



SRGC -----

Bulb Log Diary

ISSN 2514-6114

Pictures and text © Ian Young

BULB LOG 33.....16th August 2017





Rhododendron auriculatum

Rhododendron auriculatum is the latest flowering of the large rhododendrons in more than one sense in our garden where we had a twenty year wait before the first flowers and even now we only get the occasional flowering. To be fair to this magnificent, beautifully scented shrub it is not growing in ideal conditions - it sits in shade at the back of the pond among other trees and shrubs. It has seen more light since we took down five trees along our southern boundary two winters ago resulting in better growth.



Rhododendron auriculatum sits in the centre behind the bench and between a Laburnum and an Acer griseum.



I cannot overstate the importance of Rhododendrons in our garden - they form an essential part of the design providing structure, shape and form as well as year round colour and decoration - without their presence the garden would be flat and uninteresting.



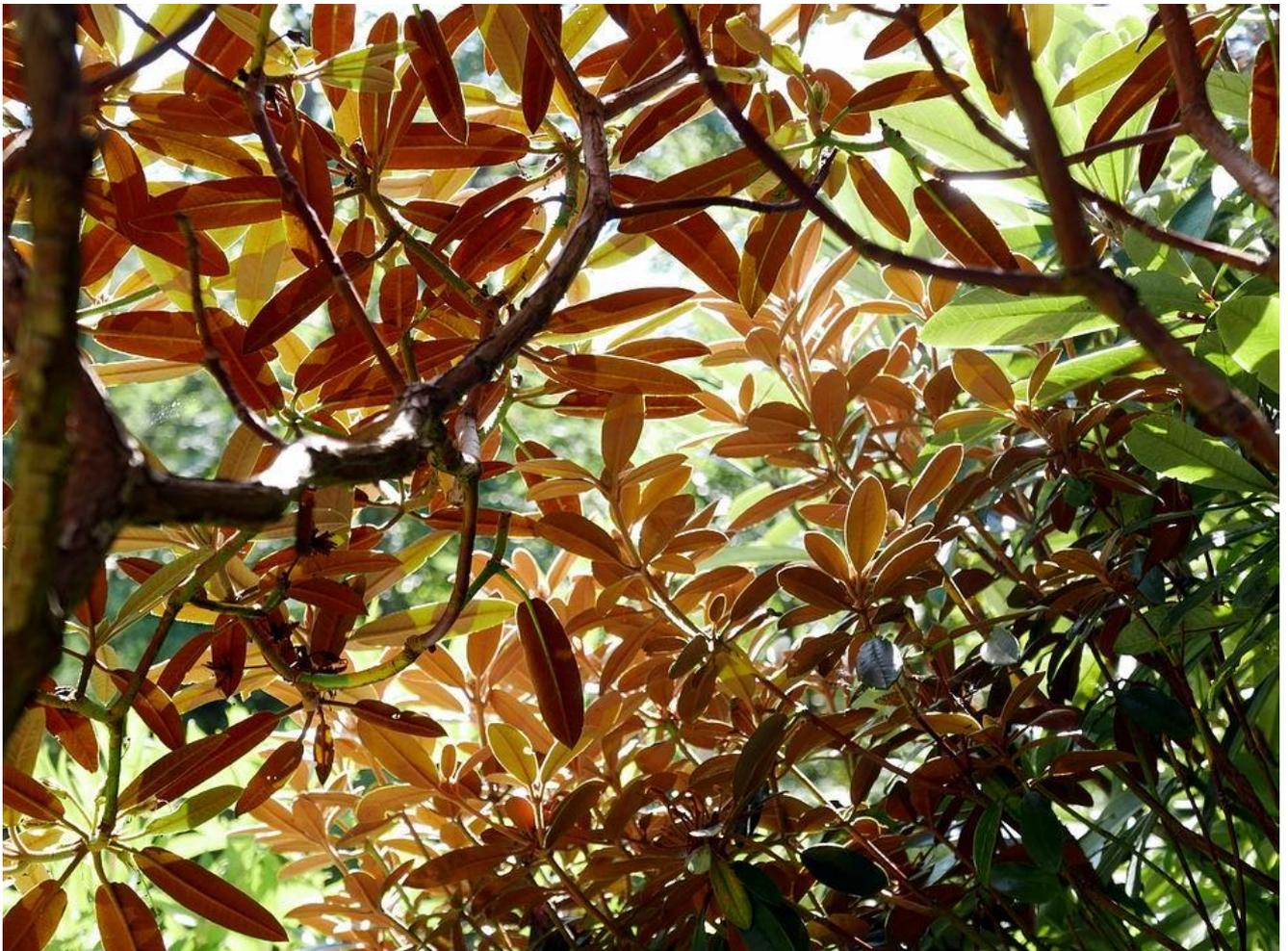


By removing the lower branches of the bigger types we can keep the ground below open for growing spring bulbs and other plants that thrive in the woodland like conditions. Also, rather than being a giant shrub, they take on a statelier tree-like form.

A further advantage as they gain height is that they form an overhead canopy allowing us to look up and view the underside of the foliage against the sky.



Rhododendron elegantulum



Rhododendron elegantulum, Rhododendron yakushimanum x tsariense and Rhododendron uvariifolium
viewed from underneath.



Rhododendron elegantulum



The thick white indumentum on the upper surface of the leaves on **Rhododendron yakushmanum x tsariense** will wear off but the underside retains its furry tan covering.



The white underside of ***Rhododendron uvariifolium*** leaves is very attractive as the leaves stand upright as they emerge – later they will turn downwards



Rhododendron rex* subsp. *fictolacteum with seedpods forming and new growth emerging.

