



Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

Spring Newsletter—Vol. 45, No. 1

- P1 Table of Contents
- P2 Executive Director's Report by Steve Hootman, Spring Events by Britt Board
- P3 Species Profile by Steve Hootman
- P4 Species Profile continued
- P5 Species Profile continued
- P6 Pleione Cultivation by Atsuko Gibson
- P7 Pleione Cultivation continued, Legacy Circle
- P8 RSF Annual Meeting and ARS Conference
- P9 New Members, Extraordinary Gifts, Restricted Contributions
- P10 Fall Garden Campaign and General Operations Support
- P11 RSF Board and Executive Committee

Executive Director's Report by Steve Hootman

We are in full spring mode here in the garden due to what has turned out to be a relatively mild winter. Many species are already in full bloom and the flower buds on dozens of others are getting ready to burst. The species *ririei*, *mucronulatum*, *mallotum* and *oreodoxa* var. *fargesii* (Erubescens Group) are among the highlights as I write in late February. Probably the most stunning display is in the *lanigerum* collection near the pond where we have more flowers this year than I have ever seen in the past, they are absolutely loaded! We have just finished renovations of the Visitor Center and adjacent Plant Sales Pavilion and the whole entrance area looks tidy and refreshed once again. A new clear roof on the Pavilion really lets in the sunlight which will help shoppers to better see what they are purchasing and will definitely keep the plants healthy and looking good.

Several new areas have been renovated and replanted in the garden including a portion of the *strigillosum* collection as well as the "May Garden" which is the area just outside the back door of the Rutherford Conservatory. We have moved several selections and species of deciduous azaleas into this area which should transform this area into a mass of color at the height of our visitor season in mid-May. The sunny exposure in this area also means it will be very colorful in the autumn when all the azalea leaves change from green to orange, red and yellow.

We have added a great collection of plants to the RSBG in the form of the impressive assortment of *Pleione* and *Bletilla* species and hybrids from the collection of Dick and Karen Cavender in Sherwood, Oregon. These relatively hardy terrestrial orchids will add lots of color to the garden and the excess material will be made available in our catalogs and at plant sales. We hope to see you in the garden this spring. Enjoy!

Spring Events by Britt Board

Spring Plant Sale—Friday, April 17 and Saturday, April 18

Now in its 35th year, the Spring Plant Sale will include an educational booth from the Master Gardeners and more than 20 vendors.

Mother's Day Weekend—Saturday, May 9 and Sunday, May 10

Bring mom for a full day at the garden, including workshops (space is limited), kids activities, food trucks, free digital family portraits, and more.

Blue Poppy Day—Saturday, May 16

This partner program with the City of Federal Way includes free admission, 6 performances, 3 food trucks, photo stations, 10+ art vendors, and the famous Blue Poppies. Be sure to check out the Rutherford Conservatory poetry garden, featuring poetry written by local writers on display amidst the flowers.



Species Profile by Steve Hootman

Rhododendron griffithianum Wight

Of all the hundreds of *Rhododendron* species introduced into cultivation over the past 150 years, it could be argued that none has had more of an impact than *R. griffithianum*. This magnificent species was used extensively in the early hybridizing programs and the genetic heritage of many of the most popular hybrids grown today can be traced directly to the early introductions of this outstanding plant.

The popularity of this species as a garden plant and hybrid parent is not without reason considering its overall beauty and tremendous ornamental attributes. One would be hard-pressed to surpass the quality and character of *Rhododendron griffithianum*. The incredibly lush and magnificent white flowers can be upwards of three inches long by six inches wide and are fragrant. These flowers, when combined with attractive, dark green foliage and smooth, exfoliating reddish or multihued bark, provide one of the most spectacular displays in the genus. Peter Cox notes that this species was Frank Kingdon Ward's favorite species in the wild. To quote Ward regarding this species 'There is an ethereal quality about the enormous bell flowers - their vital milk-whiteness, their careless rapture of form, their exquisite effortless grace as they hang clustered from the leafy shoots, their subtle fragrance - which defies description.'

