

THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2007



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SEPTEMBER

SATURDAY 15TH, 2.00PM, GENERAL MEETING, THE VIREYA ROOM
(previously Vireya Café), NATIONAL RHODODENDRON GARDENS. SPEAKER –
Andrew Raper – Reticulata Camellias followed by a bus tour of the Gardens.

OCTOBER

**FRIDAY 5TH-SUNDAY 7TH, ABC GARDEN SHOW AT CAULFIELD
RACECOURSE.**

**SATURDAY 6TH, AZALEA DISPLAY STARTS AT NATIONAL
RHODODENDRON GARDENS**

**SATURDAY 20TH, 2.00PM, GENERAL MEETING, National Rhododendron
Gardens.** Speaker – Laurie Begg – Deciduous Azaleas followed by bus tour of the
Gardens.

NOVEMBER

**SATURDAY 3RD-TUESDAY 6TH, RHODODENDRON SHOW, NATIONAL
RHODODENDRON GARDENS**

**SATURDAY 3RD & SUNDAY 4TH 10.00AM-4.30PM GARDEN & ARTS
FESTIVAL**

**SATURDAY 10TH, 1.30PM, VIREYA GROUP, NATIONAL RHODODENDRON
GARDENS**

**FRIDAY 16TH, 8.00PM, AGM, NUNAWADING, SPEAKERS – John & Carole
Quinn – Trip to USA**

DECEMBER
CHRISTMAS LUNCH -

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN.

Dear Members,

It was a pleasure to welcome our long time colleagues Ken & Lesley Gillanders to our August monthly meeting. Ken showed us numerous slides of Chile and spoke particularly about the plants of South America from the high Andes right down to the very south, the home of Gondwana plants particularly the Northfagus Beech and its species.

We have had the carpets cleaned in the meeting room at Olinda, as part of an ongoing project to upgrade the facilities there. Longer term considerations, include a coat of paint, blinds on the windows for slide shows, furniture, suitable plates, cups & saucers for meetings. The longer term consideration for the building at Olinda, is replacement by Parks Vic, but that is some years away depending on the Budget.

Please note the forthcoming General Meeting at Olinda on Saturday September 15th from 2.00 pm. This meeting will replace the normal meeting at Nunawading on Friday 21st September. We will have a further General Meeting at Olinda, on Saturday 20th October from 2.00 pm

Progress is continuing with the Memorandum of Understanding between ARS and Parks Victoria. We expect to have a number of meetings to sort out the detail before coming up with a final draft. The MOU will set out rights and privileges of both parties to avoid problems that could occur.

National Council meets in Hobart on 26 October, at the beginning of a weekend of activities and garden visits. There will be the traditional Rhododendron show in the magnificence of the Hobart Town Hall and plenty of reasons to purchase new plants while National Council and members are there.

We are looking at venues for the Christmas lunch in early December. If you have any good suggestions, please advise.

Regards,
Neil Webster.

THE SPECIES COLUMN.

chrysodoron -Subsection Boothia. [photo p 12]

Rhododendron *chrysodoron* has probably the deepest yellow flower in the Genus. It needs good drainage, light shade, and moisture in Melbourne, and generally does better in a pot. The plant is compact, growing to 1 – 1.5 metres tall, and is a good parent when crossed with the species in the Maddenia series.

Name:

The name means “Golden gift”, in reference to a plant donated to the Edinburgh Botanic Garden by the Earl of Stair.

Distribution:

N.Burma and W.Yunnan (2000-26000 metres), either epiphytic or on rocky slopes.

Characteristics:

There are several other yellow – flowered species in this Subsection, namely; *boothii*, *leptocarpum*, *megeratum*, and *sulfureum*, however, *chrysodoron* has a smaller calyx but larger leaves and flowers.

Selected Forms.

A.M. 1934 Flowers clear yellow.

Hybrids:

This has not been used extensively as a parent in England because it is not frost – hardy. I only know of two hybrids available here:

Chrysomanicum (*chrysodoron x burmanicum*). This is an excellent yellow hybrid for the Dandenongs but invariably dies a slow death in Melbourne. This is something of a mystery because both parents will survive in my area.

R.W.Rye (*chrysodoron x johnstoneanum*) This is a lighter yellow than Chrysomanicum but much easier to grow.

My own cross of *dendricola x chrysodoron* resulted in pale yellow flowers on a hardy plant. Not worth naming, but might be a good parent.

Where to See These Plants:

There are two plants of *chrysodoron* in the rock garden which put on a spectacular display in late August to early September. There are also some older plants in the Maddenia Walk which are not free – flowering due to too much shade.

Alan Kepert.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

R stevensianum [photo p 12]

Section VII Euvireya, subsection iv Malesia [according to the classification proposed by Dr George Argent *Rhododendrons of Subgenus Vireya* **RHS 2006 217-8**]; a shrub to 60 cm mostly epiphytic.

Name

According to Argent named after Peter Stevens, a botanist, who worked in New Guinea and made considerable contribution to vireya research both with collections and observations, including plants of this type

Origin

Widespread in Papua New Guinea from 2000-2300m in the Eastern Highlands, Southern Highlands and Enga Province. Argent says *R stevensianum* has been cultivated since 1990. Murray McAllister and Bill Taylor obtained cuttings from Graeme Smith at Pukieti in August 2003 sourced from Oz Blumhardt's collection from Mt Gahavasukar.

Description

[taken from Argent *op cit* but not in full] **Twigs** rounded, densely brown scaly, internodes 1-2cm. **Leaves** in tight pseudowhorls, with 2-3 full sized leaves and sometimes one or two smaller ones. **Blade** 15-35 x 10-25 mm, ovate, occasionally broadly elliptic, apex obtuse to rounded; margin usually entire, flat. **Petiole** 2-3 x 1-1.75mm weakly grooved above. **Inflorescence** of solitary [rarely pairs], hanging flowers. **Corolla** 28-33 x 22-28 mm, dull purple; tube 20-25 x 6 x 9-10 mm strongly curved.

