

# VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

## JANUARY 2022

Our purpose is to  
promote and  
educate the  
public about the  
GENUS  
rhododendron



Victoria Rhododendron Society

Lionel de Rothchild



[www.victoriarhodo.ca](http://www.victoriarhodo.ca)



Meetings are held in the Couvelier Center  
September through May on the grounds of the HCP Gardens  
505 Quayle Street Victoria B. C.

Meetings begin at 7:30 pm with a social gathering afterwards

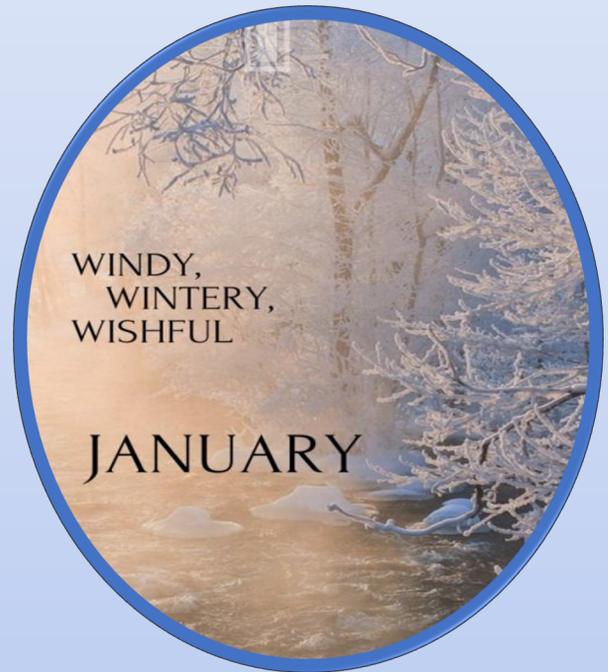
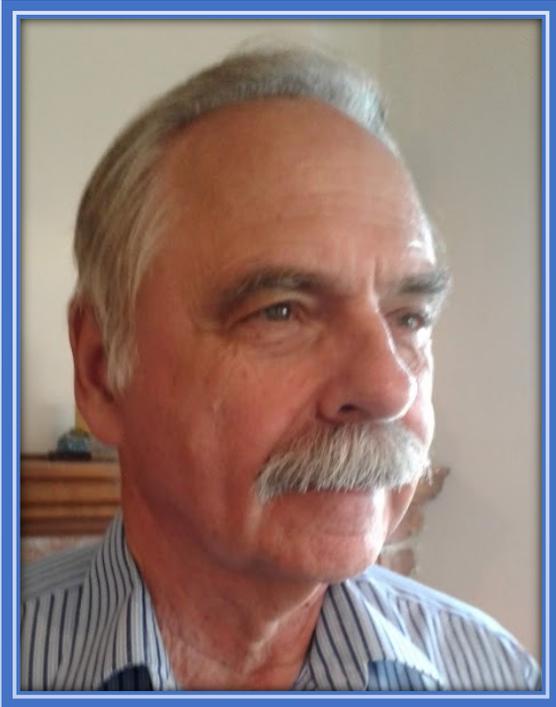
VISITORS WELCOMED

[www.victoriarhodo.ca](http://www.victoriarhodo.ca)

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# PRESIDENT'S REMARKS



As we pass the winter solstice and the days get more sunshine, the garden prepares for spring. The hardy cyclamen show off their circles of various patterns and color tones. A few crocus species are showing leaves as well. Daffodils are showing signs of growth by peeking through the soil, awaiting warmer weather. On inclement days we can browse plant catalogues and ponder garden changes to come. Non-rainy, non-windy or non-snowy days invite us to come and have a look at our winter gardens. Perhaps some maintenance work can take place. Rhododendron buds are slowly enlarging. Christmas Cheer may be showing a few blooms, challenging the drabness of winter, but always alert for the frosty days ahead.

Over the next many months seeds will be started indoors to provide the pallets of color for our spring and summer displays. For myself, seeds germinating is an uplifting experience, a sign of winter being challenged by spring. The ARS Rhododendron Seed Exchange typically opens mid-January. Many interesting rhododendron crosses and companion plants are listed for sale. The Rhododendron species Botanical Garden also sells Rhododendron seeds and plants.

