

THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2008

Published by the
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COMING EVENTS

JANUARY

SUNDAY 27TH

Australia Day BBQ 5.00pm.

BYO everything.

FEBRUARY

FRIDAY 15TH General Meeting Nunawading– 8.00pm Mike Hammer, Digital photography. Mike has mounted historical photos for display in the Hall. He will have all sorts of tips for taking and restoring photos.

SATURDAY and SUNDAY 16th and 17th FERNY CREEK
HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY “Plant Collectors’ Sale and Garden Expo” at
FCHS Garden, Ferny Creek

SATURDAY and SUNDAY 23RD and 24TH – ‘Garden Living Expo’.at
Tesselaars Tulip farm in Silvan. Volunteers are required to help on the Friday to
set up and to man the stand Saturday and Sunday. Please ring Marcia Begg if you
can help.9751 1610. We will have plants for display and sale.

MARCH

SATURDAY 8TH, 1.30pm Vireya Group meeting at Inga and Mike Hammer’s
garden. 2 The Crescent Sassafras 3787. Ring Simon Begg to confirm. 9751 1610

MARCH - FRIDAY 14TH (not the 3rd Friday) 8.00pm General Meeting
Nunawading- Peter Geneat: Bulbs.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As this is my first President's Report, I will endeavour to follow the K.I.S.S. principle and keep it short sweetheart.

I would like to thank the Committee members who have put in such a long, hard year of work on behalf of the Society. Special thanks must go to Neil Webster, who continues to excel in his duties as Treasurer and to Marcia Begg, who went above and beyond in her role as Secretary. Thank you both very much for your efforts.

I wasn't going to mention the weather as everyone is talking about it and there is nothing we can do about it anyway, but after surviving three continuous days of over 40 degree heat leading up to and including New Year's Day, I just want to let you all know that I did a lot of stamping my feet and saying "oh dear" (or words to that effect) to no avail. It is still darn hot and no real let-up in sight. My attempts at "rain dancing" have not been very successful to date. I will keep trying, though. (Actually, my next door neighbour came tearing out during one dance, thinking it was an earth quake!).

The Society hosted its Christmas function at Chatterley's on December 15, when 40 members enjoyed a very nice lunch made even nicer by the rain that continued to fall all day. Thank you to Marcia Begg and Alan Walker for organising the day.

There have been a number of changes on Committee during the past year, including Bill Taylor's decision to step down as Show Manager. Bill has undertaken this role for quite a long time now and has decided it's time for a change. Many thanks Bill, your organisation and management of the Shows will be sadly missed. John Quinn has agreed to step up to take on the challenge, with Bill's help on the sidelines, and we wish John all the best in his new role.

There are a number of new initiatives on the Agenda for the coming year and members are asked, where possible, to take on a more active role by participating in some of these events. Details will be printed in this Newsletter as they arise and if you feel you can help out in any way, please put your hand up and let whoever is in charge of the project, know. There are a lot of members out there with lots of different talents which the Society could utilise. It would help, also, if ideas for Guest Speakers at our General Meetings could be notified to the Committee. It is also hoped that more Social events can be planned, including garden visits. Again, suggestions from members would be appreciated.

Our Newsletter Editor, Simon Begg, is always looking for newsworthy items for publication, if you have something interesting you would like to pass on, then please, contact Simon (and Barry Stagoll, "The Rhododendron" journal Editor) and make their lives a lot easier. It is no easy task trying to put out Newsletters so any articles that don't have to be dragged out of people are always welcome.

Well, so much for the K.I.S.S. principle! One final duty and that is to wish one and all a safe, prosperous and very, very, wet 2008.

Regards,

Carole Quinn.

THE SPECIES COLUMN.

RARE SPECIES IN THE RHODODENDRON GARDEN.

The National Rhododendron Garden at Olinda has around 400 different Asiatic species.(including species, sub-species, and varieties) This is a world-class collection and it is important to maintain these, particularly the rarer species, because it is becoming almost impossible to import plants from overseas..

With Global warming becoming a reality, we need to take extra care of our rarest plants, and if possible propagate them from cuttings so we do not lose them entirely.

bayleyi—Subseries **Bayleyana**

A compact shrub in the lepidote group, this has narrow foliage which is densely scaly underneath. The flowers are purple and freely produced in Spring.

From Sikkim, Bhutan, and S.Tibet at 2400-4300 m.

Only one plant in the Garden.

championae—Series **Chionastrum**.

The species in this section are all from relatively warm climates and generally do well at Olinda. This is a leggy plant with bristly petioles and leaves. The funnel-shaped flowers are white or pink with yellow spots.

From S,China and Hong Kong

Two plants in the Garden.

concinnum var. *pseudoyanthinum*—**Triflorum Series**.

We had trouble identifying this plant which had no tag and was growing in the Triflora bed. Fortunately, there is only one species in the Triflora section with red flowers, and this proved to be the selected form mentioned in the R.H.S.Handbook. The leaves are similar to other Triflora and the flowers are a bright ruby-red. It should be a good parent for lepidote hybrids.

From West and Central China, 1500-4400 m.

excellens—Series **Maddenia, Dalhousiae Alliance**.

