

# THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

**JULY 2006**

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P.O. Box 92, Olinda, Victoria 3788  
Editor: Simon Begg Ph: (03) 9751 1610 email: [simonwbegg@gmail.com](mailto:simonwbegg@gmail.com)



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### Around the Growers

**Andrew Rouse** has just taken delivery of the following Vireya seed:

*curviflorum*, originally collected by Argent, Mitchell, and Smith, *pauciflorum*, originally collected by M Black, *citrinum*, collected by Argent, *nieuwenhuisii*, collected by Argent, *adinophyllum* collected by Binney, and *lamrialianum*, collected by Argent.

(\*Unfortunately the photograph of the species on p119 of G. Argent's new book is a species other than *lamrialianum*. George has notified us that this will be rectified in the next edition of his book. The correct pictorial can be downloaded from Callard's web site, [www.vireya.net](http://www.vireya.net) MMcA).

[\*\* ARSV has my photos, taken at RBGE, of *nieuwenhuisii* and *citrinum* var. *citrinum* though the latter is not a good photo Ed. ]

**Graham Price** has also forwarded some seed from **Hansjorg Brentel**, from Austria. This is seed of his "unusual colour form" of *zoelleri* pictured in a recent issue of the Vireya Venture newsletter.

These will be valued additions to our species collection, and eventually available to all members.

[continued page 2]

## CONTENTS

<b>President's Report</b>	<b>Pages 1-3</b>
<b>The Species Column</b>	<b>Pages 3-4</b>
<b>Vireya Species</b>	<b>Pages 4-5</b>
<b>Bench Display May and June 2006</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Neil Puddey's Address at the February 2006 International Vireya Conference at Hawaii</b>	<b>Pages 7-8</b>
<b>A Garden Tour through England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland</b>	<b>Pages 8-11</b>
<b>National Rhododendron Garden, Olinda</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
<b>Calendar for 2006</b>	<b>Page 12</b>

**Lyn Craven** will be pleased to see *citrinum* amongst these, as he has sought this species throughout Australia. Unfortunately, those plants already here, keyed out to *multicolor*. **George Argent's** new book, *Rhododendrons of subgenus Vireya*, provides readers with photographs of many of the species listed above, as well as excellent descriptors. (We are told that the first edition of this book is almost out of print already. We are attempting to order a number of additional copies. As a guide to the cost, note that edition 1 sold for \$106 A.)

**Andrew Raper** is planning his Vireya releases for the 2007 show. He has generously given us tube stock of those Vireya he intends to retire. We have ambitions of using this to create colour banks of Vireya at the National Gardens. Andrew, then, will focus his efforts on a number of new releases for our next show.

**Neil Puddey** has returned from a trip to Tahiti with a delightful repertoire of tales which focus on his early attempts to introduce Vireya to that country. I hope that he can find time to share some of these with you in the future.

**John Quinn** and **Laurie Begg** recently took delivery of a new batch of Asiatic rhododendrons, which were purchased from **John Corcoran** of Perfect Plants. Some of these are hybrids which John acquired from New Zealand, and would make stunning additions to your garden. John Quinn will offer members the opportunity to purchase these at a later date.

## **General News**

### **Ron Moodycliffe's hints:**

Paint Pens give durable labels for your plants, either on white tags, or directly onto the pot. Ron tells me that these can be purchased at Bunnings for about \$6 each, in the Art & Craft section. Remember, though, that it is rather tedious to scrape the names off a pot if you wish to use it for another plant.

Ron also reminds us that metal Venetian blinds can make good labels when cut up.

When we were in New Zealand, one of the Vireya hybrids we most admired, was 'Pukeiti Skyrocket'. **Graham Smith**, from Pukeiti, has written to **Bill Taylor** to indicate that that hybrid has since been keyed out to the species *archboldianum*. We still have a surviving cutting of the latter, so we are hopeful that Graham is correct. Argent's book, however, observes that this species is 'not known to have been cultivated'.

We have had some flowering of the hybrids acquired from N.Z.:

'Simbu Sunset' x *christi* – a vibrant orange/red bloom, with the typical characteristics of *christi*; 'Hugh Redgrove', a very floriferous red; and 'Red Mountain', which has excellent foliage, and the flowers consequently seem to be less important.