The COVID 19 Omicron strain is creating uncertainty, possibly delaying upcoming plans. Due to its contagious nature, vaccinations and booster shots are recommended for better outcomes. Recommendations include wearing N95 masks, and staying safe by following Provincial Health Guidelines. We may be using ZOOM talks for the upcoming months as personal health is most important. Let us hope that 2022 will be a better year for all of us.

# Introducing a new species rhododendron *Rhododendron kuomeianum*



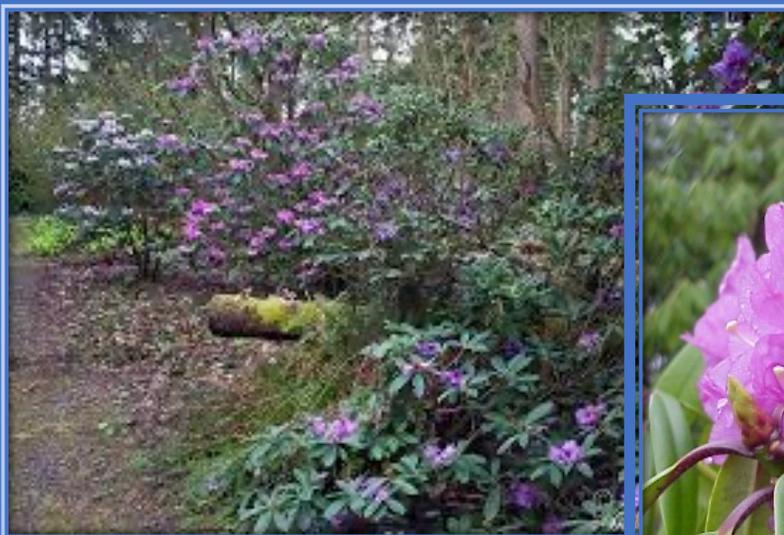
*Rhododendron kuomeianum* is a new species discovered in NE Yunnan, China. It is closely related to *R. valentinianum* and *R. changii*, and belongs to the *Maddenia* group. It was found at 1800 – 200 meters. It has a broadly elliptic to obovate leaf, between 3.5-5.5 cm in length and 2.5-3.5 cm in width. The corolla is tubular shaped, white with pale red margins and is approximately 3.5- 4.5 cm in length.

- A. Plant habit
- B. Corolla
- C. Leaf surface
- D. Underside of leaf
- E. Flower bud
- F. Corolla anatomy
- G. Pistil and calyx

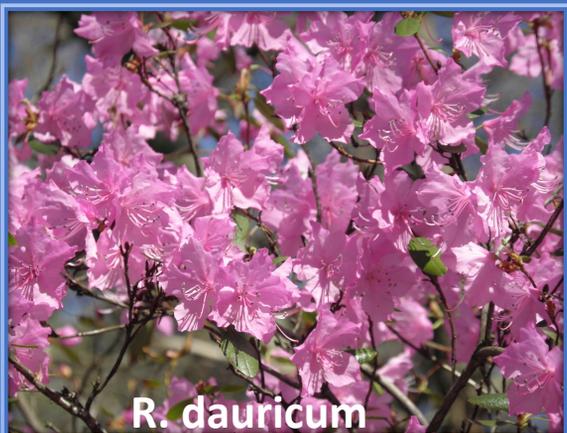
This new species was named after Professor Kuo Mei Feng, a botanist and horticulturist from the Kunming Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences to honor his great contribution to research on the genus *Rhododendron* in China.

# CELEBRATING OUR GARDENS IN JANUARY

January, being January, makes it difficult to know what is going to be blooming from one week to the next. Some years, January weather closes in and snow makes the garden a wonderland – not much in bloom – but beautiful nevertheless. January weather can also be comfortably benign, with mild winds off the ocean and only an occasional brush with frost. Many times, we see early rhododendrons open their buds in January. It is usually a very tentative opening when it happens, but if we get a stretch of mild weather, *Rhododendron ririei*, with its beautiful mauve-purple blooms, will open soon after New Year. Soon after that, we may see *R. dauricum* and *R. mucronulatum* open their sizeable blooms, not to be outdone by *R. ririei*.



*R. ririei*



*R. dauricum*



*R. mucronulatum album*



**Christmas Cheer**



**Lee's Scarlet**

Not to be outdone by the early blooming species rhododendrons, some rhododendron hybrids like to join the early blooming society. Christmas Cheer is a remarkable sight when in full bloom from mid winter to early spring. With its continuing blooming times over several weeks, this rhododendron received the Award of Merit from the Royal Horticultural Association. Rhododendron Lee's Scarlet is also an early or continuing bloom hybrid that belongs in the winter garden. It is known for the lovely indumentum on the underside of the leaf.