A recently introduced species from S.Yunnan and N.Vietnam. This is a tall shrub with bullate leaves, like a smaller version of *nuttallii*. The flowers are white, trumpet-shaped, and perfumed. (Bullate – blistered appearance, puckered).

Three plants in the Garden.

glischroides—**Glischra Series**.

This species has interesting foliage; dark green, bullate, and with intermittent thin indumentum. The flowers are white, flushed pink, with a maroon blotch.

From N.E.Upper Burma, 3000-3700 m.

Only one plant in the Garden.

lanatum—**Lanata Subsection**.

This species is a little gem, usually growing to less than 1 metre. The leaves have a thick brown

indumentum and the flowers are pale yellow with red spots. Said to be difficult to grow in England but ours are doing well so far.

From Sikkim and Bhutan, 3000-4300 m.

Two plants in the bank below the glasshouse.

***ochraceum*—Maculifera Subsection.**

A recently introduced species from China, this has excellent foliage with a woolly yellow-brown indumentum, and deep red flowers.

From Sichuan and Yunnan, 1700-3000 m.

Only two plants in the Garden.

***piercei*—Neriiflora Subsection.**

Rare in the wild, this is a low spreading shrub to 1 metre, with dark green glossy leaves and intense blood-red flowers.

From S.E.Tibet, 3700-4000 m.

Only two plants in the Garden, just below the Azalea species bed.

***recurvoides*. – subseries *Glischra*. [photo page 10]**

A compact shrub to 1 metre. Excellent foliage, glossy above with rich cinnamon indumentum below. The stems, petioles, and leaves covered in stiff bristles. The flowers are pink spotted with crimson.

From upper Burma, 3500 m.

Only four plants, in the Maddenia walk.

***venator*—Venatora Subsection.**

The only species in this Subsection, this is a medium-sized shrub with smooth leaves and blood-red flowers.

From S.E.Tibet, Tsangpo Gorge, 2400-2600 m.

Three plants in the Garden, one near the show-hall, and two in the Maddenia Walk.

***traillianum* var. *dictyotum*.—Taliensia Subsection.**

Like most of the Taliensia group, this species has excellent glossy green leaves with a brown indumentum. The flowers are white, sometimes flushed with pink. The Taliensias are generally slow-growing plants from high altitudes but do well in moderate shade.

From Tibet, Sichuan, and Yunnan, 3400-4300 m.

Three plants near the Maddenia Walk.

Propagation of these plants from cuttings is already underway with the aid of the fog propagator. Grafting may be more suitable for some varieties.

Alan Kepert.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

R rarilepidotum [photo page 10]

Section VII: Euvireya- Subsection v: Euvireya [according to the classification proposed by Dr. George Argent *rhododendrons of Subgenus Vireya* RHS 2006]. This subsection is a very big one of 88 species covering a very wide geographical area from mainland Asia, through Malaysia, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, the Philippines, Sulawesi and Maluku, New Guinea to Australia. The Subsection includes the two Australian species *lochiae* and *viriosum* .

Name

A mixture of Latin, *rari* – rare or seldom, and Greek, *lepidotum* –covered with small scales. Argent surmises the name derives from the fact that the scales easily fall off so that the leaves are glabrescent. He thinks that the name is not particularly apt.

Description [taken, though not completely, from Argent pp. 243-244]

Shrub to 4m. This species was first introduced into cultivation by John Dransfield in 1975 and it flowered at Kew in November 1983. It has been in cultivation in Edinburgh since 1981. The original collections had dark reddish orange flowers and were scented. This species was quite widely held in Australia before Murray McAllister and Bill Taylor collected species in New Zealand in 2003. I know Geraldine Roelink has this species [from where mine derived] and so, I assume, Brian Clancy also has it. One of my plants is flowering now [a single umbel] and is red rather than orange. One of Andrew Rouse's plants is covered in flowers now. They are distinctly orange. Neither set of flowers is scented. The umbel is supposed to have 6-12 flowers. Andrew's plant is in this range. My umbel has 13 flowers. I deduce *R rarilepidotum* is summer flowering in Olinda. In its place of origin it flowers from December to January.

Leaves 3-7 in loose pseudowhorls, blade 50-90 x 20-35mm elliptic, apex shortly acuminate, margin entire, flat. Petiole 7-18 x 3-4mm smooth or grooved distally, scaly.

Corolla 20-25 x 35-40 mm broadly funnel-shaped, orange often darker at the base of the tube, or yellow, sometimes scented; tube 12-20 x 8-9 x 16-18 mm .

Origin

Indonesia; Sumatra, Gajo Lands; East Coast; West Coast, Mt. Kaba. In subalpine shrubberies and on open volcanic areas, mostly terrestrial. From 1000-2500m.

Hybrids

Argent notes *R x ootrichum*, a natural hybrid of *R rarilepidotum* with *R sumatranum* . I also think I recall that Geraldine Roelink had some *R rarilepidotum* hybrids.

