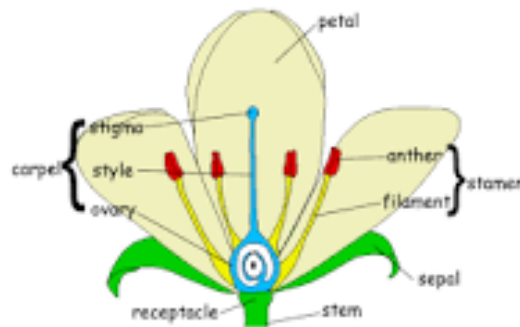


When is a rhododendron not an azalea?

Rhododendrons are survivors of the ice-age and have managed to adapt themselves to the changing conditions of their environment. The largest concentration of these plants in the wild exists in the Himalayan area and Western China. Rhododendrons are grown for their spectacular flowers, usually borne in spring. Some also have young leaves and stems covered in a striking dense woolly covering called indumentum, and some, the deciduous azaleas, have good autumn colour.

Furzey Garden is awash with colour from the many specimens of rhododendron and azalea in the garden, some of which have been here since the 1920s. All azaleas are rhododendrons but not all rhododendrons are azaleas: not as confusing as it sounds as both belong to the plant family **Rhododendron**, with Azaleas a small subset of this family. There is no clear distinction between them but a few characteristics will help you tell if you are looking at an azalea or a true rhododendron. The easiest way is to study the flower structure - an azalea has 5 or 6 stamens while rhododendrons have 10 or more. **Tip:** think of the size of the name - azalea is a short word (= 5 or 6 stamens) whereas rhododendron is a long word (=10 or more stamens). Use this simple test to help you identify plants as you walk around the garden



There are a few other ways to help deduce which type of plant you are looking at (see the table below).

Characteristic	Azalea	Rhododendron
Number of stamens	5 or 6	10 or more
Type	deciduous or evergreen	evergreen, with the exception of <i>R. mucronulatum</i> & <i>R. dauricum</i>
Plant size	small to medium sized shrubs	prostrate shrubs to trees
Leaf appearance	have appressed hairs (hair parallel to the surface of the leaf) most easily seen along the underside midrib of evergreen azaleas	often scaly or have small dots on the under side
Flowers	tubular funnel or funnel shaped	tend to be bell-shaped

Rhododendrons - There are more than 1000 different natural species in the Genus Rhododendron. These wild types, called species, are native to the temperate regions of Asia, N America, and Europe, and the tropical regions of SE Asia and N Australia. None is indigenous to Africa or S America. The largest number of wild species, including the most beautiful, are native to Asia. Wild rhododendrons are found from sea level to 19,000 feet in elevation in a variety of habitats, including alpine regions, coniferous and broadleaved woodlands, temperate rain forests, and even tropical jungle conditions.

Azaleas - There are two distinct types of Azalea:

1. **Evergreen or Japanese Azaleas** typically grow to 18"-30" in 10 years. The plant collector E H Wilson introduced his famous '**Wilson's 50**' Azaleas to the UK in 1920 having selected 50 from the 250 specimens grown in the garden of Mr. Akashi in Kurume, Japan. Since then numerous hybrids have been bred from them around the world, some not hardy enough for British conditions, but a few examples of 'Wilson's 50' can be seen here at Furzey Garden (see below).
2. **Deciduous Azaleas** are taller, reaching 4'-5' in 10 years, and lose their leaves in the autumn, often with some wonderful leaf colours first. They originate from Turkey, America, and Asiatic areas such as Japan and Taiwan.
 - 2.1. The yellow **A. luteum** from Turkey is hardy and a popular plant with scented flowers.
 - 2.2. The American species are more subtle and extend the flowering season into the summer.
 - 2.3. The Asiatic species are more delicate in habit and in flower, very beautiful, and best planted in partial shade, perfect at the edge of woodland.

Hybridisers have made innumerable crosses among azaleas and among rhododendrons, and there are now thousands of hybrids. Azaleas can be more heat tolerant than many other rhododendrons and are particularly popular in hot places, like the American southeast and the cities of Japan.

Rhododendrons and Azaleas of special interest in the garden.

