

Overview of the Ed Mezitt Hybrids: IPPS Eastern Region, Lasting Legacy Poster[®]

R. Wayne Mezitt

25 Phipps St., Hopkinton, Massachusetts 01748 U.S.A.

Email: WayneM@WestonNurseries.com

INTRODUCTION

Edmund (Ed) Victor Mezitt was born in 1915, son of Peter J. and Anna (Olga) Mezitt, and grew up involved in the nursery business founded by his parents in 1923. He graduated from Cornell University in 1937 with a degree in landscape architecture. Understanding the need for better landscape plants, he joined his family in an effort to select and propagate superior individual plants with improved characteristics, many from seedling crops being grown by Weston Nurseries. His first attempt at hybridizing in 1939 resulted in the now-world-renowned *Rhododendron* PJM Group. Using this initial success as his foundation, Ed documented more than 4,500 crosses until his death in 1986.

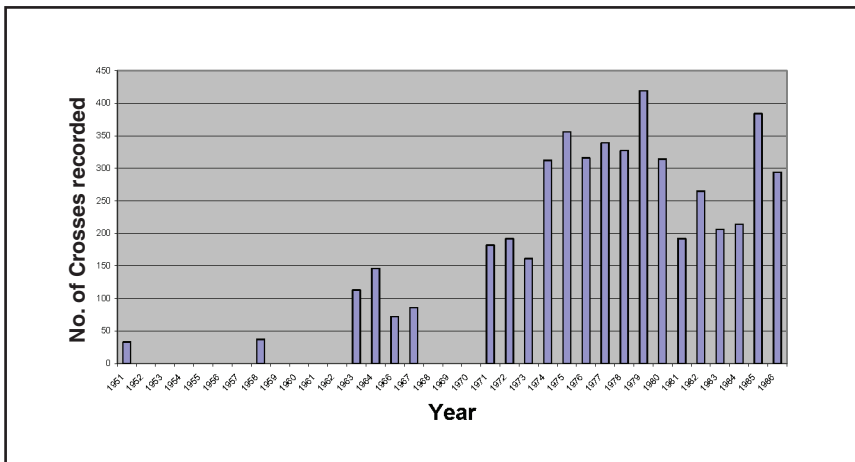


Figure 1. Ed Mezitt’s hybridization records.

HYBRIDIZING CRITERIA

Weston Nurseries plant development and selection concepts, major focus on rhododendrons and azaleas:

- Winter hardiness: Zone 5 or colder, and climate tolerant (wind, sun, stress)
- Improved flowering characteristics: color, season, size, texture, self cleaning
- Foliage appeal, particularly in winter
- Compact or improved growth habit
- Features that advance or extend the season of interest, or fill a landscape need
- Low maintenance, pest and disease resistance
- Other features such as fragrance, texture or flower form (petaloid)
- Propagates readily, easy to grow successfully by ordinary people

BASIC BREEDING LINES FOR THE WESTON NURSERIES HYBRIDS

Between 1958 and 2000, Ed (Wayne) Mezitt documented more than 4,500 crosses (some done earlier, or performed by others). These are the fundamental species used as parents.

- Lepidote (now termed "Early Rhododendrons") rhododendrons: *R. dauricum* Sempervirens Group, *R. minus* var. *minus* (Carolinianum Group) (syn. *R. carolinianum*), *R. mucronulatum*
- Elipidote (Large leaf) rhododendrons: *R. catawbiense*, *R. fortunei*, *R. maximum*
- Evergreen azaleas: *R. yedoense* var. *poukhanensis*, *R. kiusianum*
- Deciduous azaleas: *R. roseum* (now *R. prinophyllum*), *R. molle*, *R. ×gandavense*
- Summer azaleas: *R. arborescens*, *R. cumberlandense* (syn. *R. bakeri*), *R. viscosum*, *R. prunifolium*

Table 1. Genealogy of some of the Ed Mezitt rhododendron and azalea hybrids.

