

Rhododendron ciliicalyx

Franch.

Kingdom: [Plantae](#)
Division: [Magnoliophyta](#)
Class: [Magnoliopsida](#)
Order: [Ericales](#)
Family: [Ericaceae](#)
Genus: [Rhododendron](#)

Rhododendron ciliicalyx is native to the Yunnan region of south-western China. As with many *Rhododendron* species it has been extensively selected and hybridized but despite this, the habit and flower colour are quite limited. The basic flower colour is white with varying degrees of pink tinges and many forms are scented.



There are several *R. ciliicalyx* plants in the *Rhododendron* beds in the Biology courtyard and in front of E7A. Our form of *R. ciliicalyx* came from Yamina Rare Plants in Victoria and was designated *R. ciliicalyx* #3 suggesting it was a selected plant grown from seed. The plants in our beds are all cuttings from the original plant and were made by simply putting young stem material into a peat-based compost without hormones. Unfortunately *R. ciliicalyx* is very susceptible to petal blight.

Rhododendron classification. *Rhododendron* is a genus containing many subgroups and hundreds of species. Inevitably, species undergo ‘splitting’ or ‘lumping’ as different taxonomists revise groups within the genus. The picture is further complicated by the gardeners who recognize particular forms as distinct and are very reluctant to adopt any change in name.



The *Rhododendron* classification dilemma is well illustrated by adding **Maddenii series; subseries Ciliicalyx** (Balfourian Classification) or **subsection Maddenia; Ciliicalyx-Alliance** (Cullen and Chamberlain Revision) in front of *R. ciliicalyx*. In the Cullen and Chamberlain revision *R. ciliicalyx* becomes one species from the three in the Balfour classification and *R. maddenii* becomes two subspecies from seven [1]. Both the above classifications are based on conventional taxonomic properties such as arrangement of stamens, types of stem scales etc and may well be revised again when molecular techniques are applied! (e.g. ref [2])

- 1) The Rhododendron Handbook; *Rhododendron* Species in Cultivation; Royal Horticultural Society; London 1980
- 2) Milne, R.I. et al. Plant Syst. Evol. (2010) 285:233-244

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