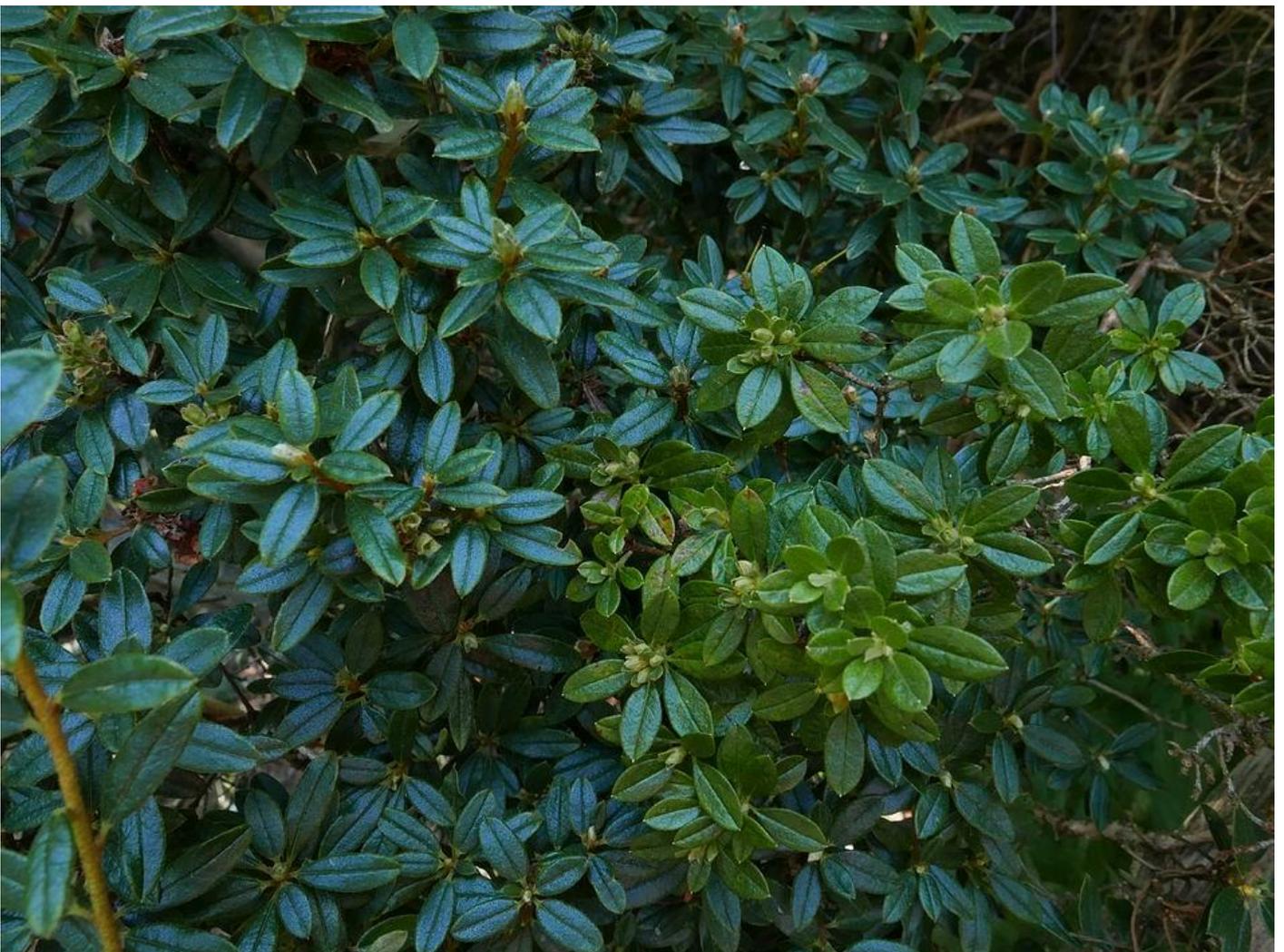


Rhododendron rex* subsp *fictolacteum* and *Rhododendron bureavii

In the wetter west coast of Scotland the leaves on these species can be easily three times the size that they attain here.



Rhododendron wardii var. puralbum



Rhododendron primuliflorum and Rhododendron campylogynum



Rhododendron cephalanthum var. **crebreflorum** grows on the top edge of the raised wall.



Rhododendron pumilum grows at the base of the wall with some of its branches intertwining through a large mound of **Phyllodoce caerulea**.



Rhododendron pumilum will produce a reduced second flowering at this time of the year if the weather conditions have been favourable – namely mild, wet with some periods of sunshine.



Rhododendron yakushimanum

**Rhododendron
yakushmanum
x recurvioides**

The growth of this hybrid is similar to that of the parents which is a spreading mound wider than high – this plant is thirty plus years old.

Rhododendron enthusiasts will always take hold of and turn a leaf to view the back – hence they are often referred to as ‘leaf turners’.



Rhododendron yakushmanum x recurvioides



The reason for leaf turning is best explained with these two pictures showing the front then back of the leaves.



Rhododendron- bureavii, elegantulum, recurvoides, yakushmanum, yakushmanum x recurvioides



Rhododendron pachysanthum with the beautiful red bark of **Rhododendron thompsonii** to the right.



Rhododendron pachysanthum



I am hopeful that these fat buds mean that this Rhododendron will flower next year – it has been around twenty five years since we sowed the Himalayan collected seeds and it has not flowered yet. Other species sown at the same time have been flowering for several years however this one was planted in the shade of a tree where the conditions were obviously not conducive for flowering - since we took the tree down in January this shrub has seen some direct light and sunshine - fingers crossed.



The larger rhododendrons provide height and help divide the garden into different areas.



Small and medium rhododendrons grow under the larger ones with a carpet of mainly spring flowering plants below them