Verdict

Argent says ‘ As a species it grows vigorously as a compact, medium sized shrub, flowering irregularly but very freely usually in spring or autumn, and is a very worthwhile horticultural subject’. My first plant is still small but fits the description so far, save for the flowering time. I have a number of smaller plants some from the Society's Vireya Bank and cuttings therefrom. On limited acquaintance a definite tick of approval.

SWB

VIREYA GROUP

The Vireya Group will hold its first 2008 meeting on Saturday 8th March at 1.30pm at Mike and Inga Hammer's garden 2 The Crescent Sassafras.

Mike and Inga have made great progress in 'in ground' growing of Vireyas. Their plants are healthy and growing. They have a very nice specimen of *R acuminatum* that I noted. They will show us around. Also Mike will show us his fogger 'at work'.

I have benefited from Mike's fogger construction advice and built one. Marcia and I had a Sage heated propagation bed from more than 15 years ago. I have brought it out of retirement [it still works!] and added the fogger. Marcia and I call our firm 'Gerry and Co' I am about to put the new fogger to good use for 2008 propagation for me and the Group. I will describe results from 2007 at NRG's fogger and how 2008 is shaping up. Our old Igloo has gone and in its place is a new Shade House with a new propagation area at one end. I did not let Gerry and Co near that conversion.

I have some sad results to report on the species authenticity front.

First the authenticity of the *R stenophyllum* which won the Vireya Species Sash for me at the 2007 Cup Day Show has been called into question by no lesser authority than Graham Smith, Director of Pukeiti. I knew there was some question about the Vireya Bank plants [this was one] but I did try to compare it to George Argent's description and photo. This year, assuming it flowers again, I will check it out very carefully. Meantime I assume Graham is right. Thank you Graham.

Second I was excited that, what I thought was, *R culminicola* had flowered for the first time for me. I think this derived from ARSV at NRG pre the Vireya Bank. Mindful of the *R stenophyllum* problem I paid very careful attention to George Argent's book. It required curved corollas. Alas mine has straight ones. Another hybrid. More on this subject in the March Newsletter.

Third I greeted the first flower on what, I thought, was *R stevensianum* with caution. I had seen this species flower last year in January on ARSV plants that I was babysitting during the drought and on Lyn Craven's plant in Canberra. Single flowers, dull purple, curved corollas. My flower was much more handsome. Pink rather than dull purple. A 4 flowered umbel rather than a single. No curved corollas. Very attractive but another hybrid. Mind you the foliage looked in all respects identical to the ARSV plants. My plant was Vireya Bank plant. According to the label [no 46] it was, from Mt Gahavisukar sourced from [and collected by?] Oz Blumhardt. Has anyone else had the same experience? Graham Smith from Pukeiti has the history. More in the March Newsletter. I have lots of cuttings, allegedly *R stevensianum*, growing well- a mixture of sources. Will take some sorting out!

There is some good news. I have had first flowers on new plants of:

R retivenium

R rubineifolium and

R pauciflorum

And on many hybrids. Also the vast majority of my new plants [and the Group's] are thriving despite the heatwave. Olinda had no 40 degree C days, fortunately. 35C was bad enough.

The main items of business for March's meeting are:

2008's programme

A Golden Jubilee Vireya for 2010?- and what?
A Vireya Show? If so when? And where?

The first item hides many issues I can think of. No doubt many more others can bring up. Please let me know your ideas. Peter Fisher, for example suggests Newsletter should publish Bench entry photos [of the better entries] to encourage participation and interest. What do you think?

The second item just requires a selection and then some quick action.

The third item requires careful thought. Mike hammer and I have some ideas. What about yours?

SWB

RHODODENDRON LAPPONICUM

[According to the RHS Handbook, 1998 *R lapponicum* is a prostrate to erect shrub to 1m flowers 3-6 with corolla violet-rose to purple, sometimes white in March- April in its Arctic habitat. It is found all around the Arctic Circle, USA (Alaska), Canada, Greenland, Scandinavia and Arctic Russia. Ed.]

Rhododendron lapponicum, as its name implies, is from Lapland. It sounds intriguing, a rhododendron found in the Arctic. A major temperature difference from plants found in the tropics!

[A websearch leads to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. According to it, Lapland can refer to:

*The official English name of the Province of Lapland in Finland

* The English name of Swedish Lapland (the name is not in official use)

*The entire cultural region inhabited by the Sami people minority in Northern Europe

It can also refer to Norwegian Lapland or Russian Lapland Ed.]

I was asked to give a talk at the AGM of the Canadian Rhododendron Society at St Johns, Newfoundland, and then to join a group which was interested to look for *R. lapponicum* in the North of the island of Newfoundland.

In St Johns Botanical Garden, we were shown plants of *R. lapponicum* collected from various areas in Newfoundland. It really is an insignificant plant, a few 200 mm high, with a purple funnel shaped flower.

From St Johns we travelled from the east to the west coast, some 500 km on the Trans Canadian Route. Passing many wet boggy areas from melting snow we found large drifts of the rose purple flower of the azalea, *R. canadense*, a single flower stem not much to write home about, but en masse, most impressive.