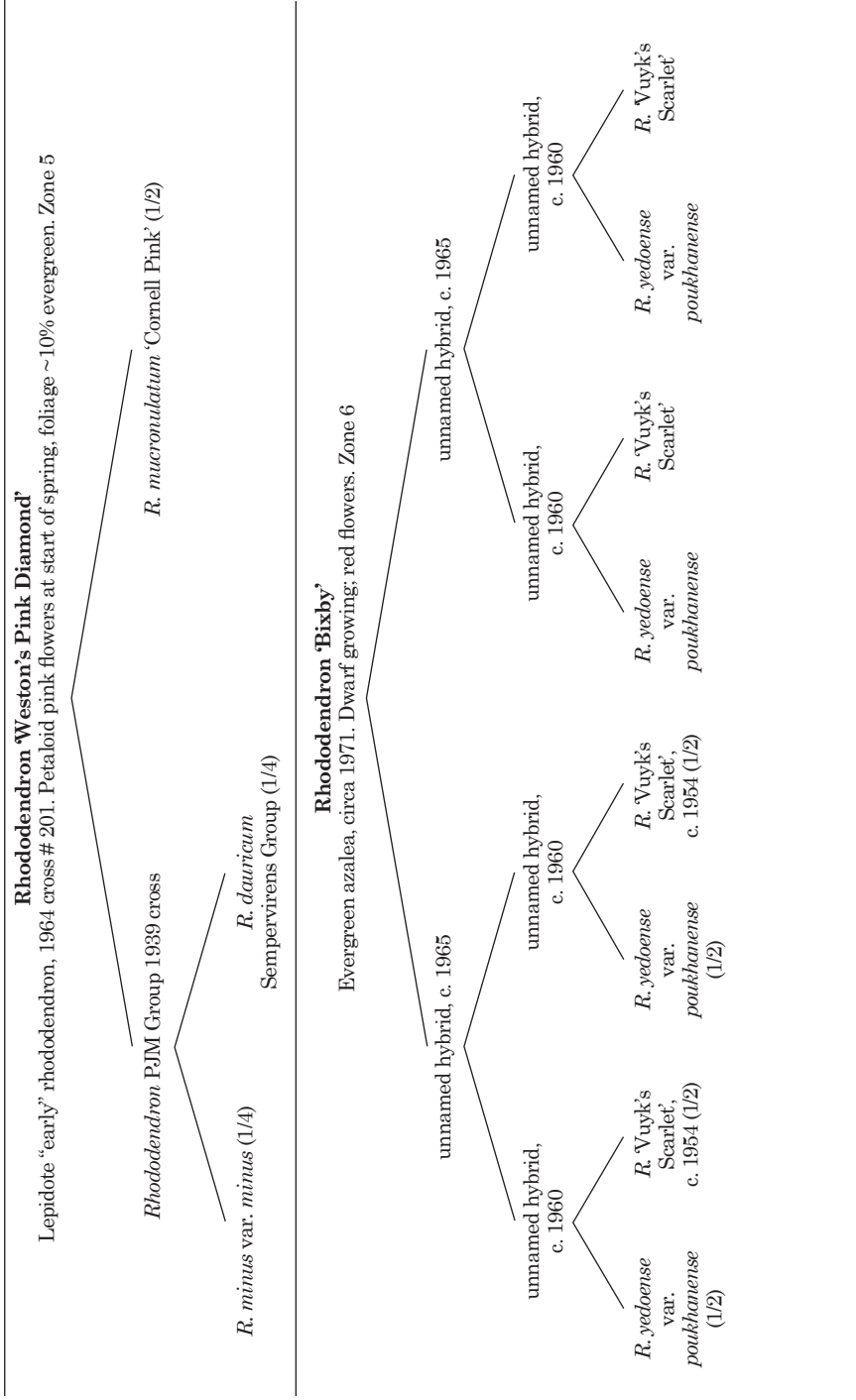


Table 1. Continued.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Rhododendron 'Big Deal'</p> <p>Elipidote (large leaf) rhododendron, 1971 cross # 683. Compact growing; ivory yellow flowers, Zone 5</p> | |
| <p><i>R. 'Nor'easter'</i> c. 1958</p> | <p>unnamed yellow hybrid c. 1965</p> |
| <p><i>R. catawbiense</i> unnamed compact seedling c. 1950 (1/2)</p> | <p><i>R. catawbiense</i> unnamed compact seedling c. 1950</p> |
| <p><i>R. catawbiense</i> unnamed compact seedling c. 1950 (1/2)</p> | <p><i>R. catawbiense</i> yellowish unnamed seedling c. 1960 (1/2)</p> |
| <p><i>R. catawbiense</i> yellowish unnamed seedling c. 1960 (1/2)</p> | <p><i>R. catawbiense</i> yellowish unnamed seedling c. 1960</p> |
| <p>Rhododendron 'Midnight Ruby'</p> <p>Lepidote "early" rhododendron, 1973 cross # 73-108. Compact growing; rose-pink flowers; aromatic foliage turns black-mahogany in winter. Zone 5</p> | |
| <p><i>R. 'Olga Mezitt'</i>, 1964 cross #226</p> | <p><i>R. PJM</i> Group, 1939 cross</p> |
| <p><i>R. minus</i> compact selection (1/4)</p> | <p><i>R. minus</i> var. <i>minus</i> (1/4)</p> |
| <p><i>R. dauricum</i> unnamed pink hybrid (1/4)</p> | <p><i>R. dauricum</i> Sempervirens Group (1/4)</p> |

