

RHODODENDRON
SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 50, NUMBER 2

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Cardiocrinum giganteum

Executive Director's Report by Steve Hootman

We experienced a very interesting blooming season in the garden this past spring. The flower bud count was quite low on many of the species, especially with the early blooming taxa. However, this was expected due to the incredible bloom we had last spring throughout the garden. Many species are known to “rest” for a year or two after a heavy year of flowering, even if they have been deadheaded. You would hope that deadheading would trick them into flowering again the next spring, but this seems to have very little effect on inducing flower bud formation most of the time – at least on the larger flowered species like *calophytum*, etc.

Most of the later blooming species as well as the lepidotes and azaleas flowered reliably as they almost always do so there was plenty of color in the middle and later portions of the season – coinciding with the time of year when most of our visitors arrive to see the flowers anyway.

With perfect timing, the early-season magnolias more than made up for the relative lack of early *Rhododendron* flowering. Almost every tree in the collection was loaded with masses of large and colorful *Magnolia* flowers, most of them unfurling well before the new leaves appeared which made the overall display even more stunning.

The Asiatic species were especially spectacular with *dawsoniana*, *sargentiana*, *campbellii*, *sprengeri*, and *mollicomata* providing the most abundant display of *Magnolia* flowers we have ever seen in the collection. Be sure to visit early next year to witness these now mature specimens in all their floral glory - mid-March is usually the best time to catch them at their peak.



Fall Catalog Opens September 3!

This September, the RSBG is excited to offer the finest selection of species rhododendrons and companion plants in its fall catalog. Four stunning varieties offered this fall are *R. denudatum*, *R. parvifolium* ‘Ocelot’, *R. tephropeplum*, and *R. benhallii* ‘Honshu Blue’. The catalog will open to Benefactor and Sustaining members on Sep. 3th, and will open to all members on Sep. 10th. Members will receive an email with a link and password to shop the fall catalog.



R. denudatum



R. parvifolium ‘Ocelot’

SNEAK PEEK



R. tephropeplum



R. benhallii ‘Honshu Blue’

Growing Rhododendrons in a Container

Many of the smaller growing rhododendrons can be grown successfully for many years in a container. You can always estimate how much a plant will grow by looking at the growth from the previous year. If you have long extension growth of several inches or more each year then that plant might not be a good choice for long term container cultivation. If you decide to grow rhododendrons in a container, well-drained soil is a must. Our potting soil is 30% lava rock and 70% fine bark, which provides excellent drainage. After 3 to 4 years, this "soil" breaks down so you will need to re-pot with fresh soil in a larger container as the plant grows.

Plants in a container are more exposed to higher temperature in the root zone. To keep the root system from baking, you will need to place the pot in afternoon shade. If you expect a heatwave, you must water the pot well PRIOR to the heat. It is not ideal to have fully water saturated soil when the heat arrives, as it will kill off the root tips.



R. lepidostylum

During the heat, I often run mist or an overhead quick spray for 30 seconds just to increase the humidity and cool down the plants in the hoop houses but not enough to water the plants.

After a few years, I will re-pot with fresh soil, and perhaps combine with different plants. Here are some of the other species that are suited for container culture: *R. mucronulatum* ('Cheju Form' such as 1976/127 and 1989/011 'Crater's Edge'), alpine rhododendrons such as *R. campylogynum* and *R. calostrotum*, dwarf evergreen azaleas such as *R. tsusiophyllum*, *R. nakaharae*, *R. indicum*, *R. serpyllifolium*, and *R. kiusianum*, and other species such as *R. forrestii*, *R. keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy', and *R. megeratum*.



R. keiskei 'Yaku Fairy'

Plants should never be overpotted, meaning too big of a container for a small root system. This will result in the soil being too wet, and may eventually cause pest and disease problems due to the plants being stressed.

Currently, I have *R. lepidostylum* in a container with *Disporopsis jinfushanensis* and *Cassiope selaginoides* at home.



R. campylogynum

Species Profile by Will Clausen

Rhododendron adenosum

Rhododendron adenosum is an evergreen shrub growing between six and fifteen feet (2.8-4.5 m) in height and width. The leaves are around four inches (10 cm) long and 1.5 inches (3.8 cm) wide, ovate-lanceolate, and covered with short glandular hairs. Glandular hairs are more abundant on new growth and make the leaves and stems sticky to the touch. These hairs persist on older leaves and are most obvious on the midrib on the underside of the leaf. From a relatively young age, plants flower abundantly in mid-spring with each inflorescence featuring six to eight pale pink to white flowers with darker pink throat markings. In cultivation, *Rhododendron adenosum* wants typical rhododendron growing conditions. This includes excellent soil drainage, light shade, and supplemental water during the summer. It is a somewhat cold hardy species, and we have listed it as able to survive to 0°F (-18°C). Given these few requirements, *Rhododendron adenosum* is an easy species to grow.



