

name is hard to pronounce, so he calls me after the street where I live. He even did something with evergreen azaleas, but they are difficult plants here, because of the early and late spring frosts. That's what I heard from some other nurserymen. Bark split in winters without snow and loss of most of the leaves. But I would say that in the last ten to 20 years we had a good number of new and better introductions from Hans Hachmann and others and as I hope from Mr. Knorr, whom I wish a lot of success on the introduction of his new hybrids.

I will save you from the rest of this story, which is not interesting enough to write you about. There are more hybridizers of evergreen azaleas in Germany. For instance, Mr. Walter Nagel from Bretten, further south in Germany. I will soon write him a letter and ask him about his activities.

Some day I will write another (continuing?) story. Just wait and see. As far as I am concerned, this would be the nicest thing to do—travelling throughout the world, looking for and at plants—rhododendrons and azaleas. Germany is not far away for me. I would like to do the same through the West and East coasts of the USA. My dream. Some dreams come true...like the dream perhaps of some of you to be in Europe.

References

1. Walter Schmalscheidt: *Rhododendron—und Azaleenzuchtung in Deutschland*, Verlag Heinz Hansmann, Rinteln, Germany.

Tijs Huisman lives in The Netherlands and teaches German language. He has been growing and hybridizing heathers and rhododendrons for 15 years. He is President of the Dutch Chapter of the ARS; member of the Dutch Heather Society, the German Rhododendron Society and the Azalea Society of America. He is also an occasional contributor to THE AZALEAN. □

An Ilam Experience

George S. Switzer

Port Republic, Maryland

The Ilam hybrid azaleas are a group developed by the late Edgar Stead¹. The name comes from Ilam, a suburb of Christchurch, New Zealand. The work was continued by Dr. J. S. Yeates of Palmerston North, New Zealand. The principal parents used were the Knap Hill Azaleas. Fred Galle points out that because of this they could be called Knap Hills, but now all deciduous azaleas originating in New Zealand are called Ilam Azaleas, as are seedlings grown from seed obtained from New Zealand. Galle lists 72 named cultivars.

In October and November of 1992, Sue (my wife) and I joined an American Horticultural Society Travel Study Program (highly recommended) to New Zealand and Australia. The 23-day trip was divided into two weeks in New Zealand (both North and South Islands) and one week in Australia (only the principal cities on the south-east coast). In New Zealand our group, numbering 29, travelled by bus, except for the short flight from Rotorua (North Island) to Queenstown (South Island).

We spent three days in Christchurch, located in the Province of Canterbury. A city of 300,000, it is New Zealand's third largest city and the largest on South Island. It is described both as "The Garden City of New Zealand" and "New Zealand's Most English City", both apt descriptions. Our tour was scheduled to be in New Zealand in their Spring, and gardens everywhere were at their peak, especially in Christchurch.

There we saw magnificent displays of yellow, orange, and red Ilam azaleas at Millbrook Reserve, Mona Vale Homestead, and the Christchurch Botanical Gardens. The latter is a 75-acre reserve encircled by a deep bend in the Avon River, in the heart of the city. We also visited several private gardens that had been judged earlier in October in an annual city-wide competition. At the end of our tour we were invited to afternoon tea (not unexpected in this "Most English City") by the Canterbury Horticultural Society at their headquarters in the Botanical Gardens.

During tea I spoke to Mr. Neiel Drain, the Society President, about my desire to obtain some Ilam seed. He made notes of my name and address and said he would try to arrange for some seed to be sent to me. In May 1993, I received a letter from Mr. Drain (dated May 13). I quote from his letter:

"Following your request last year for some azalea seed, I am writing, albeit rather belatedly, to advise that your request has not been forgotten.

I did contact the Grounds Supervisor of the Ilam Gardens at the time who advised me that he would be happy to send you some seed. However, I have just learned that he is still awaiting the full ripening of the current season's crop but will send you seed as soon as it is ready, probably in a few weeks time."