**Sarcococca**

For knock-out fragrance, the many species of sweet winter boxwood are a must in the winter garden. Sarcococcas sweeten one's day with their small thread-like flowers and glossy leaves. They do best in shade and rich soil and are surprisingly drought tolerant.



**Sasanqua hybrid**

Winter camellias bring joy to the January garden. The easy-to-find sasanqua series range from colors of bright red, light pink and white. Depending on the variety one can purchase plants ranging from 4-12 feet.



**Hellebores**

The old reliable first flowering blooms we often see belong to the hellebore family. The added bonus of hellebores is that for the most part they are deer resistant. A few bites may be tried, but mostly deer leave these beauties for human enjoyment.

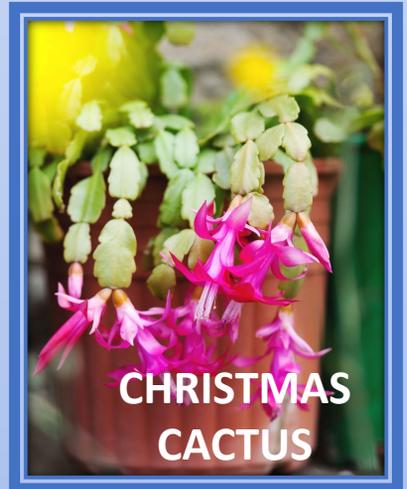
# CHRISTMAS PLANTS ... NOW WHAT???



**POINSETTIA**

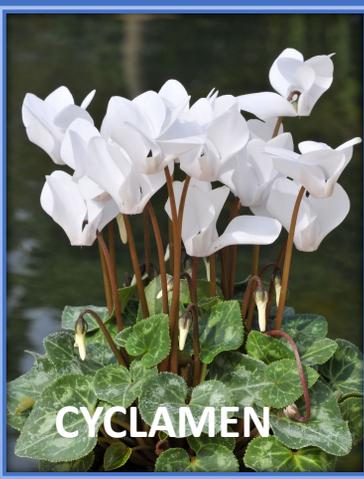
Pointsettias are a classic Christmas flower. Water when dry to the touch, remove foil or pot cover and place in draft-free area. To keep or toss: your call, but to promote flowering for next year, place in a bright window after the holiday. After April 1, remove the flower tracts, and shape as needed by pinching tips until early August. Feed every two weeks. In September, move to a room with only natural light and zero light after dark. In early October, move to your regular living area and cross your fingers.

Christmas Cactus are one of the hardier holiday plants and can last for decades. Place in a bright window, water when dry, but do not let the plant sit in water. To keep and get flowers to set next year, take the plant outside for about three weeks in late summer to early fall. Bring it in well before frost and place in a room where it is dark at night. Fertilize during the growing season from April to October. Do not repot as they prefer to be pot-bound.



**CHRISTMAS  
CACTUS**

Cyclamen are cool-season plants that can bloom for more than 8 weeks with the right conditions. Place in medium light and avoid drafts to prolong flowering. Deadhead spent flowers and yellow leaves by pulling off the entire stem near the foliage line. Water from the base by setting the plant in a saucer of water, letting it absorb for 15 to 20 minutes. This is a toss. It is tough to get cyclamen to rebloom.



**CYCLAMEN**



Prized for their ability to bloom indoors, these exotic-looking flowers can bloom about four to six weeks after the bulb is planted. Some varieties send up the flower before the foliage. Place in bright light as low light will cause it to grow floppy and topple it. Once the flowers fade, cut the stalk but keep the leaves to help replenish the nutrients in the bulb. Move outside in a shaded area when the danger of frost has passed. In late summer or early fall, let the plant go dormant and place in a garage or basement. Cut off the yellowed leaves and ignore it. No water until November when you begin watering and start the growing cycle once again.

These little fern-like plants are a somewhat new addition to the Christmas season. They are becoming increasingly more available at nurseries and grocery stores. Keep them on your coffee or dining room table as they do well in low to medium light. They prefer constant humidity and do well in terrariums. Keep the soil moist and use room temperature water. Water from below by placing plants in a saucer of water for 15 minutes. Keep it if you are lucky, as they will often die before one gets tired of them.