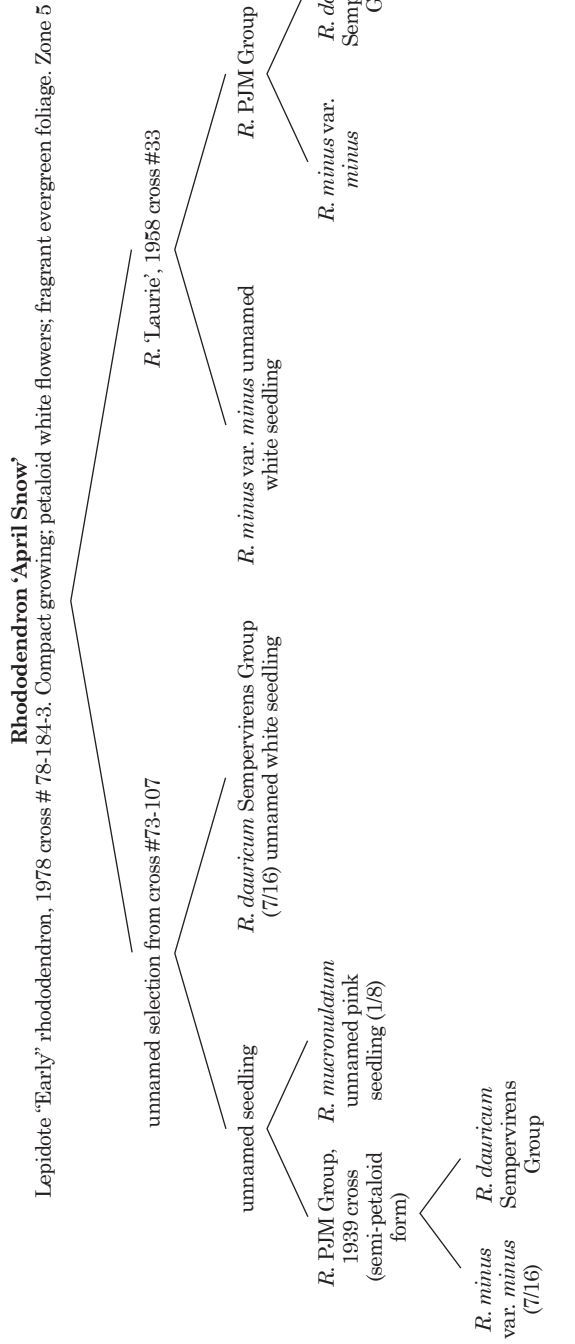
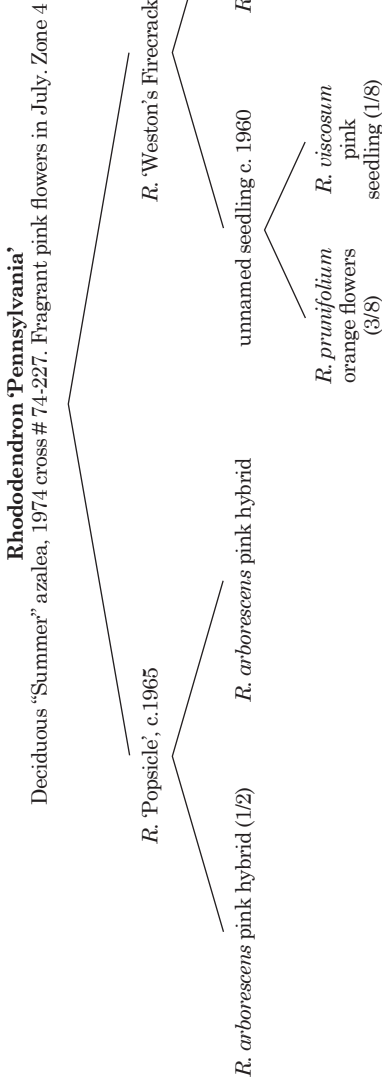


Table 1. Continued.

