corollas per truss; light pink to rose-pink, sometimes white; a few reddish-brown spots; star-like shapes in each corolla; sometimes lightly fragrant.

Foliage: deciduous; the leaves turn yellow, crimson or orange in the fall; five leaves to each rounded whorl.

Structure: upright, well-branched; grows 4 to 5 feet in 10 years.

Hardiness: - 20 to -25 degrees F.

Siting in your garden: frost protection for new growth; sun protection for foliage in summer; good drainage.



R. schlippenbachii (white)



R. schlippenbachii 'Sid's Royal Pink'



R. schlippenbachii (fall foliage)

All photos by Harold Greer

2021-02

Looking Forward To Spring? Possibly *R. ririei* will lift your spirits!

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron of the Month

Looking Forward To Spring?

Possibly *R. ririei* will lift your spirits!



R. ririei

As we enjoy our landscapes this time of the year, we may see a few Cyclamen coming showing their bright flowers and a Hamamelis displaying its yellow-flowering branches. If we are fortunate enough to have a *R. ririei*, it may be blooming also, especially if the winter weather has been mild. In fact, a *R. ririei* could bloom any time from January until the middle of March. This species is interesting because the trusses may range from light purple to lilac-purple to reddish-purple depending on which plant you acquire. What they all have in common are the deep purple nectaries. An interesting fact, also, is that *R. ririei* is unlike other species, so it is rarely confused with its relatives.

Here is more about *R. ririei*:

Classification: Subgenus: Hymenanthes Section: Hymenanthes

Subsection: Argrophylla

Distribution in the wild: 4,000-6,000 feet in Szechwan, in forests or groups of trees.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F. Protect from frost and the flowers will last a long time.

Its name: named after Reverend B. Ririe, a friend of E.H. Wilson.

Flowers: 4 to 10 corollas per truss; bell-shaped corollas; smokey purple to light purple to lilac purple to reddish-purple; dark purple nectaries; blooms anytime from January to March

Foliage: leaves are lance-shaped and up to 6 inches long; matte-green with a thin layer of silvery-white indumentum on the undersides.

Structure: upright growing to 5 feet in 10 years; somewhat open growing.



Photos by Ray Clack

2021-03

Named After a Long Lake and a Town in Scotland: R. 'Loch Awe'

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron of the Month

Named After a Long Lake and a Town
in Scotland:

R. 'Loch Awe'



(Photo: RSBG)

In Scotland, the word lake is spelled and pronounced "loch". Certainly, the area around Loch Awe in the Highlands of Scotland is a special place to visit. That a beautiful rhododendron was named in appreciation of the third largest freshwater loch in Scotland makes a wonderful connection between the place and the plant. So, what parents did Peter and Ken Cox choose to create R. 'Loch Awe'? One parent is quite hardy and the other parent has handsome large leaves. The cross is *R. 'Percy Wiseman'* x *R. macabe anum*. The result of this interesting cross are large, dark green leaves and large, light yellow trusses.



(Photo: Caerhays Gardens, Cornwall)

Here is more about R. 'Loch Awe':

Hybridized by Peter and Ken Cox.

Parentage: *R. 'Percy Wiseman'* x *R. macabe anum*

Foliage: large, dark green leaves with a thin, grayish indumentum covering the undersides.

Trusses: Peachy buds open into as many as 15 light yellow corollas. Inside each corolla are a few red freckles.



(Photo: Caerhays Gardens)

Structure: may grow to 6 feet tall in 10 years; becomes a fairly dense and rounded plant.

Hardiness: -5 to 0 degrees F. Because it blooms in April, protect from frost and strong winds.



(Photo: Glendoick)

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron of the Month

Perfect Foliage and Great Form: *Rhododendron* 'Superflimmer'



Photo: Mike Stewart

If you love your 'President Roosevelt' rhododendron, you may want to explore the possibility of acquiring *R.* 'Superflimmer'. Its leaves have large yellow centers which are rimmed by dark green. The effect of this color combination gives you a plant that brightens up a corner of your garden. In my opinion, there is no need for *R.* 'Superflimmer' to bloom because the foliage is so decorative. It does bloom in May and most people describe the trusses as having a lilac color or the same color as *R.* 'Goldflimmer'. When the blooms are gone, however, you will still have a colorful plant for all the rest of the year.

R. 'Superflimmer' grows into a mounding form and is wider than tall. You may want to plant it in full sun or maybe partial shade. Both sites are fine.

Since I mentioned *R.* 'Goldflimmer', you now can hear a little bit about the history of this rhododendron and its relationship to *R.* 'Superflimmer'. Stuart Imrie of Washington state found a special sport on one of his *R.* 'Goldflimmer' plants. It had a lot more yellow than green on its leaves. Voila! This sport became the new rhododendron *R.* 'Superflimmer'.

And there are other stories to tell in Europe. Have you heard of *R.* 'Blattgold'? It was introduced in 1988 by Klaus Stockmann in Germany as a sport of *R.* 'Goldflimmer'. Going back even farther in history, Dietrich Hobbie of Germany found a variegated sport on either *R. cawbiense* or *R. ponticum* that was developed by him to become *R.* 'Goldflimmer'. He introduced it to the world in 1955.

To further tell the story of variegated rhododendrons, the English have produced foliage with large yellow centers and green edges on a rhododendron that they named *R.* 'Molten Gold'. It is also a sport of *R.* 'Goldflimmer'. If you are choosing one of these variegated rhododendrons, keep in mind that *R.* 'Superflimmer' is probably the "superstar" that shines among them.



Photo: Don Wallace

Here is more about *R.* 'Superflimmer':

Parentage: a sport from *R.* 'Goldflimmer'

Foliage: leaves have large yellow centers that are edged with dark green

Trusses: 10 to 14 lilac-colored corollas in medium sized trusses; blooms in May.

Structure: mounding; grows to 3 feet tall in 10 years.

Hardiness: -10°F

2021-05

Its Name Implies A "Delicious" Plant: R. 'Cupcake'

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron of the Month

Its Name Implies A "Delicious" Plant: R. 'Cupcake'



Photos by Mike Stewart

It is easy to see how R. 'Cupcake' was named. It grows naturally in the shape of a cupcake, with its wider than tall, rounded structure and its "frosting" of many beautiful trusses on almost every terminal. The numerous corollas open in deep pink, then change to a blend of pink and yellow on the insides but remain pink on the outsides. The foliage is quite attractive, displaying leaves that are dark green adorned with beautiful beige indumentum on their undersides. With proper spacing, this well-behaved, somewhat formal looking rhododendron should be a longtime beauty in your garden. So, with a structure that is wider than tall with dense foliage and numerous flowers, R. 'Cupcake' is an outstanding rhododendron to consider.