On Plum Point, 200 km into the Arctic Circle, we found the first small patch of *R. lapponicum* growing in very thin soil on limestone rock. The population was about 100 plants, with evidence that a large number of plants had succumbed during the previous winter.

At Woody Point, we stopped to view an area where there was very little plant life and the acid air stank with sulphur fumes. The soil was very thin on serpentine rock, mixed with iron pyrites and

acid. Nevertheless, we were surprised to find plants struggling to grow of rhododendron, willow and juniper.

Further north around Boat Harbour, we found patches of *R. lapponicum* in flower hugging the sides of mossy banks. What with watery eyes from very chilly winds and the smallness of the rhododendron plants, we had to look twice to identify these plants.

At the most northerly end of the island, a cape juts out into the Atlantic Ocean. Here, we found a large patch of the rhododendron. To find the flower required close scrutiny as the plants were camouflaged with a covering of dead moss and grass 50mm high.

Besides Rhododendron, the trip was full of interest in seeing large areas of dwarf shrubs of birch, willow, cornus and kalmia coming into flower. Most of these plants were no more than 250mm high. Off the coast line were ice bergs floating on a smooth sea. A trip to be remembered.

Ralph Sangster

[When was this Ralph?Ed.]

NATIONAL RHODODENDRON GARDENS, OLINDA, 1967-1970

[Ralph Sangster's historical narrative continued from the September 2007 Newsletter pp14-20. Ed.]

With the finishing of the construction of the Hall and surrounds in 1967 the Planning Committee did not rest on their laurels. They still thought to expand the Garden from the first 16 acres into the next 50 acre block, i.e. about half the area allocated by the Government as a rhododendron park.

The first step in expanding was the clearing of the new area of burnt scrub, bracken and stones during 1967/68 by volunteer labour. In clearing, it became obvious that to balance the landscape of the new area that the existing boundary of the creek line between the Garden and the Golf Links needed to be shifted to take in part of the steep slope of the Golf Links. Negotiations between the two Committees of Management were friendly and the common boundary between bodies shifted approximately 3 chains up the slope of the Golf Links

This move allowed the Society to use both banks of the creek area as the first area designated for species. The first planting of the large leaf rhododendron seedlings were planted in this area. We obtained, from Boulders Nursery, a large number of their throw- out of hybrid rhododendron stock plants and this collection of plants was planted along the top edge of the new area running along the Olinda Forest Road.

All young plants need water. At first it was by buckets of water drawn from a pool at the creek head. When temporary electric power was installed to the site, the pool was made into a small dam, an electric pump installed to pump water to the top end of the Garden, which allowed a limited reticulation system for the azalea bowl and nursery.

In 1968 with the expansion into 50 acres, we started to think big of a watering system which would cope, not only of the existing plants but for future requirements of the whole area allocated for the Garden. The plan was to build a dam of such capacity to cope with summer demands of young plants, a 5,000 gallon capacity tank installed as a head tank in the top forest area, and a high pressure pump of 2,000 gallons per hour capacity. A reticulation system, drawing water from the head tank, consisting of a network of plastic piping with overhead sprinklers, was installed throughout the Garden.

The idea of a large capacity water dam which would ensure a good supply of water for fighting bush fires in the area of Olinda was sold to the Government. Money for the project became available from the Government on the basis of one part from the Society to four from Government sources. From the Garden landscape point of view, the proposed large area of water would provide a focal point in its landscape.

With the Government being prepared to allocate money for specific development projects, this changed the Society's view point of doing little by little to one of being able to plan boldly ahead in time and to develop an orderly development program.

The year of 1968 was the end of Chapter 1 of the Garden development. A chapter which fulfilled the boast of the Society's founders "we can make a major botanic garden without any assistance from the Government".

Ralph Sangster

XMAS LUNCH AT LADY CHATTERLEY'S

There were thirty-seven attendees at the annual Christmas luncheon which was held once again at Lady Chatterley's in Olinda. Following the enthusiasm of the previous year's event the committee decided 'when you are on a good thing stick to it!' Fortunately the weather was fine and sunny not the 38 degree temperature it was in 2006.

Carole Quinn our new President welcomed everyone after the first course and handed over to Neil Webster (previous President) to make the presentation to Ron Moodycliffe of Life Membership to the Society. Ron has been a member for twenty-four years during which time he has been on the committee, photographed flowers for publicity and with Marina organised the general meeting suppers for many years. (See the full Citation in the November Newsletter). Carole presented Marina with flowers and thanked her for the support she had also given the Society. Marcia Begg was presented with a Begonia with thanks for her time as secretary.

Everyone enjoyed the afternoon and some went for a walk around the beautiful Cloudehill garden.

MNB



R recurvoides
Alan Kepert
August 2007



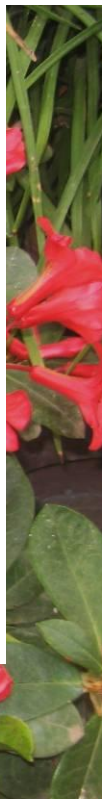
R rarilepidotum
"Beechmont"
January 2008



R fallacinum
Andrew Rouse
January 2008

Left

R viriosum
"Beechmont"
January 2008





**R “Hotel on Mayfair”
Alan Kepert
September 2007**



**R “Bold Janus”
“Beechmont”
January 2008**



**R “Choir of Angels”
“Beechmont”
January 2008**



**R “Hari’s Choice”
“Beechmont”
December 2007**

JOTTINGS

Mernda Heights Nursery: an extract from a 1960's catalogue. Do you remember it?