This species was first brought to the attention of western botanists when described by Wight in 1850 from a collection made in Bhutan by the Superintendent of the Calcutta Botanic Garden, W. Griffith. It was first introduced into western cultivation by J.D. Hooker in 1850 from seed collected during his famous two-year expedition into the Sikkim Himalayas. Unaware of the work of Wight and Griffith, Hooker named his collection *R. aucklandii* after his friend and patron Lord Auckland who had served as Governor-General of India. Since his initial introduction, *R. griffithianum* has been collected many times and from many different locations. This species occurs from 6,000 to 9,500 feet in the eastern Himalayas from extreme eastern Nepal through Sikkim, Bhutan and adjacent areas of northeastern India. It usually occurs in forests and can be quite common in certain locations although it is considered to be rare throughout most of its range. I observed this species in only three widely separated locations of Sikkim during an expedition to that region in the spring of 1997. It grew in mixed forests of broad-leaved evergreen and deciduous trees and was typically associated with *RR. grande* and *lindleyi*. The flowers in the two populations still in bloom did not vary greatly in size or color, most falling into the larger end of the spectrum and white or white flushed pink in color.



Species Profile continued...

Rhododendron griffithianum is a member of subsection Fortunea but is quite distinct morphologically from any other member of that group (*decorum*, *fortunei*, *orbiculare*, *vernicosum* and *calophytum* for example). The primary differences distinguishing this species from the other members of its subsection are its large calyx, extremely disjunct range (the other species are native to China) and the substantially larger five-lobed corolla. Some authorities feel that this species would perhaps be better placed in its own subsection.

This species grows as a large spreading to upright shrub or small tree attaining heights of up to 50 feet in the wild. The bark is smooth and peeling, typically reddish in color but varying to tan, gray, brownish or an attractive combination of these shades. The dark green foliage is smooth on both surfaces and up to twelve inches in length by four inches wide. In late spring, as the bright green new leaves emerge, they are adorned with long reddish bracts for an added burst of color. The leaves vary in shape from oblong to somewhat elliptic or oblong-ovate with a rounded base. The flowers (mid- to late spring) are borne on a long rachis in an inflorescence of three to six flowers. The individual flowers are among the largest in the genus, often attaining dimensions of three inches in length and six inches across. They are broadly bell-shaped, often fragrant and range in color from white to white with a rose, pink or yellow flush, sometimes with a green throat and/or spots.

Recent collections of this species from the far eastern end of its range in central Arunachal Pradesh are quite distinct in foliage with much larger leaves. The leaves on this eastern form are very widely elliptic with an undulate margin and a cordate base and look strikingly like those of *R. hemsleyanum*. Based upon the foliage, you would never guess it was *griffithianum* but the bark and flowers are a perfect match as is the overall “gestalt”. Another interesting variation is that the flowers do not appear until about a month later in the season than those of the typical forms in cultivation.

In cultivation, this species is hardy from +10 to +15°F. and is generally only suitable as a long-term garden plant in areas such as coastal Oregon and California, New Zealand, the western coast of Great Britain and regions with similar mild climates. In harsher climates, it makes a superb specimen for the cool greenhouse and is an excellent plant for container gardening with its attractive bark and flowers. In regions where this species is hardy, it performs best in a sheltered position with some shade in the afternoon.



Species Profile continued...

Rhododendron griffithianum has been used extensively as a parent in hybridizing programs and its ornamental attributes are readily distinguished within its numerous offspring. A small sample of the better known hybrids derived from this species would include the 'Loderi' grex, 'Jean Marie de Montague', 'Pink Pearl' and 'Penjerrick'. This species received a First Class Certificate in 1866 when exhibited by J. Standish of Ascot.

ACCESSIONS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE RSF:

80/099 Younger Botanic Garden.

81/113 Britt Smith. From seed collected wild in Sikkim.

81/115 Britt Smith. From seed collected wild in Sikkim.

94/385 Fred Cummings. From seed collected wild in the Eastern Himalaya.

BB#8841 Warren Berg – Two accessions from seed collected wild at 8,000 feet in the Eastern Himalaya.

SEH#501 Steve Hootman – Six accessions from seed collected wild at 6,900 feet in the Eastern Himalaya.

SEH#523 Steve Hootman – Two accessions from seed collected wild at 8,850 feet in the Eastern Himalaya.

SEH#533 Steve Hootman – One accession from seed collected wild at 8,850 feet in the Eastern Himalaya.

KCSH#0390 Ken Cox & Steve Hootman – Seven accessions from seed collected wild at 7,750 feet in the Eastern Himalaya.

KC#0101 Ken Cox – Five accessions from seed collected wild in the Eastern Himalaya. This is the first introduction of the large-leaved eastern form.

KR#10075 Keith Rushforth – Six accessions from seed collected wild in the Eastern Himalaya.

KR#10092 Keith Rushforth – One accession from seed collected wild in the Eastern Himalaya.