Additional considerations about R. 'Cupcake':

Parentage: (R. yakushmanum x R. 'Medusa') Hybridized by the Thompsons in 1990.

Foliage: Fairly small, dark green leaves, covered with a thick beige indumentum on their undersides, densely cover the plant and hide the stems.

Trusses: Each semi-lax truss has approximately 9 corollas that open pink and then change to a blend of pink and yellow on the insides through its blooming cycle. The outer sides of the corollas remain pink. Occasionally, it blooms in the Fall, however, it will bloom nicely again in May.

Structure: Grows to 3 feet tall and 4 feet wide in 10 years.

Hardiness: -5 degrees F

2021-06

Excellent Foliage, Great Form, Superlative Flowers: R. 'Peggie Roberts'

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron of the Month

Excellent Foliage, Great Form, Superlative Flowers: R. 'Peggie Roberts'



Photos by Mike Stewart

During the month of May, we are treated to a glorious array of rhododendron blooms. There are so many to enjoy, how can you pick a favorite? Well, Rhododendron 'Peggie Roberts' has some stunning attributes that convince you to call it a favorite. The blossoms start out as dark pink buds and then they open into wide, funnel-shaped, pale pink corollas with purplish pink on the wavy edges. The decorations that catch your eye are the dark pink-red circles in the centers of all the corollas. And radiating out from the circles are dark-red streaks of spots! What makes you stop to enjoy this plant, is that you realize you are looking at something quite different from almost all other rhododendrons. To complement these beautiful blooms, the foliage is dark green, attractive and it densely covers the limbs.

Furthermore, the structure of R. 'Peggie Roberts' is wider than tall and grows into a strong framework for the numerous blooms.

Additional considerations about this amazing rhododendron:

Parentage:	(['Fancy' x <i>degronianum</i> ssp. <i>yakushimanum</i>] x 'Coronation Day') Hybridizer: Jim Barlup
Foliage:	Medium-sized, dark-green leaves that completely cover the limbs
Structure:	Grows to 3 ft. high and 3 ft. wide in 10 years
Trusses:	Blooms in May; usually has 14 corollas in each full truss; the pink-red circles in the centers of each corolla send out rays of red
Hardiness:	-5°F (-20°C)

2021-08

R. spinuliferum, the "Firecracker" Rhododendron

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron of the Month

R. spinuliferum, the "Firecracker" Rhododendron



Photo by Mike Stewart

If you are looking for a very unique rhododendron that will surely catch the eye, this is the plant for you. Its name comes from the tiny hairs along the stems and the hairy new leaves. Our plant is in fairly deep shade, yet it has dark green leaves thickly covering the upright branches. To add to its interest, the scarlet-crimson blooms are narrowly tubular. Using your imagination, the flowers remind you of "firecrackers". Especially in bloom, *R. spinuliferum* attracts interest! And remember that this rhododendron has a hardiness rating of 5° F., so it should have winter protection in colder areas.

Classification: Subgenus: Rhododendron, Section: Rhododendron, Subsection: Scabrifolia

Hardiness: 5° F.

Its **name:** means "bearing spines" (They are not real spines.) As noted above, the stems have tiny hairs and the new leaves have hairs.

Flowers: The scarlet-crimson tubular flowers are found along the branches and usually point upwards. The nearly closed tubes show protruding stamens and anthers, further adding to the firecracker "look".

Distribution in the wild: 6,000 to 8,000 feet in Yunnan, China



Photo: Chimacum Woods

Foliage: The leaves are dark green and pucky on top with sparse hairs on the edges. Underneath, the surfaces look like netting covers them.

Structure: upright and growing to 4 feet in 10 years

2021-09 In Honor of a Great Man, a Beautiful Rhododendron with The Perfect Name: Rhododendron 'Harold Greer'

**In Honor of a Great Man,
a Beautiful Rhododendron with The Perfect Name:
*Rhododendron 'Harold Greer'***



Photos by Harold Greer

A few months ago, Harold presented us with his namesake rhododendron that we now proudly have in our garden. It will always be a reminder of our good friend, his generosity, and his ability to create excellent rhododendrons. This rhododendron has a very strong structure with vibrantly colored trusses. Its habit is upright with vigorous branching. Although we have not seen our new plant bloom yet, it is obvious that the structure will proudly hold up its large blossoms.

When Harold hybridized his namesake, he chose two parents with good growth habit and handsome leaves: (*R. 'Very Berry' x R. 'Horizon Monarch'*) With these two exceptional parents, *R. 'Harold Greer'* is a plant you must have.

The seed parent, *R. 'Very Berry'*, another Greer hybrid, is known for its large, deep fir-green leaves that thickly cover the plant. 'Gigantic' is the word Harold used to describe these 10-inch-long leaves. In our experience growing this commercially, it withstood both cold and heat extremes. *R. 'Very Berry'* should take -10° F.

The pollen parent, *R. 'Horizon Monarch'*, is known for its very large trusses of pale greenish-yellow corollas with a vivid red flare. Again, Harold was working toward creating a magnificent hybrid that displayed both large leaves and large flowers.

R. 'Harold Greer' will display ball trusses of 10 corollas with very wavy-edged lobes, deep purplish pink in bud, opening inside pale yellow, with deep purplish pink

picotee margins. The calyx is pale yellow with deep purplish-pink stripes. It will bloom in early May in western Oregon and is rated to 0° F.

Enjoy this wonderful plant, hold dear the memories of Harold Greer, and cherish the many contributions to the world of rhododendrons that he gave to us.



Young 'Harold Greer' foliage in the Stewart Garden
Photo by Mike Stewart

2021-10 Rhododendron 'Blewbury': A Beautiful Hybrid With a Strong Species Look

Rhododendron 'Blewbury'

A Beautiful Hybrid With a Strong Species Look

By Maria Stewart



These and cover
photo by
Mike Stewart

When you see *R.* 'Blewbury' from a distance, you may think that it is *R. roxieanum*. The foliage is dark green, narrow and covered underneath with light brown woolly indumentum in a thin layer. The trusses of *R.* 'Blewbury' also show some of *R. roxieanum* traits, including attractive white corollas with occasional red spotting. That being said, *R.* 'Blewbury' trusses are white and *always* the upper throat is spotted with a strong, deep purplish red blotch. We have found that *R.* 'Blewbury' performs very well in our garden under a variety of conditions. This rhododendron draws your attention to its wonderful foliage, cinnamon-colored buds and full trusses.