Comment

The flowers, being mostly solitary, are not overly conspicuous but caught my eye sufficiently last autumn, on an ARSV plant I was minding in our drought, to write this note. Unfortunately I neglected to photograph the plant in flower, so the photo is of a solitary flower on Lyn Craven's plant.

R stevensianum is easy to propagate and grow and, though small growing, forms an attractive, compact, shrub. This summer I hope my original plant, now in a 200 mm pot, by then 3 year old, will flower. Already I have more than half a dozen cuttings from it.

SWB

SPRING IS IN THE AIR

The gardens are coming to life with the warmer weather we have had over the past few weeks. The Magnolias are in full bloom and the large leaf Rhododendrons have been looking splendid.

The Daffodils are in full swing, they are the great survivors of the drought, with no water over summer and are perfect for our modern gardens. I am looking forward to the cherries this year and hope that the weather is kind to us so they last longer than a day.

The Garden Explorer started operation this week so our drivers are learning the ropes and starting to understand the gardens. It is a pretty big ask of them to learn so much so quickly but it amazes me how we can adapt to such situations. It is great for them to have input from staff and members of the ARS as it helps them deliver a better commentated tour to the public.

This year we have a couple of large projects and challenges in the gardens.

Marcia is working on the Garden & Arts Festival on cup week end and has done a fabulous job bringing people and organisations together. I think the work she has done will create a great atmosphere. I hope the ARS will benefit from the hard work put in.

The Friends of the Gardens have donated money for interpretative signs and the ARS was successful in applying for a Community Grant to do with interpretations on large sign boards. I am presently trying to gather together some people who are interested in interpretations to plan the process.

Things that we will need to brainstorm are –

- Who are our typical visitors?
- What is our target market?
- What are the messages we want to get across?
- Are there any stories to tell?
- What will they take home with them?

A key to this is to try and imagine being a visitor to the gardens and what you would like to experience, but also how will you go away with some unexpected new experience or knowledge.

I believe this project is probably one of the most important that we undertake in the next few years as it has a major effect on the visitor experience. The biggest challenge is to sort the information because not all information should be interpreted onto large sign boards. Large sign boards are great for the bulk of the people but there are also guided walk notes, information booklets, technical notes, MP3 walking tours and probably many other interpretation methods. The key to sorting this information will be who we are targeting.

I hope you are enjoying this spring and hope it rains a whole lot more. (I need to fill my new tank).

Glenn Maskell, Team Leader NRG

WHY VIREYAS? THE EVOLUTION OF AN ENTHUSIAST.

This is the story about why I like Vireya rhododendrons – in preference to other plants and other hobbies in general.

When I was little, around 7-10 yrs old and growing up in Sydney on the northern shore of Botany Bay, I was a pretty ordinary kid – playing with my brother and local mates, running everywhere, fighting, climbing and falling from trees. We had the usual range of pets – dogs, cats, birds, fish. School wasn't particularly important. I went fishing regularly on Botany Bay. Passing through my teens and into early twenties, school and eventually University became important and so did girls.

I married while still at Uni and a few years later with two kids we settled down on an acre and a half at Mt Dandenong and I began to take an interest in things natural – trees, the garden, animals, self sufficiency. I went through a wide range of hobbies and interests and learnt a little about many things. Bee keeping - the little buggers sting when they are angry, the hives have to be carried to the flowering trees, I learnt to recognize different eucalypts, and that selling honey doesn't produce much money. Goats – males are smelly, goat kids are cute and friendly, goat wool (cashmere) is difficult to collect, they eat everything they can find but prefer blackberry bushes. Dogs – border collies love to run, all day and every day, breeding females attract many unwanted males, small-scale breeding, raising and selling of pups isn't profitable. Vegetable gardening – needs lots of weeding, digging, pest eradication, the yield isn't worth it, you can buy more carrots for \$2 than you can grow for \$50. Fruit and nut trees – pruning and pest management is even more difficult, birds try to eat everything, fresh walnuts are infinitely preferable to the dried things we get from California, plums straight off the tree are fantastic, 6 kiwi fruit vines produce an awful lot of kiwi fruit, chestnuts are a great source of pocket money for kids. Plants and flowers – cymbidium orchids have muddy colours, dendrobiums are too small, catlyas are too delicate, ferns are nice and delicate but become boring quickly, bonsais eventually become boring. Palm trees are lovely and there are many varieties.

Living in an environment filled with large bushes that get covered with flowers every year and not knowing anything about them was frustrating so I joined to local Rhododendron Society to learn something. Wild enthusiasm at first about everything – mollis azaleas, big leaf rhodies, plant collectors in Western China and the Himalayas, western US rhodies, dwarf rhodies. Collected as many big leaf rhodies as I could get (*grande*, *macabeanum*, *giganteum*, *protistum*) but quickly ran out of room to plant them all. Decided to focus on a more manageable group, the Maddenia, and again collected as many as I could find. Undertook numerous hybridizing programs and raised many plants. I even wrote a small book about Rhododendrons in Australia. I became more and more involved in the Society and the management of the National Rhododendron Gardens at Olinda.

Then I discovered Vireyas! Bright clean colours in a wide range, manageable sized plants, many varieties, at least one species from Australia and the rest from nearby areas. Again I began collecting as many as I could find, and I began hybridizing among them – to produce something different, something that was my own. Initially I loved the variations among the species and wanted them all, then I gradually began to appreciate the hybrids and was fascinated by what people could produce and how they planned what they would cross with what. I developed a clear preference for larger-flowered vireyas over the smaller-flowered ones. I dreamed of going on collecting expeditions to New Guinea.

