

# THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

MAY 2005

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

**J**ust a short report, the last for a few months, as Joan and I are going on a holiday overseas for 8 weeks.

We have flowered some of the plants the Society bought from Hari Withers. To our amazement there was a *phaeopeplum* (Hunstein's Secret), 3 different varieties of *helwigii*, one a very dark red, and a couple of hybrids (*lochiae x leucogigas*) *x superbum*. One had a very large white perfumed truss – 18 flowers – some 4" across.

We are having a change in the Team Leader at Olinda, but we don't know who. David Roberts is leaving and going to Bendigo.

We are still very short of members to our monthly meetings, even though we have had some interesting talks. So what is it that we need to do to encourage members to attend?

Xmas in July is going ahead. If you are interested, contact a Committee Members for dates and times.

It is still very dry. I hope it rains while we are away.

See you all in a couple of months.

**Bill Taylor - President.**

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## AGENDA FOR 2005

June 17 <sup>th</sup>	Canon Cruttwell's Papua photos from 1952 on	8. 00 p.m.
July 15 <sup>th</sup>	Rhodos for the Suburbs – L. Begg	8. 00 p.m.
July	<b>Xmas in July Time and venue TBA</b>	8. 00 p.m.
	<b>Society subsidy.</b>	
August 19 <sup>th</sup>	Rob Small, CEO of Fleming's Nursery and Chair Dandenong Ranges Gardens Advisory Committee- Future for Dandenong Ranges Gardens and NRG John Faull's – Olinda Gardens –The early days	8. 00 p.m.
September 16 <sup>th</sup>	Maddenii – A. Kepert	8. 00 p.m.
October 21 <sup>st</sup>	To Be Advised	8. 00 p.m.
October 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Azalea Show</b>	
October 29 <sup>th</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup> , 31 <sup>st</sup> & 1 <sup>st</sup> Nov.	<b>Rhododendron Show</b>	
November 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>ARS National Convention South Australia</b>	
November 18 <sup>th</sup>	Satsukis – Azaleas – Len Sloggett	8. 00 p.m.
December 4 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Christmas Luncheon</b>	

## VIREYA GROUP MEETINGS

June 11 <sup>th</sup>	NRG,Olinda.	1. 30 p.m.
August 13 <sup>th</sup>	NRG, Olinda	1. 30 p.m.
October 8 <sup>th</sup>	NRG,Olinda	1. 30 p.m.
December 10 <sup>th</sup>	NRG, Olinda	1. 30 p.m.

## EDITORIAL

President Bill commenced his well earned overseas vacation on 28 May. We wish Joan and Bill all the best. Make us envious by sending us a postcard!

As Bill made clear last Newsletter, the Society must find a new leader at the end of the year. We also must find some answers to the questions Bill has raised in recent President's Reports. His March opening asks 'What is becoming of our Society?'

Our concerns can be broken up:

1 What is happening;

- numbers down at monthly meetings. And at Vireya Group meetings.
- the number of members who enter bench exhibits at meetings and shows is declining
- the average age of members is increasing.
- Parks is spending less looking after NRG, it employs fewer staff, those it does employ have fewer horticultural qualifications and Parks is increasing the area of NRG where it only mows the lawns
- Parks does not, in a timely or appropriate way, answer our letters , meet with us or respond to our requests for grants to improve NRG

2 Why are these disturbing things happening?

We can be confident that the following factors contribute;

- horticulture as a leisure activity is getting less attractive

- water restrictions make plants harder to grow; rhododendrons are perceived to have high water requirements
- water restrictions are not going to be eased, to the contrary they will tighten
- house blocks are getting smaller, so smaller plants must be grown; rhododendrons are perceived to be big plants
- chemicals used to control pests [fungi, viruses and insects] are classified as 'hazardous'; rhododendrons are perceived, as a group, to suffer from pests, azalea lace bug, rust, red spider, cock chafers, powdery mildew and petal blight
- Australian natives are perceived to be hardier, endemic and growing them to be patriotic
- both partners in most families work, cutting into gardening time
- there is a vast choice of leisure activities and increasing affluence enables many families to employ landscapers and maintenance people instead of gardening personally
- decreased demand for rhododendrons has led to large plant retailers ceasing to stock them, or stocking only a few, cheap, 'throw away' lines
- the rise of major retailers has increased their buying power and decreased the margins of plant wholesalers in all plant varieties; it has driven small retailers and many wholesalers out of business

### 3 What are we going to do about it?

You will remember the special meeting Bill organized last year. The start of the Vireya Group. You will remember Andrew Raper addressing us, trying to show us how the Camellia Society has bucked the declining trend.

On 17 May Rob Small, newly appointed chair of the Dandenong Ranges Gardens Advisory Committee and CEO of Flemings Nurseries addressed the volunteer Group for an hour and a half. Rob has a vireya, R 'Rob's Favourite' named after him by Oz Bloomhart. His CV includes looking after Auckland's parks, being involved with the Millennium Project at Geelong Botanic Garden and being CEO of Otway Shire.

Rob has a fervent belief in the power of volunteers and told us of their role at Geelong. They also play a major role at Eden Garden, Auckland [not included in Rob's prior bailwick] where vireyas are grown in the open. He also knows the value of a trained horticultural leader for a Botanical Garden, and makes clear that the recent success of the Geelong Botanic Garden owes much to John Arnott, its director.