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

Chamberlain, D.F. 1982. "A Revision of *Rhododendron*. II. Subgenus *Hymenanthes*." *Notes from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh*. Vol. 39(2):pg. 237.

Cox, Peter A. 1990. *The Larger Rhododendron Species*. Timber Press, Portland, OR. pgs. 171-172.

Cox, Peter A. & Cox, Kenneth N.E. 1997. *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species*. Glendoick Publishing, Perth, Scotland. pg. 55.

Davidian, H.H. 1989. *The Rhododendron Species*. Vol. II. Timber Press. Portland, OR. pgs. 204-205.

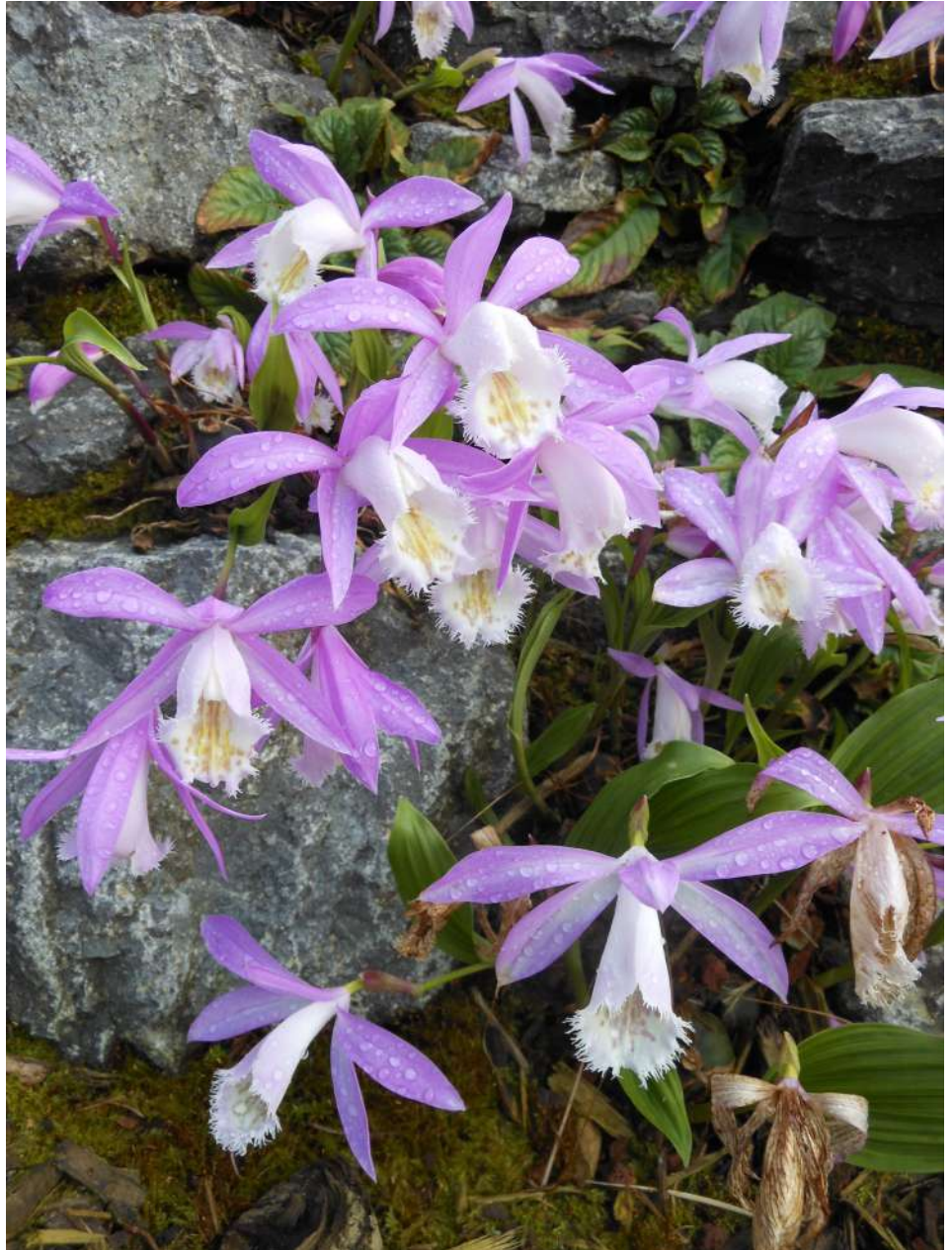
Hootman, S.E. Unpublished field notes.