I collected many plants and produced many seedlings. Took the vireyas to Perth in Western Australia (leaving all the big leaf rhodies, maddenii, orchids, ferns, kiwi fruit, fruit and nut trees and bonsais behind), then brought them all back to Melbourne as my work dictated where we lived. Everything being in pots made the shifts difficult, but enjoyable as well. I took over several shadehouses at La Trobe University and expanded the hybridizing program. Raised lots of seedlings in the Uni's hot-box and kept records of what I was doing. Eventually I had over 2500 plants occupying 5 shadehouses with automatic watering, but because of overcrowding lots of diseases and pests – which drove me to despair.

When we moved into an apartment in the city I persisted with the vireyas out at La Trobe Uni but now I had to travel to even see them. I learnt to be less possessive. I gave most of the plants to the Society for planting in NRG at Olinda and kept only about 200 for planting in beds around our apartment block. I still produce vireya seed but now I give it to others to raise and distribute.

My interest in vireyas is maintained now by the few plants I have left, in seeing what others have without being covetous, in learning more about the group and in spreading news to others who are interested – hence The Vireya Venture newsletter. I am still fascinated by the beautiful flower colours and forms in vireyas and that many have beautiful scents, but I am also interested in leaf shape and colour, plant habit and presentation. They are a most amenable group of plants. I am following up on a particular hybridizing experiment and watching as many differences appear among a collection of over 100 seedlings from one particular cross. I take many photos of flowers and plants – they are easy to manage and don't need watering.

As I get older, less agile and cannot do the work needed to maintain a large collection, I am thankful that we have developed a manageable approach to vireyas – I concentrate on the enjoyable aspects and not on the work. Vireya rhododendrons provide this enjoyment and many a night I lay awake thinking about them. What more can one want for a hobby?

Graham Price
lithic01@bigpond.net.au

BENCH DISPLAY

JULY 20th

Our display was very light. There were quite a lot of members who forwarded apologies for non attendance, and this was probably a good reason why we had a lack of blooms. Many classes didn't have any entries, however the quality was good. Simon Begg contributed all the places in the vireya section except for a second place for Elizabeth Xipell who had *radians* in the small species class. Point scorers for Simon were *tuba*, 'Pendance', 'Red Tubular', *konori*, 'Penny Whistle', 'Glen's Surprise' and 'Vladimir Bukovsky'. A good wide selection. Once again *tuba* was chosen as the exhibit for the night.

Simon also won first and second with 2 un-named blooms in the evergreen azalea section. John Quinn's 'Marion' x *delavayi* and 'Pink Delight' were good Asiatic blooms and gained points for him.

AUGUST 17TH

The warmer weather is bringing the flowering season forward & we had 13 exhibitors, this was very good. Barry Stagoll won exhibit of the night with *javanicum* x *brookeanum* a large flowered Vireya. Andrew Rouse & Bill Taylor gained points with *leptanthum* and *sessilifolium* & Andrew's plant *mac* x *rubineifolium*. *Sessilifolium* & Red Tubular were Bill's Other winners were Elizabeth Xipell with Pennywhistle & Alan Walker with a plant Jazz Band. Please note Simon Begg's *tuba* didn't win this month although it still came third in it's class. The only Azalea entries were in the evergreen hybrid class. Bill won with Osta from Len Sloggett's Orchid Gem & Orange Delight.

There was a good display of Asiatics but in writing this report I found that some were given points although they were entered in the wrong class. Mike Hammer won 2 classes with *montroseanum* & a *macabeanum* hybrid. Alan Kepert won the Maddenia class with *veitchianum*. Alan must have a good collection as he always does well in this class.

The small hybrid class was awarded to Simon with Seta.

The non Rhodo display was also quite good with Cynthia Sladen winning with - wait for it - *Tecophilaea Cyanocrocus* Var. *Leichtlininii*, [Blue Chilean Crocus].

VIREYA GROUP 8TH SEPTEMBER

We were pleased to be joined today by Anne O'Connor, 'botanical artist extraordinaire'. Anne showed us her latest prints of a vireya, 'Just Peachy', an Asiatic rhododendron and a fabulous one of colourful nasturtiums. These will probably be on sale in the Gift Shop at the Rhododendron Gardens sometime in the future. Anne herself will be demonstrating her art at the Garden & Arts Festival on the Saturday and Sunday of Cup Weekend.

Simon Begg led the meeting by going through the list of species vireyas thought to be in Australia on a spread sheet. One column showed species available from sources outside the ARSV shade house either immediately or within a year. Many others will become

available but in a longer timeframe. The aim is for all VG members to hold a collection of as many species as possible and to propagate them for release to other members. Interestingly, with drought again looming this summer, most opted to defer collection of available plants until after rain next autumn.

Mike Hammer demonstrated the simple and cheap construction of a fogger for propagation. The cost is about \$100 and will be satisfactory for an enclosed area of approximately 2m x 1m which would hold quite a few cuttings. A full method of construction will be written up in the November Newsletter. At the next meeting on the 10th November Mike will demonstrate the construction of a simple hot bed for propagation.

After a cuppa Alan Walker led the group on a walk to see a very overgrown, neglected, group of mostly hybrid vireyas high on the west side of the lake north of the rock garden. These had been planted when banished from the propagation house about 20 years ago when it was decided that house should function as a propagation house rather than a display house.

All members are very welcome to participate in the Vireya Group activities. Come along on Saturday 10th November at 1.30pm. We would love to see you.

MNB

JOTTINGS SEPTEMBER

A LITTLE BIT OF FUN

- Pick the number of times a week that you would like to go out to eat (more than once but less than 10)
- Multiply this number by 2 (just to be bold)
- Add 5
- Multiply by 50
- If you have already had your birthday this year add 1757.... If you haven't add 1756.
- Now subtract the four digit year that you were born.
- You should have three digit number.
- The first digit of this was your original number. (i.e., How many times you want to go out to restaurants in a week.
- The next two numbers are YOUR AGE ! (Oh YES, it is !!!)