Welcome back **Simon and Marcia Begg**, following their vacation in the U.K. I am certain we will hear and enjoy many of their holiday anecdotes and pictorial presentations in the future.

### **Special Plea:**

**R.L. Stevenson:** "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive."

The colder winter months have seen a marked decline in attendance of members at General Meetings. My plea is for continued support. It is difficult to justify **our** poor attendance to guest speakers who often expend their own time, energy, and travel costs to give us their presentations.

The best reason to come to the meetings, of course, is for the fellowship, and friendship of our group.

By definition, a **Society is: a group of people with common purposes and interests**. To make our Society more vibrant, we need to give it our **time, energy, attention, and focus**. It is something to **fight for**, to **care about**, and as scary as it sounds, something to **share with other people**.

Let's all cultivate and celebrate the enthusiasts, and those who dare to be passionate about their plant collections or interests. Conversely, we need to be less interested in the doomsayers, for **those of us who are passionate members know that the real winners are the people who have fun**.

**Murray McAlister**

### **GOOD HOME WANTED**

Now that we no longer have a 'nursery'/'hobby that got out of control'! we have a lot of black pots and seed trays that we would like to find a new home for. They are free to anyone who would like to come and collect them. Please ring first.

Marcia and Simon Begg, Phone: 03 9751 1610 (Vic)

### **INFORMATION NEEDED**

At one of the early Vireya Shows at Waverley someone placed a vireya on the show bench. It was a very good yellow with 3 or 4 flowers in the truss and the label read – *laetum*, Arthur Headlam form.

If that person could get in contact with me I would greatly appreciate their assistance.

Jack Morris, Phone: 03 9870 5597 (Victoria)

*[I understand from Jack that, at the June General meeting Bill and Murray identified a flower, described as Jack has indicated, as R "Teddy's Best". I have a photo of R "Teddy's Best" exhibited by Brian Clancy at the Vireya Show 2005. I also have an ARSV photo of R laetum, Arthur Headlam form, taken by Lesley Eaton. Ed.]*

### **THE SPECIES COLUMN.**

#### **ciliicalyx– Subsection *Maddenia*, *Ciliicalyx* Alliance.**

*Rhododendron ciliicalyx* is one of my favourites and should grow anywhere in Melbourne. It prefers light shade but is very heat-tolerant and is not fussy about soil conditions. Like most *Maddenias* it does not require much water once established. This is an extremely floriferous species with flowers on almost every stem, and makes a beautiful sight in August-September with masses of pink and white flowers. They also have a sweet spicy perfume, similar to *Fragrantissimum*.

#### **Name:**

Means (obviously), prominent bristles on the calyx of the flower.

**Distribution:**

Yunnan, at an altitude of 1800 to 4000 metres. It grows on rocky hillsides and woodlands.

**Characteristics:**

This species has caused much confusion among botanists. Harold Davidian in "The Rhododendron Species", says this is a very variable species with several different forms, however, Peter and Kenneth Cox maintain most of the cultivated plants have been wrongly named, and should be included in *dendricola* or *pachypodum*. Our form has a pronounced bristly calyx, pink or white flowers in trusses of 3-4, bristly petioles and leaves, and does not fit the description of these other species, so the original name has been retained. I believe our plants were raised from seed collected in England by Tom Lelliot. Perhaps the plant should be given a varietal name or registered as an unknown *Maddenia* hybrid.

**Where to See These Plants:**

Our records show about 40 *ciliicalyx* have been planted in 1960 to 1970 mostly in the *Maddenia* Walk area. The GPS survey only found 10 of these but there are probably many more down in the eucalypt forest. The plants can be easily identified in early Spring by its flowers and perfume.

**Hybrids:**

'Harry Tagg' – (*ciliicalyx x Albescens*)

'White Wings' – (*ciliicalyx x bullatum*)

'Anne Teese' – (*ciliicalyx x formosum*) A striking deep pink.

Unnamed – (*ciliicalyx x formosum x moupinense*) A Jack O'Shanassy hybrid. Similar to *Cilpinense* but much hardier, more resistant to lace-bug, and easier to grow.