These often come as kits or loose bulbs with a planting medium. Pot them up and enjoy the fragrant blooms for two or three weeks. Keep them in a cool or sunny location, but too warm a location will cause leggy growth. When the flowers emerge, tie the stems to decorative stake to keep them from toppling over. Water regularly. These are not worth trying to keep for another year.



# RHODODENDRONS

## EXCERPTS FROM KENNETH COX, GLENDICK



Rhododendrons need acid soil and they naturally grow on peaty soils in the Himalayas, Japan and China

Soil acidity ideal is pH 4.5-6

Rhododendrons need an open soil mixture which has air pockets, created by adding organic matter such as leaf mold, composted bark or conifer needles

Soil preparation needs to be a much larger area than just the root ball.

Rhododendrons must not be planted too deep. The root ball should be just below the surface. If you bury the root ball, you may kill the plant. Do not add very thick layers of mulch over the root ball.

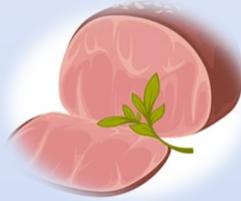
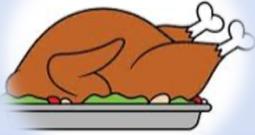
Ensure the plant is well watered, but allowed to drain. Soil should be firmed around the roots, but do not stamp the root ball. Best planting time is October to early April, depending on weather conditions.



Rhododendrons do not grow well under greedy trees. Tree roots will take up most available moisture and lack of light creates straggly, shy-flowering plants. Good trees to grow with rhododendrons include Japanese maples, flowering cherries, conifer, pine, larch, spruce, firs and cedars.

Rhododendrons in containers must have good drainage. Evergreen azaleas, yaks and R. Williamsianum hybrids are good choices for container growing. Using ericaceous compost with some added perlite, grit or bark creates the best soil conditions. Ensure drainage holes do not get plugged.





## TOO MUCH TURKEY, HAM AND CHRISTMAS TREATS



## FAMILY VISITS ARE OVER



## ONE CANNOT GET OUT INTO THE GARDEN

## HERE ARE SOME YouTube SITES TO VISIT

1. [How to grow Rhododendrons | Royal Horticultural Society](#)
2. [Rhododendron Varieties and How to Grow Them | jonny A](#)
3. [Growing rhododendrons-what you need to know |The Middle -sized Garden](#)
4. [Planting Rhododendrons and Azaleas |THE RIGHT WAY Dayton Nursery](#)
5. [Rhododendrons-growing and planting |Rare find Nursery](#)
6. [What is an azalea, care, pruning, deadheading, soil |Gardening at Douentza](#)
7. [Rhododendron Garden tour at |Kincaids Nursery](#)

# INKARHO RHODODENDRONS

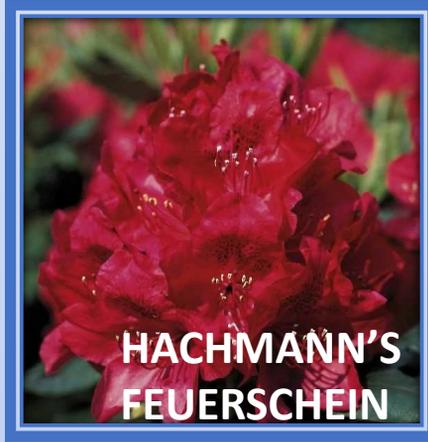
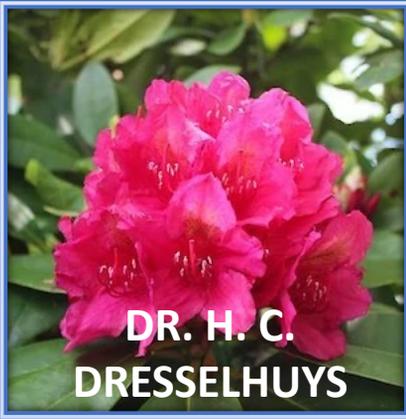
## Rootstock rejuvenation

Inkarho.de

This story began when a self-seeded rhododendron was spotted growing in a quarry with a known limey soil and bedrock. This rhododendron was then bred with R. 'Cunningham's White'. The resulting progeny of about 20,00 seedlings were grown on and eventually the growers chose the Inkarho. The name "Inkarho" refers to the rootstock of the named plant.