Parentage: *R. roxieanum* var. *roxieanum* x *maculiferum* ssp. *anwheiense* Hybridized at the Crown Estate Windsor, 1968. There are several different clones in commerce.

Foliage: leaves narrowly elliptic and 3.5 inches long; recurved edges; dark green with slight covering of light brown woolly indumentum underneath.

Trusses: Each truss has 18-20 corollas; each white corolla is 1.5 inches across; the upper throat is spotted

deep, purplish red; *R.* 'Blewbury' blooms in late April the first part of May.

Height in 10 years: two to three feet tall; grows upright manner.

Hardiness: 0° F.



2021-11

Want to Watch *R. protistum* Grow to Maturity? Start When You are Young!

Want to Watch *R. protistum* Grow to Maturity? Start When You are Young!

By Maria Stewart



Photo by
Mike Stewart

This species is very often the slowest species to grow to maturity. It may take 50 years to start blooming and completing its indumentum on the undersides of the leaves. So, enjoy the beauty of its form and foliage while it grows in your garden over many, many years. The leaves are oval with good length and are dark green. The foliage is handsome! Depending on its location in your garden, in sun or in shade, it will become a very large tree-like shrub in the sun. However, in the shade, *R. protistum* will not be as attractive because it will become leggy. Through the years I have enjoyed experiencing the subtle changes in this rhododendron as it ages with me. It will always remain one of my very favorite plants.

Classification: Subgenus: Hymenantes; Section: Hymenantes; Subsection: Grandia

Its name: "first of the first"

Hardiness: +20° F. (Our *R. protistum* has never suffered cold weather because it lives in filtered sunlight under trees.)

Flowers: If you ever have the good fortune of seeing flowers on a *R. protistum*, there will be 20 to 30 corollas in a full truss. The corollas will be any color from pale pink to crimson purple.

Foliage: As mentioned above, the leaves are dark green, oval, and at least 10 inches long. Indumentum will very likely be incomplete because it takes many years to cover the leaves, as shown in Pukeiti photo.

Structure: It forms a large shrub/tree and if it grows 10 to 20 feet tall, be happy! In the wild, it grows 18 to 90 feet in height.

Distribution in the wild: Western and Northwestern Yunnan, Southeastern Tibet, Eastern Arunachal Pradesh, Northeastern Upper Burma, Northern Vietnam at 9,000 to 13,000 feet.



Photo: Mike Stewart

Photo in Pukeiti Gardens
from Harold Greer collection

2021-12

Rhododendron 'Ginny Gee': Another Warren Berg Winner

Rhododendron 'Ginny Gee' Another Warren Berg Winner

By Maria Stewart

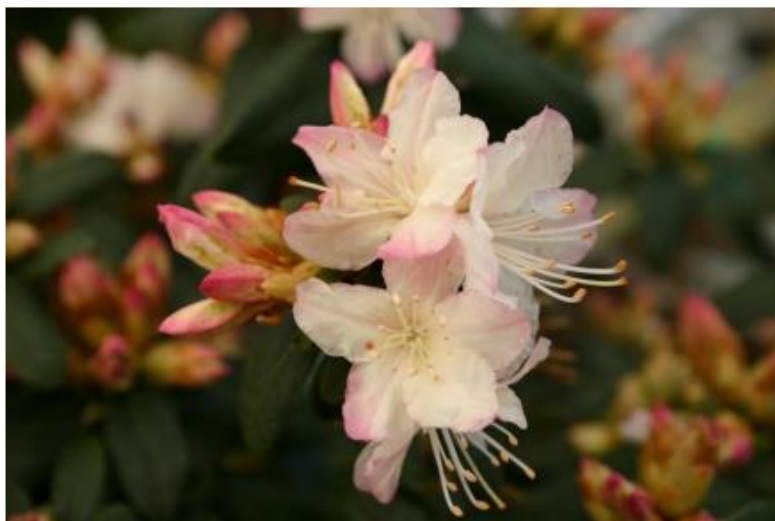


Photo by
Mike Stewart

If you are collecting rhododendrons that are award winners, Ginny Gee is the plant for you. It has received multiple awards including the Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society as well as the Rhododendron of the Year Award from the American Rhododendron Society for several regions throughout the United States. It qualifies for these prestigious awards because it grows and performs well in a wide range of growing/climate conditions. From the Pacific Northwest, where it was hybridized, to the Atlantic Region, it performs well in USDA zones 6 through 8. If all that isn't enough, it keeps a beautiful shape for 10 years and beyond. It holds its rounded shape well with matte green leaves densely covering all of the branches. This heavily branched structure supports a profusion of pink and white flowers. It is well known as a semi-dwarf rhododendron, but plan ahead, in partial shade, this plant in our garden after 25 years is now 5 feet tall and 6 feet wide. And what a display in the mid spring season as it completely covers itself with beautiful pink to white blossoms.

- Parentage: R. keiskei 'Yaku Fairy' x R. racemosum
Hybridizer: [Warren Berg](#)
Foliage: Elliptic, matte green with some red-bronze coloring in cold climates.
Trusses: Flowers white with pink flushing at edges both inside and outside, fading to light pink or white in terminal clusters of buds of 3 to 5 flowers
Size: 1 to 1.5 ft. high, 1.5 to 2 ft. wide in 10 years.
Hardiness: -10° F.



Photo by Warren Berg

2022-01

Handsome Foliage, Bark and Flowers: *R. hodgsonii*

Handsome Foliage, Bark and Flowers: *R. hodgsonii*

By Maria Stewart



Photo by
Mike Stewart

The species, *R. hodgsonii*, with its rounded structure, slowly grows into a small tree in the Pacific Northwest. So, to see this rhododendron growing to heights of 20 feet in its natural environment of the Himalayas, is a real treat. There, you may first notice the smooth trunks with peeling bark, because the trunks have a striking creamy to cinnamon color. Then, you see the large pink trusses displayed beautifully on the ends of its branches. To complete the impact of seeing *R. hodgsonii* in the wild, you discover its large, dark green leaves have a thin layer of silvery to tawny or cinnamon colored indumentum on the undersides. Natural hybrids of *R. hodgsonii* in the wild merit attention also. They are *R. hodgsonii* affinity with its thick, dark chocolate-brown indumentum and *R. x decipiens* which is a natural hybrid of *R. hodgsonii* and *R. falconeri*. Here is more about *R. hodgsonii*:

Classification: Subgenus Hymenanthes, Section Hyemnanthes (most "typical" rhododendrons), Subsection Falconera, Species *hodgsonii*

Distribution: Nepal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, South Tibet, at 9,500 to 14,000 feet. It is an elepidote.