A CALL TO ALL HYBRIDISERS: I had a phone call from a lady in Sydney asking why there are not more vireyas in paler colours, e.g. soft pinks, mauves, creams, as these colours would more readily blend into the colour schemes of garden beds with mixed shrubs, perennials, etc. She has a point. Nurseries often find the harsher reds, oranges, yellows are not bought to the same extent as pinks, whites, creams and blues which all fit in well together. Not everyone has enough space, or the desire, to have a bed of brighter colours. Is it a male thing to aim for hotter less delicate colours and large flowers? Middle-

aged women are the predominant plant purchasers. Perhaps someone will take up the challenge.

EDITORIAL APOLOGY: It is gratifying to find that many people read and enjoy the Newsletter. Soon after the postage of the July Newsletter Simon had a phone call from a member pointing out a spelling mistake. The member was Mrs Craig Faragher, the widow of Craig Faragher, who produced *Rhododendron vireya* 'Craig Faragher' from *R. gracilentum* x *R. jasminiflorum*. The mistake made was to put a double 'r' in Faragher. Thank you very much Mrs. Faragher it is a pleasure to have feedback from the members especially when they have such personal involvement.

SHOWS: The Editor and I visited two shows in one Sunday afternoon in August, both for interest sake and to see how other specialist plant societies do it. We visited the Orchid Show at Gardenworld in Springvale Road followed by the Camellia Show at Mt Waverly Community Centre. Our report follows.

ORCHID SHOW AT GARDENWORLD: Massive. There is no other word to describe this event. Gardenworld is a huge attraction in its own right. We have not been there at a weekend recently but even on a week day it is busy, busy, busy, drought or no drought. But at least parking is relatively easy. On the Sunday afternoon of the Orchid Show finding a place in the huge car park was really difficult. Finding a seat in the restaurant for a cappuccino was likewise difficult. The Orchid Show was in a purpose erected marquee at the back of Gardenworld's usual sale orchid display. There was an entry queue. The way in was marked by a blue line, lest we got lost. Inside the display was awesome. Every variety of orchid in countless groups and sections. We did not even try to count the different Orchid Societies each with their own little share of the overall Show. Australian natives; species and hybrids. What we, *Rhododendron* growers are used to but on a scale we doubt our Society has ever seen, and certainly not for 30 years. The way out led back into Gardenworld's orchid sales area through a 'sales' tunnel where Orchid Society members [presumably the professionals] had their special plants for sale.

We succumbed and bought a number of small plants that, should we live long enough, might flower in our lifetimes. Orchids are small plants not requiring much space or water. Hence, we assume, their present popularity. This Show, however, is not an overnight thing. All these Orchid Societies are not brand new. Gardenworld, too, is attuned to the times. Drought tolerant plants, pots, minerals, bonsai, attractive presentation, information, advertising, attractive restaurant and parking. It looks a thriving business. Patrons were not predominately middle aged to elderly. There might have been a *rhododendron* somewhere but we did not see one.

CAMELLIA SHOW AT MT WAVERLY. We arrived with just sufficient time to view the exhibits before presentation of the major prizes. Remember Mt Waverly Community Centre is where, until this year, our Society held its April *Vireya* Show, in conjunction with the Fern Society. The Camellia Society held its Show in conjunction with Mt

Waverly Garden Club. They filled the whole of the space the Centre had available. The Show display filled the room the Fern Society had in April last year. Single Camellia flowers don't take much space. But there was a full display of 'other plants' covering a wide range and of a high standard. The numbers of Camellia exhibitors made us very envious. Children, too entered their sections in numbers showing there are new members coming. Watching the prize winners collect their prizes did show that Camellia exhibitors are mostly middle aged at least, but, we thought, a bit younger than ours. We could not help but be impressed.

OLINDA IN THE SNOW: Olinda, usually, has a snowfall a year. Every 5 years, or so, it has a reasonable fall. This was the snowfall year. On 18 July. Snow, when it is rare, is a great attraction.

Inga Hammer went to NRG with her camera. A selection of her photos are on pages 12 and 13. More have been loaded on to the Society's Picasaweb site. Click on the address on the back page.

The Vireya planting at NRG survived the snow well. The species were unaffected and the hybrids suffered only minor damage.

MNB

CULTURAL NOTES SEPTEMBER

Now is the time to look for pests and diseases:

Vireyas:

Rust, Mildew. Watch closely at any spots on leaves. Then look at back of leaf for any orange spots. This is rust. Spray with wetttable sulphur and copper oxychloride.

Asiatics:

Red Spider and Lace Wing.

These can sneak up on you, now that the overnight temperatures are increasing. So be very observant and at the first sign of any moving insects, spray with insecticide, then again in 3 weeks.

Bill Taylor

CALENDAR 2007 and HOBART RHODODENDRON SHOW

By this time of the year the Calendar fits on the front page and is not repeated here. However Hobart hosts National Council and the ARS AGM this year. These events take place in Hobart on Friday 26th October. In conjunction Southern Tasmanian Branch is holding its Rhododendron Show in the Hobart Town Hall. A magnificent setting.