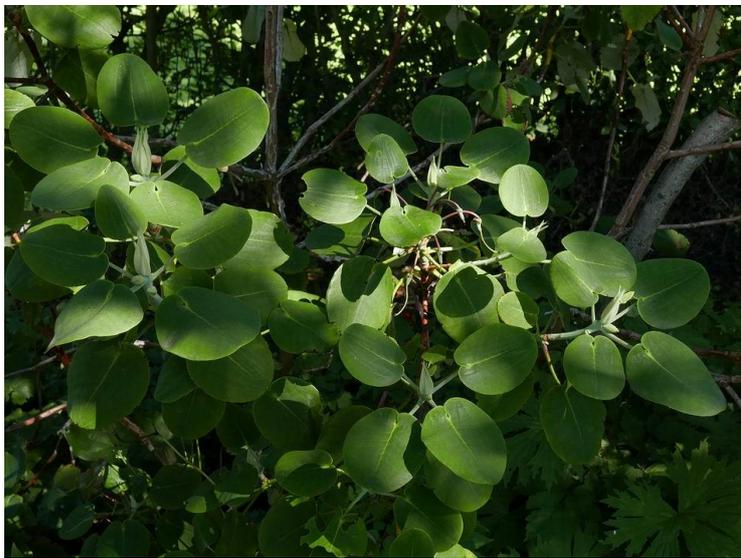


Rhododendron makinoi

Leaving the flowers to form seed pods slows the emergence of the new growths which is why it is best to dead head as the flowers go over – we used to do this but as the numbers of flowers increased we do not find the time also we can no longer reach up to the taller ones.



Rhododendron makinoi



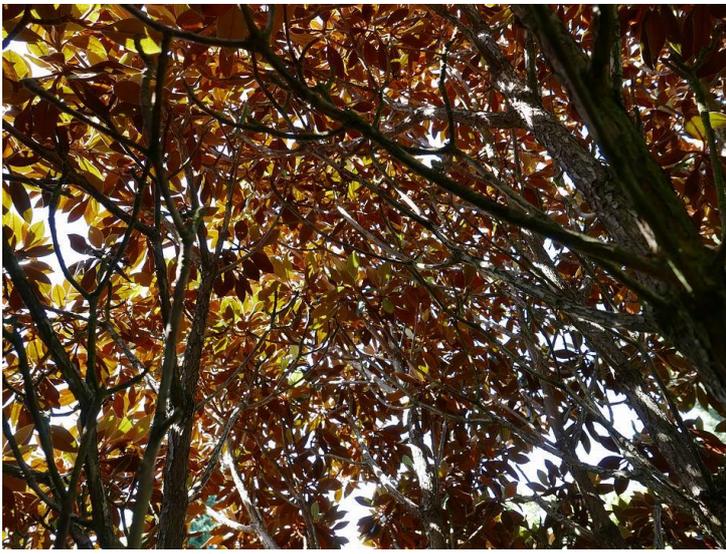
Rhododendron orbiculare



Rhododendron roxianum var. oreonastes



Rhododendron bureavii in the front garden is at least 4 metres high and over the years we have removed the lower branches.



Rhododendron bureavii

Rhododendron bureavii has some of the finest foliage of the entire genus making it worth growing even if it never produced any flowers. This is one of the rhododendrons which produce a mass flowering every second year with a lesser number of flowers in the intermediate years. Our two forms of bureavii have lovely purple spotted flowers with a dark throat.



Rhododendron lepidostylum

The hairy-edged blue grey foliage of Rhododendron is another of my favourites and we thought we had lost this plant when the front garden became overgrown. To our great delight when we were cutting back the overgrown shrubs a few years ago we found it hanging on in the dark undergrowth - now having been opened up to the light for a few years there is strong new growth.



Two of the most regular of the smaller rhododendrons to produce a second flowering in summer are the purple flowered **Rhododendron saluense** and the yellow hybrid **Rhododendron 'Curlew'**.



Some of the larger rhododendrons help hide our front garden from the road.



An illustration of the variation in shape, colour, texture and size of rhododendron leaves in our garden.





We grow rhododendrons of all sizes upwards from one of the shortest; the mat forming **Rhododendron calostrotum keleticum radicans**.



A dwarf Rhododendron 'Bluetit' which at forty years old is less than a metre tall.