Rob also has a vision for NRG that would value its unique plant collections

Rob is to address the Society General Meeting in August.

Come along and see if you can share Rob's vision for NRG, whether the Society, and you, can help make it happen. If you disagree, come and say so

For the Society to flourish into the future opportunities must open for new, younger, members. It is us, the current, active membership, who must have the vision to see what the Society must do to attract them.

Should the Society

- Broaden its plant base to embrace, say, magnolias, kalmias and daphne? RHS, UK, has a Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group.
- Broaden its volunteer activities to embrace landscaping and guiding
- Actively pursue group tours by members including tours to see rhododendrons, and other plants in their native habitats and to see major gardens in other Countries or even other States?

- Seek to liaise directly with education and research groups, trying to gain members from them? For example Melbourne University and its Burnley campus.
- Actively encourage members to attend congresses in other places, interstate and overseas? The Hawaiian Group wants an Australian speaker next February.

Tell the Committee what your ideas and wishes are. Better still come to the August meeting and have your say.

ED

### THE SPECIES COLUMN.

#### **R *macbeanum* – Grandia Series. [pictures in email slidehow]**

Rhododendron *macbeanum* is undoubtedly the finest species in the Grandia Series. This species thrives at Olinda in the shade of eucalypts, and can withstand drought conditions in Summer and Autumn. Under favourable circumstances it grows to 15 metres high and is not really suitable for suburban gardens.

#### **Name:**

After Mr. MacCabe, Deputy Commissioner for Nagaland in the Himalayas.

#### **Distribution:**

N.E.India, Manipur, & Nagaland, usually in forests at 2400 – 3000 metres.

#### **Characteristics:**

This species is easily identified by its huge truss of yellow flowers, and its large elliptical leaves with a pale woolly indumentum. *R.grande* and *R.sinogrande* have cream or pale yellow flowers and a plastered silvery indumentum.

#### **Where to See These Plants:**

Over 100 *macbeanums* have been planted in the Rhododendron Garden, either in the Mountain Ash forest near Falls Road, down the “Lyrebird Walk” past the Lake, and a few in the “Maddenia Walk”. Most of these were grown from imported seed and some look like hybrids, but we have some excellent grafted plants including the F.C.C. form from Trengwainton in Cornwall, and a beautiful plant from the late Bob Withers. If you take a stroll past the Camellia Garden in early October you will find some of these spectacular plants in flower, followed by their silvery new growth in November “like candles on a Christmas tree”.

**Alan Kepert**

### VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

#### **R *macgregoriae* [pictures in email slideshow]**

Vireya, subsection Vireya [The Rhododendron Handbook, RHS, 1998]

According to the RHS editors; mostly a shrub, rarely a small tree and recorded, possibly erroneously, up to 15m, terrestrial, and probably the easiest species to cultivate. In Olinda, and Melbourne also, *R macgregoriae* is readily propagated and grown, save only for the fact that, at least in these locations, it is one of the most rust prone, and azalea lace bug prone Vireya species. Plenty of air circulation and vigilance are required. Indeed after 10 years experience all my

yellow form plants have been banished from my prime display areas to my 'sin bins' where they, and like minded vireyas, coexist with their problems and grow and flower reasonably. A once a year treatment [sometimes longer intervals] controls the insects. I do have to spray for rust a few times a year.

In Olinda, and Melbourne, *R macgregoriae* is a shrub, to 1-1.5m. Many other species, and hybrids, grow much larger

### **Name**

After Lady Macgregor whose husband backed the expedition that discovered the species. According to both Dr. Sleumer and the RHS editors the discoverer was Frederick Mueller.

### **Origin**

Widespread over the whole of New Guinea, from 500 to 3300m. It is often considered a weed there since it grows in pastures and is poisonous to stock. It is a 'first colonizer' on roadsides.

### **Description**

Leaves are 5-8 x 2-5 cm, elliptic to ovate, apex shortly acuminate to rounded, the margin usually distinctly recurved [facing up], the upper surface smooth with only indistinct scales [the pink form has thinner, pointier, and hairier leaves]; the midrib very slightly indented above but distinctly raised below; 6-10 pairs distinct, but not raised laterals and small brown star or disc shaped scales. Flowers are 7-15 per umbel erect to horizontal corolla varying from yellow to orange and pink to red, shortly tubular, 1.5-2.5 x 2-3 cm, stamens 10.

There is also said to be an 'unusual' form which has far larger leaves and flowers, a bi shaded yellow and orange. I obtained one of these from NRG some 10 years ago, and others have been shown recently. But it is not described in the RHS 1998 Rhododendron Species Handbook, so I can't vouch for the plant's authenticity as a species.

### **Where to see these plants**

I don't know where *R maggregoriae* is planted, in ground at NRG. There is no shortage of the yellow form in pots at NRG and among members. The pink form is less common. It seems to be more floriferous, covering the bush like an azalea, but with fewer flowers per umbel.

### **Hybrids**

*R macgregoriae* is a common parent of hybrids.

