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**R**HODODENDRONS. WHAT a privilege it would be, if we could call back as we walk through the collection, the men who have contributed to the development of our garden rhododendrons. They would make an interesting and varied assemblage – Dean Herbert, the Earl of Carnarvon, Sir J. D. Hooker, blunt Anthony Waterer, John Fraser, gentle Peter Collinson in his Quaker garb, and Baron Ungern Sternberg. For the rhododendrons of our gardens are quite literally something new under the sun; there is nothing just like them in nature. Aristocratic cosmopolites, they came into being in Victorian England when species from the Old World and the New were sympathetically gathered by plant collectors and intelligently blended by a few hybridizers.

The contributing species are all mountain lovers. From the lower slopes about the Mediterranean and Black Seas comes *Rhododendron ponticum*; higher up in the Caucasus are the hardier *R. caucasicum* and *R. Smirnowii*. Our own southern mountains contributed the hardy and attractive *R. catawbiense* which occurs by thousands of acres on the upper slopes of the southern Alleghanies. Near the North Carolina boundary among the open balsam woods and natural meadows which form the summit of Roan Mountain it reaches as far as the eye can see, growing in scattered groups in the open meadows and forming a dense undergrowth beneath the balsams. It was from this very locality that it was first collected for European gardens by John Fraser, over a hundred years ago. Fraser was a Scotchman, who as a very young man, like many another Scotchman, had gone to London to seek his fortune. He eventually became one of the most successful of those early plant collectors who ransacked the American continent to provide novel and beautiful plants for European gardens. He had phenomenal success in Russia where he became a favorite of Catharine the Great. After



her death, by Imperial ukase, he was sent back to America with orders to furnish rare and novel plants for the imperial collections. "Accompanied by his eldest son, John, he embarked in the year 1799 for the southern states of North America, where he prosecuted his researches in various unexplored parts of the continent. On the summit of the Great Roan or Bald Mountain, on a spot which commands a view of five states, it was Mr. Fraser's good fortune to discover and collect living specimens of the new and splendid *R. catawbiense*, from which so many beautiful hybrid varieties have since been obtained by skillful cultivators." (Condensed from the account by Sir William Hooker, in the "Companion to the Botanical Magazine.")

Another American species, the rosebay, *R. maximum*, has been little used by the English hybridizers, unfortunately so for American gardens, since it is one of the hardiest of the lot. It is of particular interest to New Englanders for it is occasionally found native as far north as Sebago Lake and southern New Hampshire. It was among the American plants introduced into England by the Quaker botanist Peter Collinson. The religious bond between English and American Quakers kept up a lively interchange between the two countries. Quakers had always been interested in gardening; George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, had specified that the "nature of herbs, roots, plants, and trees" should be taught in Quaker schools. What more natural then, but that packets of seed and pressed plants and much garden information should pass back and forth between the two countries. In this way *R. maximum* was sent from the New World to the Old and in Peter Collinson's "Commonplace Book for June 26, 1756" we find the entry, "The great mountain laurel or rhododendron flowered for the first time in my garden."

One other species, the showiest of the lot, *R. arboreum*, came from the foothills of the Himalayas. It contributed splendor to the garden rhododendrons for it is a great shrub-like tree with large flowers of bright red, varying in different strains from blush pink to a black crimson. Unfortunately, it brought in a tropical aversion to cold along with all this tropical splendor. *Rhododendron arboreum* itself can barely be grown out-of-doors even in England; it was not until it had been hybridized with hardy American species that a plant was produced which could withstand the English winters. English hybridizers, however, have continued to use *R. arboreum* and other lovely but tender species in their work. The result is a glorius group of flowering shrubs but one which Americans must cross the ocean to see. Only a few of the thousand or more named varieties will stand our hot summers and cold



winters. Among the pinks we can recommend "Mrs. C.S. Sargent" and "Henrietta Sargent" in deep pink and "Lady Armstrong" and "Roseum elegans" in rose pink. The hardiest reds are "Charles Dickens," and "H.W. Sargent." In dark purple the best are "Purpureum grandiflorum" and "Purpureum elegans."

