Stevenson's Collection of Kurume Azaleas—Part II

John M. Hammond—Starling, Manchester, England

Editor's Note: This is a continuation of the historical article that was published in the Fall 2006 issue.

Records of "Stevenson's Collection"

Under a "grand-fathering" clause, the names of J. B. Stevenson's Kurume introductions that were considered to have been available "in the trade" were registered in 1958 by the then International Registration Authority/Royal Horticultural Society (IRA/RHS) and were included in *The International Rhododendron Register* published in that year by the RHS. Whilst doubts have been expressed about the correctness of the spellings and transliteration of some plant names, what really matters is that the IRA/ RHS had the foresight to "put a stick in the sand" and record the names and details of what plants were thought to have been commercially available at a particular point in time. J. B. Stevenson and James Russell both supplied information at the time the 1958 edition was compiled, and the content of the IRA/ RHS records suggest they were based on this information, which, presumably, the RHS archived for future reference. Minor revisions were made to the names in the registration process where they did not accord with the expected format and spelling of Japanese epithets.(1)

Frederic P. Lee in *The Azalea Book,* Second Edition, makes passing mention of Stevenson, but only names 28 of his introductions.(2) Irrespective of problems with the transliteration of Japanese names, Lee's flower details correctly replicate the details for Stevenson's introductions in Britain.

As noted in Part I of this article, James Russell sent Fred Galle a copy of the listing of azaleas that were available from the Sunningdale Nurseries prior to its closure, together with further details of their origin on Galle's data sheets.(3) This listing included "Wilson's Fifty" and "Stevenson's Collection." Fred C. Galle in *Azaleas,* Second Edition, details 60 varieties in his listing of Stevenson's introductions from Yokohama Nurseries.(4) However, the relegation of this listing to *Appendix J* at the back of the book and the comment, "but most are uncommon in the U.S.A." suggests that Galle's book was compiled primarily for an American audience, which is most unfortunate. Galle's listing is incomplete, some spellings have been changed, some flower details do not correlate with the known characteristics of the plants that Stevenson introduced in Britain, and a Knap Hill introduction is included in the list. It is difficult to understand why this listing is significantly different from the information that James Russell supplied to Galle, as Stevenson's introductions preceded those of Beattie and other subsequent introductions in the United States.

To confuse the matter further, at the time of writing, in many instances the transliteration of names and the flower details available on the Internet in photographs taken in Japan do not correlate with either Galle's listing or the known details available in Britain for the Stevenson introductions. This suggests that other names have been duplicated in more recent years.

Table 1 provides details compiled from sources on this side of the Atlantic, as referred to above, for the 80 varieties introduced by Stevenson from Yokohama Nurseries. From the author's perspective the spellings, use of capital letters, and the flower details in Table 1 replicate the names under which the plants were propagated, supplied, and planted in gardens in Britain and Ireland; so this should form a viable basis for plant identification work in old British gardens. The consistency of both the spellings and the use of capital letters in the plant names in past articles written on this side of the Atlantic suggests that these were the names under which the plants were selected by Koichiro Wada and supplied by Yokahama Nurseries. At some future date it may also be possible to take up an invitation to return to Tremeer and look more closely at the collection with a view to verifying the names and details of the extant plants. In the meantime it should be noted that this is the first attempt to collate a more accurate listing of these plants from the scant information available and any comments on the contents of Table 1, or any other aspects of this article, would be most welcome. In this way we all benefit.

It seems inexplicable that the 2004 Second Edition of *The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist* is significantly less specific than the original edition; and, with the exception of 'Banzai', Yokohama Nurseries has not been recorded as the origin of the plants, Koichiro Wada has not been mentioned as being responsible for their selection, and neither has J.B. Stevenson been credited with their introduction.(5) There may well be some underlying reason for this approach, but it is unhelpful and is counter-productive with regard to the efforts of those individuals who are endeavouring to clarify the British introductions and groupings within the Kurume azaleas. Mention is made in the *Introduction* of the Second Edition, Note (j), *Informal Groupings*, of the informal azalea groupings, and the subsequent listing includes the Kurume azaleas. The note continues, "These groupings and many more can be found listed in F. C. Galle's *Azaleas*, where their origin and characteristics are described."

J. B. Stevenson's Kurume introductions were made directly to England from a well known Japanese nursery and were selected by a highly regarded Japanese plantsman, so

Table 1
A Listing of Kurume Azaleas selected by Koichiro Wada, supplied by Yokohama Nurseries, and introduced in 1927-29 by J.B. Stevenson of Tower Court, Ascot.