Pleione Cultivation by Atsuko Gibson

Among the many companion plants we offer in the nursery, pleiones are one of the most popular items. I mean, who wouldn't want a miniature orchid that can be grown outdoors in the ground with very little care?

The genus *Pleione* has around 21 species. The flower looks like a miniature *Cattleya* flower and the color varies from white to pink to purple to yellow. In the wild, they grow in thick moss on tree trunks or on rocks. However, *Pleione* is considered a "terrestrial" orchid, meaning they can be grown in the ground. Some species are much easier to grow than others. *Pleione formosana* and *P. bulbocodioides* are recommended for beginners, as they multiply quickly and can be grown with little care. Here is how you grow these adorable miniature orchids.

If you acquire one in the dormant season, wait to plant it until late winter. These plants are best grown in bright shade to full sun. The key is to choose a setting where the pseudobulb does not stay wet during the dormant season. So, by any means, don't plant them in heavy clay soil with no drainage. Your option could be a rockery where overhead rocks can shed the rain or under some eaves. If you plant one without any cover, you could place a plastic nursery pot over it to shed the rain. When you plant a pseudobulb, plant it so the top third of the pseudobulb is above the ground. There is no need to start watering until foliage emerges, which is after it blooms. If you live in



USDA zone 8a or colder, you will have to dig them up and re-plant them every year, or grow them in a container. We have a patch of *Pleione formosana* that have been in the ground for over 15 years in the alpine garden, and they bloom beautifully every year. I should mention they are growing in thick moss, so they do have some protection from the cold.

Pleione Cultivation continued...

If you opt to grow one in a container, it can be done just as easily. The bulbs can be potted in a barky soil mixed with some regular potting soil. No matter what soil you use, it must have sharp drainage. A “no watering rule” during the dormant season should be strictly followed. This is especially true with container culture, and more so if you bring the container inside during the winter months. A pseudobulb will not start growing roots until it leafs out, so that is why watering is not necessary. Overwatering in the dormant season will result in the rotting of the pseudobulb.

I grow *Pleione formosana* in a trough and leave them outside year around. Mine are placed on a table under a Douglas fir tree, so the trough stays rather dry in the winter months. They have produced many “daughter bulbs,” which I have been sticking in between the bricks of my retaining wall.

Lastly, don’t forget the slug bait whether you grow them in the ground or in a container. Some of you might think growing orchids is sensitive and difficult but give *Pleione* a try. I will bet you will have a very rewarding experience. If you would like to know more about it, I recommend visiting <http://www.pleione.info/> for detailed information.

Legacy Circle

Members of the Legacy Circle:

Deena J. Henkins

Keith White

Peter Norris

Ian Walker

Donald King

Anne Guelker

Jean Muir

Established in 2013, The Rhododendron Legacy Circle is open to all members who have made provisions for the Rhododendron Species Foundation (RSF) in their financial or estate plans. The Legacy Circle enables the RSF to recognize and show appreciation for our friends’ generosity during their lifetime. For more information and to join the Legacy Circle, contact Grace Pham at Grace@RhodyGarden.org.



2020 RSF Annual Membership Meeting

May 2, 2020 from 9-11am at The Heathman Lodge, Vancouver, WA

Many of our members are not located on the west coast but they are also members of the American Rhododendron Society. Generally, they are unable to come west to the RSF Annual Meetings. This year the decision was made to hold the RSF annual meeting in conjunction with the ARS 75th Anniversary Convention sponsored by ARS District 4 and the Portland chapter of ARS which is being held at the Heathman Lodge in Vancouver, Washington. This allows our east coast members an opportunity to attend the RSF annual meeting as well as the ARS 75th Convention. It also means that our west coast members have only one meeting to attend instead of two.

A little history note here: ARS was founded in Portland, Oregon in 1945 and is directed towards all things rhododendron. In comparison, RSF was founded in Eugene, Oregon in 1964 and is primarily directed toward species rhododendrons. The intent was that they would be parallel organizations, working independently, and not merging as they have a common love of rhododendrons but different priorities.

If you are planning to attend the RSF Annual meeting only and not opting for any paid items, registration and payment are unnecessary. Please, however, email Loni Welch, registrar at ars2020reg@gmail.com who will have a badge prepared for you to pick up at the registration desk. If you plan to stay for the Saturday luncheon featuring the talk by Ken Cox, please submit the online registration form and select the Saturday luncheon ("Meal 5 @ \$29), being sure to check the "RSF Meeting" box on the form. Full information about the convention and registration form is available on the internet at www.ars75.org.