SWB



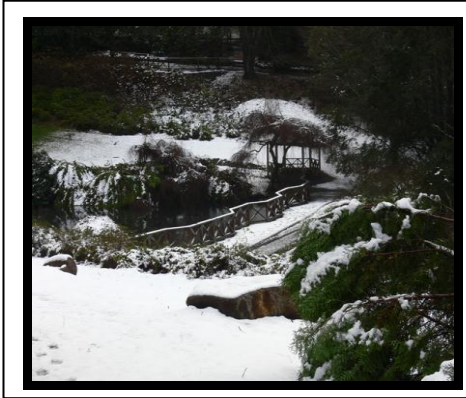
R crysododon NRG Rockgarden
Alan Kepert photo 2007



R stevensianum August 2006
Lyn Craven's glasshouse



Banksias and Proteas at NRG in the Snow, July 2007
Inga Hammer photo



**Snow at the NRG July 2007
Inga Hammer Photo**



**Lyrebird at the NRG
Inga Hammer Photo**



**Vireya Hybrids in the snow at NRG, July 2007
Inga Hammer Photos**

EARLY HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Ralph Sangster

Forward

I joined the Society after the 1960 Spring Rhododendron Show because I appreciated the Society's vision of creating a major garden and I wanted to be a part of it.

The politics of the break-away Rhododendron Group of the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society are well recorded in the early editions of the Journal.

This history relates to the blood, sweat, stress (and even injuries) shed by the Society members in turning their vision into a reality.

Birth of a Garden

In 1960 a small committee of members, Bramley, Coles and the District Forest Officer, Westcott, looked at two possible sites in the Dandenong Forest area in the Monbulk and Olinda areas. Both of these sites had been worked by potato growers. Both sites were suitable and the choice was slanted towards the Olinda site because of the Yarra Valley view. Subsequently, it came out that there was only one site as the Victorian Government wanted open space developed as a protection of the Olinda township against bush fires.

In 1962, 100 acres of the Olinda State Forest was gazetted to be set aside as a Rhododendron Park by the Victorian Parliament.

In 1961 money was allotted to fence in the top 16 acres with a light 16 foot wire fence. Along the top fence a row of *aborium* seedlings was planted – a gift from Boulters Nursery. In the Summer of 1962, a forest fire swept up the creek gully destroying trees etc and we were left with a massive clearing problem. In the Autumn of this year a circular path around the top clear 8 acres was made starting from the entrance gate. Also, it was the start of planting deciduous trees and hybrid rhododendrons along the east fence corner with a Saturday afternoon volunteer force. The lack of planning for this event was obvious. This led to my suggestion that the volunteer labour be split into four Saturday groups led by a team leader. This idea worked for approximately six months until volunteer enthusiasm fell away and we planned work for whoever turned up.

The Shire extended and graveled the track from the main road, past the Garden entrance to the Olinda Falls Road. Also it provided a proper entrance to the gate. To provide water to the new plantings a 1,000 gallon tank was erected on the south-east corner, the supply being the golf links pipe line which cut through the Garden. This unauthorized tapping of the water line brought down the wrath of the Forest Officer and the supply was cut off. However, all was not lost as the tank stand was enclosed with iron sheeting,

a door fitted and it became a storage shed for volunteers' tools. So, it was the first building built on the Garden site. The first appliance bought was a large builders' barrow.

Committee of Management

The Government having gazetted the "Rhododendron Park Olinda", it was necessary to form a Committee of Management responsible to the Forest Commission for public land. The first self-appointed Committee of Management consisted of members of the Society, the District Forest Officer and the Lilydale Shire engineer.

In 1963, the Society elected its members and I was elected as chairman of the Committee of Management. Realising the legal situation, the members of the Committee of Management did meet on a regular basis and ratified what the Society's responsibility was for the development of the Garden. An annual report of the Committee of Management was presented to the Forest Commission for the years through 1963 to 1970.

In 1971 I resigned from the Committee of Management to go overseas. From this date a mentality gradually developed that the Committee of Management should "rubber stamp" what the Society's Committee submitted for approval. Maybe this attitude arose because in the early days we made too much of the philosophy that the Society could develop a public garden without Government assistance.

In the late 1980s, the neglect of the Committee of Management's role of responsibility in what was done in the Garden was one of the reasons for the Forest Commission taking over the control of the Garden.

Garden Development Funds

From the start of the Society's accounts, a separate fund was shown as the Development Account within the Society's accounts. With funds being obtained from Government sources, these funds were shown as the Society's income and debited to the Garden Development Account.

In 1986 I received a call from the Forest Commissioner that the Society would not receive funds from the Government and that any future funds for the Garden would be paid into the Committee of Management (COM) bank account and I should let the Forest Commission know the COM account number. The reason for same was for Government audit purposes. At this point in time the COM had no bank account. The Garden operated from this account in the next two to three years. This new arrangement left in the Society's Development Account approximately \$100,000.00 - \$80,000.00 of Government money and \$20,000.00 from a legacy held over but not spent. As I was no longer a member of the two committees, I do not know what happened to this amount in the Society's accounts.

Garden Development 1962-63.

The tree fellers left huge stumps about 8 feet high from ground level when they cut down dead trees on the top 16 acres which were an eye sore and a major problem to remove. It happened that an explosive firm was looking to try out a new type of explosive and they were invited to experiment on the Garden stumps with much success and no cost.

The relationship with the Forest Officer was mended and the large dead gum trees in the top acres were felled by the FC and their logs pushed into the head of the creek, causing a headache for their disposal in later years. It was a year when how the development could proceed with little cash and relying on how much volunteer labour we could rely on for help, was discussed. The first major task was to clear out the bush fire debris from the creek. The lightly burnt shrub was man-handled out and the medium size trees cut down with a chain saw and hauled out by Michael Spry with his tractor and Peter Daman with his converted bren gun carrier. In delightful Autumn afternoons all the rubbish was piled into a heap and the volunteers had a great bonfire. These were the days when great friendships were made and "bon amie" prevailed.

As part of the development of the Garden, a link track was made starting a half chain from the entrance and running parallel from the road fence to the bottom fence of the 16 acres. In this area was planted a clump of early rhododendrons donated by Como Nurseries and a bed of *nuttallii* seedlings from Alf Bramley. An avenue of flowering cherries was planted down the centre of the 8 acres donated by Remington Nurseries.