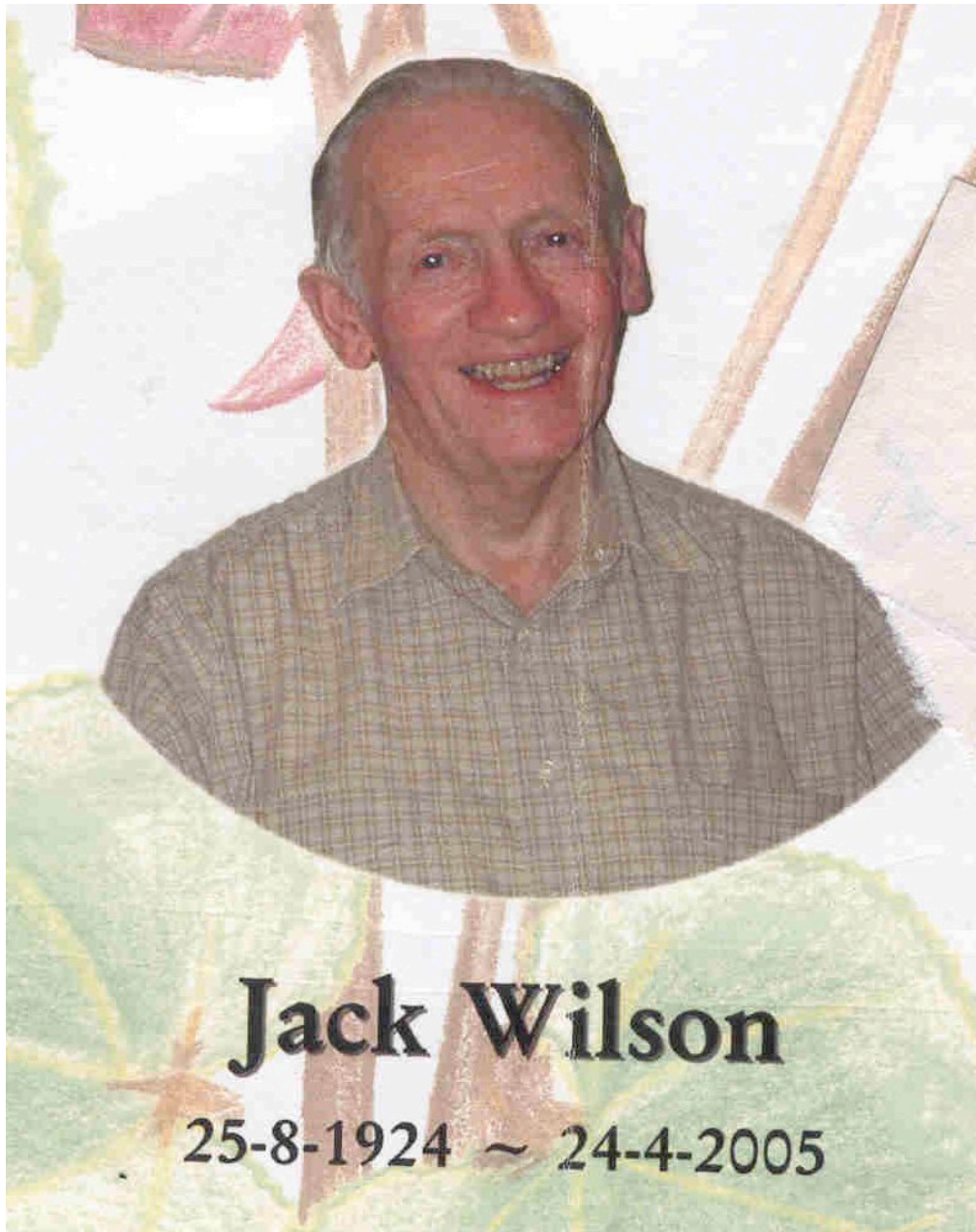
There are many *R viriosum* x *R macgregoriae* hybrids.

R 'Rob's Favourite' is named for Rob Small by the late Oz Blumhardt. Rob is now chair of the Dandenong Ranges Gardens Advisory Committee.

These hybrids have, usually, many small pink to red flowers in tight umbels.

R 'Sunny' [*R christiana* x *R macgregoriae* ] was hybridized by Brian Clancy and registered by Graham Snell

**Simon Begg**



**(JOHN FRANCIS) JACK WILSON**

25/8/24 – 24/4/05

**A TRIBUTE**

Jack was born in Gisborne in 1924, and commenced work upon leaving school, for the local council, and the newspaper, whilst he waited to turn 18, and could then enlist. Enlistment was in 1942, and he recalled living in the Melbourne Exhibition Buildings whilst training at Pilot School as a Navigator. He was seriously injured in training, and carried fragments of a wayward grenade for the rest of his life.

He then undertook teacher training at Melbourne Teachers College, and spent 21 years as a Primary Teacher, mostly at Regional Schools.

He met Dorothy in 1953. Upon their marriage, they lived in Brighton, and subsequently in Blackburn South, for a total of 52 years. Jack and Dorothy raised four daughters, Elizabeth, Helen, Jenny and Sue. They have been blessed with 10 grandchildren.

In the later years of his career, Jack upgraded his qualifications. He was then given the task of establishing a Professional Development Centre for teachers at Mirabooka, and eventually retired as Director, Teacher Education, for the State of Victoria, after a very distinguished career.

He was also Master of his Lodge in 1985.

Jack was a perfectionist, a man who never gave up, and one who continued to learn throughout his lifetime. This was one of the reasons others were drawn to him. His knowledge of Rhododendrons, Azalea, Vireya, and species Cyclamen became formidable. Few, if any, had more knowledge.

Brian Clancy, and Jack O'Shannessy, can both recall purchasing *R ponticum* seedlings from Jack for 5/- each. Jack also sold seedlings to Coles, for rhododendron was unique at that time. Brian says he first met Jack in 1959. He had a lot of respect for Jack.