Mernda Heights Nursery, Old Rd, Olinda, Telephone: Olinda 67.

THE RHODODENDRONS in this Catalogue are GRAFTED & IMPORTED DIRECT from HOLLAND

New **ENGLISH**
RHODODENDRONS

THESE NEW ENGLISH RHODODENDRONS ARE MOST DELICATE IN COLOURING AND CAN BE OBTAINED FROM OLINDA NURSERY TO THE BEST LEGAL YET AVAILABLE. THEY ARE GRAFTED, WELL BUSHED, FLOWERING PLANTS CUT MANY VARIETIES ARE ACCT DIRECT TO CUSTOMER. CONSEQUENTLY STOCK IS LIMITED.

ALL ARE LARGE
5 YEAR
FLOWERING PLANTS

DAISE BRUSH - - - - - Unusual blue with black spots. A very delicate and new hybrid. Well up for best hybrid in English garden. New - from 1957/8.

CHINA - - - - - A well bushed tree of open clustered flowers with red throats. Limited stock. New - from 1957/8.

DORTMUND - - - - - Clear gold yellow and black or brown, arranged from. Outstanding results. New - from 1957/8.

Days to ... All prices are indicated and interest is added where appropriate.

Whilst Rhododendrons are becoming increasingly popular year by year, they have never yet received the preference they deserve.

GRAFTED RHODODENDRONS are very hardy plants. The care and attention of a garden lover is well rewarded by the richness of their colour and the size of the flowers.

They grow into beautiful compact bushes without the slightest tendency to become straggly or untidy in their appearance. Their profusion of richly clustered blooms is a joy to behold.

The climate of Victoria, particularly Gippsland, but excluding the North- Western area, is ideally suitable to all Rhododendrons. Tasmania is also ideal for Rhododendrons.

MERENDA HEIGHTS NURSERY offers a superlative choice of newest famous named varieties AT PRICES TO SUIT THE MOST ECONOMICAL GARDENER. These include the very latest of the. .. NEW DUTCH RHODODENDRONS in a marvellous range of colours, from

Delicate lavender to Deepest Purple. All flower almost immediately. ALSO NEWEST English RHODODENDRONS in very delicate colourings. Grown under *the supervision of the Agricultural Department* . *Guaranteed to flower, and in no time become large, vigorous, bushy plants.*

All Rhododendrons sold are dug with a complete intact root system, and to prevent damage, are wrapped in burlap.

REMEMBER -Rhododendrons up to 3 feet adjust themselves almost immediately, and do not suffer a setback.

All prices quoted in this Catalogue are at Nursery- all deliveries additional.

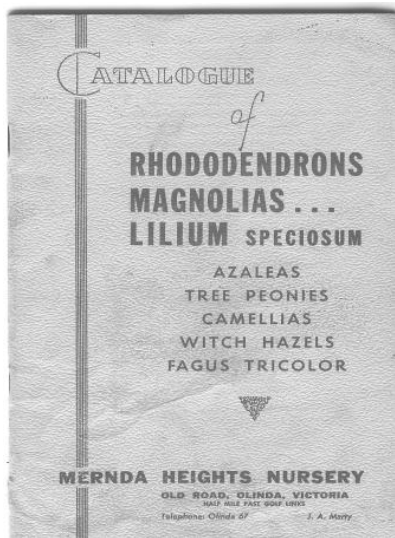
In the 1960's Mernda Heights Nursery was based at 'Mernda Heights' in Old Rd Olinda. The large garden was owned by a member of the Coles family, Rick Coles, and is still owned by his daughter, Norma Berry. The nursery was run by J.A.Marty who was the gardener. In the 1970's Marty moved the nursery to Coonara Rd (now called Olinda-Monbulk Rd) opposite the Golf Course.

It was later owned by Dick and Fran Finlay who ran it as a retail then wholesale nursery for twelve years. One year they took a family holiday to Scotland and imported many rhododendrons which had to be quarantined before they could be used for propagation. Garden Week was a huge event in those days and Dick and Fran used to dig up large trees to set up a full sized garden to display their plants.

A few years ago Fran married Simon's brother, Andrew Begg! Hence I have a loan of some old catalogues which are fascinating to read. Looking at the prices. I imagine that only the wealthy

could afford many of the plants. Some would have cost an average person a week's wage! On the page above, for 5 year old flowering plants the price was 4pounds 10 shillings. How much would that be now? 200, 300, 400, 1,000 dollars???? *Camellia reticulata*, 24-30 inches, the price started at nine pounds nine shillings! These were imported from Holland and the UK before quarantine restrictions were so severe.

I wonder how many of our members remember the nursery and could tell us a tale or two about those times. I would love to hear from them.



Untidy or functional?