Flowers: about 20 tubular-bell shaped corollas in a large and compact truss; pink through purple to cherry red, with or without a blotch.

Foliage: large, oblong, dark green on top with a thin layer of silvery to tawny or cinnamon indumentum on the undersides.

Structure: rounded when young, growing erectly with age; in the Pacific Northwest, grows to about 5 feet in 10 years.

Hardiness: +10° F.

Placement in your garden: well-drained soil, filtered sunlight; protect from the wind and cold.



R. hodgsonii (photo by Marc Columbel)

2022-02

A Remarkable Species: *Rhododendron insigne*

A Remarkable Species: *Rhododendron insigne*

By Maria Stewart



Photo by
Mike Stewart

Along about the second week in May, *Rhododendron insigne* shows off its pink and white flowers with pink stripes decorating the outside of each corolla. The foliage is handsome, also, with the stiff dark green leaves framing the flowers. The tawny indumentum is so plastered on that it reminds you of skin and its coppery sheen is quite attractive.

Here is more about *R. insigne*:

Classification: Section: Hymenantes subsection: Argrophylla

Natural origin: Apparently only grows on Wa Shan where it may be extinct, in Central Sichuan at 7,000 to 10,000 feet elevation in woodlands. May have been found recently in northeast Yunnan and South Sichuan.

It is an elepidote, meaning it has no scales on its leaves.

Flowers: The bell-shaped corollas range in color from light pink to deep pink with distinctive deeper pink stripes on each lobe. Blooms in mid-May and later.

Hardiness: 0°F

Leaves: The word *insigne* means remarkable and the foliage is certainly worthy of that epithet. The tops of the thick leaves are shiny and dark green. They feel stiff and rigid. The undersides of the lance-shaped leaves are tightly covered with a shiny, coppery indumentum.

Height and structure: 3 feet in 10 years and grows slowly in the sun.

Placement in your garden: *R. insigne* grows best in sun to show off its compact form. It gets leggy in the shade.



R. insigne (UBC Botanical Garden)

2022-03

R. 'Seta': An Early Bloomer To Enjoy

R. 'Seta' An Early Bloomer To Enjoy

By Maria Stewart



When February arrives, our thoughts turn to early blooming rhododendrons and companion plants. It's always uplifting to wander the garden; to breathe in the fragrance of *Sarcococca* and *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn'; to enjoy the perky pink blooms of *Cyclamen coum* and the varied colors of the stalwart Hellebores; to see the swelling buds on *R. 'Cilpinense'*, *R. moupinense*, *R. calophytum* and *R. sutchuenense*; and to maybe see a little color on the dwarf *R. mucronulatum* and the *R. mucronulatum* 'Cornell Pink'.

Another rhododendron that catches our eye in February, even before Valentine's Day, is *R. 'Seta'* because it is blooming in a greenhouse. Its tubular, light and dark pink flowers remind us that spring is not too far away. Here is more about *R. 'Seta'*:

R. 'Seta' is a lepidote, which means it has scales on the undersides of its leaves.

The cross is (*R. spinuliferum* x *R. moupinense*). It blooms in late March in the garden. *R. spinuliferum* blooms in

late April and is hardy to +5° F.; *R. moupinense* blooms in February or March and is hardy to 0° F.

Flowers: tubular, funnel-shaped; combinations of light pink and darker pink; three to four corollas per each lax truss; very floriferous.

Foliage: dark green, oblong, about two inches long and one inch wide.

Height in 10 years: about 4-5 feet; pruning helps to create more branches.

Hardiness: +5°F.

Placement in your garden: Needs protection from frosts and some sun to bloom well.



Photos: Mike Stewart (from the Stewart Garden)

Notes: *R. 'Seta'* won the [2016 ROY Award](#) for the SW region. Don Wallace in his [Singing Tree Nursery](#) email of Feb. 13 declared "This cultivar announces the beginning of the rhododendron bloom each year."

2022-04

A Species to Treasure: *Rhododendron mallotum*

A Species to Treasure: *Rhododendron mallotum*

By Maria Stewart



Photo by Mike Stewart

It is hard to pass by a plant of *R. mallotum* without noticing its dark green foliage accented by its woolly, brownish-red indumentum. The combination of the deep green on the top sides and the striking indumentum underneath begs you to take a second look. Like frosting on a cake, the flowers are beautiful, also. They form full trusses of crimson, scarlet or cherry-red.

Here is more about *R. mallotum*:

Classification: Section: Hymenanthes Subsection: Neriiflora. *R. mallotum* is so distinct from the rest of the Neriiflora that it is one most easily recognizable of all the species in the subsection. It is an elepidote, meaning that its leaves do not have scales.

Leaves: very thick and stiff, obovate, retained for one to three years, dark green on top and covered with a dense, woolly cinnamon-brown indumentum on the undersides.

Flowers: usually crimson, sometimes scarlet or cherry-red in trusses of up to 20 corollas; blooms late March to early April.

Placement in your garden: needs protection from frost because of its early blooms. 3' in ten years.

Its natural origin is NE Upper Myanmar and Western Yunnan at 11,000 to 12,000 feet.

Hardiness: + 10°F.



Photo by Harold Greer



R. mallotum illustration by Christy Hansford Baker
[JARS v52n3](#)

2022-05

A Trio of Bears: 'Teddy Bear', 'Cinnamon Bear', and 'Silver Bear'

A Trio of Bears: 'Teddy Bear', Cinnamon Bear' and 'Silver Bear'

By Maria Stewart



R. 'Teddy Bear' Photo by Garth Wedemire



R. 'Silver Bear' Photo by Mike Stewart



R. 'Cinnamon Bear' Photo by Diane Weissman

To make this article into a story, 'Goldilocks' would have to be included. However, 'Goldilocks' deserves her own article, therefore, a later newsletter will feature that fine lepidote. Meanwhile, back to the bears. All three have striking indumentum of the woolly type underneath their leaves which makes you think of bear fur. And 'Silver Bear' has discontinuous white indumentum on the tops of its leaves which leads you to think of the color silver. You will see shared characteristics among these three rhododendrons, mainly because of their parentage. Notice that each "bear" grows with a different stature, however. Here are descriptions of the three bears:

'Teddy Bear' grows wider than tall and makes a large specimen in fifteen years of 4 feet in height and 7 feet in width. Its leaves are dark green on top and have orange-brown indumentum on the undersides. The same indumentum extends down the petioles of the leaves and then down the stems. It blooms in late April into early May and the 8 to 10 corollas are light purplish pink fading to white with red spotting in the throat. Its hardiness is -5 to -10° F. It appreciates filtered sunlight and good drainage. The cross is (Lem's *bureavii* hybrid x *R. yakushmanum*) but the hybridizer is unknown. Briggs introduced this hybrid in 1991.

