

Bremen 2018 Convention

Pre-tour to Denmark and Sweden

Jens H. Hansen
Jylinge, Denmark
and
Stefan B. Salomonsson
Lund, Sweden



J. Hansen



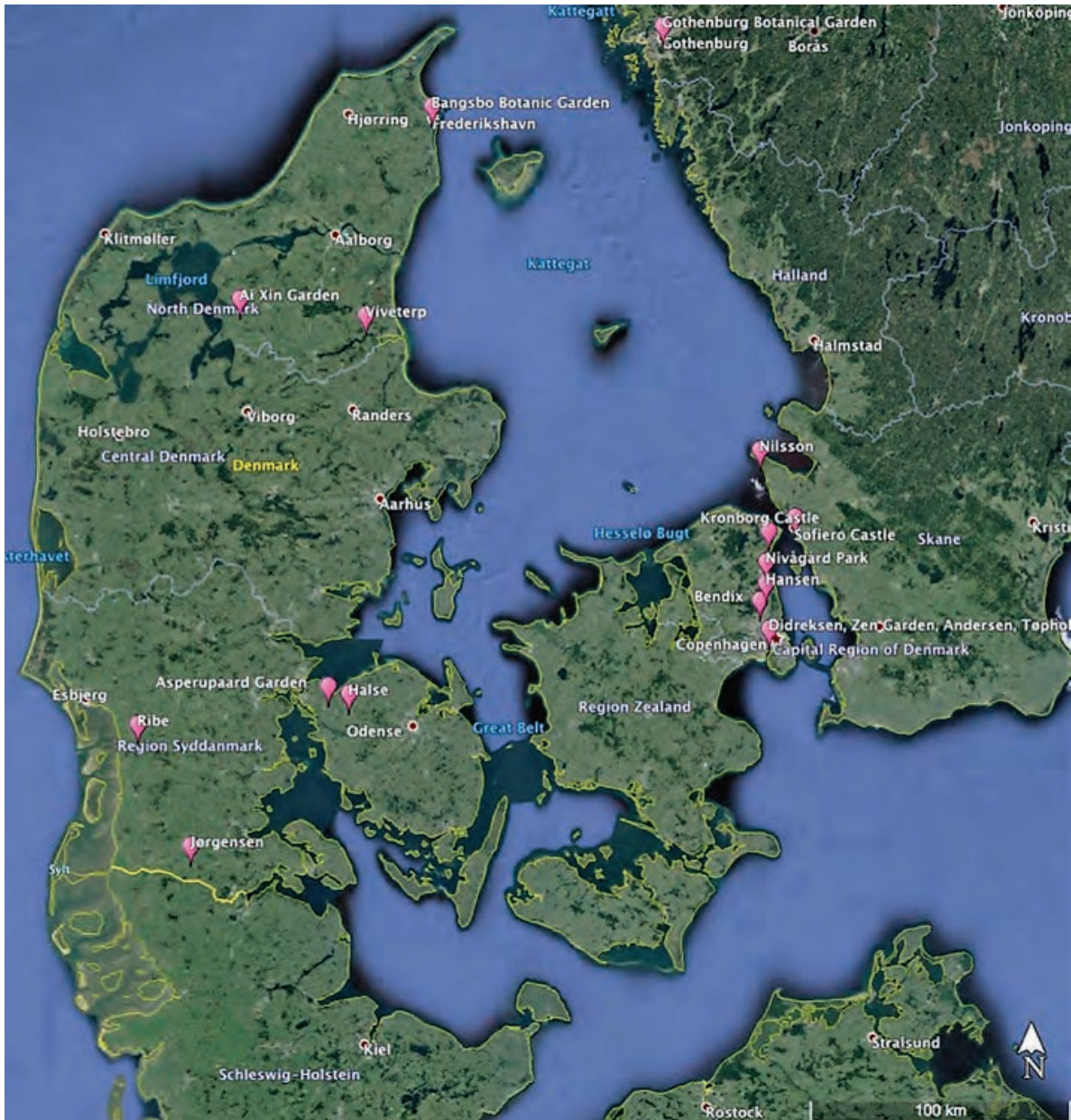
S. Salomonsson

The Danish and Swedish Rho-dodendron Societies of the ARS are both participating in the organisation of an eight-day pre-convention tour before the ARS Convention in Bremen, Germany, in May 2018, and are inviting ARS members to visit Scandinavian gardens, parks and arboreta. The tour to Denmark will start from Bremen early in the morning, and the first stop will be a visit while still in Germany to the Hachmann Nursery in Barmstad, where we will have lunch.