In 1964 it was agreed that as a step forward there should be erected a pre-fabricated steel shed on the Garden site to store the Society's show property, which, at that time, was stored on the Society members' properties, and to provide shelter in inclement weather for volunteer workers. The expenditure required, its size etc took a lot of discussion and by 1965 nothing had been done.

In 1965 we heard of a good size storage shed being sold at a decommissioned explosives factory at Ballarat. It was considered that the \$1,000.00 allocated last year was better put towards its purchase and modernisation. An approach was made to a director in charge and a low figure of \$500.00 was given for the building. A project team under the leadership of Lindsay McCallum, an engineer, was formed to plan how the purchased building would be modified to provide a show hall, a meeting room, kitchen and toilet facilities. At this stage, the finance available was \$1,500.00 and the estimate for the work required was three times this amount and it was an act of faith some-how over the next two or three years that the work visualised would be completed. To raise money, Geoff Hay, an accountant, agreed to sell \$200. five year debentures and another \$1,000.00 was raised. Also, the Ladies' Auxiliary got busy with a number of fund raising ideas. For a start, we budgeted for an expense of \$3,500.00 on the project and over the two years it took to complete to stage 1, a very tight rein was kept on all expenditure.

Major earthworks at the top end of the Garden were required as the Society's Committee desired that the nursery exhibits should be installed in the Garden. The

engineer in charge of the factory division demolished the building steel work at no cost for us. A great friendly help from the director of Mayne Nickless at no cost to us, brought the steel work from Ballarat to Olinda and also provided a day's work erecting, by a mobile crane, the structural steel frame of the new building.

Our finances would only allow for concrete on the meeting room and kitchen areas which was laid in one morning by volunteers. Wherever possible, fixed prices by contractors were used enabling us to control expenditure. The roof and wall cladding were of asbestos sheeting done by a contractor. A last minute decision was to clad the inside walls of the meeting room with timber and the construction of a stone stairway leading to the meeting room. The cost of these items were met by a generous contribution of \$400.00 each from Fred Coles and Harvey Ansell.

The Society got a first class club building for around \$5,000.00 which had a value of around \$20,000.00. The building was put to very good use for over twenty-five years and is a tribute to many hours of work of volunteer engineers, carpenters, electricians, plumbers and labourers who contributed to its construction.

The building and the November Show were opened by the Society's President, Lindsay McCallum, in the presence of five State Ministers and other dignitaries. That year we had one of the best shows. The sun shone, the nursery's display was a colourful bank of rhododendron plants and the crowds poured in through the gates. In the hall, the competitive space was not short of exhibitors. The floral artists showed their skill in decorative vases around the hall. To cap it all there was a free celebrative evening meal put on by the Ladies' Auxillary.

Planning for Planting

The idea of planting in a systematic way never entered our heads in the early days of 1962-63. It was a question of planting where they might be looked after. As the Garden began to take shape, this altered and one of the first projects suggested to the Committee was that there should be a collection of Wilson's fifty Kurume azaleas. A start of a collection of three each of seven named varieties was established in a bed at the top of the Garden.

The present azalea bowl came about from someone reading about a music bowl being constructed in bowl shaped land with an orchestral pit at its bottom as the focal point. The idea stuck. "Why not construct a symphony of colour". With this idea developed the planting of Kurume azaleas with the pond as its focal point in its present site. What is interesting is that the same idea of an azalea bowl was being constructed about the same time in Windsor Great Park. As the top of the head was cleared, we planted a group of ten 'Countess of Haddington', an idea copied from a display of the beautiful rhododendron in a gulch in the Dunedin garden. Unfortunately, this rhododendron was very susceptible to blight and after four years it became an eye sore and was pulled out. Subsequently the area was planted with *R. fortunei*.

At the spring source was planted plants of *R. williamsianum*, an idea copied from the Bodnant Garden, UK. At the perimeter of the pond was planted *R. yakusianum*, a cutting from the plant from the Saville Garden in UK. As a backdrop to the top creek area were planted seedlings, raised by members, of the large species.

A suggestion that a floral bed of red, yellow and blue groups of rhododendrons against the west fence by using what small rhododendrons were available in the nursery, such as 'Felix de Chevalier' and 'Susan'. For some years the effect was good but in the long run the growth habit of the rhododendrons used was a mistake.

Steering Committee

As a follow on from the planning of the building project there was the formation of a steering committee with the responsibility to initiate new development projects within the Garden with the necessary plans for action and finance, then to place before the two committees these plans for discussion and when approved, put into action. This steering committee consisted of Lindsay McCallum, chief engineer Vic Railways and wife Reba, a floral artist, Neil McKenzie, project engineer MMBW and wife Val, secretary, Ralph Sangster, section product manager ICIANZ and wife Lillian plants person.

During the period 1966-1971, this group met regularly in one or another's homes. Later in this period, Keith Moody, chief engineer CRB, joined the group. It was a period during which we broke out of the first 16 acres heading for the centre of the Garden which called for much constructive thinking and action.

The number of plans which were made and their success or failure should be another story.

The Ladies' Auxillary

In 1963, Edie Sayers suggested to the Society's Committee, that a ladies committee should be formed to raise money for the development of the Garden. Little did he know that the Auxillary would be playing a major part in the Society's activities. Lillian Sangster was asked to organise such a group of ladies. So a group of about 30 ladies met in the Garden who agreed to form themselves as an auxiliary of the Garden, with lots of ideas of how to raise money.

In its existence of 25 years, the Auxillary raised \$100,000.00. Raising cash was not their only achievements. In 1963-64 when volunteers were in short supply for maintenance in the Garden, they took the task of weeding and watering the young plants in the Garden site. Such keen gardeners as Jean Whitelaw, Ruth Funder, Joyce Whitehead, Reba McCallum and Lillian Sangster come to mind. They helped to run successful shows, social events etc. They had definite ideas for planning the kitchen, rest rooms and meeting room which were incorporated in the plans for the club building. Their members were a source of potential members of the Society's Committee and at one stage represented 40% of the Committee.