CPV 4 – (*ciliicalyx x veitchianum*) My best hybrid to date.  
White flushed pink, yellow throat.

Alan Kepert.

## VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

**R Christi**

Section VII: *Euvireya* – Subsection v: *Euvireya*. Classification according to Dr. George Argent *Rhododendrons of subgenus Vireya* The Royal Horticultural Society 2006. First described by Foerster in 1914, though, according to Argent, described without number by Keysser in October 1912.

**Name**

According to Argent, named after Konrad H. Christ, Swiss fern specialist who was professor of botany at Basel.

**Origin**

Papua New Guinea: New Guinea (E), Mt. Saruwaged and vicinity; Eastern Western and Southern Highlands; Simbu District; Wharton Range; Finisterre Mountains (Madang District) and also in Indonesia (Irian Jaya), New Guinea (W), Wamena Range; Ibele Valley at 1200-3000m

### **Description**

Shrub to 1.2m, usually epiphytic. According to Sleumer, *Flora Malesiana*, 1966, small stiff sparsely branched. The latter is not reflected in cultivation in Olinda where *R Christi* is an attractive bushy shrub. Leaves are 2-4 together in tight pseudowhorls, blades 40-110 x 25-65 mm, ovate apex shortly or long, acuminate, margin entire, flat; lateral veins 4-6 per side, curved ascending and joining; slightly prominent beneath densely netted. Flowers are an open umbel of 2-5 unscented florets. The corollas are bicoloured with a greenish-yellow tube and red-orange lobes [Sleumer, and observation in Olinda, but *cf* Argent who describes the colours as yellow and orange]. The corollas are 30-45 x 25-35mm, tubular below and expanded and oblique at the lobes.

### **In the Ground**

In Olinda *R christi* is quite floriferous and easy to propagate and grow. It may be small but it flowers young. And the flowers are both distinctive and attractive. I have only seen the plant in pots or on fern logs save that, in my own garden, it is quite happy in the ground. I think most Melbourne/ Olinda plants derive from material brought back from PNG by Bill Taylor.

Because, in recent times, a number of plants have been produced from cuttings there will be no difficulty in planting some in the ground at NRG, when the plants are bigger, without worrying whether they risk being overrun by weeds or sprayed with weedicide- as does happen, from time to time.

### **Hybrids**

According to Argent, *R christi* forms a natural hybrid, with pink flowers, with *R beyerinckianum*. There is a hybrid "R Christi" that I thought won the small hybrid class at a recent Vireya Show but I cannot find this name in the Register nor remember its colour. In the Vireya Show 2005 *christi x zoelleri* won this class. My photo shows this is red.

**R superbum** [March and May 2006 Newsletters]. I reported in May that I was concerned whether my winning entry at the Vireya show was *R superbum* as I had believed and I would send a sample for testing. I did send a sample of the flower and leaves to Lyn Craven. Lyn kindly looked at the sample under his microscope. He reported the sample was *R konori*. I suspect that many members' plants had a common origin to mine. Genuine *R superbums* are, likely, vary rare in Melbourne and at Olinda. I have brought back photos of the genuine article from Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

SWB

## **2006 PACIFIC REGION INTERNATIONAL RHODODENDRON CONFERENCE**

### **BURNIE, TASMANIA, FROM 20<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER.**

The programme includes garden visits, guest speakers, dinner, transport, etc.  
There is also a follow up tour to Cradle Mountain and the West Coast, finishing in Hobart for the Hobart Rhododendron Show

All enquiries to Graham Simpson  
20 Hambleton Avenue, Burnie, Tasmania, Australia, 7320  
Phone: 03 6431 6505

### **POLO SHIRTS**

Tom Noonan is organizing an order for navy blue polo shirts with a small ARS logo (*Rh. viriosum*) in red. They are a good quality and look very smart and sell for about \$21 each. There are also caps to match @ \$6.