After lunch, we will cross the border into Denmark, which is of interest for the following. First, we will be going into another country; and second, we are crossing a boundary into Scandinavia, which is characterized by a common ethno-cultural North Germanic heritage and mutually intelligible North Germanic languages, where the cultures and living styles between Germany and Denmark are quite different.

Denmark is a lovely country in which to grow rhododendrons. Areas have USDA Hardiness Zones 8a to 9a, which means that the more tender rhododendron species cannot be grown unless they are held over the winter in a cold greenhouse. There are some really fantastic gardens in both Denmark and Sweden that will be visited during the tour, and there will also of course be some cultural events.

The first garden in Denmark to be visited will be that of Jørgen Jørgensen in a small town called Rens. Jørgen's garden is a show garden that contains both rhododendrons and big-blossom azaleas, a fantastic garden that attracts people to Rens from all over. After visiting this garden, we go to the Hotel Dagmar, a renovated 16th-century building (Denmark's oldest hotel, built in 1581) located on the town's main square. Ribe is known both for its cathedral and for Queen Dagmar, a princess who arrived in the late 1100s. Ribe is one of the oldest cities in Denmark, and it is said that the Czech Princess Drahomira, Dagmar in Danish, sailed into Ribe to meet the Danish King



Map of the pre-tour Scandinavian garden locations in Denmark and Sweden. (Zoom in to read text)

Valdemar Atterdag, the Conqueror, whom she married in 1205. Shortly thereafter, the couple came to Ribe where they resided at Riberhus Castle on Slotsbanken. Queen Dagmar was the people's queen, where according to legend, she died in 1212 in Ribe while giving birth, and is buried in Ringsted. There is a statue of Queen Dagmar showing her in the stern of a ship looking both for the new country and for the king that she is destined to marry.

Ribe Cathedral is the best pre-served Romanesque building in Denmark, but reflects a plethora of different architectural styles and artistic traditions. It was founded in the Viking Age as the first Christian church in Denmark, and ranks amongst the biggest Danish tourist attractions. We will have dinner at the hotel and after dinner for



The Ai Xin Garden in Farsø, created by Finn and Linda Glerup.

those who want to know more about Ribe, there will be a guided night walking tour through the city.

The next morning we will travel up through Jutland (Jylland) where we will enjoy Danish forest and moor landscapes, with its hills and valleys. We will next go to the town of Farsø where we will visit the Ai Xin Garden, created by Finn and Linda Glerup. The Ai Xin Garden is a large farmhouse property covering 1.2 ha (three acres) that was founded in 2001. The garden hosts a rich plant collection of predominantly Asian species and was inspired by Chinese garden art, culture and nature as a result of trips both owners have made to China over recent years. They have adopted some of the elements typical of Chinese gardens, but it is not a traditional Chinese garden. A typical Chinese garden consists of four elements: houses and yard connected in a box system; stone mosaics, path patterns and rocky outcrops/mountains; basins with bridges; and finally plants, some in pots like penjing (bonsai). To get from one garden to the next you often pass through a round, so-called moonport. The owners decided that the entrance to the garden instead should be a moonport and that the patterns on the paths should contain stone mosaics with image motifs. The ideas were implemented using hard work, a concrete mixer and a lot of sand and cement. A professional mason helped with the moon gate, and the mosaic image motifs include famous ones like the Bird Phoenix, Ying Yang, the Nine Fish, Dragon, the Five Bats, etc., while the trail system is decorated with transverse mosaic bands and floral motifs. A balustrade with eight-edge

holes contributes to the mood, and there are two granite Chinese guardian lions—one of each sex—that guard the garden’s inner entrance by a pergola covered with wisteria. In the garden there are rhododendrons both collected in China and also grown from seed, along with other seldom seen plant species. The property also has other different gardens, as well as being a functional sheep farm.

Our next stop is east to the town of Hadsund where we will visit Maren and Søren Tang’s garden, called the “Viveterp,” but first Søren will provide a Danish lunch. Viveterp was founded in 2002 and is a country garden of about two ha (five acres) that contains mostly rhododendrons, but also a vegetable garden, an orchard and some rare trees.