Photo by Prudence Holliger

Rhododendron adenosum is one of nine recognized taxa in subsection Glischra, a group of rhododendrons characterized by the glandular hairs that cover stems, leaves, branches, ovaries, petioles, pedicels, and calyces. Species in subsection Glischra are strikingly beautiful and are great plants for the woodland or shaded garden. Other noteworthy species in this group are *Rhododendron glischrum*, *Rhododendron crinigerum*, and in particular *Rhododendron habrotrichum*, which has eye catching red glandular hair covering its new growth. *Rhododendron adenosum* was once considered to be a variety of the closely related



Rhododendron glischrum, but the two are distinct enough that separate species recognition was deemed appropriate and granted by H.H. Davidian in 1978. He gave the species epitaph *adenosum* in reference to the abundant glandular hairs. Compared to *Rhododendron glischrum*, *Rhododendron adenosum* has smaller leaves, fewer flowers per inflorescence, smaller calyces, and shorter hairs. That's not to say it is a lesser plant, and in fact in some ways it is the more interesting plant.

Like many species in the genus, *Rhododendron adenosum* has a small range in the wild. It is only known to occur in the Kulu Mountains of Muli County, in the southwestern part of Sichuan, China. This area was explored extensively by the Austrian-American botanist Joseph Rock starting in the 1920's, and in 1929 he made a collection of a plant that was unknown at the time but would come to be known as *Rhododendron adenosum*. This collection was the only documented sighting of the species for many decades. Because of the lack of repeated sightings, *Rhododendron adenosum* was actually presumed to be extinct in the wild by certain sources until very recently. That changed in 2020 when a team of Chinese botanists went on an expedition to relocate the species and were successful in finding it near the location of original collection that Rock had made. Unfortunately, they were only able to find a single plant but as noted in their account, it is probable that more exploration in that area will turn up more plants.

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Species Profile cont. by Will Clausen

Additionally, another collection that was sent to us long ago as *Rhododendron strigillosum* and masqueraded as such out of sight and mind in a forgotten corner of our garden has recently been given a closer look and identified as *Rhododendron adenosum*. This collection was made in 1992 in the general area of the original Rock collection by Quarryhill Botanical Garden (now Sonoma Botanical Garden). As it turns out, *Rhododendron adenosum* is not extinct in the wild, but it is clearly a very rare and likely critically endangered species. The propagation and distribution of species like *Rhododendron adenosum* is in line with our mission to preserve and spread vulnerable species in order to help safeguard against extinction. Growing plants like *Rhododendron adenosum* in your own garden is a small way in which you can participate in species conservation, plus you get the benefit of having a nice plant to look at every day. Check for *Rhododendron adenosum* in our upcoming fall catalog.



Photo by Prudence Holliger

We have five extant accessions of *Rhododendron adenosum* in the collection. The best specimen here at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden is found along the trail near the two stone benches in the Lower Woodland Garden. It is an old plant with mossy branches and blooms heavily every spring tucked in among the big leaf species.

Accessions in the Living Collection of the RSF

1975/325 – Rae Berry

1976/138 – R#18228

1976/187 – RBGE

1976/211 – RBGE

1998/073 – Sich#1054

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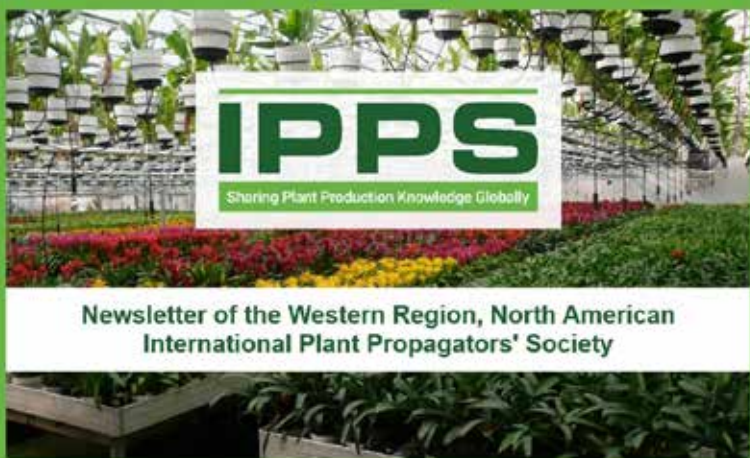
'*Rhododendron adenosum*'. Trees and Shrubs Online. treesandshrubsonline.org/articles/rhododendron/rhododendron-adenosum/. Accessed 2025-06-17.