Jack was also a beekeeper - for the honey, and probably also for the pollination of his seedlings.

His close friend, Ken Campbell said in eulogy, that: "Your friend is your needs answered". Jack generously gave advice, information, and plant cuttings to those who asked. To receive cuttings of R 'Southern Cloud', his prized hybrid, was to be given a magnificent gift. What better way to remember a "friend"? He also named three azaleas from the large number he bred, one of which was 'Blackburn Pink Frills'.

His abiding desire was to see further work done on tetraploids, which he considered to have much merit, as shown by R 'William Avery', named after a close friend (a hybrid of *diaprepes gargantua* x 'Walloper').

We all have much to thank him for. No person has done more for the Rhododendron genus in Australia than he; for he was one of a group of 5 who founded the Australian Rhododendron Society as a break-away group from the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society, and ultimately paved the way for the establishment of the National Rhododendron Gardens.

Jack was President of the Victorian Branch in 1990 and 1991 and the editor of the newsletter for 10-15 years.

Our sincere condolences to Dorothy and family.

M McAlister

# Fraser South Rhododendron Society

Excerpts from and comments on published by:  
Loretta Goetsch, Andrew Eckert and Benjamin Hall  
University of Washington

*[These excerpts, from a paper proposing revisions in the rhododendron taxonomic system, and comments are republished by kind permission of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society and the authors. This paper is very important. I have added, in parenthesis in the text, explanations of some of the technical terms ED.]*



*Rhododendron canadense*

**Classification of Rhododendron species based on morphology [structure] has led to a consensus taxonomy [science of naming] recognizing the major subgenera Azaleastrum, Hymenanthes, Pentanthera, Rhododendron, Tsutsusi and three minor ones.**

**To determine whether these subgenera are monophyletic [a natural group of plants being a single plant and all of its descendants, that group being a 'clade'] and to infer phylogenetic [Quoting Society of Australian Systematic Biologists 1998 'for the purposes of cladistics it is assumed that the phylogenetic pattern of evolutionary history can be represented as a branching diagram like a tree [a 'cladogram'] with the terminal branches [or leaves] linking the taxa being analysed and the internal branches [or internodes] linking hypothesised ancestral taxa [or nodes']] relationships between Rhododendron sections and species, Goetsch et al. carried out a cladistic [method of classification employing genealogies [study of ancestry] alone] analysis using molecular data, including all groups within the genus.**

For this purpose, they sequenced a large part of the nuclear gene RPB2-I, encoding a major RNA Polymerase II subunit, from 87 species and analyzed the data by maximum parsimony, maximum likelihood, and Bayesian methods. [A Bayesian is someone who interprets probability as degree of belief. Bayes' theorem [a mathematical one] takes its name from Reverend Thomas Bayes [1702-1761] published posthumously in 1763]



*Rhododendron niveum*



The resulting phylogenies show subgenera *Azaleastrum* and *Pentanthera* to be polyphyletic [*a term for a group of taxa when, despite their being classified together as one taxonomic category, it is thought not all have descended from a common ancestor which was also a member of the group*] and group all *Rhododendron* species (except the two in section *Therorhodion*) into three large clades.

Based upon the molecular data that they and others have obtained, certain revisions in the *Rhododendron* taxonomic system are proposed, consolidating minor subgenera that are related and recognizing monophyletic subgenera.

More than 90% of the 1,025 *Rhododendron* species described prior to 1996 (Chamberlain et al. 1996) belong to the predominately Asian subgenera *Hymenanthes*, *Rhododendron* and *Tsutsusi*.

The first two of these have many species in the Himalayan- Southwest China region; in addition, the 300 species of section *Vireya* in subgenus *Rhododendron* are distributed mainly through the islands of the Malay Archipelago (Sleumer 1966), extending from their probable origin on the Asian mainland as far as northern Australia.



*Rhododendron spinuliferum*

The geologically recent juxtaposition (< 10 million years ago) of the eastern and western halves of this archipelago raises interesting biogeographic questions for future phylogenetic study of *Vireya* species, as does the Himalayan orogeny [*mountain building episode*] (Irving and Hebda 1993) for *Hymenanthes* and *Rhododendron* species of the Sino-Himalayan area.

*Rhododendrons* of subgenus *Tsutsusi* have a mainly east Asian maritime distribution (Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and east China) with no species in either western Eurasia or North America.

Systematic studies that encompassed all sections and subgenera of *Rhododendron* were initiated by Sleumer (1949) who proposed a comprehensive system of *Rhododendron* classification in the form of a key to subgenera and sections.



*Rhododendron vaseyi*

Subsequently, the conclusions of a number of more narrowly focused morphological taxonomic studies (Sleumer 1968; Cullen 1980; Chamberlain 1982; Philipson and Philipson 1986; Judd and Kron 1995) were incorporated into an alternative *Rhododendron* classification.

This taxonomic system is now generally accepted by *Rhododendron* specialists (Cox and Cox 1997) because it embodies the findings of substantially all morphology-based *Rhododendron* systematic studies since 1980.

Significant differences between the Sleumer (1949, 1980) and Chamberlain et al. (1996) taxonomic systems concern subgenus *Therorhodium*, which Sleumer placed outside genus *Rhododendron*, and placement of the four species of section *Sciadorhodium*. Based on studies by Judd and Kron (1995), Chamberlain et al. (1996) assigned these species to subgenus *Pentanthera*, while Sleumer merged them with section *Brachycalyx* in subgenus *Anthodendron*, equivalent to subgenus *Tsutsusi* (Chamberlain and Rae 1990).