All enquiries to Tom Noonan, Phone: 03 9752 2211 (Vic)

### **BENCH DISPLAYS**

#### **20 May 2006**

The one redeeming feature of this display was that it was full of blooms, even though there was only a small number of members exhibiting and one of those, Simon Begg, was in Scotland at the time of the meeting. The vireya section was full and colourful. The top exhibits came from Alan Walker, Simon Begg and Murray McAllister. Simon won the species classes with *tuba* and *konori* -the latter being voted exhibit of the night. Alan won the small hybrids with an unusual *macgregoriae* hybrid. Murray won the large hybrids with a *javanicum* cross and the plant section with 'Eastern Zanzibar'. Elizabeth Xipell took three seconds with *tuba* and *zolleri* in the species classes and a *loranthiflorum* cross in the small hybrids.

As was to be expected there wasn't a huge quantity of azalea blooms. The places went to Len Sloggett, 'Mardi Gras', Alan, 'Purple Glisters' and Murray 'Temperance'.

There were only 2 asiatic entries.

There were a few nice entries in the non rhododendron category. Inga Hammer was selected as the winner with a good, large autumn display.

#### **16 June 2006**

Again there was a good, full display, but by few members. It is a pity more members do not enter. This month there was a change in the successful exhibitors. John Quinn won the vireya species classes with the same 2 species that won in May, *tuba* and *konori*. Elizabeth Xipell won the small vireya hybrids with a good 'Highland White Jade' and also gained a place with 'Penny Whistle'. Bill Taylor had places in large species, *brookeanum* small hybrids, 'Red Tubular' and large hybrids, 'Simbu Sunset'. Michael Hare was placed in the large species, *laetum*, and large hybrids, 'Arthur's Choice' x *superbum*. Alan Walker won exhibit of the night, and the large hybrids, with 'Buttermilk'. The entry may well be 'Gardenia Odyssey'. Len Sloggett's 'Tropic Fanfare' won the plant section.

In the Azalea section Bill Taylor was a winner with 'Piewacket' and 'Osta'. Murray was placed, again with 'Temperance'.

In the Asiatic Section there were three classes each with a single entry and winner. The winners were Alan, Bill and Len.

There were again a nice lot of entries in the non rhododendron section. Len won with a large bromeliad.

**Len Sloggett**

**NEIL PUDDY'S ADDRESS AT THE 2006 INTERNATIONAL VIREYA SEMINAR IN HAWAII**

*.[ The first installment appeared in the May 2006 Newsletter. The remainder appears here.]*

**PROPAGATION TECHNIQUES**

The techniques that Neil has adopted have evolved in response to his unique market. His plants have been sent to Thailand, Taiwan, Tahiti, New Caledonia, Belgium, Hawaii, with some plants being forwarded to mainland USA. He has also had recent enquiries from Spain, Columbia, Laos and China. Neil jokes that he never though he would be cash cropping in Columbia! He is interested in spreading this section of the genus *Rhododendron* around the globe, or within Australia. He takes a special interest in species, because of the unique possibilities they hold. He also observes that the natural habitat of *Vireya* is declining, largely as a result of continued population growth, and climate change in their county of origin.

He has adapted to his markets, by producing small plants in 90 mm pots which can be sold **straight off the bench**, then packed and posted domestically within Australia, or sent overseas; still in the original pots, in many cases.

He outlines his process as follows:

- (1) Choose new growth, just hardened off, with terminal bud swelling. Leave only 4 –6 leaves on the cutting. Reduce these leaves by half.
- (2) Wound the cutting, and then dip in a root-stimulating hormone. The wound into the cambium layer is approx. 1 inch long, scored down one side. Recent batches were left with whole leaves, and were not wounded. He observes that cut leaves, or tissue is often the entry point for *Botrytis* fungus.
- (3) Place each cutting in a 90 mm pot containing only perlite. Perlite makes the job of bare rooting for export easier. The growing medium may also be more sterile than alternatives.
- (4) On top of the perlite, place a small amount of slow release fertilizer, perhaps 1/3 of a teaspoon of seedling Osmocote or Nutricote. Keep this to the side of the pot, and not close to the stem of the cutting. This helps give 3 or 4 shoots right from the start. The perlite, of course, has little or no nutriment alone. (Seedling Osmocote is available from Fertool in 10 kg packs).
- (5) Place on a bench under mist.
- (6) Plants retained for growing on, are repotted into 140mm (6 inch) pots. The mix he uses at this stage is :  
2/3 large pine-bark (approx. 1 inch), 1/3 small pinebark, or “fines”, which are approx. ¼ of an inch in size.