Many factors apart from lime tolerance would guide this choice: including bushy habit, vigor, uniformity and a good grafting ability. This extensive work has been done in Germany by a consortium of about 20 large nurseries. There are now about 40 different rhododendrons on the market.





**Inkarho is a registered name. Over many years, there have been improvements in the development of this strain. 'Easydendron' and 'Dufthecke' (scented hedge) are known as easy care plants. "This special breed rhododendron, which grows in virtually every rich humus garden soil is particularly robust and easy to care for." With Inkarho rootstock, rhododendrons will be able to grown where they were not previously grown.**

## Greening Government Strategy



The **Greening Government Strategy** is helping Canada to **take action on climate change** within federal operations. We are taking steps to reduce the environmental impacts across the Government of Canada. The science is clear. Human activities are driving unprecedented changes in the Earth's climate. These pose significant risks that need to be addressed. We are greening our own operations with a **new net-zero emissions by 2050 commitment**, and expanding the scope of the target to include areas such as emissions related to national safety and security, commuting, and procurement of goods and services.

### Four key focus areas

#### Mobility and Fleets

Goals: modernizing fleets with zero-emission vehicles and hybrids; switching to lower carbon fuels; promoting and incentivizing lower-carbon employee travel, and commuting.



#### Property and Workplaces

Goals: constructing zero carbon buildings, maximizing energy efficiency in existing buildings, reducing water consumption, diverting waste from landfills, and minimizing ecosystem impacts.

#### Climate-Resilient Services and Operations

Goals: anticipating future climate related hazards, risk planning, and minimizing disruptions to our operations; using nature-based solutions to protect physical assets from threats, such as flooding.



#### Procurement of Goods and Services

Goals: transitioning to a net-zero, circular economy through green procurement and adopting clean technologies, products and services such as 100% clean electricity and low carbon building materials.



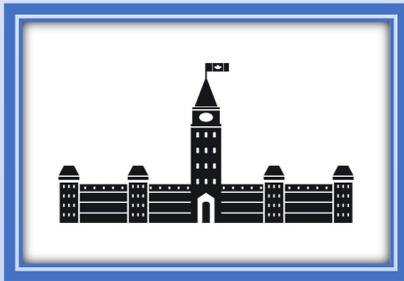
Our environmental impacts and greenhouse gas emissions need to be considered in everything we do. **The Centre for Greening Government** is working with federal organizations to ensure operations are **resilient, green, and net-zero**.

- 1 We are showing leadership in our own operations - inspiring sustainable ways of working and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- 2 We are working with key partners and stakeholders to implement the Strategy.
- 3 We are leading in a way that learns from and inspires others - to help build a more sustainable tomorrow for us all by taking action today.



# BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE-BASED CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA AND HSTV



## THEM

“sequester carbon through ecosystem restoration and improved management practices that increase carbon stored in forests, grasslands, soils, inland and coastal wetlands and marine environments while maintaining ecological values”

“maintaining and restoring wild or near-wild areas that conserve healthy populations of native species”

“identify any potential federal Crown lands or waters that would contribute to the commitment to conserve and protect 25% of Canada’s land and oceans (working to 30% by 2030) through low to no-cost designation or other conservation measures”

“developing management approaches as required for federal sites to protect biodiversity and enable sites to become protected as protected areas”



## US

Plant a tree.. trees help purify the air and give wildlife a home

Start a compost pile.. take your kitchen scraps and convert them to nutrient-rich food for your soil

Use a rain barrel.. conserving water makes less impact on the earth while growing a greener garden

Water smartly.. give your garden a drink during the coolest part of the day so more water can seep into the ground before it evaporates

Reduce the grass in your lawn.. non-grass lawns can be made up of easy-care groundcover plants, wildflowers, stone, pavers or other materials, resulting in less work, less watering and less mowing

Use fewer chemical-based products.. try replacing fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides with more natural strategies

Plant more rhododendrons.. sales will be coming in the spring



# AWARD OF MERIT BY THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY



The Award of Merit is usually given after a trial period, often at Wisley, and is judged by experts in the field. It is only awarded to plants that are:

- . Excellent for use in ordinary and appropriate conditions
- . Available
- . Good constitution
- . Essentially stable in form and color
- . Reasonably resistant to pests and disease

The Award is subject to review and in 2002, more than 1300 plants in total were removed and 900 were added and in 2012, 1900 were removed and 1600 were added.