*Rhododendron viscidifolium*

An interesting, although infrequently noted, feature of Sleumer's taxonomic key is the proximity of the deciduous section *Pentanthera* to the evergreen subgenus *Hymenanthes*. These taxa both lack lepidote scales and, for both, the new leafy shoots emerge from the axils of shoots from the previous year's growth.

In subgenus *Pentanthera* the Chamberlain et al. (1996) classification system includes the major section *Pentanthera*, comprising 15 species from the southeast United States plus three from other regions: section *Sciadorhodium* and the smaller sections *Rhodora* (2 spp., North America) and *Viscidula* (1 sp., Japan). Other than having deciduous leaves covered in hairs and terminal rather than axillary inflorescences, few morphological attributes link these four sections together (Cox and Cox 1997).



*Rhododendron stenaulum*

Historically, the most taxonomically problematic rhododendrons have been the subgenera *Azaleastrum*, *Mumeazalea* and *Candidastrum*. Both classification systems place sections *Azaleastrum* and *Choniastrum*, which share the lateral inflorescence character, in subgenus *Azaleastrum* even though they differ consistently in number of stamens (5 vs. 10) and other characters (Philipson and Philipson 1986).

Because of distinctive floral and seed characteristics, the deciduous taxa *R. semibarbatum* Maxim. (Japan) and *R. albiflorum* Hook.f. (North America), were placed, respectively, in separate monotypic subgenera *Mumeazalea* and *Candidastrum*.



*Rhododendron retivenium*

Two studies of molecular systematics across the genus *Rhododendron* have previously been published. The first used sequences from the chloroplast *matK* and *trnK* genes (Kurashige et al. 2001) and the second used nuclear ITS Sequences (Gao et al. 2002). As detailed in the Goetsch et al. paper, several of the contradictions between morphology-based *Rhododendron* taxonomy and the RPB2-I phylogeny determined in their paper are also evident in the plastid and ITS phylogenies, although those publications did not emphasize the contradictions.

In their investigation, Goetsch et al. recovered, sequenced and computationally analyzed sequences of RPB2-I from 87 *Rhododendron* species in order to address several related issues.



*Rhododendron genestierianum*

First, they set out to test whether the morphology-based sections and subgenera of *Rhododendron* proposed by the taxonomic systems of Sleumer (1949, 1980) and Chamberlain et al. (1996) are monophyletic.

A second objective was to resolve, irrespective of these and other taxonomic proposals, the relationships between all *Rhododendron* sections, including subsection *Ledum* and genus *Menziesia* (Kron and Judd, 1990).

The monophyletic groups so identified, together with morphological information, provide the basis for a revised classification system for *Rhododendron*, which is described briefly below.

#### **Classification.**

The results of the Goetsch et al. investigation clarify the phylogeny of *Rhododendron* and suggest that several changes in the infrageneric systematics of *Rhododendron* are warranted.



*Rhododendron canescens*

Based upon the molecular data that they and others have obtained, certain revisions in the *Rhododendron* taxonomic system are proposed.

For taxa outside of subgenus *Rhododendron*, this system eliminates three subgenera and two sections that are present in the taxonomic system of Chamberlain et al.

Inclusion of section *Pentanthera* within subgenus *Hymenanthes* reflects the 100% bootstrap and Bayesian support for a clade containing only these taxa. *Hymenanthes* is monophyletic with 79% bootstrap support.

Sections *Sciadorhodion* and *Viscidula* and *R. vaseyi* (section *Rhodora*) from the discontinued subgenus *Pentanthera* are combined with sections *Azaleastrum*, *Tsutsusi* and *Brachycalyx* to form an expanded and revised subgenus *Azaleastrum*.



*Rhododendron glischrum*

Sister groups in this subgenus are the sections *Tsutsusi* (largely evergreen) and *Sciadorhodion* (entirely deciduous).

While the RPB2-I phylogeny places section *Choniastrum* in clade A, as sister taxon to subgenus *Rhododendron*, *Choniastrum* lacks the attribute most characteristic of this subgenus, lepidote scales on the leaves.

For this reason, Goetsch et al. propose that *Choniastrum* be considered a separate subgenus.