Species rhododendrons:

1. **R. brachyanthum** - a hardy small shrub discovered in Central Yunnan by the French missionary Abbe Delavay in 1884 and introduced to the UK by George Forrest in 1906. It has aromatic leaves that are sparsely scaly beneath, and in June and July it bears bell-shaped, pale-yellow flowers.
2. **R. griersonianum** - discovered by George Forrest in West Yunnan and Burma-Yunnan frontier at 7,000 to 9,000 feet, it was named after R.C. Grierson, of the Chinese Maritime Customs at Tangyueh. Quite different to any other species in the region, flowers are 5-lobed, bright scarlet. and produced in trusses of 5 to 12, up to 3½" long by 4½" wide, **R. griersonianum** has been much used by hybridisers, one of the best known hybrids being '**Tally Ho**' (see 13) as well as '**Temple Belle**' (see 14).
3. **R. haematodes** - another George Forrest introduction, this is a small shrub, up to 10 feet high. Its leaves are up to 3" long by 1½" broad, oblong to ovate, dark green above, densely rufous woolly tomentose below. Flowers are held in a truss of 6 or 12, up to 2" long, and deep crimson to scarlet. Hardy and late flowering, it usually takes some years to become free flowering.
4. **R. keysii** - first brought to the UK in 1851, this specimen was grown at Furzey from seed collected on one of Kingdon-Ward's expeditions. Native to SE Tibet, Bhutan and Assam, it grows to a medium-sized to large shrub with densely scaly leaves, and bears clusters of tubular, cuphea-like flowers of bright orange-red, tipped yellow, from April to June.
5. **R. macabeanum** - this specimen is a fine example of a tree rhododendron, originally grown from seeds collected by Kingdon-Ward and named after Mr McCabe, a former Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, NE India. It bears huge yellow flowers in March and April.
6. **R. racemosum 'Forrest's Dwarf'** - **R. racemosum** is easy to raise from seed and there are consequently several different forms, the best of which is '**Forrest's Dwarf**', which has red stems and deep, bright pink flowers that fade as they mature. It was originally identified by George Forrest in Yunnan in 1921 and is now propagated vegetatively for consistency of flower colour and form. The species was first identified by Abbè Delavay in 1889 and has been extensively used by breeders to develop low-growing, floriferous hybrids. As a species it is variable but normally a dense, small to medium-sized shrub, with leaves that are leathery and glaucous beneath.
7. **R. rex** - a large shrub or small tree with large, shining dark green leaves covered with grey to pale buff tomentum on the lower leaf. The flowers are large trusses of bell-shaped rose or white flowers with a crimson basal stain and spots, borne in April and May. Native to S Sichuan and NE Yunnan.
8. **R. thomsonii AGM** - A well known and desirable Himalayan species, introduced to the UK by Sir Joseph Hooker in 1850. A large shrub or small tree, it has attractive, smooth, cinnamon-coloured bark. Deep red, bell-shaped flowers appear in April and May, and are held in loose trusses.
9. **R. tephropeplum** - an original 1920s specimen grown from seed collected by George Forrest, and introduced to the UK in 1921, native to NE Burma, NW Yunnan, SE Tibet and Assam. A small shrub, up

to 1.5m tall, it has lanceolate leaves that are glaucous and dark scaly beneath. In April and May it bears many bell-shaped flowers that vary in colour from pink to carmine rose.