'Cinnamon Bear' grows a bit taller than wide in ten years to about 6 feet in height and 5 feet in width. Its

leaves are dark green on top with small remnants of discontinuous fawn-colored indumentum on the previous year's leaves. The undersides of the leaves give this rhododendron its name because the indumentum is a rich cinnamon color. Also, fawn-colored indumentum covers the petioles and the stems. It blooms in late April into early May with full trusses of about 20 white corollas. It is hardy to -5 to -10° F. It appreciates filtered sunlight and good drainage. The cross is (*R. bureavii* x *R. yakushmanum* 'Koichiro Wada') and the hybridizer is Cecil Smith who registered it in 1989.

'Silver Bear' is more compact growing than the other two bears. It grows to about 3 feet tall and wide in ten years. Its leaves are dark green on top and are decorated with white discontinuous indumentum. The undersides are covered with woolly orange-brown indumentum and the indumentum covers the leaf petioles and the stems, also. It blooms in late April into early May with full trusses of white corollas. It is hardy to -5 to -10° F. It also appreciates filtered sunlight and good drainage. The cross is (*R. yakushmanum* x *R. bureavii*) and the hybridizer is in question. We purchased this rhododendron from Lansing Bulgin about 25 years ago when it was simply (yak x *bureavii*). The hybridizer could be Cecil Smith, but that is not confirmed. We named it 'Silver Bear' after growing it for several years under the cross name only.

2022-06

Dense and Beautiful, A Hybrid to Treasure: Rhododendron 'Kimbeth'

Dense and Beautiful, A Hybrid to Treasure: *Rhododendron* 'Kimbeth'

By Maria Stewart



Connor Ryan, pictured with *R.* 'Kimbeth'
at the Stewart Garden Luncheon Event at ARS 2022, May 5, 2022

When your garden is in need of a rhododendron that grows to three feet high and wide in ten years, you will be pleased to find *R.* 'Kimbeth', a beautiful plant that fits that perfect place in your garden! Yes, this semi-dwarf rhododendron grows very densely, keeps its perfectly rounded shape, and is attractive throughout the entire year. Not only are the flowers bright deep-pink, funnel-shaped and have three to five florets per truss when they bloom, but they also bloom on every stem, covering the entire plant with a massive show of color.

It blooms early in May. Furthermore, before it blooms, the flower buds are an eye-catching purple, inherited from its seed parent, *R.* 'Kimberly'.

The bud color is delightful throughout the winter. Its hardiness is -5° F.

So, here is a rhododendron that grows wider than tall. Leaves: elliptic to oblong, light green with bronzy new growth that is also attractive.

The parents of this hybrid are *R.* 'Kimberly' and *R.* 'Elizabeth' and it was Harold Greer whom we thank for making the cross in 1979.



R. 'Kimbeth' Photo by Harold Greer

2022-08

An Extremely Fine Foliage Plant: *R. concatenans*

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron of the Month

An Extremely Fine Foliage Plant: *R. concatenans*

Rhododendron cinnabarinum ssp. *xanthocodon* Concatenans Group

By Maria Stewart

When I walk by this elegant plant in our garden, I stop and enjoy its newly formed, beautifully glaucous, bluish-green foliage and I cannot resist turning a leaf over to once again delight in its almost bright glabrous underside. And that is when it is not blooming. From the second half of April into mid-May, two inch long, bell-shaped apricot-yellow, veined flowers appear! They rest among these beautiful leaves in a lax truss form. The combination of apricot-yellow and bluish leaves is a perfect combination.

Classification:

Genus: *Rhododendron*

Species: *cinnabarinum*

About its name: Translates into "linking together".

Distribution in the wild: *R. concatenans* grows in S.E. Tibet at 10,000 to 12,000 feet elevation.

Structure: In ten years, our plant is three feet high and four feet wide. The leaves are well distributed throughout the plant, but not densely.

Hardiness: +5 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: It prefers partial protection from the afternoon, western sun.

Photos by Mike Stewart.



2022-09

Rhododendron 'Golfer': Remarkable Foliage, Form, Blooms

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron

Rhododendron 'Golfer'

Remarkable Foliage, Form, Blooms

By Maria Stewart



Rhododendron 'Golfer' (photo late Harold Greer, Eugene, 04-98)

As I stroll through our garden in the month of August looking for a beautiful rhododendron, one in particular draws my attention. It is *R. 'Golfer'* and the foliage is wonderful this August! Not only *now* is the foliage attractive, but it will continue to draw attention to garden viewers in September and even maybe in October.

The shape of 'Golfer' is a tight dome with lush, thick foliage. The new leaves, which persist for about two months, are narrowly elliptic with silvery tomentum covering them. The hybridizer, Warren Berg, crossed *R. yakushimanum* with *R. pseudochry-*

santhum, both of which have good foliage. All these foliage factors created a wonderful rhododendron! The flowers that adorn the plant in May are a pale purplish-pink with very slight brown spotting and the reverse sides are striped a little darker. These trusses are fully domed-shaped and display 13 florets.

In addition to the attractive look of 'Golfer', its hardiness will be appreciated both in summer weather and throughout the winter. It is rated at H6 hardiness which means 'Golfer' should be able to survive -15 and -10 degrees F. It has proven its strength during these last few harsh summers, showing no leaf burn. Our plant is exposed to a mostly southern exposure with some shade to the west in the late afternoon.