As you walked around the National Rhododendron Gardens you may have remarked that some of the newer beds, especially vireya beds, look very untidy. There is a very good reason why this is so. At the Gardens we are privileged to have some delightful and entertaining native birds. Superb Lyrebirds! If you have been visiting early in the day or on a quiet autumn day you may have heard or seen one or more lyrebirds as they scratched around in the undergrowth or practised their repertoire. It is this scratching that has caused the gardeners a problem. Newly planted plants in soft soil are easily unplanted by the strong feet of the Superb Lyrebird as they search for worms, etc! Our volunteer group had to devise some method to stop this activity or the plants would have died. Someone eventually came up with the brilliant idea of using old tree fern fronds. When these are placed around the plants the lyrebirds find it much more difficult to scratch and they retire to the softer, damper soil nearer the creek. (I would like to see an explanatory sign erected.)

Brindabella Country Garden and Nursery.

John Gray has been a member of the ARS for a few years and though living near Toowoomba in Queensland he makes regular trips to the Rhododendron Gardens with a trailer to buy plants for his garden and nursery. His 4 acre English garden called Brindabella has over 400 rhododendrons including vireyas, asiatics and azaleas as well as roses, magnolias, maples and perennials and hundreds of rare and unusual exotics. In 2006 Brindabella won the International Award for Garden design.

Thirteen years ago John and his wife Sylvia started with a bare paddock to achieve their dream of a 'Nursery in a Garden' where the garden acts as a trial garden for the nursery. Now the garden hosts the Brindabella Autumn Rose Show in May each year with 2,500 roses in bloom. David Austin and the new French roses, 80% of which are fragrant, are the predominant feature at that time. In 2007 the highlight was 'Brindabella Swirl', a salmon pink rose with cream swirls.

During winter 'Brindabella Magnolia Magic' invites visitors to see over 50 magnolias in bloom. These range through white, pink, fuchsia, yellow, almost black and a special red one 'Black Tulip' that John found in Tasmania. In spring during the 'Carnation of Flowers', rhododendrons, bulbs, perennials and blossoms are at their best. There are many other exotic



plants one would not expect to find in a Queensland garden. The nursery and garden are open from Thursday to Sunday and attract plant collectors, gardeners and tourists year round.

From the Web!

A 92-year-old, petite, well-poised and proud man, who is fully dressed each morning by eight o'clock, with his hair fashionably coifed and shaved perfectly, even though he is legally blind, moved to a nursing home today. His wife of 70 years recently passed away, making the move necessary. After many hours of waiting patiently in the lobby of the nursing home, he smiled sweetly when told his room was ready.

As he maneuvered his walker to the elevator, I provided a visual description of his tiny room, including the eyelet sheets that had been hung on his window.

"I love it", he stated with the enthusiasm of an eight-year-old having just been presented with a new puppy.

"Mr. Jones, you haven't seen the room; just wait."

"That doesn't have anything to do with it," he replied. "Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged ... it's how I arrange my mind. I already decided to love it. It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have a choice; I can spend the day in bed recounting the difficulty I have with the parts of my body that no longer work, or get out of bed and be thankful for the ones that do. Each day is a gift, and as long as my eyes open, I'll focus on the new day and all the happy memories I've stored away. Just for this time in my life. Old age is like a bank account. You withdraw from what you've put in. So, my advice to you would be to deposit a lot of happiness in the bank account of memories! Thank you for your part in filling my Memory bank. I am still depositing. Remember the five simple rules to be happy:

1. Free your heart from hatred.
2. Free your mind from worries
3. Live simply.
4. Give more.
5. Expect less.

Pass this message to 7 people except me. You will receive a miracle tomorrow.

Now, STOP! Did you hear what I just said? You WILL receive a miracle tomorrow. So send it right now!"

Does this remind you of anyone?

While on a road trip, an elderly couple stopped at a roadside restaurant for lunch. After finishing their meal, they left the restaurant and resumed their trip. When leaving, the elderly woman unknowingly left her glasses on the table and she didn't miss them until they had been driving about twenty minutes. By then, to add to the aggravation, they had to travel quite a distance before they could find a place to turn around -- in order to return to the restaurant to retrieve her glasses. All the way back, the elderly husband became the classic grouchy old man. He fussed and complained and scolded his wife relentlessly during the entire return drive. The more he chided her -- the more agitated he became. He just wouldn't let up one minute. To her relief, they finally arrived at the restaurant. As the woman got out of the car and hurried in side to retrieve her glasses, the old geezer yelled to her, "While you're in there, you might as well get my hat and the credit card."

MNB

CULTIVATION NOTES JANUARY/FEBRUARY

This a good time to set to and finish all of the re-potting that you need to do.

Plants can be cut back in this period after flowering to promote more compact growth. Don't be afraid to cut back hard if you wish.

January-February is a good time to put in cuttings. Select cuttings from new growth and make sure that they are not too soft. The cutting should have a slightly springy feel when gently bent. We use a propagating mixture of two parts washed river-sand, one part peatmoss and one part perlite.

Watch for lace-bug and red spider. If any is present, spray the plants on a cool and non-windy day. Confidor is one of the safer sprays but be sure and follow the directions.