The Tangs joined the Danish Rhododendron Society in 2010, and now have 250-300 types of rhododendrons and azaleas, species as well as hybrids. During the last few years, they have started to graft and today their garden counts about 50 home-grafted plants. Their garden, located in a beautiful forest of pine and oak, is rather hilly, has incorporated a lot of stones, and has as a small part inspired by Japanese garden design. The garden has a number of the famous hybrids from the German Hachmann Nursery, including ‘Fantastica’, ‘Denise’, ‘Goldkrone’ and *R. wardii* ‘Goldsprenkel’.

Our next stop is to the last garden park before we cross the Kattegat, a strait between Jutland and Sweden that is 64–113 km (40–70 miles) wide, by ferry to Sweden. This is the Bangsbo Botanic Garden in Fredrikshavn, which has several gardens, one of which



Maren and Søren Tang’s garden, called the “Viveterp.”



Water feature in the garden of Torsten Nilsson in Mölle. Photo by T. Nilsson.

is of rhododendrons and azaleas. It also has the world's largest crevice garden, which is a big rockery where huge oblong limestone stones have been placed vertically close together. This leaves deep, vertical crevices where the plants roots can find moisture and shade, replicating how alpine plants grow in many places. There are many rhododendron species and hybrids, but it is also worthwhile to visit its herb garden, where there are many herbs that were used by monks in olden times to make medicines. There will be a 5 p.m. dinner, after which we will catch the ferry for Sweden, which departs at 8 p.m. It arrives in Gothenburg at midnight, where we will overnight before visiting the Gothenburg Botanical Garden the next day.

The Gothenburg Botanical Garden first opened to the public in 1923 and has a garden proper of about 40 ha (100 acres) with about 16,000 different species. Sights worth seeing are the Rhododendron Valley, the Japanese Glade and greenhouses with about 4000 various plants, including some 1500 orchids, a remarkable tufa apartment and the endemic Easter Island tree, *Sophora toromiro* [called Toromiro; it had been extirpated, but has now been reintroduced there]. Our guide here will be Björn Aldén, who was responsible for the rhododendron collection for many years, and there will also be some Swedish society members present.

Later in the day we will travel south three hours to Helsingborg, where there will be a visit to a private garden in Mölle not far from Helsingborg. The owner, Torsten Nilsson, a member of the Swedish Rhododendron Society, has a beautiful garden on



Rhododendrons in the garden of Torsten Nilsson in Mölle. Photo by T. Nilsson.

a hillside with a fantastic view facing the sea. He established his garden relatively recently, but has had really remarkable results. His collection holds both rhododendron species and hybrids.

The night will be spent at a nice hotel in Helsingborg and the next day, the main attraction will be Sofiero Castle in Helsingborg. Along with the Gothenburg Botanical Garden, the Sofiero Garden holds the most interesting rhododendron collections in Sweden. Sofiero is a garden established by the late king Gustav VI Adolf at the beginning of the 20th



Sofiero Castle. Photo by Jorgen Schwarzkopf.



Azaleas at Sofiero. Photo courtesy of Sofiero.

century. Sofiero Palace was until the 1970s a summer residence for Swedish royalty. The magnificent heritage of thousands of rhododendrons, beds, borders and kitchen gardens continues to be carefully tended by a team of dedicated experts. In 2010, Sofiero was voted “Europe’s Most Beautiful Park.” The rhododendrons (more than 10,000 plants of 500 different varieties) are planted in two valleys facing the sea with a view over Öresund to Denmark. At Sofiero we are hoping to again meet some Swedish Rhododendron Society members. Our guide at Sofiero will be one of the pre-tour organisers and co-author of this article, Stefan Salomonsson. Later in the day, we will leave Sweden on a ferry to Helsingör, Denmark, to spend some more time in Denmark.

Our first stop in Denmark will be a cultural visit at Kronborg Castle. Kronborg is known to many as “Elsinore,” the setting of William Shakespeare’s famous tragedy “Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,” though “Elsinore” is actually the anglicized name of the surrounding town of Helsingør. The castle’s story dates back to a fortress, *Krogen* (lit. “the Hook”), built in the 1420s by the Danish king, Eric of Pomerania. The king insisted on the payment of “sound dues” by all ships wishing to enter or leave the Baltic Sea passing through the Sound [a narrow stretch of water forming an inlet or connecting two wider areas of water], and to help enforce his demands, he built a powerful fortress at the narrowest point in the Sound. At the time, the Kingdom of Denmark extended across both sides of the Sound, and on the eastern shore the Helsingborg Castle had been in existence since the Middle Ages. With the two castles and guard ships it was

possible to control all navigation through the Sound. From 1574 to 1585, Frederick II had the medieval fortress rebuilt into a magnificent Renaissance castle, unique in its appearance and size throughout Europe. However, during the Dano-Swedish War of 1658-60, Kronborg was besieged, attacked and conquered by a Swedish army, and as a result of the Swedish occupation, Kronborg was deprived of many of its most precious art works, including the richly decorated fountain in the castle courtyard, Frederick II's canopy and a number of the large ceiling paintings commissioned by Christian IV for the ballroom.

