

German Pre-Conference Tour

The pre-conference tour from May 13 to May 14 consists of two garden visits and one big rhododendron show.

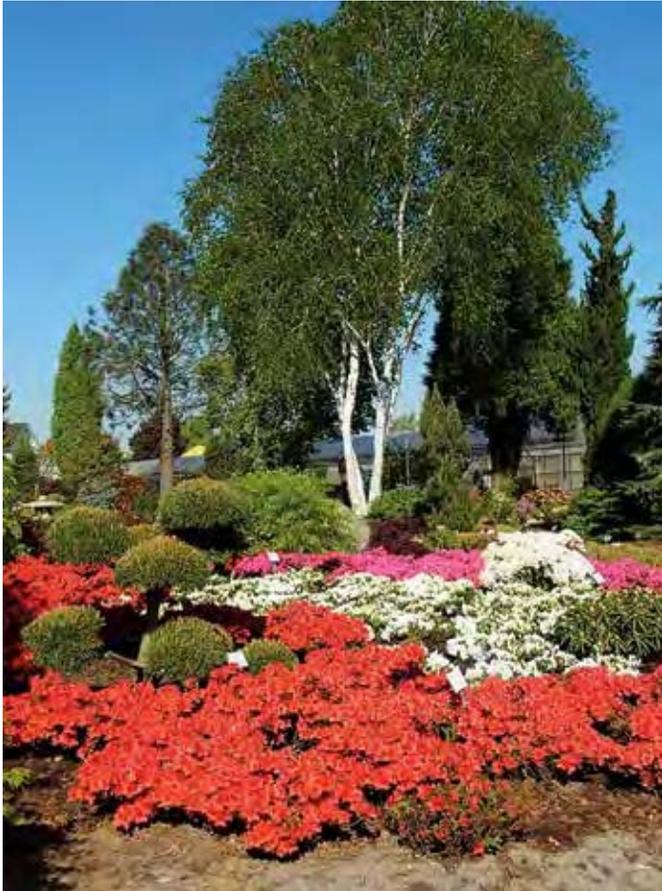
H. Hachmann Nursery, Barmstedt

The third-generation Hachmann Nursery in Barmstedt offers the broadest range of rhododendron cultivars in Europe, with 640 different varieties. On 20 ha (49 acres), about 30 staff produce rhododendrons and azaleas, rare conifers and deciduous trees, Japanese maples, heathers and dwarf conifers. Over the years, the breeders Hans and Holger Hachmann have created more than 500 rhododendron cultivars, elepidotes as well as deciduous and Japanese azaleas. Their catalogue, weighting almost half a kilo (one pound), is a fantastic tribute of the firm and a sought after source of information.



Hachmann Nursery. Photo courtesy Hachmann Nursery.

Hans and Holger belong surely as some of the world's leading rhododendron breeders. Their breeding program is unmatched in its longevity and breadth of material. Since 1951, more than six million rhododendron seedlings have been tested and strictly selected. Many species, formerly not appearing in German hybridization, were used here for the first time to create new cultivars. Almost 50% of the Hachmann plant assortment originates from their own hybridization work. Their hybrids are presented in the nursery's impressive display gardens together with heather, conifers and maples. Holger releases new hybrids almost every year, concentrating not only on the flower but also on foliage. Several new cultivars with very narrow leaves, fantastic new foliage



Hachmann Nursery. Photo courtesy Hachmann Nursery.

or in case of Japanese azaleas, with superior leaf retention, can be seen. There is a good chance that some unnamed cultivars, not yet named or introduced, will be displayed. www.hachmann.de

Hobbie Rhododendron-Park, Linswege

The Rhododendron-Park of the Hobbie family will turn 90 next year. With 70 hectares (173 acres), it is one of the largest rhododendron parks in Europe. Founded by Dietrich Gerhard Hobbie, it is now run by its next generation, Volker, grandson of Dietrich, and his wife Birgit Hobbie. Dietrich G. Hobbie started the nursery in the 1930s under the shade of an already existing tree cover, with some trees then already 200 years old. He is most known for his many *R. repens* und *R. williamsianum* hybrids, which he created in the 1940s and 50s. The original of these so-called dwarf hybrids are



Hobbie Rhododendron-Park. *R. fortunei* subsp. *discolor*. Photo by Hartwig Schepker.



Hobbie Rhododendron-Park. *R. luteum*. Photo by Hartwig Schepker.

now towering specimens of 3-5 m (10-16 ft).

A 2.5 km (1.6 mile) loop path leads through what has become in the last nine decades a rhododendron forest. In recent years, Volker has spent lots of energy opening the understory, creating new vistas, and removing competitive plants to highlight the rhododendron record holders: a 7 m (23 ft) high *R. rubiginosum*, a 10 m (33 ft) high *R. fortunei*, both planted in 1928, and a *R. rex* from 1930. The *R. campanulatum* hybrid

'Susan' can be seen in specimens easily expanding to 7-8 m (23 -25 ft) width. There is also a long path leading through a pure stand of *R. luteum*, a spectacular site for both the eye and the nose.

A display garden gives a good overview of the available species and hybrids, presenting a broad range of color and foliage. A new addition is the 2015 Species Garden that will be expanded in the next few years. In 2016, three new theme gardens were opened: a Yakushmanum Garden displaying the most compact and sun-tolerating cultivars; an Azalea Garden with a selection of species, rarities and hybrids; and the "path of the trunks," where undergrowth has been removed and old plants have been limbed up to enable a closer inspection of the trunks of both rhododendron hybrids and species. A nature trail has also been created to showcase the area's many introduced and native trees. The combination of a forest atmosphere with a colorful assortment of old and modern rhododendron cultivars topped with some very impressive old specimens is unique and well worth a visit. www.hobbie-rhodo.de

RHODO 2018

The RHODO in Westerstede, Europe's largest rhododendron show, is held every four years. Hundreds of rhododendrons and azaleas provided by more than 70 nurseries turn the city center into a sea of colors over two hectares (five acres). It is a mini Chelsea Flower Show with rhododendrons as the main actor, but similarly crowded. Next to the open-air ground displays, the Rhododendron Halls host the competitive exhibition of the regional nurseries, and experts provide advice to visitors. For most of the rhododendron growers in northwestern Germany, the RHODO is the main event and a perfect opportunity to present their newest cultivars. Like in 2014, the RHODO in 2018 will be designed by Nils Blatt, a young landscape architect and one of the speakers at the ARS conference in Bremen. www.rhodo.de

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