Their last effort was providing cash and planting ideas for the Lyre Bird Garden. It is a memorial to their place in the development of the Garden. Alas for want of attention, its tail feathers have fallen apart!

Shows

The first four shows – 1960-61 were held in hired marquees on the local football ground and, although a good success, the cost of hire did not give a good financial return. For the 1963 show, a plastic covered light steel frame was constructed by volunteer labour. The design was that it could be erected and dismantled so that it could be used again. Because of the thin numbers of volunteers who were prepared to do this task in the evening after shows, this operation became a pain in the neck.

In 1966 this pavilion structure was erected on the Garden site and solved the volunteer problem. This temporary structure served its purpose until the early 1970s when it was replaced with a permanent structure. The visual impact of colour stretching for some 300 odd feet was stunning!

These spring shows were a great success in that they were a showcase for the Society's activities and an introduction to the genus rhododendron.

Sadly, the rhododendron trade nurseries in the 1980s withdrew their support for the show and there is no longer the excitement of such shows.

Garden Nursery

In a bank above the creek, a light pipe frame shade house was constructed for a large number of two year old struck cuttings of azaleas and rhododendrons. These plants were mainly the efforts of Tom Elliot. These plants were laboriously watered by carrying buckets of water from a spring at the creek head. In the Winter of 1963 a heavy snow fall collapsed the light shade house frame, making it necessary for a much sturdier framed shade house to be constructed. Since that date only light falls of snow have been experienced.

Even with the good rainfall of the Dandenongs, all small plants need water and in Summer this was an urgent requirement for growing in the Garden. A small dam was constructed by the Forestry Commission at the top spring head. The SEC electricity supply was extended from the Olinda Falls Road to the Garden fence per the courtesy of a member. The electricity supply was connected to a temporary pole in the Garden. An electric pump, given by Hebe Graham, was installed at the dam and connected to a second hand tank by the top gate and we were in the business, albeit small.

Politics

During 1963-64, the numbers of volunteers working in the Garden fell away and it became obvious that the Society needed outside help to make any significant progress. It was a question of who amongst the Society membership had access to the financial

world for assistance. Very few! For a start, the local state member, Bill Borthwick, was approached several times but the answer was always the same, the Government had no money for such projects. In 1965, members of the Government started to show interest in the progress of the Garden development. With the start of the construction of the building and plants growing rapidly, something of progress could be seen and we were able to talk with confidence of the present and future plans of the Garden development. During the spring of 1965, with unscheduled meetings with Gil Chandler, Minister of Agriculture and Frank Moulds, Chairman of the Forest Commission, I was able to discuss, with plans, the Society's proposed development of the Garden. These meetings, followed up by discussions over the lunch table, paved the way for Government assistance in future years.

The Government interest was further pushed in the Spring of 1966 with the opening ceremony of the new building when five members of the State Cabinet attended the opening ceremony, and were afterwards entertained with something stronger than tea, at Dr Cox's residence nearby. The dividend from these meetings was a Government grant of \$3,000.00 for a tractor and in 1971 for the construction of a toilet block - \$10,000.00.

GENERAL MEETINGS

JULY 20TH:

Terry Nisbet from the Iris Society wears many hats including Show Manager, Past President, Secretary and speaker. He gave an interesting well prepared talk predominately about Bearded irises. The word 'iris' is plural and means 'rainbow' in Greek. Iris are native to the northern hemisphere, often in the desert areas, e.g. Egypt and the Mediterranean, where they enjoy the cold and frost. Unfortunately he had none for sale as it was not the right time of the year to lift them. His slides showed some beautiful hybrids in massed displays. He pointed out the important features and floral parts and some cultivation hints.

Bearded irises are drought tolerant and need to have their rhizome on the surface of the soil in a position where they will receive winter sun for three quarters of the day. The soil should be fertile, neutral to slightly acid and moist during flowering but dry after flowering. Plants should be lifted and divided every year for best results, the old rhizome discarded and new young rhizomes planted in groups that will form flowering clumps in the following year. Fertilize in February with nine month osmocote or Dynamic Lifter mixed with the soil. Builders lime or dolomite is good but not if planted with rhododendrons. Do not mulch. If the old leaves become unsightly they can be cut into a fan shape but this is not necessary. Each rhizome should produce three flowers per stem. When hybridised the results can be seen in two years but it is rare for them to cross pollinate in the garden. Rhizomes cannot change colour but some, like purple, are very

strong growers and should be kept separate from the slower growers or they will be smothered.

As most members have some irises in their gardens they asked many questions of Terry which showed the amount of interest in the topic. There were a lot of questions about Japanese irises also.

The Iris Show will be held at the Mt Waverley Community Centre over Cup Weekend.

AUGUST 17th

Ken and Leslie Gillanders flew over from Tasmania especially to speak at our August meeting. Twenty-eight members attended to hear about one of their many overseas trips exploring and collecting plants. Chile was the chosen topic for the night. Ken started by showing a map of South America with the route marked.

The first few slides were of the Nevadas de Putre where they travelled by bus for a day trip leaving their accommodation at sea level and arriving at their destination 3,500 metres above sea level. This sudden elevation made it necessary to carry oxygen in the bus in case of altitude sickness. On arrival the scene is one of desert with ancient Candelabra Cactus and not much else scattered over the gravelly soil. The growing conditions are so poor that the cactus grow very slowly and are many years old.