With the damper months behind us, rust and mildew should be gone by now. If there is any still present, spray the plants with a mixture of copper-oxchloride and wettable sulphur. A teaspoon of each in 8ml of water is sufficient. This mixture can be included in the Confidor spray and all sprayed on together.

It's very easy for your pots to dry out during this hot weather. Be sure and keep pots out of direct sun.

BANKSIAN MEDAL

It was mentioned in the November issue of the Newsletter, in error, that the Banksian Medal would not be presented in 2007.

The Medal was, in fact, won by Simon Begg and congratulations go to Simon on winning this award which is presented by the Royal Horticultural Society for Affiliated Societies.

Since 2001, the Medal has been presented each year to the Exhibitor with the highest aggregate of points. Any Exhibitor who has won the Medal within a period of two years is not eligible to win again until that period is up.

Winners since the Society began presenting the Medal have been, in order, as follows:

Ken Cathie 2001, Bill Taylor 2002, Simon Begg 2003, Murray McAlister 2004, Bill Taylor 2005, John Quinn 2006, and Simon Begg 2007.

Congratulations to all winners.

Carole Quinn

VOLUNTEER GROUP

The Tuesday Volunteer Group continues to be busy in the Gardens.

The last few weeks have been spent working on the watering system in the Glass House and Nursery. Water, as we well know, is in scarce supply so every effort is being made to ensure it is used wisely and effectively.

The fogger in the glass house was pulled to pieces and the whole unit was cleaned, along with the outlet pipe. It is amazing how quickly slime can build up! At the same time we gave the fan sensors a good scrub.

Tom Noonan did a lot of work in the Shade Houses to make it easier for those with the responsibility of watering. Tom cut the hoses in a number of pieces so that the difficulties associated with trying to move one long, continuous hose could be avoided. This now means that a number of sections can be watered at the same time. Thanks Tom for your efforts.

With the really hot weather we have been experiencing, Bill Taylor and John Quinn have taken on the task of checking every couple of days to make sure that the smaller plants are not drying out. A big thank you to Bill and John, also.

Apart from mulching the Vireya Species Garden and keeping checks on the Trial Garden, not much has been done in the Garden.

Help is always needed on our Tuesday work days, so if any member has a few hours to spare, perhaps they could come and join us. The work is not strenuous and all sorts of activities take place, from those listed above, to propagating, weeding, potting on etc. etc. As well as that, there is the social aspect. Lots of laughter and chatter over morning tea and lunch. So, for a good time as well as a bit of work, why not come and join us? You will be most welcome.

Happy New Year to all.

Alan Walker

SPRING IS OVER

The Christmas silly season has finished at last and life is starting to return to normal. Here at the gardens all our staff are returning from leave and we hope to get into some projects in the coming months.

I hope you will welcome our new managing curator Kristen Jackson who will be working with us. Her job will be mostly developing management plans, marketing and looking for new opportunities for us into the future. Her background is with planning so we will be educating her into the finer points of horticulture and inspiring her with the beauty that is the Dandenong Ranges Gardens. Our apprentice Matthew Batch has taken up a role at the Melbourne zoo two days a week so will be working part time with us for the remainder of his apprenticeship. This is a great opportunity for him and we wish him all the best.

I have to thank the ARS for their support in supplying Lace Wing to help control the Lace Bug Population in the gardens. In all we will be putting out over 50,000 Lace Wing throughout the gardens this year. Unfortunately our supplier had trouble building up numbers so the last 30,000 will be going out in the next couple of weeks a little later than I expected. We will be monitoring Lace bug damage in the coming months to try and ascertain how well they are working.

The community grant for tank and irrigation to supply the ARS nursery has been spent and the system is now up and working. We will be fine tuning the system to make sure the water is efficiently used over the next few weeks.

In the next couple of months I will be looking for help with getting together information for interpretations signs, I have put together a plan and will be giving people responsibility to come up with information for the signs which we will then edit down to fit the style and sign size which is still to be determined. These signs have been made possible by a donation from the friends of the gardens and a community grant that the ARS has applied for through Parks Victoria. I believe that these signs are a wonderful opportunity to add a new dimension to the visitor experience and add attraction to these gardens.

Over the summer I am hoping to get a start on the landscaping of the sensory garden going in above the pond and hope to start planting it out in the Autumn. This garden will add diversity to what we offer here and be a great attraction for people of all ages, we are planning to build the garden over the next couple of years so that we can spread the labour and budget. The first steps will be layout of paths and any hard landscape needed after which we will plan the plantings. We are also hoping to do lots of pruning in the Camellia garden and now that Craig Parsons is back from Canada I hope that he can take a lead on that project, I am sure he would love some volunteers to help him.

I would like to thank Marcia Begg and helpers for all their work on the festival, the rain chased away quite a few visitors which was disappointing, but the rain was great.