This gives a **well-drained** medium, with lots of **air space** for those water sensitive roots, and is reported to have anti pathogenic properties. Try **not to over pot**, and always ensure that you can see the top of the root ball from the previous pot. Covering these delicate air-loving surface roots too deeply can result in losses.

N.B. Some of the very large leaved hybrids can be potted into larger pots; missing a stage in their progression to 300 mm (12 inch) tubs as they tend to be able to cope with the additional moist mix around their roots. Perhaps transpiration rates are higher from these large leaves?

- (7) At all stages of potting-on, he adds a slow release fertilizer, and then supplements this with monthly foliar feeds of macro and micronutrients. In the sub-tropics, *Vireya* grow throughout the year, and therefore benefit from a regular supply of nutrients. Pine bark

alone offers little nutrient, particularly if it is uncomposted, so a regular foliar feed is essential. If some hybrids develop inter-veinal yellowing, Iron Sulphate is added to the mix.

- (8) **Tip pruning** is used to limit those hybrids which appear to be heading straight up. If a foliar feed is timed to coincide with pruning, more lateral buds can be encouraged to provide a better, bushier framework.
- (9) To **rejuvenate** older leggy plants, break a tall branch just above a swelling, or node. This is not a cut, but a break, and the stem is left dangling in the breeze. About 3 weeks later, you will notice a break of new shoots below and around the node. When these are about 2 inches long, remove the broken branch.
- (10) Plants are grown on in a shade house covered with 50% cloth, which allows sufficient light, but protects from excessive heat. **Haloed Gold**, and **Summer Glow** are two that are suitable for growing in full sun, and no doubt there are others.

### ***CONTROL OF DISEASE***

Neil is interested in using products that are environmentally sensitive, and less likely to impact on his own health.

(i) For **leaf fungus**, he uses *Ecocarb*. This is essentially *Potassium Bicarbonate*. It is low in toxicity, and alkaline in nature, which therefore inhibits spore germination on the leaves. If it is applied with *Eco-oil*, a canola oil product, the Carbonate is more easily fixed to the leaf, and therefore more effective. Local gardeners make their own brew using bicarbonate of soda vegetable oil and a small amount of detergent. This is cheaper, and also effective on leaf fungus.

(ii) *Eco-oil* also assists in **aphid and lace bug** control. However, since this works by smothering, remember to spray the underside of the leaves too.

(i) In the event of an outbreak of **phytophthora** in a period of very warm and wet weather, he uses a product called *Agri-fos*, which is phosphorous acid. This should not be confused with phosphoric. This product is used extensively in the avocado industry to control root disease, and is safe to use.

(iv) **Mealy Bugs** appear occasionally in low infestations. Neil uses the cryptolemus lady-bugs, which feed on them. Having introduced these to his nursery in 1999, they still exist in sufficient numbers.

(i) Some growers spray with a 10% milk solution for **mildews**. A strong coffee solution made from the leftovers of plunger brews will deter **slugs and snails**.

(ii) E. White, in Vireya Vine, also suggests that aspirin can be used to good effect. (See No. 78 March 2006.)

Neil will happily deliver Vireya plants to you through the mail. They usually arrive in A1 order. He has been growing Vireya for about 15 years, and now has a collection of approximately 200 hybrids, and 43 species. His nursery is at Woolgoolga, N.S.W., which is close to the border of Queensland, on the coast so that he can still take time to pursue his second love, surfing!

You can contact him at 1 Creek Road, Woolgoolga NSW.

**Telephone** 0266541612

Visit his Vireya gallery at [vireyaworldwide.net.au](http://vireyaworldwide.net.au), and select from there.

### **A GARDEN TOUR THROUGH ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, WALES AND IRELAND**

Marcia and I were privileged to visit some magnificent gardens on our recent trip overseas. We arrived in Edinburgh in mid May and left from Glasgow at the end of June. Our digital camera worked overtime so we can give a virtual tour of some magnificent gardens. In this issue we



cover the first and last days of our trip. These were, respectively, visits to Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh and “Glendoick”, the garden and nursery of Peter, Patricia and Ken Cox, world renowned rhododendron experts.