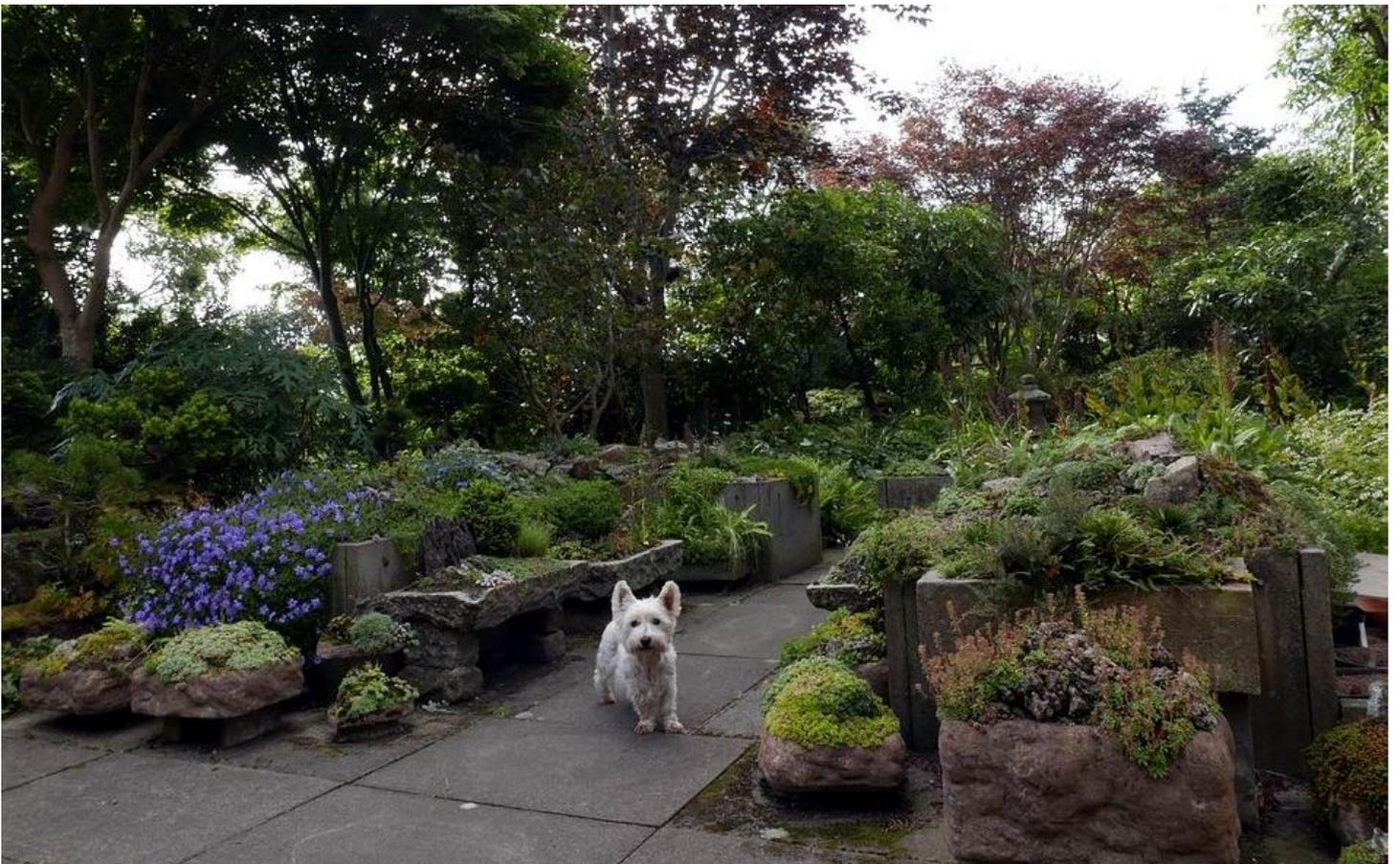
Then and now pictures: above looking towards the bed of alpine Rhododendrons, top left, in around 1985. The sculpture beside the pond is also visible in the background – this is where I have recently made a new bed.



As near as possible the same view as it is today where the alpine rhododendrons have grown into one mound forming a multi coloured tapestry of textures and shapes, both in the leaves and at flowering time.



Rhododendrons along with other evergreen shrubs and trees turn the garden into a mini-landscape around which we can under-plant with bulbs and other herbaceous plants.



Megan agrees that Rhododendrons are good in the garden and well worth celebrating.....