Ken is particularly interested in the *Nothofagus* (Southern Beeches) and showed photos where the larger species of *Nothofagus* were being logged. Autumn was the time of year of this visit and the *Nothofagus* forests of deciduous varieties were in full colour. Especially brilliant golds in autumn are the *N. alessandri* which are not easy to come by in Victoria. Forests of *Nothofagus* species covered the mountains, the trees getting smaller and windswept nearer the southern areas of Tierra del Fuego.

The flora included many genera common in Australia - *Eucryphia*, *Tropaeolum*, *Viola*, *Hydrangea*, *Fuchsia*, *Drimys*, *Lapageria* – some being plants of Gondwanaland, but most being different species.

Glaciers filmed from the air looked like huge freeways heading off into the wide blue yonder. One photo showed Lesley cooling off on a large block of ice beside a glacier!

After supper Mike Hammer showed slides of Ken and Leslie's garden in Tasmania taken when he visited there in October last year. Ken helped to judge the rhododendrons on the bench and there was an excellent display with good competition. Barry Stagoll won the flower of the night.

MNB

AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY - Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z)
NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z), shall be held on Friday, November 16th, 2007, at the Whitehorse Horticultural Centre, 84 Jolimont Road, Forest Hill (Melway Ref: 62 G4), commencing at 8.00pm.

The business of the meeting shall be:

- a) to confirm the Minutes of the last preceding Annual General Meeting;
- b) to receive from the Committee, reports upon the transactions of the Branch during the last financial year;
- c) to elect Officers of the Branch, and the Ordinary Members of the Committee;
- d) to receive and consider the Statements of Income and Expenditure and Assets and Liabilities for the last Financial Year;
- e) to elect an Auditor; to elect a Delegate to represent the Branch on the National Council for the two year period of 2005/2006 and 2006/2007;
- f) to conduct such other business of which notice is given in accordance with the Branch Rules.

All positions of Officers of the Branch shall fall vacant under Rule 22.(3) and are to be filled by election.

The Officers are: President, Vice-President (1), Vice-President (2), Secretary, Treasurer.

Three positions of Ordinary Committee Member Positions fall vacant by rotation for three year periods in accordance with Rule 23.(3). Retiring Officers and Ordinary Members of Committee are eligible to stand for re-election.

Please note that **ONLY** financial members of the Branch are allowed to vote at elections - **ONE Vote per Membership**.

Nominations of candidates for election shall be in writing, signed by two members of the Branch and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate, and shall be delivered to the Secretary of the Branch not less than seven (7) days before the Annual General Meeting.

Note that the Nominee, Proposer and Secunder must be financial members of the Branch at the time of signing.

Nominations, which close at 5.00pm on Friday, November 6th, 2007, should be sent to the Secretary, A.R.S. - Victorian Branch (Inc.), P.O. Box 92, Olinda, Vic. 3788.

A copy of the "Statement of Purposes", and the "Rules of the Australian Rhododendron Society - Victorian Branch Incorporated (A5896Z)" may be obtained on application to the Branch Secretary.

A Nomination Form is attached to this Notice.

MN Begg
Honorary Secretary,
A.R.S. - Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z)

OLINDA GARDEN AND ARTS FESTIVAL

CUP WEEKEND – SATURDAY NOVEMBER 3rd AND SUNDAY NOVEMBER 4TH 2007 10.00am-4.30pm.

Plans are well under way. We have had a good response from the invitations and application forms that were sent out.

The hall will hold the Rhododendron Show and competition as usual and a fern and orchid display and sale area by B & T Ferns from Silvan.

The previous 'Café Vireya' will hold an Art Show and sale presented by the Sherbrooke Art Society who are well known for the high quality of their art work. It is hoped that Anne O'Connor our well known member who is a botanical artist will demonstrate her talent.

Also:

- ❖ The CFA will raise well needed funds with a BBQ and will also hold a display of their equipment.
- ❖ Food vendors will sell cappuccinos, tea and snacks, hot baked potatoes, New Zealand Ice Cream and more.
- ❖ The Healesville Sanctuary will display artefacts and information about native animals.
- ❖ Specialist nurseries will have plants for sale.
- ❖ Wine tasting and sales by a local wineries.
- ❖ Live music by local artists.
- ❖ Vintage cars and Vintage Machinery
- ❖ Local Primary Schools will have display their art work.
- ❖ Children's activities will include a potting up bench and on Sunday Parks Vic are organising other activities. Also on Sunday there will be a free animal farm.

Entry includes a bus tour of the gardens. ARS members and a guest will have free entry and bus tour as usual. Children are free. Sunday is Family Day .

Members are asked to come along and invite friends and relatives to come and enjoy a pleasant day in the hills. Bring your children and grand children and encourage them to become members of the ARSV. Bring or buy a picnic lunch and relax on the lawns. Please give the enclosed flyer to a friend or pin it on a community notice board in a post office, library, milk bar, etc.

MNB

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Australian Rhododendron Society Vic Branch Committee 2006-7

President – Neil Webster , Ph 9859 3622	Val Marshall – Ph: 9803 4434
Vice President No. 1 Mike Hammer– Ph: 9755 2176	
Vice President No. 2 Vacant	Bill Taylor -- Ph: 9754 8275
Treasurer – Neil Webster, Ph: 9859 3622	Tom Noonan – Ph: 9752 2211
Secretary – Marcia Begg, Ph: 9751 1610	John Quinn – Ph: 5968 1027
Simon Begg – 9751 1610 (Newsletter Editor)	Alan Walker- 9726 8836
Len Sloggett – Ph: 9808 6484	

There are 2 vacancies on the committee. Volunteers will be welcomed.

SOCIETY PICASA WEB SITE

Visit <http://picasaweb.google.com/ARSVic> for the latest pictures.

Additions since the July 2007 Newsletter are :

- National Rhododendron Gardens in the Snow
- Vireya Species arranged alphabetically

For the latest on the “Beechmont” Picasaweb site visit

<http://picasaweb.google.com/simonwbegg>

SWB