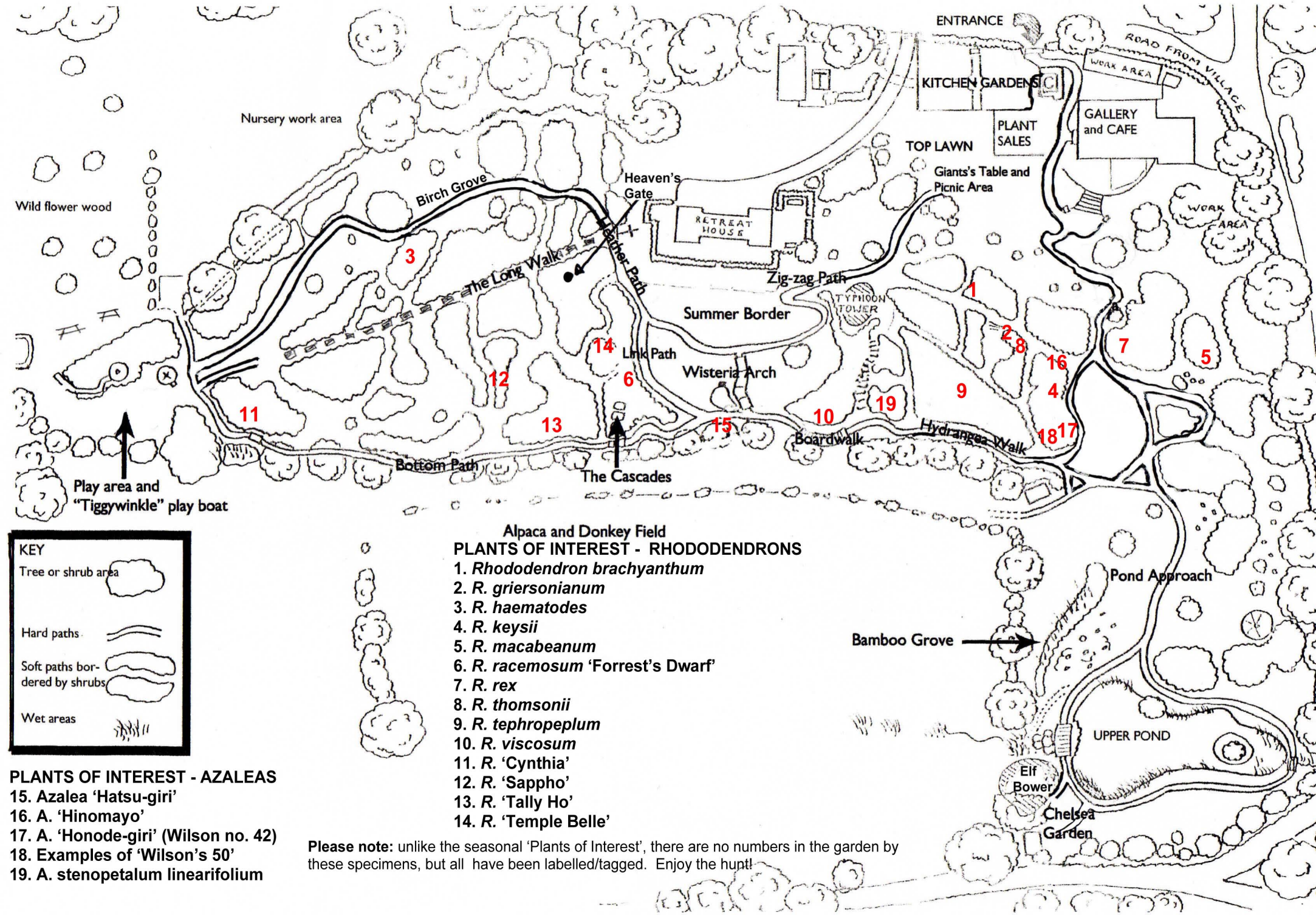
10. **R. viscosum** - one of the less common deciduous rhododendrons originating from the USA. A medium sized, summer flowering (June and July) shrub, with good spicy scent, and flowers that are white, sometimes with a pink stain. As well as the specimen identified here there are also several smaller plants dotted around the garden.

Hybrid Rhododendrons:

11. **R. 'Cynthia' AGM** - one of the oldest rhododendrons in the garden, it has self-layered to produce several plants. 'Cynthia' is a large, dome-shaped hardy hybrid which can grow to 6m in height, with oblong leaves and large conical trusses of funnel-shaped, deep rose-pink flowers 8cm in width in late spring. Formerly known as **R. 'Lord Palmerston'**, it is one of the best of the Hardy Hybrids, the result of crossing **R. griffithianum** (native to Asia) with another species such as **R. catawbiense** (native to N America). Notable for their vigour, hardiness and size, they may be used for large-scale hedging and screening, in the same way as **R. ponticum** but without the risk of invasiveness.
12. **R. 'Sappho'** - one of many hybrid rhododendrons that were bred in the UK from 1825 onwards, its parentage is not known. It is very free-growing, with a rounded habit, and dark glossy leaves up to 7" long. Its flowers are borne in trusses and are widely funnel-shaped. They are mauve in bud but then open as pure white but with conspicuous blotches of rich purple overlaid with black.
13. **R. 'Tally Ho'** - a dome-shaped bush bearing compact, round trusses of brilliant scarlet (reminiscent of a red hunting jacket), funnel-shaped flowers from May to late June. This superb woodland plant was raised by JJ Crossfield at Embley Park from a cross between **R. facetum** x **R. griersonianum**, first released commercially in 1933. Embley Park in Romsey is where Florence Nightingale lived and where she claimed she received her first divine calling from God in 1837 whilst she sat underneath a tree in the grounds. JJ Crossfield gave this plant to Bay Dalrymple, who was a keen huntsman, and over the years it has layered and regrown to form a group from one original plant.
14. **'Temple Belle'** - a charming shrub of neat, rounded habit, first sold commercially in 1916, the result of crossing **R. orbiculare** x **R. griersonianum**. The rounded leaves are glaucous underneath. Loose clusters of Persian-rose coloured, bell-shaped flowers are produced from April to May.

Azaleas:

15. **Azalea 'Hatsu-giri'** - abundant small pretty funnel-shaped bright purplish-crimson flowers 25mm across flowering in late April to early May. This is a dense low evergreen plant with small, narrow, dark green leaves. It grows wider than tall. Height 60-80cm in 10 years.
16. **Azalea 'Hinomayo' AGM** - there are several groups of Azalea, one of the largest being the Kurume Azalea group of hybrids with small flowers in such lavish quantities that the shrub is buried under a blanket of colour. 'Hinomayo' is an evergreen azalea, one of the best pinks, and is an old hybrid introduced in 1910 from the Emperor's garden in Tokyo.
17. **'Wilson's 50' A. 'Hinode-giri'** (Wilson No. 42) - a dwarf evergreen shrub with a rounded to spreading habit and attractive tiered branches. It bears profuse clusters of single cherry red blooms in early to mid-spring. The flowers are funnel-shaped and moderately sized with ruffled edges. Dark green leaves take on a red or burgundy tint in winter.
18. **'Wilson's 50'** - several further examples of 'Wilson's 50' azalea can be found in the vicinity of 'Hinode-giri'. They are not very strong growers, which is one reason why they never became popular in the UK.
19. **Azalea stenopetalum 'Linearifolium'** - the Japanese Spider Azalea (syn. *Rhododendron macrosepalum*) was until fairly recently a rare find in cultivation. Both the rose-lilac flower petals, usually present from April to May, and the dark green leaves are distinctly linear or spider-like. The foliage often persists through the winter making it essentially evergreen. However, the stems and 'branches are brittle, and require protection from wind, frost. While thought to have originated from Japan, it has not been found in the wild, probably resulting from hybridisation in the late 19th century by PF von Siebold (a Russian plant hunter who introduced many rhododendron, magnolias and acers to cultivation) and JG Zuccarini. This specimen has been in the garden since the 1930s.



Nursery work area

Wild flower wood

Play area and "Tiggywinkle" play boat

KEY

- Tree or shrub area
- Hard paths
- Soft paths bordered by shrubs
- Wet areas

- PLANTS OF INTEREST - AZALEAS**
- 15. Azalea 'Hatsu-giri'
 - 16. A. 'Hinomayo'
 - 17. A. 'Honode-giri' (Wilson no. 42)
 - 18. Examples of 'Wilson's 50'
 - 19. A. stenopetalum linearifolium

- Alpaca and Donkey Field**
- PLANTS OF INTEREST - RHODODENDRONS**
- 1. *Rhododendron brachyanthum*
 - 2. *R. griersonianum*
 - 3. *R. haematodes*
 - 4. *R. keysii*
 - 5. *R. macabeum*
 - 6. *R. racemosum* 'Forrest's Dwarf'
 - 7. *R. rex*
 - 8. *R. thomsonii*
 - 9. *R. tephropeplum*
 - 10. *R. viscosum*
 - 11. *R. 'Cynthia'*
 - 12. *R. 'Sappho'*
 - 13. *R. 'Tally Ho'*
 - 14. *R. 'Temple Belle'*

Please note: unlike the seasonal 'Plants of Interest', there are no numbers in the garden by these specimens, but all have been labelled/tagged. Enjoy the hunt!