### **Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh**

This is a magnificent, and historical, garden that we visited on 17 May. I contacted George Argent in advance to arrange a visit to the Vireya Research Facility which has, possibly, the best collection of vireyas in the world. Vireyas are my own particular interest.

George has recently retired, along with David Chamberlain. According to an RHS appeal for donations to fund a PhD course in hardy rhododendron taxonomy, this is the first time there is no active rhododendron taxonomist working at RBGE since George Forrest’s expeditions began. The objective of the appeal, at a practical level, is to preserve George and David’s experience and RBGE’s rhododendron standing. George has recently published a definitive book on Vireya rhododendrons and, clearly, is still working at RBGE even if not for a salary. Very generously George gave Marcia and I a morning of his time of which we took full advantage.

We were, first and foremost, tourists and, in the world of taxonomy, lay-people. I photographed Vireya species in flower as fast as I could click the shutter and Marcia could number the photos against the list of Vireya species in White Smith and Lucy Sorensen’s anthology of Vireya articles published by the American Rhododendron Society. There were a number of species not on White and Lucy’s list, but the system worked very well and saved our wasting George’s time while we laboriously wrote out descriptions.

I labeled all the photos while our recollections were still fresh, cut a CD and sent it back to Melbourne. It has been loaded on the Society’s computer. On our return I discovered that our photos had been presented to a general meeting and a Vireya group. Marcia wanted me to supply the CD after our return, so we could present them! Our photos don’t compare with those on Chris Callard’s website but, for all that, enable us to refresh our memory and to compare plants growing indoors in Edinburgh with those we grow outdoors in Olinda. Above all we can see how far ARSV [and ourselves] have to go to complete a comprehensive species collection. However, assuming we can access seed, the objective is achievable.

I set out below the photographs I took in RBGE of Vireyas. Members who want a copy of the CD can have one for the cost of the CD plus postage. Plants that particularly struck my fancy are noted with an asterisk.

*nieuwenhuisii\**, *polyanthemum\**, *vitis-idaea*, *superbum ssp.ibeles*, *retivenum\**, *caliginis*, *christianae*, *flavoviride*, *commonae*, *armittii\**, *gracilentum\** [red, pink and purple], *leptanthum var.warianum\**, *herzogii*, *superbum* [pink form], *luraluense*, *scabridibracteum*, *macgregoriae* [yellow form], *intranervatum\** [not in flower, but the foliage caught my eye], *javanicum ssp. brookeanum var.moultonii\** [a very striking yellow], *javanicum ssp. brookeanum\** [the red-orange we know], *lambianum\** [white], *womersleyi*, *bagobonum* [the real thing, in contrast to ours proclaimed a hybrid], *robinsonii\** [yellow], *praetervisum\** [very vivid pink, George says violet-I have a small one not yet flowered], *verticillatum*, *album*, *citrinum*, *acuminatum\** [red- and striking foliage-I have a small un-flowered one], *baconii*, *buxifolium*, *himantodes var. lavandulifolium*, *rubineiflorum*, *anagalliflorum*, *yeliotii\** [a deep red], *suaveolens*, *leptobrachion*, *javanicum*, *meliphagidum*, *renschianum*, *impositum*, *sessifolium\**, *rarilepidotum*, *madulidii\** [white], *javanicum subsp.schadenbergii*, *quadrasiense var. marivelesense*, *quadrasiense var.intermedium*, *taxifolium\** [white], *rousei\** [white], *viriosum*, ‘Triumphans’, ‘Princess Alexandra’ [a Veitch hybrid, but, in Olinda, very prone to rust], *aequabile\** [much more compact plant than I grow], George Argent, Seed propagation and growing on, *hellwigii* hybrid and *konori*.

Of course I also photographed other plants and these are also on the CD.

After leaving George we toured the remainder of the Garden. We were particularly taken by the small glass house that housed alpinists. This was not because they were not hardy but because they needed protection from wind. Better to visit in May, on a sunny day, than in January, we thought. The alpinists included a number of daphne species that were new to us. *D. petraea* was in full flower. Outside the alpine house, also in flower was *D. tangutica* and *D. cneorum*.