Editor's Note: The following details have been compiled from British sources. The spellings and use of capital letters reflects the names generally used for these plants in Britain since their original introduction. The reader is cautioned that many of the cultivar names in Table 1 do not conform to the ICNCP code (e.g., capitalization and the use of hyphens) nor with a Romaji translation from the Japanese language (e.g., 'Mizu no Yambuki' and 'Shjuchuke' are not possible).

'Agamujin'	Pure white, frilly with slight green spots. (a)
'Arziemakie'	Vivid salmon pink, deeper spotting.
'Asahiryn'	Flame pink, deep red tube.
'Augigasana'	Shell pink, edges deeper,, spotted brown.
'Ayahime'	Bright rose.
'Azafujin'	Shell pink, deeper streaks, greenish ground.
'Banzai'	Bright salmon pink, darker spotting.
'Chigo no Mai'	Rose pink, paler centre, bright red spots.
'Chiyo no Akebono'	Brilliant rose pink on slightly blue ground.
'Choraku'	Lavender pink, greenish white throat.
'Fude Tsuka'	Rose, greenish cream centre, brown spots. (a)
'Fude Tsukasa'	Clear rose pink, paling to greenish white.
'Fuji no Asahi'	White, flushed rosy lilac on edges. (a) (e)
'Fukuhiko'	Vivid crimson red flowers and anthers.
'Gaeshi'	Deep salmon pink, white anthers.
'Gyokoko'	Apricot red.
'Had no Sato'	Soft lilac pink, paler anthers, large calyx.
'Haru no Akebono'	Salmon rose, paler throat, crimson blotch.
'Haru no Kyokii'	White, light green buds, odd crimson petal.
'Haru no Shiou'	Blush, flushed deep lilac edges. (a)
'Harumiji'	White, no spots, with a large calyx.
'Hatsuki'	No description found.
'Hatsuoto'	Lilac blush. (b)
'Hikkasen'	Pale salmon, pink centre, dark blotch.
'Hino Tsukasa'	Deep scarlet red. (b)
'Hinode no Kumo'	Rich crimson.
'Ima Zuma'	Pale lilac rose, deeper edges, faint red spots.
'Ishiyama'	Creamy white, broad lilac border.
'Itten'	Pale lavender.
'Iwato Kagami'	Pale pink. (e)
'Izumi Gawa'	Rose lilac, pale throat, reddish spots .
'Jukachi Ko'	Salmon red, bright red anthers.
'Keinohana'	Deep lilac pink, white anthers.
'Kinjo no Tama'	Deep rose pink, rose red anthers.
'Kodai Nishiki'	White. (a)
'Kogasane'	Soft carmine, deep band down petal centre. (f)
'Kojo no Odorikaraka'	Vivid tomato red.
'Kokinran'	Flesh pink, white throat, carmine spots.
'Komachi'	Pale pink, rose lilac edges, brown spots.
'Koranyuki'	Vivid tomato red. (c)
'Kumagaya'	Pale flame red, red anthers, large calyx.
'Kumoidori'	No description found.
'Maihime'	White shading to greeny-yellow throat.
'Maikojaku'	No description found.
'Maimsode'	Rose pink on slightly blue ground..
'Metake'	Bright red.
'Mikaera Zakura'	Pure white.
'Mikatanishiki'	Blush petals with vivid pink edges.
'Mizu no Yambuki'	Creamy white. (e)
'On no Sora'	Lavender, white anthers, odd brown spot.
'Ouchi Shisti'	White, creamy tinge at centre. (b)
'Ouchiyama'	Lilac crimson.
'Paikune'	Bright pink, pink anthers.
'Rankyoken'	Vivid orange red, red anthers, white stigma.
'Sahohime'	White, flushed rose, deeper spots. (b)
'Senju'	Apple blossom pink, crimson spots.
'Senka'	Deep flame pink, darker spots. (b)
'Shikishima'	Lilac pink, darker spots, light centre. (b)
'Shintsune'	White, freely sports salmon pink.
'Shino Miyagino'	Rose Magneta, white anthers. (a)
'Shi no Ito'	Cream flushed lilac, lilac tips, brown spots.
'Shi no Noe'	Pale greenish white, pink margins.
'Shi no Uye'	White, slight chestnut brown spots.
'Shinsagino Kagasane'	Pale rose madder, pale throat, crimson spots.
'Shjuchuke'	No description found. (d)
'Soroi'	White, flushed and edged rose madder.
'Susuganioto'	Deep rose pink, red anthers.
'Takamakie'	White, with greenish eye.
'Tokoharu'	White, deep crimson striping. (a) (e)
'Tonkonatsu'	Pure white. (b)
'Toun'	White, faint flesh tints, chestnut brown spots.
'Unma'	No description found.
'Usugukari'	White, rose lilac edges, white anthers. (b)
'Wakalia'	Salmon orange, pale anthers.
'Yezo Nishiki'	Creamy white, deeper throat, white anthers.
'Yoro'	White, no spots.
'Yoshi Migatake'	Bright rose madder, large ragged calyx.
'Yozakura'	Pale magenta. (b) (f)
'Yugire'	Lilac pink. (b)
'Yukachiko'	Salmon red, bright red anthers. (g)