I heard nothing until August when in the mail arrived the following letter, along with a very generous packet of seed (carefully cleaned!):

11,8.93

Dear Mr. Switzer:

Enclosed is a sample of seed collected from open pollinated Ilam hybrid deciduous azaleas grown at Ilam Gardens on the University of Canterbury campus in Christchurch, New Zealand.

I understand from Neiel Drain of the Canterbury Horticultural Society that you visited Christchurch and were keen to obtain a packet of this seed.

Yours Sincerely,
Pete J. Cadigan
University of Canterbury
Grounds Department

Enclosed with the packet of seed was a sheet of growing instructions headed "THE ABSOLUTELY UP-TO-DATE METHOD OF GROWING RHODODENDRON AND AZALEAS FROM SEED (in case you failed last year reread the directions.)" I thought, this seems very familiar, and it was: it was signed "Good luck! George Ring and friends".

George Ring, a long-time member of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, has distributed his and friends instructions to Washington, D.C. area members of the ARS, and I have followed them with considerable success for several years. It is a great credit to their expertise that their instructions have been adopted half-way around the world and undoubtedly many places in between.

Reference

1. Galle, Fred C. *Azaleas*. 1985. Timber Press, Portland, OR. □

The ABSOLUTELY UP-TO-DATE METHOD of Growing Rhododendrons and Azaleas From Seed

*(In case you failed last year; reread the
directions.)*

Using fluorescent lights, rhododendron and azalea seed planted from November to February will produce plants large enough to set outside in late spring or early summer. Soak a mixture of 75% sphagnum peat and 25% sand or perlite; squeeze out excess water. (Peat varies greatly even within one brand. A fairly fresh sphagnum is desirable). Place mixture in wooden or plastic box about five inches deep with good bottom drainage. Firm to level and sow seeds on surface. Dust with Captan or benlate, or spray mist with captan or benlate solution. Do not cover seeds with medium. Place plastic or glass over flat. At 70 degrees F germination will usually begin in two weeks or less, but some seed may take as long as two months.

Now place flat 11 inches from fluorescent lights. One four-foot fixture with two tubes provides space for three large flats. This allows 15 or more watts of florescent light per square foot. Leave light on 16 to 24 hours per day.

Transplant seedlings when large enough to handle—at the two-leaf or four-leaf stage. Space one inch or more apart, using same medium as above or a medium of 1/3 peat, 1/3 perlite, 1/3 compost. Water lightly with very dilute solution of fertilizer. Nutro, Peters 15-45-5, or fish emulsion will produce rapid growth. Cover seedlings with glass or plastic for a few days until seedlings are stable. If using compost, soil borne fungus may appear; if so, dust with captan and admit more air. Transplanted seedlings should be watered regularly with very dilute fertilizer solution. Daily watering is necessary if growing in low humidity of heated house. Temperature under lights may vary from 65 to 80 degrees F; 72-76 degrees F is optimum, with five degree drop at night. Keep medium damp at all times but NOT soaking wet. **Almost all seed growing problems can be traced to keeping them too wet.**

If your seedlings are really lusty you may want to thin and transplant a second time indoors. Seedlings should be moved outside from late April (after the last spring frost) to July. They must harden off before the onset of winter. Protect them from wind and sun in cold frame or lath house during the first summer and winter. The weaklings will be thinned out by the coming spring, and the sturdy survivors will be ready to go into nursery beds.

Seed sources: your own crosses or collecting; National ARS Seed Exchange in March offers rare and unusual hybrid and species seed from U.S. and abroad; Potomac Valley Seed Exchange in January offers seed in limited quantity donated by Chapter members; H. L. Larson, 3656 Bridgeport, Washington 98486; F. W. Schumacher, Sandwich, MA 02563.

Good luck!

George W. Ring and friends
University of Canterbury—Grounds Department