We walked into the new garden being prepared to honour the late Queen Mother. The Queen is to open it later in the summer. We were evicted, having failed to notice the 'closed' sign, but not until after we had had a good look around.

Of particular interest to me was a very large specimen of *Nothofagus solandri* covered in flower. Marcia and I are trying to make a collection of these plants as they grow well in Olinda. We found that *Nothofagus* was frequently grown everywhere we went, though mostly South American and occasionally New Zealand varieties. Australian varieties were a rarity and then only *N. cunninghamii*. Marcia was impressed by a woodland said to promote wildlife. A large cat thought there was a good prospect of a meal and refused to be chased away!

The Conservatory was a very pleasing building from the outside with stands of 20<sup>th</sup> century discoveries; Ginkgo *biloba* and *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* and a fossil tree immediately in front of it. Inside, besides the areas not open to the public, including the Vireya Research Facility, was a fern display, an arid display, a whole room for *Victoria amazonicus*, the giant water lily, [this room is replicated at many European Botanic Gardens, Berlin and Kew among them] and a temperate room in which there were a number of well presented Vireyas. Species in flower represented here included *aequabile*, *konori*, *superbum* and *polyanthemum*.

RBGE also has a magnificent collection of Asiatic rhododendrons and azaleas. I particularly noted, and photographed in flower *R. wardii* and *R. anwheiense*.

We had lunch at the café in the middle of the garden. A very much more appealing set-up than Café Vireya at NRG, even when the latter was open.

We concluded our visit at the gift shop and retail nursery. A common feature of nearly every garden we visited. The retail prices of quite common, and quite small, rhododendron hybrids was astonishing. A 'Percy Wiseman', in flower 60 cm tall for 93 pounds! Australian retailers facing competition with Bunnings would be green with envy- if the plants sell.

**Simon Begg**

### **GLENDOICK GARDEN CENTRE**

On the last day of our trip to the UK and Ireland we were suddenly inspired to try and find Glendoick Nursery, owned by the Cox family. A visit to the Glasgow Visitor Information Centre, where we were assisted by an exceptionally helpful girl, divulged the fact that it was in Perthshire and accessible by train and bus, though the bus would only get us there, we would have to find our own way back to the train! We decided to worry about that small difficulty later!

An hour on the train through lush green fields, canola crops, towns and dairy farms brought us to Perth, an old but well preserved station. The bus was a puzzle. No one we asked seemed to know where our bus stopped. The large bus station had a manager who had never heard of our bus and gave us a phone number to ring just as it pulled into the bus station! This particular bus run is only served three times a day and we were not going to be able to catch it back to Perth. Well, there is always a taxi!

Another lovely drive and we arrived at Glendoick Garden Centre. Similar to any garden centre in Australia it is on a main road, has a large car park and everything for sale that a garden could

possibly need. Inside the entrance there is a gift section, garden books, ornaments, tools, chemicals, clothing and fabulous displays of flowering annuals, orchids, succulents, etc.

After a wander around inside we moved outside to find the rhododendrons, Simon's camera at the ready. We were now thinking that an article for the Newsletter would be a good idea. Thinking also that permission to photograph would be wise I went in search of the person in charge who turned out to be Kenneth Cox himself. Kenneth was agreeable to our taking photos and writing an article and offered to drive us up the road to see the propagation nursery and the five acre Woodland Garden beside his house. As we had arrived unannounced we considered ourselves fortunate to meet him and had a brief chat before he dropped us off at the nursery and raced off to a meeting.

We spent a very pleasant two and half hours wandering around the Woodland and house gardens. We did not go into the nursery area but could see part of it in an old walled garden and several acres of in-ground rhododendrons in another area. Most of the plants at the garden centre are in pots but we had noticed some rhododendrons wrapped in hessian.