**Number of species analyzed, grouped by the taxonomic system of Chamberlain et al. (1996)**

**subgenus *Azaleastrum* Planch.**

**section *Azaleastrum* (2)**

**section *Choniastrum* Franch. (3)**

**subgenus *Candidastrum* Franch. (1)**

**subgenus *Hymenanthes* (Blume) K. Koch**

**section *Ponticum* G. Don (20)**

**subgenus *Mumeazalea* (Sleumer) W. R. Philipson & M. N. Philipson (1)**

**subgenus *Pentanthera* (G. Don) Pojarkova**

**section *Pentanthera* (5)**

**section *Rhodora* (L.) G. Don (2)**

**section *Sciadorhodium* Rehder & Wilson (2)**

**section *Viscidula* Matsum. & Nakai (1)**

**subgenus *Rhododendron***

**section *Pogonanthum* Aitch. & Hemsl. (3)**

**section *Rhododendron* (30)**

**section *Vireya* (Blume) Copel.f. (9)**

**subgenus *Therorhodium* (Maxim.) A. Gray (1)**

**subgenus *Tsutsusi* (Sweet) Pojarkova**

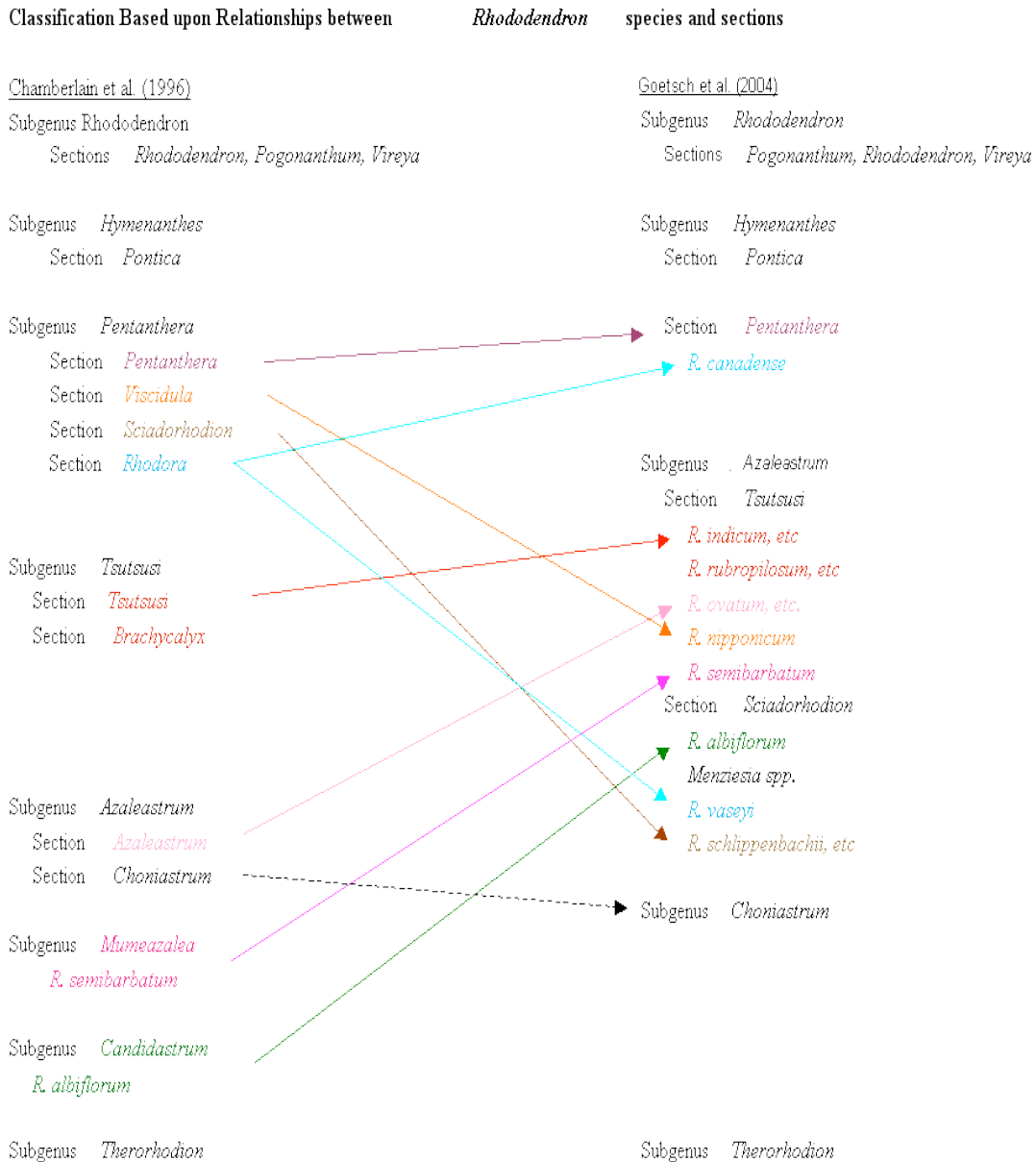
**section *Brachycalyx* Sweet (2)**

section *Tsutsusi* (3)

*Menziesia* Smith (2)

*Empetrum* L. (1)

**Dr. Hall presented and explain the data analysis behind this proposal at the [2005 Annual ARS Convention in Victoria, B. C.](#) where he was a speaker in the program on April 29.**



### IDENTIFICATION OF A MYSTERY VIREYA STEM FOUND AT THE VIREYA SHOW

On the Sunday afternoon of the Vireya Show a visitor sought to buy a plant of *R. tuba*. Alas, all stock had been sold. I asked if the visitor had any experience with cuttings. On receiving a positive response, I went in search among the flowered stems brought by Wally Lobbezoo and Catherine [from Parks] on Saturday morning to 'brighten up' the Show. There were, I knew, a number of *R. tuba* stems. I went to select the first one I came across but then put my selection quickly to one side and chose another. I saw at a glance that the flowers of the 'first' selection were far too big for *R. tuba* and also too big for *R. rhodoleucum* which, likewise, was represented, in flower at the show. What was it?

I showed it to experts more knowledgeable than me. Additional suggestions were a hybrid or *R. armitii* but no one was sure. No one had noticed the flower or knew its source. NRG and possibly the Bornstein collection seemed the most likely.