Most of these iron-clad varieties are the creations of one man, Anthony Waterer, an English nurseryman who became a sort of god-father to American gardeners. His particular affection for Americans came about in an interesting way. When Andrew Jackson Downing laid out the grounds about the National Capitol, he ordered plants from Waterer. The plants were received but before payment was made Downing had died. His friend and neighbor, Henry Winthrop Sargent, when settling the estate found Waterer's unpaid bill. By the influence of his college classmate, Charles Sumner, he got a special bill through congress and Waterer was eventually paid. Now, Anthony Waterer was a forthright, John Bull sort of a man, as strong in his likes as in his dislikes. Sargent's action lead to a life long friendship, one which was large enough to include Sargent's friends and his friend's friends as well. It was Henry Winthrop Sargent who brought Anthony Waterer and his rhododendrons to the attention of his cousins, H. H. Hunnewell and Charles Sprague Sargent. It was this friendship which lead to the great rhododendron collections at the Hunnewell estate in Wellesley, at Professor Sargent's home in Brookline, and at the Arnold Arboretum.

In growing rhododendrons it is necessary to remember their likes and dislikes. They hate a limey soil. They dislike hot sun in the spring and summer, cold winds in winter. They like partial shade and a soil which is well drained but moist at the roots. The situation provided for them in the Arnold Arboretum is almost ideal. The bold ridge of hemlocks to the south screens them from the sun and helps to keep the soil moist at the roots. Even there they could be grown in greater perfection if they were more sheltered from winter winds and from adventuresome small boys. This latter pest is a very real problem in growing rhododendrons at the Arboretum. Anyone who was ever a boy does not blame the urchins for wanting to play about in the Bussey Brook and to crawl up through the rhododendron beds among the giant bushes. Yet anyone who knows rhododendrons and their needs knows that this crawling is very hard on the bushes. Twigs snap off and sunshine strikes at the roots. The passing of hundreds of pairs of little feet, and little knees as well, wears out the very soil. The rich, cool mulch which has so carefully been built up is scuffed away and bit by bit the collection succumbs.



Of late years rhododendrons here and elsewhere in New England have been attacked by the lace wing fly. These bizarre little creatures are scarcely larger than the head of a pin. Under the microscope they appear like hump-backed monsters dressed in lace. Monsters they are in action as well as appearance, for they gather under the rhododendron leaves and suck its juices. They can be successfully controlled by using an oil spray but their attacks are kept to a minimum if the rhododendrons are planted in semi-shade. The insects dislike the shade; the shrubs prefer it, therefore such a situation is doubly preferable.

One of the Caucasian species, the handsome *R. Smirnowii*, thwarts the lace wing fly by clothing its leaves below with a mat of woolly hair. So protective is this covering that even the hybrids between *R. Smirnowii* and the other species are practically immune. Fortunately, for the next generation of American gardeners, hybridizers are at last at work creating new varieties for this country, varieties which will be winter hardy and summer hardy, which will at least discourage attack from the lace wing fly and which will, nevertheless, compare with present day English varieties in the size and beauty of their flowers.

EDGAR ANDERSON

**R**HODODENDRONS. IN spite of last winter's devastating cold there has been quite a show of bloom among the hybrid rhododendrons during the last month, the hardy Caucasian hybrid, "Boule de Neige" flowered profusely and the late-blooming variety "Delicatissimum" made a very good showing. Pending a more complete report on the collection as a whole it may be briefly recorded that in addition to these varieties the following gave at least a fair account of themselves: "James Bateman," "Echse," "Anton," "Lady Armstrong," "Henrietta Sargent," and "H.W. Sargent."

**A**REPORT ON WINTER INJURY. THE effects of the severe winter of 1933-1934 on the collections of the Arnold Arboretum are proving to be of great scientific and horticultural interest. Under the leadership of Professor J.G. Jack there is accordingly being prepared a comprehensive report on winter injury at the Arnold Arboretum. It will comprise one or more numbers of the Bulletin of Popular Information and will be published in the autumn of 1934.

#### EXPLANATION OF THE INSERT

**Rhododendron maximum** L.

(From drawings by C.E. Faxon for Sargent's "*Sylva of North America.*")











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