American Rhododendron Society

75th Anniversary

20/20
VISION



ARS75.org

Looking forward, reflecting back

Portland-Vancouver, April 29-May 3, 2020

Welcome New Members—10/1/2019—1/31/2020

Mary Moreno

Colin Mathieson

Cornell Farm

Meshal Alsheddi

Chen-Hao Hsu

John Dean

Diane Bero

David Peterson

Michael Diaz

John Ronsley

V. Alton Dohner

Eileen Okazaki

Susan Brubaker

James Ellison

Tianze Pan

Anthony Flanagan

Don Bland

Christina Brown-Mader

Chris Degnan

Scott Reynolds

Christopher Becker

Edward Trimble

Mike Riley

Extraordinary Gifts

Margaret Hall

Edwin Wells

Anonymous

Restricted Contributions

4Culture, Grant for Visitor Center & Nursery Renovation

ARS Valley Forge, Curator Travel

R. Garratt Richardson, Curator Travel

ARS Seattle, Intern Program

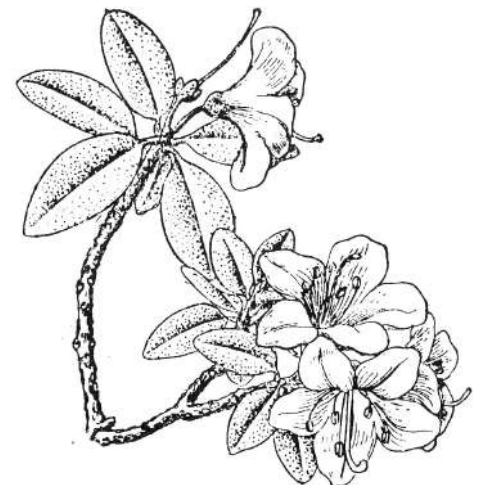
Walker Foundation, Yearbook

Walker Foundation, Plant Database

Pat McDowell, Interpretive Signage

Norcliffe Foundation, Interpretive Signage

Walker Foundation, Interpretive Signage



Fall Garden Campaign

Brian Adams
Dianne Bell
Wilbur Bluhm
Gioia Browne
Patty Candiotta
Heather Carlisle
Susan Clark
Earl Eckund
Kenneth Everding
Hans Hasche-Kluender
Deena J. Henkins
Eric Hirsch
Carole Kellerman
Lillian Koblenz
Ralph Love
Kevin McIntosh
Robert & Katherine McLean
Jean Muir
Janis Nelson
Sue Olsen
John Parker
Rosalie Preble
Nancy Rawles
D. Ann Robbins
Craig Russell
Beverly Smith
Rex & Jeanine Smith

Bettie Snoey
Ramona Soule
Scott Stowell
Karen Swenson
Diane & Paul Thompson
Elizabeth Ward
Kathe Watanabe

General Operations

AmazonSmile Foundation
ARS De Anza Chapter
Michael Bunce
George & Kathy Burtchett
Carol F. Chapen
Elizabeth Drury
Dorothy Dunstan
Loretta A. Goetsch
Venessa J. Harrold
Clem Hertz
Frances Jones
Peter Kendall
Robert Mast
David R. Morel
H. Dean Stout
The Boeing Company
Stephanie A. Twigg

2020 RSF Board and EC

2020 RSF Board Continued

Executive Committee:

President: Sean Rafferty

1st Vice President: Ian Walker

2nd Vice President: Charles Muller

Treasurer: Robert Gust

Secretary: Garratt Richardson

Immediate Past President: Mike Stewart

EC Members-At-Large:

Anne Gross

Jean Muir

Paul Thompson

Board of Directors:

Jerry Ackerman

Rollo Adams

Chris Brickell

Al Campbell

David Chamberlain

Ken Cox

Susan Davies

Harold Greer

Anne Gross

Robert Gust

Don Hyatt

Douglas Justice

Board of Directors continued:

Donald E. King

William Lindeman

Robert Mast

Stephen McCormick

Jean Muir

Charles Muller

Peter Norris

Tom Nosella

Sean Rafferty

Garratt Richardson

Joseph Ronsley

Charles Sale & Margaret Charlton

Hartwig Schepker

Don Smart

Valerie Soza

John Stephens

Mike Stewart

Diane Thompson

Paul Thompson

Ian Walker

Tim Walsh

Garth Wedemire

Keith White

Martin Wilkie