



BOWOOD

WALK OF THE WEEK

Week 7

If last week was about the Loderi group of plants developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Sir Edmund Loder at Leonardslee in West Sussex, this week is about plants hybridised by the Waterer family who through the Bagshot nurseries became titans of 19<sup>th</sup> century rhododendron cultivation.

If you would like to follow the Walk of the Week, can we suggest you take a photograph of the numbers and descriptions on this board and refer to your photo at each of the marked shrubs. They are marked with a post and numbered blue disc. Please remember that most woodland plants are poisonous to animals and humans if ingested.

This is a 45-minute walk, at an average pace, with a couple of short inclines along the way.

1. ***Cornus × rutgersensis* Ruth Ellen ('Rutlan') (Stellar Series)**

On entering the Woodland Garden, on the right-hand side are three outstanding *Cornus* plants, which we planted in 1997. Ruth Ellen is a hybrid flowering dogwood, a cross between *Cornus florida*, found in South-eastern United States, and *Cornus kousa*, from China. It was developed as one of the 'Stellar' dogwoods bred at Rutgers University in New Jersey. It is a large shrub growing up to 6m in height, with an upright habit and green foliage, turning to shades of plum-purple in the autumn. Masses of slightly overlapping, rounded, petal-like bracts open to pure white with a green centre, appearing now.

2. **Rhododendron 'John Waterer'**

This plant has ruffled flowers of crimson red blooms with light spotting and white anthers. It can grow to over 3 metres. The parentage is *Catawbiense* × *arboreum* and dated > 1860. It is one of 18 hybrids named for members of the family of nurserymen who owned and managed the Bagshot Nursery. Over a century of planting the Waterers originated more than 300 hybrids.

3. ***Rhododendron × mucronatum* (EA)**

An evergreen or semi-evergreen shrub, with a wide-spreading habit and lance-shaped, hairy green leaves. Clusters of two or three fragrant, funnel-shaped, white or sometimes pink flowers are freely produced. It is native to China where it grows at altitudes of 2,800–4,500 m (9,200–14,800 ft).

4. ***Rhododendron degronianum* subsp. *yakushimanum***

A compact, spreading evergreen shrub with narrow, convex leaves with a buff-felt beneath, and rounded trusses of bell-shaped, pure white flowers, opening from bright pink buds. Shortlisted for Chelsea Plant of the Centenary in 2013 for the decade 1943–1952. Only found in its native environment on the windswept, rain drenched, mountain peaks of Yakushima island, Japan. It was introduced in the UK in 1934 by the Japanese nursery man Koichiro Wada to Exbury Gardens, Hampshire. It is now the parent of a great many hybrids.

5. ***Rhododendron degronianum* subsp. *degronianum***

This plant is a compact, evergreen shrub native to Japan (Honshu), typically growing 0.5–2.5 metres tall. It is valued for its funnel-shaped pink to white flowers and leaves which can be 6–14cm with a dense, white-to-brownish felt-like underside (indumentum).

6. **Rhododendron 'Mrs Charles E. Pearson'**

A vigorous, large evergreen plant which grows to 2 metres with glossy foliage on fairly upright branches. Large conical trusses of broadly-funnel shaped, pale lavender flowers, mauve-pink in bud, fading to near white with a red-brown flare. Its parentage is Coombe Royal Group (s) × 'Catawbiense Grandiflorum'. It was hybridised circa 1909 by M. Koster and Sons in The Netherlands. It is popular for hedging and screening.

7. **Rhododendron 'Betty Wormald'**

This is a compact evergreen shrub with glossy, very dark green leathery foliage and clusters of bright pink flowers with paler pink throats and dark red markings. Its parentage is 'George Hardy' × un-named red hybrid. It is an old hardy hybrid originating between 1907–10 and bred by M. Koster and Sons in The Netherlands.

**8. Rhododendron (May Day Group) 'May Day'**

'May Day' is a magnificent low, spreading evergreen shrub with narrow, dull green leaves brown-woolly beneath. It has loose trusses of slightly pendent, funnel-shaped bright deep scarlet flowers, up to 8cm in width and with conspicuous black anthers. It is a showstopper, being sharp and vivid. It's well named, like a flare for capturing attention.

**9. Rhododendron 'Lady Decies'**

This plant flowers up to 20 in a dense truss. The corolla is widely spreading, almost flat, and nearly 4 inches (10.2cm) across with lilac-mauve shading to white in the centre, with a flare of bright yellow. It was bred by the Waterers at Bagshot pre-1922.

**10. Rhododendron 'Marchioness of Lansdowne'**

This elepidote rhododendron flowers about 14 in a compact truss. The corolla is broadly funnel-shaped with pale magenta-pink colours with a dense almost black flare on the central lobe, appearing to have been burnt on with a poker, and with some speckling on the adjacent lobes. The leaves are about 3 inches (7.6cm) long. It was bred by the Waterers at Bagshot pre-1879 and named after the then 5<sup>th</sup> Marchioness of Lansdowne.

**11. Rhododendron 'Pygmalion'**

This plant flowers about 16 in the truss on reddish-brown pedicels. The corolla is widely funnel-shaped, 3 inches (7.6cm) wide, crimson-scarlet with a black flare and some crimson markings on the lower lobes. The anthers are dark brown, on crimson filaments. It was first bred at Bagshot by the Waterers in 1933. In North America this plant is frequently associated with Charles O. Dexter's rhododendrons, often appearing in hybrids with species like *R. haematodes*.

**12. Azalea 'Sunte Nectarine'**

This award-winning deciduous shrub is known for its vibrant, deep orange-yellow flowers and strong scent. Clusters of up to 15 flowers are not unusual. It grows to about 1.5 metres high with elliptic, slightly hairy green leaves that are tinted bronze when young. Originally from the UK, this Exbury hybrid was bred by Edmund de Rothschild about 1996.

**13. Rhododendron 'Cannon's Double' (Knap Hill Hybrid/d) azalea**

This deciduous azalea grows to 1.8m high, with ovate, glossy dark green leaves, tinted with red on new growth and in autumn. Pink buds open to pale creamy yellow, fully double flowers, in rounded clusters of 7-8. It also gives excellent autumn colour.

**14. Rhododendron 'Mrs W.C. Slocock'**

This compact shrub with unscented flowers of apricot pink that fade to buff is a popular hardy hybrid. Bred at the Goldsworth Old Nursery in Woking, Surrey in the early 20th century its parentage is *R. campylocarpum* x unknown. It can grow to 1.2 metres in height. Mrs W C Slocock was Mary Sophia Ashley (b.1866). She married Walter Charles Slocock (b.1854) in 1895. Walter bought the Goldsworth Old Nursery in 1877 for £1,750. At the time of his marriage the nursery had annual sales of £14,000.

**15. Rhododendron 'Award'**

With fragrant pinky white flowers that have a light yellow flare which open to almost pure white with green spots this plant forms a wide ball shaped truss. Leaves are narrowly oblong, with an apiculate apex and rounded base. In 2009 the plant proved very popular at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. A hybrid bred in the USA in 1969 by Delbert W. James with parentage 'Anna' x 'Margaret Dunn'.

**16. Dicksonia antarctica**

An evergreen soft tree fern, but deciduous in colder areas, grows slowly up to 4m in height, with a stout reddish-brown stem and a terminal rosette of arching, deeply divided, glossy dark green fronds to 3m in length. It originated in E Australia and Tasmania.