Yao G, Liu D, Sun W, Ma Y. Rediscovery of *Rhododendron adenosum* in south-west China. Oryx. 2020; 54(5): 601-601. doi:10.1017/S0030605320000502

New Zealand Exchange Fellowship by Emily Joseph

This spring, I had the incredible opportunity of traveling to New Zealand on behalf of the Western region of the International Plant Propagator's Society (IPPS). The fellowship exchange is offered annually for one young professional propagator from each region to exchange between another region and this year I was selected. Coinciding with the international conference being held in New Plymouth, I was asked to give a presentation representing the Western region to share information about the propagation for conservation being done at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden and Hardy Fern Foundation. In addition, the exchange included traveling around the country while visiting natural areas, gardens, and nurseries across both the North and South Island while meeting and engaging with knowledgeable and incredibly inspiring plantspeople. As a propagator, exposure to other methodologies and practices across the nursery industry is vital to growing and maintaining one's technical skills. Visiting nurseries and gardens, especially internationally, provides invaluable insights and the chance to share information and ideas with others who don't often have the time to get away from daily operations.

The journey began in Auckland before meeting up with the conference pre-tour to travel down through the North Island from Rotorua to Palmerston North, Wellington, and on to New Plymouth where the conference was held.



The image shows the cover of the IPPS newsletter. At the top, there is a photograph of a greenhouse filled with various plants. Overlaid on this is the IPPS logo, which consists of the letters 'IPPS' in a large, bold, green font, with the tagline 'Sharing Plant Production Knowledge Globally' in a smaller font below it. Below the photograph, the text 'Newsletter of the Western Region, North American International Plant Propagators' Society' is written in a green font. At the bottom of the cover, there is a section titled '2025 New Zealand Exchange Program Representative' in a bold green font. Below this title, there is a paragraph of text introducing Emily Joseph as the representative for the Western Region. To the right of the text is a small portrait photograph of Emily Joseph. Below the portrait, there is a short message from the Western Region.

IPPS
Sharing Plant Production Knowledge Globally

Newsletter of the Western Region, North American
International Plant Propagators' Society

2025 New Zealand Exchange Program Representative

We are pleased to introduce the Western Region 2025 New Zealand Exchange representative, Emily Joseph! Emily will travel to New Zealand in May to represent the Western Region at the New Zealand Conference. Emily Joseph is the Nursery & Sales Manager for the Hardy Fern Foundation and the Retail Sales Manager & Assistant Nursery Manager at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden. She is a Washington state Certified Professional Horticulturist and holds degrees in Environmental Horticulture and Fine Art. As a visual artist by training, she uses botanical illustration in her work and enjoys photographing plants, gardens, and wild places.



The Western Region is proud to be able to collaborate with New Zealand in this fabulous exchange program. Best of luck to Emily!



Auckland Botanic Gardens

Upon arrival in Auckland, the first experience of the exchange would set the tempo for the entire trip. I was greeted at the Auckland airport by a welcoming party of a few members of IPPS and taken directly to the Auckland Botanic Gardens to join with the international pre-tour group. The 156-acre (63 hectares) garden and native forest was established in 1982, though you would never guess the garden's young age based upon the incredible botanical collections spread throughout the acreage. Indicative of the climate of the region, I marveled at their vireyas, a classification of subtropical and tropical rhododendrons, growing outside under the dense canopy of palms and native conifers.

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New Zealand Exchange Fellowship cont. by Emily Joseph

A few favorite areas of the garden included the Threatened Native Plants Garden, Palm Garden, and the Gondwana Arboretum. I couldn't have asked for a better way to experience my first few hours in New Zealand than wandering through the botanical collections with renowned nurserymen Terry and Lindsey Hatch of Joy Plants and Antony Toledo of Multiflora Laboratories, as Terry discussed the many plants they have selected and introduced from their nursery over the last 60 years.

As the exchange continued, I visited several nurseries that currently grow or have historically specialized in *Rhododendron* and other Ericaceae. Notable operations included Kilmarnock Nurseries in Ashhurst (northeast of Palmerston North), Lowlands Nursery in Waitara (north of New Plymouth), and Elliot's Nursery in Amberley (north of Christchurch on the South Island). It was fascinating to see how other propagators are honing their operations to produce plants of the highest quality while navigating many of the same challenges we face in our own production.



Lowlands Nursery

These nurseries are actively examining their practices like how to quickly and strongly root cuttings, how to deal with liverwort on shade grown crops, the best methods of pinching and pruning for better looking and healthier plants, and how best to maintain consistent moisture and quality drainage in containers. Experiments in production timing, shade coverage, media, container types, water and weed management, and capillary action were discussed and under consideration.