I took it home to bring to NRG on Tuesday. Wally, when I asked him, had not noticed it [and he would have had he picked it]. Catherine was working in the city and might not have noticed it. A number of us looked around NRG that morning but could not find the source plant. Any member who brought it would have entered the flower in the show! It was well worthy.

I photographed the branch, put down cuttings and sent a sample to Lyn Craven.

I set out our short exchange.

“I am posting to you a flower and a couple of leaves from a stem found, un-named, in a bottle, on a table at the ARS Vireya Show at Mount Waverly on Sunday.

Similar to *R. tuba*; leaves, colour of flowers [white with pink tubes], shape of flowers – but not their size, which is huge by comparison, 5cm x 6.5cm- 6 florets.

Similar to *R. rhodoluceum*; flowers [as above] closer than to *R. tuba*- but even larger than *R. rhodoluceum*; not similar leaves, which are closer to *R. tuba* having stems.

Similar to *R. armitii* , perhaps, [flowers only from photos], but leaves not the same [compared with NZ derived small plant].

Will email photos. Put down 3 cuttings and 3 leaf buds.

Simon”

“On a best fit basis, it keys out to the first lead of couplet 11 of Subsection *Solenovireya* on p 548 [Sleumer, *Flora Melesiana* 1966] where Simon has placed it. However, there are wild-collected plants in cultivation that do not fit the descriptions of Sleumer and I am rather doubtful about his taxonomy for this group of plants.

[One must keep in mind that most of these species are based on very few collections and I do not think that Sleumer was able to come up with a sufficiently robust classification/taxonomy such that subsequent collections can always be fitted into his concepts. Whether there needs to be more species described, or whether some of the presently recognised species should be combined, I do not know, there might need to be some of each course of action. What is clear is that there are not enough well-documented collections to be able to sort it out at present, and probably not for the next 100 years at the present rate of collecting in New Guinea.]

Having had a look at the material under the microscope this AM I now think that it probably could be a wild-collected plant, and probably a "species" as opposed to a "hybrid" but there is little that can be done unless we know in New Guinea where it came from.

In the meantime, my suggestion is that you label it as an "unknown white-limbed, pink-tubed *Solenovireya*".

Best wishes, Lyn”

There is one happy outcome. At the end of May the source plant was found at NRG, near the northern end of the ‘Vireya Bank’ below the golf course. It is still in flower. At a best guess it was ‘rescued’ from the creek, where many vireyas were planted years ago, and have become overgrown by ferns and other more competitive plants, and planted on the Vireya Bank when that was established in fairly recent times. Finding a source plant does not establish its provenance. But, if it came from the creek, it may well be a wild collection as Lyn surmises.

Photographs appear in the emailed slide shows. Any suggestions would be gratefully received. Especially the provenance of the plant. Meantime the cuttings are surviving. And there is one source plant.

SWB

## BENCH DISPLAYS

### April 2005

As expected there was an excellent display of *vireyas* and the results were well distributed.

John Quinn won exhibit of the night with 'Painted Lady', a very good truss. Murray Mc Allister had a good *rhodoleucum* in the species under 4 cms. Simon Begg won in three classes, 'Bulolo Gold' in the under 4cms hybrids, *laetum* in the large species and two very good plants in pots, 'Coral Flare' and 'Littlest Angel'. Elizabeth Xipell showed a small 'Penny Whistle' and a large *zoelleri*. All in all an excellent, colourful display.

Azaleas were not presented in abundance but it was pleasing to see Tom Noonan win with a very good 'Goyet'. Alan Walker brought a good flowering plant of 'Charlie', this is a very showy azalea. Alan also had a second with 'Eri Schame'.

### May 2005

We only had nine exhibitors but even so we had a good display.

*Vireyas* were entered in all classes with Simon Begg receiving exhibit of the night with *tuba*. This is happening with monotonous regularity; perhaps he can start striking cuttings and give each of us a plant to give him some competition! Simon also took the three places in class 3 species over 4cms with *superbum*, *laetum* and *rhodoleucum*. Other blooms of note – Bill Taylor's *laetum* x *javanicum* and 'Donvale Pink' blooms, while Murray McAllister displayed a plant of 'Donvale Pink' and a truss of 'Multicolour'. Michael Hare presented a small hybrid entry of 'Lorchris'.

Tom Noonan won again with azalea 'Goyet' – two months in a row, amazing. Len Sloggett and Murray placed with 'Mardi Gras' and 'Red Ruffles'. Len also gained points with the only azalea in the plant section with 'Eri Schame', he also had the only rhododendron truss displayed, *veitchianum*, well and truly out of season!

In the non rhododendron category Gerry Heilmann presented a very unusual protea bloom, and it was no surprise that it won.

**Len Sloggett**

## GENERAL MEETINGS

### April 2005

Murray McAllister was the speaker. His topic was the *Vireya* Hybrids the Society had recently acquired from Neil Puddey and other sources. Murray illustrated his talk with photos of 50, or so, of the best of these hybrids. It is worth pointing out that many, indeed most, of these hybrids have yet to flower at NRG. The photos came either from Chris Callard's CD 'Vireya List' or from photos taken in 2003 at Graham Snell's place in Malvaney Queensland. Murray pointed out some parentage lines also. Thank you Murray for a most illuminating talk.