Notes :
(a) Hose-in-hose variety.
(b) Large flowers.
(c) Very similar to 'Kojo no Odorikarake'.
(d) Listed in 1958 by IRR, but the spelling probably incorrect.
(e) A plant with a similar name was introduced to California by Domoto Brothers c. 1918, but it may not be the same plant as that in Britain.
(f) A plant with a similar name was re-introduced by USDA in 1929, but it may not be the same plant as that in Britain.
(g) Synonym of 'Jukachi Ko.'

there is little point in removing any of these details from the registration records unless more specific information can be inserted. To suggest that the reader refer to Galle's records, which are incomplete and are inconsistent with the plant material that exists in Britain, is not a viable alternative.

In the author's view it is high time that the duplication of Japanese plant names, transliteration inconsistencies, and plant description variations were recognized by the International Cultivar Registration Authority (ICRA) in the same way as it has dealt with the duplication of English names; these variants, with all their known details, should be listed in *The International Rhododendron Register*. It is intended to revise the transliterated versions of Japanese epithets to bring them in line with the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* (ICNCP).(6) This could be a disaster in horticultural terms, as it will only serve to exacerbate the confusion that already exists in the real world, unless both the original name under which the plant was introduced and the ICNCP revised name are listed together for reference purposes in the registration details so some correlation can be maintained with the original labelling of plants in gardens. Previous attempts to eradicate inconsistencies with names that are similar, or do not adhere to their expected format and spelling, have led to the current confused situation on both sides of the Atlantic as to what plant is actually being referred to when a particular name is used. This problem, coupled with the direct introduction into the United States of plants with similar names as those in Britain (but not necessarily the same plants that exist in Britain under those names), may well go a long way to explaining why Galle's listing does not correlate with the plants that Stevenson introduced. Many Japanese names are difficult for someone from the Western World to interpret. Take, for example, the Stevenson introduction 'Fuji no Asahi' ['Fuji-no-asahi'] whose meaning is said to be "Sunrise on Mount Fuji" and could be thought to relate to a plant with pink or reddish flowers; but, 'Fuji no Asahi' ['Fuji-no-asahi'] is white, flushed rosy lilac. A more precise translation by a Japanese interpreter is said to be "Sunrise on (snow-covered) Mount Fuji"; now the flower characteristics begin to make sense. Care needs to taken that transliteration revisions do not alter the meaning of the original name given to a plant. Unfortunately, as far as records are concerned, there appears to be no single point of reference that provides a full listing of the "Stevenson's Collection" of Kurume azaleas and the details of their origin.

Some Thoughts About Cultivation and Hardiness

Some authorities in the United States recommend using little, if any, fertilizer on Kurumes. This may have more to do with avoiding feeding routines that could delay the onset of dormancy in colder areas of the East Coast rather than with the actual nourishment required by the plant. In Northern England, where the soil is often heavy clay, experience over many years suggests that a scattering of bone meal, and the application of a handful of magnesium sulphate dissolved in a two-gallon bucket of water per four mature plants, applied when the new growth starts in the spring, is all that is required to maintain good looking specimens and avoid damage from the late spring and fall frosts. No adverse effects have been noted from the calcium content of the bone meal. Where bark or other forms of organic content have been added to the soil, an application of inorganic fertilizer will be needed to increase the nitrogen, but take care and apply sparingly until the correct dosage has been determined. In the author's garden an unexpected heavy frost one night in mid-November 2005, accompanied by an east wind, seared across the tops of the more exposed evergreen azaleas. Several plants lost most, or all, of their flower buds, and two plants were killed outright. Thankfully, as Roza Stevenson had predicted almost half a century ago, the Kurumes were undamaged.

