



Book Review by Margaret Hodgson

Hardy Rhododendron Species by James Cullen,
 Timber Press, Inc. Portland, Oregon, 2005.
 496 pages, approx. 172 colour photos,
 Bibliography, Index.
 Hardbound, \$69.95

Dr. James Cullen is Director of the Stanley Smith (U.K.) Horticultural Trust based in Cambridge. He served as Assistant Regius Keeper at the RBG Edinburgh from 1972 to 1989, where he was responsible for research on *Rhododendron* classification based on both dried and living collections. From 1976 to 2000 he was editor of *The European Garden Flora* (Cambridge University Press).

Hardy Rhododendron Species, A Guide to Identification is specifically directed towards identification of species of the genus *Rhododendron* that are cultivated in Britain, western Europe, and parts of North America. The stress is very much on the species: this is not a manual for the identification of hybrids.

The book is organized, following normal practice and standard taxonomic forms (keys and descriptions): - species identification, subgenera, sections, and subsections. The descriptions are broken down into individual

characteristics as to make comparison of one with another as easy as possible. In addition to the standard dichotomous keys, two other identification tools are provided: identification tables and character lists appear at the end of the book.

A long introduction of twenty-six pages includes the History of Classification, but also explains the current classification. The description continues on to include, with good diagrams, the physical characteristics of 1) leaves – position, shape, duration, 2) indumentum (hairs or scales) which may be present, 3) corolla shapes, 4) ovary shapes.

Following the introduction, Cullen leads the reader into thorough information of each subgenus with its corresponding subsections, before moving on to the next subgenus. Prior to the descriptions of the various subgenus and subsections, Cullen has given a clear explanation to his system of “Keys and Descriptions” by example.

The following will give an example of the organization of the material:

27: *Rhododendron williamsianum*
 Rehder and Wilson
 Illustration *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*,
 8935 (1922) reprinted

Habit dwarf shrub to 1.5 m; young shoots glandular-bristly; bark grey-brown, shredding

Leaves ovate-circular, 2 – 4.5 cm

Inflorescence Buds elongate-ovoid, dark red towards base

Calyx to 1 mm, glandular-ciliate

Corolla campanulate, 3 – 4 cm, pale pink with darker spots

Stamens filaments hairless; anthers brown

Ovary glandular

Style glandular to the apex

Capsule 1.5 – 1.8 cm

Distribution western China (central Sichuan)

Flowering spring

Hardiness Zone 7

The above example is accompanied with a photograph of the flower and a microscopic image of the leaf surface. Only about one third of the identification entries include photographs which is disappointing. No plant hardiness zone map is included which is a drawback. The index is excellent.