Rhododendron 'Golfer' (photo Mike Stewart)

2022-10

Not Only Unique, But Flowers of Marmalade! Rhododendron 'Unique Marmalade'

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron Not Only Unique, But Flowers of Marmalade! *Rhododendron 'Unique Marmalade'*

By Maria Stewart

When you are looking for a rhododendron that has a wonderfully dense habit of leaves and the flowers are displayed beautifully on top of the leaves, then you will enjoy *R. 'Unique Marmalade'*. In ten years of growth, your plant will be about three feet tall and three feet wide. The foliage will be a nice medium-dark green and will cover the mounding plant. Many of the other orange blooming rhododendrons have the genes of *R. griersonianum* in them such as *R. 'Fabia'*, *R. 'Medusa'* and *R. 'Autumn Gold'*. Those have lax trusses and a more open growth habit. However, the parents of *R. 'Unique Marmalade'* are *R. 'Orange Marmalade'* and *R. 'Unique'*, both



of which contribute to the fully rounded ball trusses of *R. 'Unique Marmalade'*. Furthermore, the leaves have a shiny surface, very unlike the leaves of many of the other orange blooming *griersonianum* hybrids. It blooms in mid-April to late April. The flower buds are bright pink and they open to rosy-pink flowers with orange throats giving it that multi-colored marmalade look. There are delicate spots inside the throats.

Parentage: (*R. 'Orange Marmalade'* x *R. 'Unique'*)

Hardiness: Zero degrees F.

Growing Conditions: It will take some shade and some sun. The more sun that you give it, the more densely it will grow.

Hybridized by: Davis in 1990.



2022-11

Rhododendron 'Patriot's Dream': A Plant You Will Enjoy for A long Time!

Maria's Rhododendron for November 2022

Rhododendron 'Patriot's Dream'
A Plant You Will Enjoy for A Long Time!

By Maria Stewart

When you are looking for a compact rhododendron that keeps its rounded form and has a slow growing habit, you will be very pleased to own a *Rhododendron* 'Patriot's Dream'. The plant that we have in our landscape is 10 years old and it has grown to 18 inches tall and 2 feet wide! The trusses are deep red, and the dark green foliage often looks like it is polished. The parents of this rhododendron are *Rhododendron* 'Carmen' and *R. yakushimanum*.

Rhododendron 'Patriot's Dream' draws your eye to it because of the shiny leaves surrounding the deep red corollas. Its ability to survive our winters is given by the cold hardy *R. yakushimanum* parentage and the strong deep red colored flowers are attributed to *R. 'Carmen'*. Its buds are rounded and attractive on the tips of the branches. It blooms in May and is hardy to at least -5 F.

By the way, the name, 'Patriot's Dream' comes from the song, "America the Beautiful". When Mike and I were introducing and naming several rhododendrons years ago, we chose phrases from this and other beautiful patriotic music that ultimately resulted in the naming of *R. 'Freedom's Song'* and *R. 'Mountain Majesty'*.



Rhododendron 'Patriot's Dream' (Mike Stewart)

2023-02

Handsome Foliage, Bark and Flowers: *R. hodgsonii*

Maria's Rhododendron from January 2016

Handsome Foliage, Bark and Flowers: *R. hodgsonii*

By Maria Stewart

The species, *R. hodgsonii*, with its rounded structure, grows slowly into a small tree in the Pacific Northwest. So, to see this Rhododendron growing to heights of 20 feet in its natural environment of the Himalayas, is a real treat. There, you first may notice the smooth trunks with peeling bark, because the trunks have a striking creamy to cinnamon color. Then, you see the large pink trusses displayed beautifully on the ends of its branches. To complete the impact of seeing *R. hodgsonii* in the wild, you discover its large, dark green leaves have a thin layer of silvery to tawny or cinnamon colored **indumentum** on the undersides. Natural hybrids of *R. hodgsonii* in the wild merit attention also. They are *R. hodgsonii* affinity with its thick, dark chocolate-brown **indumentum** and *R. x 'decipiens'* which is a natural hybrid of *R. hodgsonii* and *R. falconeri*.

Here is more about *R. hodgsonii*:

Classification: Subgenus Hymenanthes, Section Hyemnanthes (most "typical" rhododendrons), Subsection Falconera, Species *hodgsonii*

Distribution: Nepal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, South Tibet, at 9,500 to 14,000 feet. It is an elepidote.

Flowers: about 20 tubular-bell shaped corollas in a large and compact truss; pink through purple to cherry-red, with or without a blotch.

Foliage: large, oblong, dark green on top with a thin layer of silvery to tawny or cinnamon **indumentum** on the undersides.

Structure: rounded when young, growing erectly with age; in the Pacific Northwest, grows to about 5 feet in 10 years. Hardiness: +10 degrees F.

Placement in your garden: well-drained soil, filtered sunlight; protect from the wind and cold.



R. hodgsonii in Sikkim in the wild. (Mike Stewart)

2023-03

Rhododendron ririei Flowering in February

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron

Rhododendron ririei

Flowering in February

By Maria Stewart

Yes, this rhododendron will decorate your garden that early. Steve Hootman reported to us on January 26th that *R. ririei* was starting to bloom at the [Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden](#) (RSBG). What a delight to see Spring on its way! Of course, the plant and the trusses will need some protection from the freezing weather. However, the effort that you put out to protect your early bloomer will be well worth it.

R. ririei was named after a friend of E.H. Wilson and introduced in 1904. It is an upright grower that is known as a bushy shrub or small tree, so give it plenty of room to grow to 6 feet or more. Its leaves are oblong and pointed and grow to 6 inches long and 2 inches wide. With light green on the top sides and with a thin white or light greyish layer of **indumentum** on the undersides, these features make it very distinctive from other species rhododendrons. The trusses are large and each corolla is about two inches long in a wide bell-shape. The colors of the blossoms range from light to dark purple or smokey blue, and each corolla has noticeable purple nectar pouches. You should expect to have a plant that displays trusses with as many as ten corollas.

R. ririei is an Arboreum and is classified as subspecies *Argyrophyllum*. If you were plant hunting for this rhododendron in the wild, you would explore Szechwan in China on Mt. Omei at 4,000 to 6,000 feet. Its hardiness is negative 5 degrees F. Photo by Harold Greer.



2023-04

The Lovely *Rhododendron lutescens*

Maria's *Rhododendron*

The Lovely *Rhododendron lutescens*

By Maria Stewart

There is a rotting five foot Douglas Fir stump in our garden. Growing in this naturally well-draining decaying soil are wild huckleberries, salal, ferns and a *R. lutescens*. We planted it at the base of the stump about twenty years ago. Lo and behold! The *R. lutescens* grew right through the stump and now we have plants on both sides of the stump. This species grows in a willowy and upright manner and looks at home when it is winding its way among other plants.

R. lutescens usually blooms in late March in our garden, however, because of our extended winter this year, we are still waiting for it to bloom. After the blooms fade, this species puts on another show of color with its distinctive reddish new growth. The vibrantly colored leaves are like a second stage of blooming!