### May 2005

Alan Kepert and Tom Noonan were the speakers. Their topic was, primarily, the use of GPS [Global Positioning System] technology to record the location of rhododendrons at NRG. Tom had a 'powerpoint' presentation

\*to illustrate his explanation of how GPS worked,

\*the handheld unit the Society has acquired,

\*how Alan and Elizabeth Xipell entered data of the GPS locations of rhododendron species and hybrids at NRG into the unit

\*and how the data was downloaded to Tom's computer and entered by him into the 'access' databases of rhododendron species and hybrids.

Tom showed us photos of the dog eared, tattered and handwritten species and hybrid registers that were in use until the days of computers and GPS. Alan then showed us photos of his favourite 25 rhododendron species. These came from the Society's [now digital] photo archive and Alan's own garden. Thank you Tom and Alan.

**SWB**



## VIREYA SHOW 2005

Attendance of the public was down by almost 100 persons compared to last year. This was despite unprecedented publicity in all three daily newspapers, Channel 10, and radio. The continued dry weather is still having considerable impact on plant sales.

In spite of that, ARS members were able to give lots of support; perhaps best illustrated when clean up time came around. What marvelous support. As one member said, we all gained through the friendships, and the tall stories we each swapped.

The display was particularly good, considering there was not a great deal of material available (see pictures in emailed slideshow). Fortunately, Bill T, Geraldine & Brian, Simon and Marcia, were able to provide most of the material, nicely supplemented by the NRG, courtesy of Walter and Catherine from Parks Vic. Indeed, as is noted elsewhere (see pp 14-15 ), Simon discovered an interesting flower stem similar to *R tuba* and *R rhodoleucum*, but different from both that came from NRG (see picture in emailed slide show ).

Brian and Geraldine's contribution deserves special mention (see pictures in emailed slide show). Their display occupied one large table and two small tables. On the smallest table were three plants of Brian's cross of "Gardenia Odyssey" x *R. javanicum*, being shown publicly for the first time. Most spectacular was plant GJ 21 with two huge orange blooms, each of 23 flowers, displaying the characteristics of the seed parent "Gardenia Odyssey". GJ32 had showy orange-red scented flowers with a yellow throat, GJ41 had three trusses each of thirteen scented flowers of a delicate pink colour on a dwarf bush. Dominating the central table was a large plant of "Kiandra" with five big glowing orange flowers plus 21 buds just opening. Also on the table was a large plant of *R. aurigeranum* x "Gardenia Odyssey" with four trusses each of 12 flowers, cream tinged rose on the edge of petals with ten buds just opening.

Many people commented on the scent coming from the large table. Geraldine counted 17 plants/flowers with good perfume. Displayed on the large table were 21 plants in 8 inch pots, two fern logs in colour, and 12 cut trusses. One of the best of these was the plant of "Dr. Sleumer" x *R. superbum* back -crossed to *R. superbum* with two trusses of seven large flowers (corollas 13 cm across) with scented, creamy-yellow flowers of substance. "Christopher John" x *R superbum* had trusses of white flowers with a green throat and nice perfume. The hybrid of "Gardenia Odyssey" x *R. superbum*, in the centre of the table, displayed two first blooms each of eight large, scented trusses opening to lavender pink and maturing to rose-pink with a yellow throat and showing much promise. Best of the cut trusses was the golden-yellow truss of "Teddy's Best". "Channon Marie" had a perfect truss of 12 apricot-orange flowers shading to a yellow throat. Most unusual and attractive was the cross of *R. yongii* with "Arthur's Choice" with three trusses each of 8 flowers in the unusual colour vermillion red. 'Dr. Sleumer' x 'Sonny Boy' had very striking colours of fire-engine red with a very distinctive yellow throat. Also much admired was the exhibit of 15 golden yellow cut trusses arranged in a large Carlton-ware blue vase.

### **Best Bench Displays [see slide show photos]**

*Larger Species:* 1. *konori* (Andrew Rouse), 2. *viriosum* (Simon)

*Smaller Species:* 1. *williamsii* (Andrew), 2. *luraluense* (Andrew)

*Larger Hybrids:* 1. 'Laura Kate' x *superbum* (Murray), 2. 'Eastern Zanzibar' (Bill T)

*Smaller hybrids:* 1. *christii x zoelleri* (Murray), 2. 'Red Tubular' (Simon)

*Foliage:* 1. 'Tropic Fanfare' (Simon), 2. 'Irian Jaya' (Michael)

*Hanging Basket:* 1. *apoanum* (Bill T), 2. 'Vladimir Bukovski' (Simon)

*Species in Container:* 1. *mac* (Jack), 2. *phaochitum* (John Q)

*Hybrid in Container:* 1. 'Wee Annie' (Jack), 2. 'Iced Pernod' (Michael)

**Special thanks to Past President Lesley Eaton** for providing the expertise in judging.

**The most popular flowers** as voted by the public, were:

'Laura Kate' x *superbum* (Murray), and 'Dr Sleumer' x *superbum x superbum* (Brian). These tied for first. Both were hybrids by Brian. Mrs E Francis of Mt Waverley was the delighted winner of the prize to select the best bloom.

My gratitude to all who contributed to the show in one-way or another

**Murray McAllister**

**2005 NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON  
SOCIETY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Don't forget to register to attend the ARS Convention. Details and registration forms were included in the March Newsletter.

In case you have lost them, convention registration, and commencement is at Mount Lofty Botanic gardens on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2005. There is a full program both Saturday and Sunday.

Obtain additional forms from Mr Jeff Bettcher, 28 Snows Rd Aldgate South Australia 5154  
Phone 61 (0) 8839 3345.