In addition to inspiring nursery visits, the IPPS hosted a day of workshops at Totara Glen Nursery organized by Paul Fisher, Professor and Extension Specialist in Floriculture at the University of Florida's Horticulture

Program. The workshops included presentations and hands-on teaching applications for concepts in irrigation management, measuring soil porosity, measuring soil pH and EC, greenhouse LED lighting, and more from researchers and professors at the University of Florida and Michigan State University's Floriculture & Greenhouse Crop Production Program. Learning about the ongoing research and practical applications for better greenhouse and nursery growing got me thinking in new and exciting ways about plant production. The central tenet of IPPS is "to seek and to share plant production knowledge globally," and they certainly lived up to that motto with an impressive afternoon of education.



Kilmarnock Nursery



Elliot's Nursery

New Zealand Exchange Fellowship cont. by Emily Joseph

Yet a visit to the North Island of New Zealand would not be complete without the opportunity to visit Pukeiti, 889.5-acres (360 hectares) a regenerating rainforest, which is home to a gorgeously curated botanical garden managed under the Taranaki Regional Council. Set amidst a stunning canopy of *Cyathea* (tree ferns), *Metrosideros* (northern rata and pohutukawa), and *Dacrydium* (rimu), rhododendrons have been planted and are growing beautifully on a large scale. The horticulture team graciously led tours through the garden, and Curator Andrew Brooker, gave a presentation on the work of the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust.



Pukeiti Vireya Walk

After three weeks of traveling around the land of the kiwis, I found myself missing home and ready to return to a routine. The once in a lifetime opportunity has made an impact on me both professionally and personally and a few paragraphs in a short newsletter article is nowhere near enough time (or photo space) to relay the incredibly jam-packed adventure hosted and sponsored by the International Plant Propagator's Society. I look forward to sharing more anecdotes from the journey in a future presentation and an article for the annual RSF yearbook, including many photographs, details on the plants seen (that I am now coveting), and all the recommendations for gardens, nurseries, and natural areas to visit on your own future travels to New Zealand.

Andrew also led a tour through the nursery where he propagates rhododendrons, and I had to laugh when I saw a note on the chalkboard reminding him to “graft *lacteum*.” As it becomes more and more challenging to grow species rhododendrons that must have the right balance of cool air and moisture around their root systems during the warmer/drier spring and summers, I was curious and excited to hear about his successes with grafted *Rhododendron lacteum*. A simple note on a chalkboard started a discussion on conservation propagation techniques that could alter the course of success or failure in cultivating these difficult to grow species. Moments like this remind me why it is so important to be an active participant in the exchange of ideas in this industry.



Pukeiti

Upcoming Events



EVENING IN THE GARDEN

Saturday, August 9, 2025 | 5:00 pm – 8:30 pm

Garden members and volunteers are invited to join us!

Savor mouthwatering cuisine and desserts, refreshing beer & wine, a rare plant live auction, garden tours, and more...all benefiting the RSBG!

Enjoy an elegant evening in the garden as you share your favorite gardening and plant hunting stories with friends. We can't wait to celebrate with you. More ticketing information coming soon.

\$55 Members

\$65 Non-Members*

(*Non-Members must be accompanied by a Member)

FALL FOLIAGE FESTIVAL

Saturday & Sunday, November 8-9, 2025 | 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Join us for this free event featuring garden tours and plant talks, kids' scavenger hunt, a food truck, and search for the perfect spot to take that quintessential fall photo. Also shop RSBG's biggest sale of the year! Discover an immersive wonderland of sights, sounds, and sensations – from cool breezes to rustling leaves and the quiet swaying of golden-brown maple trees.

The garden's annual Fall Foliage Festival and Plant Sale is sure to please garden enthusiasts and nature lovers of all ages. For plant hunters looking for something special, featured pop-up vendors will bring their cultivated collections to the Rutherford Conservatory terrace.

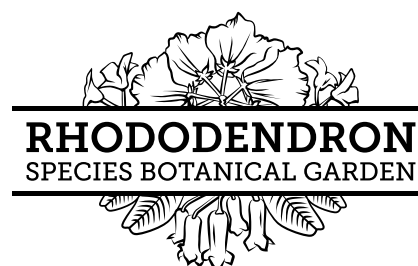


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Executive Director of Business Operations
Nursery Manager & Assistant Curator
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A planned gift is a way to extend your support of the RSF beyond your lifetime. This kind of long-term provision ensures that the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden will be here to share the inspiring stories of the natural world with generations to come. Contact us to learn more and enroll.



Membership Matters

Welcome New Members February 1, 2025 - May 31, 2025

The garden is grateful to all its members, whether you have been with us since the beginning, a loyal member who renews each year, or a brand new addition to the RSBG family - Thank You! Your legacy of support ensures we can continue to fulfill our mission of conservation, research, acquisition, evaluation, cultivation, public display, and distribution of *Rhododendron* species.

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Membership Matters

Welcome New Members February 1, 2023 - May 31, 2025

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