R. lutescens (Mike Stewart)

- Distribution: West Sichuan, Northeast Yunnan, Hubei and Guizhou in China, at 1,750-10,500 feet altitude, in the open in a thicket or among trees.
- Taxonomy: Subgenus: *Rhododendron*
- Section: *Rhododendron*
- Subsection: *Triflora*
- It is a lepidote¹ with a few scales on the tops of leaves; the undersides of the leaves are more pale. The shape of the leaves is oblong or like a lance. The new growth is a bright reddish bronze.
- Blooms: light to deeper primrose yellow; wide funnel-shaped; 1-3 corollas to a truss.
- Hardiness: +5 degrees F. Depending on the selected clone, the larger the flowers, the more tender the plant according to *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species*, authored by Peter and Kenneth Cox. (Our plant suffers somewhat during Arctic blasts; its buds freeze and its leaves burn, but it keeps coming back!)
- Height: depends on whether it grows vertically or somewhat less than vertical as it finds its way among your other plants. It should grow 6 feet in 10 years.
- Derivation of name: *lutescens* = becoming yellow

¹ Rhododendrons are frequently divided into two categories: lepidote and elipidote. The lepidote rhododendrons have minute scales on the leaves and are generally the small-leaved species. Conversely, the elipidote rhododendrons don't have leaf scales and are generally the large-leaved species. (<http://rhodyman.net/rhodynle.php>)

2023-05 Three Magnificent and Early Blooming Species: *R. calophytum*, *R. praeevernum* and *R. sutchuenense* var. *geraldii*

Maria's Rhododendron

Three Magnificent and Early Blooming Species

R. calophytum, *R. praeevernum* and *R. sutchuenense* var. *geraldii*

By Maria Stewart



R. praeevernum (Mike Stewart)

to -15 degrees F. You will find it in the wild in Szechwan and NE Yunnan at 6,000 to 13,000 feet in elevation.

R. praeevernum is slower and lower growing than *R. calophytum* and *R. sutchuenense*. Its lance-shaped leaves are smaller than the other two species, also. You still should place it out of strong winds for the sake of the leaves. Some experts consider *R. praeevernum* to be closely related to *R. sutchuenense*. With its handsome form, it eventually becomes a small tree in a more compact manner than the other two spe-

During those two weeks of cold and snowy weather in late February, three of the rhododendrons in our garden continue to swell their buds and to look as if Spring is approaching. The cold weather does not faze our hardy *R. sutchuenense* var. *geraldii* and we can count on *R. calophytum* and *R. praeevernum* to be just as hardy. Keep in mind, however, that all three species will prefer being sheltered from strong winds that may break the leaf petioles¹ of their attractive long leaves. All three will command rather large spaces with *R. praeevernum* growing somewhat smaller and more slowly than the other two. Adding to their grand stature are their early and large flowers, prominently displayed on the tips of their strong branches.

These species all are members of *Subgenus Hymenanthes*; *Section Hymenanthes*; *Subsection Fortunea*:

R. calophytum var. *calophytum* is the most cultivated of the *R. calophytum* varieties. (As a side note, variety *R. openshawianum* is considered by some to be an inferior form of *R. calophytum*.) It eventually will become a beautiful tree, showing off its large, light pink flowers, each one displaying a deep red blotch. Considering that *R. calophytum*'s medium green leaves can be as long as a foot, you will want to plant it out of strong winds in your garden. When a hint of spring comes, watch for *R. calophytum* buds to swell and bloom as early as February. We have a photo of a *R. calophytum* blooming with snow on the ground. It is hardy



R. calophytum var. *calophytum* (Garth Wedemire)

1 The petiole is a stalk that attaches a leaf to the plant stem.

Maria's Rhododendron

A Special and Unusual Rhododendron: *Rhododendron* 'Elephant Ears'

By Maria Stewart

Photos by Mike Stewart

Our experience with this rhododendron is limited, because we received it as a gift from Harold's and Nancy Greer's collection only a year ago. As are so many plants in our garden, this one is extraordinary because it will always remind us of our association of many years with Harold and Nancy and the Thompson Family.

Limited information is available about the parentage of *R.* 'Elephant Ears'. The Thompson Nursery introduced this plant in about 2005. It was open-pollinated and the seedling was found in a flat of *R. macabeanum* hybrids. In a recent interview with Michelle from Thompson's Nursery, she stated that they have never known the exact parentage.

We recently asked Steve Hootman from the RSBG for his opinion about the parentage. He stated that the leaf shape strongly suggests that it is an *R. orbiculare* hybrid. Other experts weighing in during the past year have suggested that *R. sinogrande* may be a parent. Steve Hootman, however, does not see evidence of *R. sinogrande* in its lineage.



Front side of leaf (Mike Stewart)



Back side of leaf (Mike Stewart)

2023-08 a

R. arborescens x R. prunifolium - A Late Summer Bloomer

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron

R. arborescens x *R. prunifolium* = A Late Summer Bloomer

By Maria Stewart

Photos by Mike Stewart

A rhododendron that is blooming in August? With all this hot weather? And it still catches your eye with its beauty? The genus *Rhododendron* never ceases to amaze us with its diversity and in this case, we see a pleasing extension of the blooming season. Appropriately, this deciduous azalea is named 'August Sunrise' and its hybridization is credited to Fred Galle of Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia. These special gardens were created to protect American species azaleas, certainly a group of rhododendrons to treasure.

To explain the summer blooming of 'August Sunrise', let's first talk about *R. prunifolium*, which blooms from July to September. Called the "Plumleaf Azalea", it has orange-red to red flowers, smooth leaves and stems and dark green leaves. The traits of this species are stable because of its late blooming time. Growing quite tall, up to 20 feet or more, *prunifolium* likes cool places along creeks and in ravines. It is found in a very small range covering only eleven counties along the Alabama-Georgia border.



R. arborescens x *R. prunifolium* (Photo Mike Stewart)

R. arborescens has fragrant white flowers, often with yellow blotches and prominent red pistils and stamens. Called the "Sweet Azalea", it blooms from May to August. The leaves are smooth to semi-glossy to glossy and vary from medium green to dark green with glaucous undersides. Growing to fifteen feet and very stoloniferous¹, *R. arborescens* is one of North America's most recognizable species. However, there is another form of *R. arborescens* named variety

¹ Stoloniferous: Having stolons, horizontal, above-ground, creeping stems with roots and shoots forming at the nodes and the tip.* Strawberries and spider plants are both well known for reproducing by stolons.