The Woodland garden is a rhododendron enthusiast's heaven. Though not many were in flower late June there were enough to keep the camera ticking over for quite awhile! Various other exotics, trees, shrubs and perennials were scattered amongst the rhododendrons. Of particular interest to me were the many species/hybrids of *Meconopsis*. There were blue, red, pink, yellow and white poppies in flower at the time and more to come. Amongst the rhododendrons there were some with excellent foliage like *Rh. bureavii* giving year round pleasure and several very small alpines like *Rh. forrestii*. Too many more to name!

Paths meandered through the masses of shrubs, over small bridges, along the creek and past the folly of castle ruins. I took the opportunity to contemplate the scenery on many of the well placed seats while Simon was enjoying the photography.

Nearby is the 18<sup>th</sup> century house where Kenneth and his family live. The house garden had a lovely bank of *Kalmias* in reds, pinks and white, *Rh. occidentale* in full bloom, masses of deciduous azaleas in flower, unusual lilliums, fabulous deep blue *Geranium pratense* and many plants we did not recognise. One interesting specimen tree was *Nothofagus obliqua* a deciduous beech from Chile.

We walked back to the garden centre and had a very nice light lunch at the café overlooking the 'Pagoda Garden' before taking a closer look around. The 'Pagoda Garden' is laid out as a display area. As well as plants of all varieties for sale there are gazebos, outdoor furniture, water features, a playground and lots more garden equipment. One area of rhododendrons was closed off while a person covered from head to toe sprayed them with an insecticide. The rhododendrons are separated into species and hybrids and set out on benches with large descriptive labels showing a photo, cultivation notes and frost tolerance. There are more species than hybrids and the few *Maddenias* have instructions suggesting they be grown on the west coast only to take advantage of the warm gulf stream. One section is devoted to 'Glendoick Specialties'. This has miscellaneous shrubs and some rhododendrons. Kenneth had said that they do grow some vireyas but people insist on trying to grow them out in the open and lose them to frost.

After an enjoyable time we rang for a taxi to return to Perth station. Trains go hourly back to Glasgow at that time of day and many people commute between Glasgow and Perth in these comfortable, clean, fast inter-city trains.

**Marcia Begg**

**NATIONAL RHODODENDRON GARDEN, OLINDA**

Glen Maskell has taken up the vacant position as Team Leader. Welcome Glen.

Glen is a regular attendee, along with Walter Lobbezoo, at morning tea on Tuesdays [volunteers' day] He wants to know the Society's objectives at NRG. We have specified collection and preservation of Rhododendron species and, of course, maintenance and display of the Garden in prime condition. Glen, with a background that includes Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, mentioned provenance. We were able to say that careful records of provenance of accessions were kept and, because of Tom Noonan's work on the database and Alan Keper and Elizabeth Xipell's work on GPS location of plants, provenance was being addressed positively.

In recent times Parks' staff has been tidying up the Karume Bowl. The volunteers spent some time assisting. Other Tuesdays, recently, have been spent tidying up the big leafed Rhododendrons, pruning, relabelling and removal of fallen branches. Some are starting to flower.

**SWB**

**CALENDAR 2006**

<b>Saturday August 12 Vireya Group at NRG</b>	<b>1.30 pm</b>
<b>Friday August 18 at Nunawading, Annette Zealley- Progress of NRG Master Plan</b>	<b>8 pm</b>
<b>Friday September 15 at Nunawading, [to be confirmed]</b>	
<b>Leo Kerlewyn- Michelia of New Zealand</b>	<b>8 pm</b>
<b>Azalea Show [Display- not a competitive Bench]</b>	
<b>Saturday and Sunday September 30 and October 1</b>	
<b>Tuesday October 10 OR 17 [to be advised] Carnegie Garden, Woodend</b>	
<b>Saturday October 14 Vireya Group at NRG</b>	<b>1.30 pm</b>
<b>Friday October 20 at Nunawading, Andrew Raper-</b>	
<b>Promotion and presentation of Rhododendrons</b>	<b>8 pm</b>
<b>Rhododendron Show Saturday-Tuesday November 4-7 at NRG</b>	
<b>Friday November 17 at Nunawading - To be advised</b>	<b>8 pm</b>
<b>Friday December 15 at Nunawading -To be Advised</b>	<b>8 pm</b>
<b>Xmas Party- To be Advised</b>	