The Swedish conquest of Kronborg in 1658 demonstrated that the castle was far from impregnable, and so afterwards, its defences were strengthened significantly. From 1688-90, an advanced line of defence was added called the Crownwork and later, a new series of ramparts were built around it. After their completion, Kronborg was considered the strongest fortress in Europe.

At the castle, we will have a very special meeting with the "Hofmesterinde" Beate Bille, the mother to Thyge [Tycho] Brahe, the famous 16th century Danish nobleman and astronomer known for his accurate and comprehensive astronomical and planetary observations. He was the last of the major naked-eye astronomers, working without telescopes for his observations. Beate Bille will show us around in the Castle and tell about 16th century life at the Danish Kings Court, take us to the different rooms and explain how each was used, before ending the tour in the Kronborg Castle church.

The day's tour will end at Nivågård Park. Edvard Glæsel laid out the park in 1901–1902 and today, the park and its rhododendrons are looked after by Svend Hansen, who established the new rhododendron garden there in 2007.

After an exciting day, we will go to the Wakeup Hotel in Copenhagen, which will be our base for the next three nights. We begin our garden tour of Zealand by first going to visit Kjeld Didreksen, a member of the Danish Rhododendron Society for many years and a member of the ARS. Kjeld has been a long-time seed collector from his own plants and has more than 180 rhododendron species and hybrids. His plants are cataloged by name, time of blooming and so forth, and Kjeld and his wife are also well known breeders of corgis.

Our next stop will be at the Zen Garden, a 2.4 ha (six acre) garden filled with plants (many rhododendrons) and a mountain landscape, consisting of more than 6000 tons of granite. The owners Jørgen and his wife Jakobine Nielsen have build their garden from the ground up, and there are many ponds with big koi. We will have a Danish open sandwich lunch, in Danish a smørrebrød, here, followed by a short coffee break with home-baked cakes.

The last visit on this day will be at Henning and Eva Andersen's big garden and nursery where they produce rhododendrons from both seed and from cuttings, after which we will return to our hotel.



Eva Andersen's garden at Henning.

The next day we will visit three very different gardens. First, we will visit Mogens and Kirsten Bendix in their garden in Lyngby. These two elderly people, both over 80, have a big garden that they maintain themselves. The garden is near an old fortress, meant to protect Copenhagen and built from money collections by the Women for Peace. If we have time, the Mogens will also give us a tour of the fortress.

After leaving this garden, we will have lunch at Svend and Birgit Hansen's garden at Kernehuset. Svend, together with his good friend Jens Christian Birch, both collected seed in China, and along with rhododendron cutting obtained from the RHS Botanic Garden in Edinburg, have established them in a park at Kernehuset. It is very big, impressive and can't be easily explained. Sven and Jens Christian are the people behind the selection of the DANE rhododendron series—'Great Dane', 'What a Dane', 'Sticky Dane', etc., which Hachmann is now propagating.

After the Hansen's garden, we will visit our last garden on Zealand, Lulu Tøpholm's big rhododendron garden, or park. In its 2.5 ha (6.2 acres), there are some 800-900 rhododendron beside a lake of about 5 ha (12.4 acres) and a woodland connected to the park by an old stone bridge. We then return for one last night in Copenhagen.

On our way back to Bremen to the Convention, we will pass the island of Fuen where we will first visit Jørgen Halse's garden. Jørgen was one of the founders of the Danish



Eva Andersen's garden at Henning.

Rhododendron Society and he has a great garden with many different rhododendron species. Our final stop will be to Asperupaard Garden in Asperup, which is a “wild garden” with about 400 rhododendrons, 250 different magnolias and more than 500 other plants. We might have lunch at Asperupgaard, or else on the way as we travel south to Bremen.

I hope that you have enjoyed reading about the Scandinavian rhododendron tour and that you will be able to join it.

Moore images can be seen on a Powerpoint pdf at <http://ars2018.org/home.php#anchorDENMARK-SWEDEN>

Jens H. Hansen is the Chairman of the Danish Rhododendron Society and Stefan B. Salomonsson, former chairman of the South Swedish Society and the Swedish ARS Chapter.