In general terms the Kurume azaleas are not difficult to grow, very few are tender in the British climate, and experience suggests that they are resistant to bark-split. It is absolutely correct that several varieties of "Wilson's Fifty" can be lost in a bad winter, as can many other varieties of azaleas and rhododendrons. So, these Kurumes occasionally need to be replaced in gardens where full collections are held; however, this is not a problem that needs to be handled by the average enthusiast, as these varieties are not readily available in the trade in Britain. For the record these are:

#6 'Tancho', flesh colored.
#7 'Hachika-tsugi', white, suffused with lavender.
#10 'Sui-yohi', flesh-colored.
#13 'Bijinsui', pale pink.
#17 'Osaraku', white, suffused and margined with lavender.

For further details see the hardiness report by Francis Hanger.(7) This report also provides a useful listing of "Wilson's Fifty" by number and name; it also notes that whereas young plants are susceptible to winter damage, mature plants are hardy. No hardiness problems have been recorded with the collection of Kurumes that Stevenson introduced, despite their having endured ten particularly severe winters since their arrival in Britain (1928-29, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1947, 1954, 1956, 1961, 1962-63, and 1981). In other words, they are much hardier than some reports would suggest.

From the Lake District in the North to Cornwall in Southwest England the collections of Kurumes established over the past 80 years or so have performed reasonably well despite the impact of WWII on gardens and the difficult times that followed the cessation of hostilities. Those in the author's garden, a windy, exposed location in Northern England on the edge of the West Pennine Moors, have also performed well when grown in full sun, as they did at the author's previous home that was also an exposed location a few miles to the south. There are suggestions that Kurumes do not perform as well north of the border, but this may be

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society now has a new secretary, Carol Flowers, and three newly elected directors, John Brown, Ron Hooper and Tom Milner. A huge plant sale room full of beautiful azaleas and rhododendrons was a hit with convention attendees. Following the convention many participants enjoyed a post convention tour of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Much work has been done this past year on the Azalea City project. We will have several new Azalea Cities shortly. Several applications for this honor have been received. More and more interest in the many different types of azaleas nature provides mankind is being shown by our nation's plant lovers. This program will help keep azaleas on the minds of our gardening friends.

Much work has been done on the Archive Project. John Brown reported that an index has been created for the society's archives. This is currently online at the society website, www.azaleas.org. The ASA currently occupies some seventeen plus feet of shelf space in the D. H. Hill Library at North Carolina State University.

Many garden writers are now members of the society. We hope these folks will enjoy the membership and that our publication, ***The Azalean***, will provide valuable information when they write their articles.

We now have a beautiful new color brochure that the society can use to make plant lovers aware of the society, the work it does, and the many ways people can learn about azaleas through membership in the organization.

As the society evolves changes are continually made to the society bylaws. A change has been proposed this year and will be voted on at the convention annual meeting in 2007. You can find further information on this subject on page 90 of this publication.

In conclusion, we want to say thanks to Barbara Stump for the work she put in over the years that she was editor. Our publication, ***The Azalean***, has been a first class journal. Barbara has done a lot to keep up the fine quality. After this issue Barbara will no longer be our editor. Taking her place will be Pam Fitch. Again, thanks Barbara.

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due to the lower light levels in Scotland adversely affecting the setting of flower buds and causing the wood to only partially ripen. It is also said that Kurumes perform better in countries where the summer and winter seasons are clearly defined.

The most spectacular aspect of Kurumes is their flowers. They more readily cover themselves with color than most other groups of azalea and when in full-flower it is often impossible to see the leaves. They perform best when placed in full sun as this tends to ensure that they achieve a good bud-set, remain compact, and most varieties will spread and form a mound that is 4' to 6' in width. Because they tend to be early flowering, the Kurumes usually get a head start on seasonal growth, so a good measure of sun also provides an opportunity for the wood to ripen in the fall, which the Kurumes appear to need. In deeper shade the plants grow much more leggy, with an open plant habit that can reach over 6'; they are also more prone to wind damage, lichen problems, and fewer flowers.

The only boundaries in horticulture are those that are man-made. The above comments on hardiness and cultivation are intended to encourage you to have a go at growing these most rewarding plants. Only by your own experience will you learn the approach that best suits your climatic conditions and thus enable you to enjoy the stunning performance of the Kurume azaleas as each new flowering season comes around.

And, out there in the real world, there are plants of "Stevenson's" superior Kurumes waiting for you to find and collect for use in your hybridization projects, or for you to simply enjoy as spectacular garden plants in their own right.

John Hammond's *interests in propagating and cultivating azaleas and rhododendrons stretch back over 30 years, although he has been involved with gardens for considerably longer. He is particularly interested in the history of old azalea and rhododendron gardens and encouraging their restoration. He is Vice-President of the Scottish Rhododendron Society, ARS Alternate Director at Large, and a frequent contributor to the* Journal, ARS.

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