2023-08 b

R. arborescens x *R. prunifolium* - A Late Summer Bloomer

georgiana that grows in the low elevations of Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. It blooms in August and September instead of May to August like its cousin in the highlands. Its leaves are not glaucous and this variety is not stoloniferous, although its flowers are white with the distinctive red pistils and stamens.

The interesting trait in common with *R. prunifolium* is the location of *R. arborescens* var. *georgiana*, causing botanists to explain the pink or salmon shades of a few *R. prunifolium* to close encounters between the two species. That is why *R. 'August Sunrise'* is listed as a possible open-pollinated hybrid on the website *hirsutum*. Here is more information about *R. 'August Sunrise'*:

- Classification: Subgenus Pentanthera; Section Pentanthera
- It is an elepidote.
- Flowers: medium pink with a gold blotch that combines with the pink to look slightly tangerine; five petals with five long red stamens; mildly fragrant.
- Foliage: medium green and semiglossy; smooth surfaces; deciduous.
- Height in 10 years: 5 to 8 feet, growing upright and bushy.
- Hardiness: -10 to -15 degrees F.
- Siting in your garden: morning sun, afternoon filtered sunlight.
- Source: Dick Cavender grew the plants of 'August Sunrise' that we received from Fran and Ed Egan.



R. arborescens x *prunifolium* (Photo Mike Stewart)



R. arborescens x *prunifolium*. The colors on these three crosses are similar, but do show some difference. (Photo Mike Stewart)

2023-09 a

Rhododendron pachysanthum

Maria Stewart's Rhododendron

Rhododendron pachysanthum

By Maria Stewart

Rhododendron pachysanthum grabs your attention when seen in anyone's garden. It stands out from all other plants at a distance. The beautiful combination of the earlier silvery indumentum followed up by the darker cinnamon indumentum on the tops of the leaves is impressive. Along with the thick tan indumentum on the underside of the leaf makes this species one of the most desirable rhododendrons in the world. The leaves are retained for three years, which provides for a more full-looking plant and continual beauty throughout the year. You will find that the leaves display a darker indumentum when grown in the shade and, as the plant becomes older.

R. pachysanthum grows naturally in the wild at 10,000–10,500 feet elevation in Central Taiwan above the tree line. So, it can stand some sun, but remember that in the wild at that high elevation, the air is cooler and often filled with moisture. Be careful to provide some protection from our sometimes, intense sun exposure. It is cold hardy to -5 degrees F. and grows to about 3 feet tall and wide in 10 years.

The flowers are white to pale pink and usually spotted. Expect to wait a few years for blooms to begin. It is well worth the wait!

Classification: Subsection Maculifera. Davidian has placed *pachysanthum* in the Taliense series, Wasonii subseries. (Cox, Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species 1997)

Many of the hybrids of *R. pachysanthum* display the same beautiful traits and are all well worth growing. We have included only a few of these hybrids in the picture portion of this article. There are many more hybrids available in the Pacific Northwest.



R. Golfer (Photo by Mike Stewart)

2023-09 b

Rhododendron pachysanthum



R. pachysanthum (Photo by Mike Stewart)



Frosted Jade x *R. pachysanthum* (Photo by Mike Stewart).



R. pachysanthum 'Pachy Bee' (Photo by Mike Stewart)



R. pachysanthum (Photo Jens Birck)

Inspiration

September, 2012

From the President's Corner: Following in Rather Large Footsteps

By Maria Stewart

With humility, I accept the honor of serving as your President. As I write this first message to you, I am remembering the energy, passion and fortitude that Mike Domaschofsky gave to the Portland Chapter throughout the four years that he served as Vice-President and President before me. He initiated new activities and invigorated traditional activities, all the while having fun doing it. Mike will continue to be my mentor as Past President and we will all continue to benefit from his experience as he organizes and runs our plant sales. Thank you, Mike, for giving me rather large footsteps to follow.

Brenda Ziegler will be another asset to our Chapter as she serves as your Vice-President and program chair for two years. Her energy has already been evident as a board member working closely with our Events Coordinator at Crystal Springs. Brenda will continue that collaboration along with acquiring speakers for our meetings. I was reminded, today at our Finance Committee Meeting, of the many tasks that Dick Cavender performs for the Chapter as our Treasurer. He is the Chairman on the Finance Committee. He constantly searches for the best way to manage our credit card usage, our reporting procedures and our bank accounts. He makes reports to the Board on a monthly basis. Dick is another member on whom we rely tremendously. Carol McCarthy is our faithful board secretary. She sorts out the sometimes-tortuous pathways that our Board discussions might take. She writes clear and detailed reports that give great accountings of our Board meetings.

Bob MacArthur and Donna Giguere are the Co-Chairs of Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden. Both of them are dedicated to the Garden and we are fortunate that they work so well with the City of Portland and with the volunteers who maintain the Garden.

Often behind the scenes, but performing several important duties, is Kathy Van Veen. Sometimes, we wonder how she has time to run her nursery! She writes checks for Chapter expenses, is a member of the Board, is the Chairperson for the Friends of Crystal Springs, keeps the Chapter archives, is unofficially the Chapter historian, and on occasion is a member of a Board committee.

There are so many members to thank for their service to the Chapter that this page is only a start. As we launch into a new year of programs and activities, I hope we will once again experience the strength and energy that our members give so willingly.

June, 2024

From the President's Corner

By Maria Stewart

As I look back on the four years that I have served as the Portland Chapter's Vice-President and President, I feel honored that you placed your trust in me. It is not easy to hold those two offices without the help of many dedicated members. The Portland Chapter is charged with maintaining two major gardens, putting on two shows and plants sales every year, and promoting rhododendrons through our programs for a large metropolitan audience. It takes active members to successfully fulfill the goals of our Chapter. And, we seem to have fun while we're accomplishing those goals! The friendships that we have because we share a love of rhododendrons, makes our work a lot easier. We are fortunate to have a Board of Directors and a membership that works together in a congenial way. I thank all of you personally for helping to make my term enjoyable. As for the future, I hope to finish a couple of projects that need some more time and I will always be an active member. Your new Vice-President, Dennis O'Malley, and your new President, Brenda Ziegler, have already shown their positive leadership skills. Our Chapter has much to look forward to in the next four years.



Maria and Mike Stewart with one of their famous *Rhododendron sinogrande* specimens. They were major participants in distinguished Oregon and Washington Rhododendron nurseries and societies.