This article is focusing on species rhododendrons.

Species include: *R. arborescens*



*R. davidsonianum*



*R. bureavii*



*R. decorum*



*R. calophytum*



*R. falconeri*





R. fulvum



R. luteum



R. macabeum



R. makinoi



R. obiculare



R. pachysanthum



R. pseudochrysanthum



R. racemosum



R. rex



R. sinogrande



R. viscosum



R. williamsianum



R. argyrophyllum



R. mucronulatum

# ROBERT JOHN THORNTON (1768-1837)

Illustrator and artist...celebrating flower art

Robert John Thornton was an English physician and botanical writer noted for *A New illustration of the Sexual System of Carolus Von Linnaeus* (1807) and the *Temple of Flora*. He was destined for a career in the church, but while at Trinity College, Cambridge he found inspiration in the botanical lectures of Thomas Martin and switched to studying medicine. Many consider Thornton's book to be the greatest of all flower books.



The Pontic Rhododendron, 1807



The Winged Passion-Flower,  
1807



The Superb Lily, 1807



A Group of Auriculas, 1807



The Quadrangular Passion Flower, 1807



Hyacinths, 1807



The White Lily, 1799



The Nodding Renealmia, 1801



Indian Reed, 1807

# 8 FANTASTIC FERNS FOR THE GARDEN

IDEAS FROM ART'S NURSERY

Ferns have fossil records that date back to the age of the dinosaurs and are still thriving today. If one wants to add form, texture, foliage and low maintenance plants to the garden, ferns beautifully fit the bill. What makes ferns unique is that they do not flower or set seed. Instead, they produce using spores that disperse and create new plants. They are extremely diverse in habit, form and size. Ferns are a common feature in woodlands, mountainsides and other shaded and damp areas.



# RHODODENDRON OF THE MONTH

## Argyrophyllum “Chinese Silver”



*R. argyrophyllum* “Chinese Silver” is a beautiful rhododendron to add to any garden. Red in bud, opening to excellent pink bell-shaped flowers with a darker flushing and flowering in early May. The leaves are dark green with a silvery lower surface. It is an easy to grow plant, reaching 5- 6 feet in 10 years. It is native to China, growing at 2,250 meters. It was awarded the Garden Merit by the Royal Horticultural society in 1933.



# NOTES FROM THE BOARD



## BOARD MEETING DECEMBER 20, 2021

With COVID and its variants making life more difficult each day, it appears that our members have “stepped up to the plate” and continued to support the Victoria Rhododendron Society.

This is despite not enjoying the social interaction we have when all is normal. Friendship and communication with one another in a social setting is very much a part of who we are as a society.

Just know we will still accept all membership applications into 2022. The monies collected for full membership in the VicRS and the ARS will be sent this month to the US. Just a reminder that the VicRS does subsidize that category of belonging in our society.

The water bill for the Norm Todd Propagating center will soon be arriving. Bill Gordon will send a cheque to cover the costs.

As of this date, the HCP cannot find the cheque we sent them for October. Bill will investigate.

The VicRS has tentatively booked the Couvelier Center for months February to May and September to December 2022. Much will depend on the Health Restrictions as the continuing COVID restrictions may alter our plans.

Our regular monthly meeting that is held on the first Monday of every month is cancelled for January 2022.

The Board made a decision to instead take advantage of a special ZOOM meeting on January 15, starting at 11:00 am. Information is included in this newsletter.

# VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

## CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS



**BOARD MEMBERS**

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# IN THE SHADOW OF MIGHTY KANGCHENJUNGA:

...a botanical expedition to the Bhutan and Sikkim Himalaya

JANUARY 15, 2022 11 am.



Seamus O'Brien manages the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland Kilmacurragh. He is a veteran of many plant expeditions and author of *In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry* and *In the Footsteps of Joseph Dalton Hooker*.

In 2014 Seamus led an expedition of Irish horticulturists and tree enthusiasts to the mountains of Bhutan and Sikkim, following the routes of early botanical explorers such as William Griffith, Joseph Hooker, Frank Ludlow and George Sheriff. His travels took him from tropical valleys to icy glaciers, to woodlands and mountain tops. Seamus will entertain us with his recollections of these adventures.

JANUARY 15 AT 11 AM.