Glenn Maskell

COMMITTEE AT WORK

Your new committee got off to a good start for 2008 with our new President, Carole Quinn, calling a special meeting to discuss general housekeeping matters and, in particular, the 50th Anniversary of the ARS and National Rhododendron Gardens to be held in 2010. An International Conference will take place in October 2010 and the theme will evolve around the history of the Society, Rhododendron Garden and rhododendrons in Australia. A sub-committee will be formed and members are invited to give their suggestions for a programme that will involve international and local speakers, seminars, garden visits, dinners, etc.

Other important matters discussed included the Garden Expo at Tesselaars on 23rd and 24th February. The ARSV have been offered the opportunity to have a stand to display/sell plants and to provide a speaker on each day. Andrew Raper has kindly agreed to be a speaker on the Sunday and Bill Taylor on the Saturday. A large marquee is provided for speakers. This is an excellent opportunity to advertise the Society and rhododendrons as over 3,000 people attended last year. We hope many members will attend. (A flyer inserted in the newsletter admits two people for the price of one).

A sub-committee has been formed to work on the Rhododendron Collection Policy. They will subsequently confer with Glenn Maskell from Parks Vic. Another sub-committee was formed to organise a programme for 2008.6

Mt Tambourine Botanic Gardens in Queensland are planning to start a Rhododendron Garden and have requested advice on growing and acquiring plants. Committee agreed to supply suitable plants if required. The garden is very well designed and well worth a visit.

A laptop computer and digital camera have been purchased and will be used to photograph flowers through the year. Information will be added to the data base and a photographic record kept.

A Garden Expo will be held at Alexandra on April 26 and 27, 2008, with many local gardens open. In addition, there will be a garden produce market during the hours of 10am to 4.30pm. A Workshop will be conducted from 10am to 1pm and the Speakers are Andrew Laidlaw, Stephen Ryan and Kevin Walsh. Further details can be obtained from Ann Barkla on (03) 5772 1991 or Mandy Valsinger (03) 5772 1999.

MNB



**Leongatha members Jocie Rutherford and grandson Daniel
At ARSV Christmas Lunch**

ANTICIPATED PROGRAMME FOR 2008

JANUARY :

SUNDAY 27TH Australia Day BBQ 5.00pm. BYO everything.

FEBRUARY:

FRIDAY 15TH General Meeting Nunawading– 8.00pm Mike Hammer, Digital photography. Mike has mounted historical photos for display in the Hall. He will have all sorts of tips for taking and restoring photos.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 23RD AND 24TH – ‘Garden Living Expo’ at Tesselaars Tulip farm in Silvan. Volunteers are required to help on the Friday to set up and to man the stand Saturday and Sunday. Please ring Marcia Begg if you can help. 9751 1610. We will have plants for display and sale.

MARCH:

SATURDAY 8TH, 1.30pm Vireya Group meeting at Inga and Mike Hammer’s garden. 2 The Crescent Sassafras 3787. Ring Simon Begg to confirm. 9751 1610

FRIDAY 14TH (not the 3rd Friday) 8.00pm General Meeting Nunawading- Peter Geneat: Bulbs.

APRIL:

FRIDAY 18TH 8.00pm General Meeting Nunawading. Barry and Gay Stagoll. Gardens of UK.

MAY

SATURDAY 10TH, Vireya Group. (Simon Begg overseas)

FRIDAY 16th 8.00pm General Meeting Nunawading. Representative from Parks Vic

JUNE

FRIDAY 20th 8.00pm. General Meeting at Nunawading.

JULY:

SATURDAY 12TH, Vireya Group Ring Simon Begg to confirm. 9751 1610

FRIDAY 18th 8.00pm General Meeting Nunawading. Grafting workshop.

AUGUST:

FRIDAY 15th General Meeting – Ian Wallace, Big Leaf Rhododendrons.

SEPTEMBER:

SALE DAY TO BE ADVISED

SATURDAY 13TH, Vireya Group Ring Simon Begg to confirm. 9751 1610

FRIDAY 19th 8.00pm General Meeting at Nunawading. Hybridising/pollinating. Speaker on Vireyas

OCTOBER:

FRIDAY 3rd, SAT 4TH AND SUN 5TH ABC GARDEN SHOW @ CAULFIELD RACECOURSE

SATURDAY 4TH & SUNDAY 5TH AZALEA DISPLAY in Hall

FRIDAY 17th 8.00pm General Meeting and National Council AGM at Nunawading.

NOVEMBER:

FROM SAT. 1st TO TUES. 4TH, RHODODENDRON SHOW in Hall.

SATURDAY 8TH – Vireya Group Ring Simon Begg to confirm. 9751 1610

FRIDAY 21st 8.00pm AGM at Nunawading. Speaker to be advised.

DECEMBER:

CHRISTMAS FUNCTION – 1ST OR 2ND weekend.

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Australian Rhododendron Society Vic Branch Committee 2007-8

President –Carole Quinn Ph 5968 1027	Inge Hammer-Ph: 9755 2176
Vice President No- 1 Mike Hammer Ph: 9755 2176	
Vice President No- 2 Bill Taylor Ph: 9754 8275	Marcia Begg, Ph: 9751 1610
Treasurer – Neil Webster, Ph: 9859 3622	Elizabeth Xipell-Ph: 0959 9934
Secretary – Val Marshall, Ph: 9803 4434	John Quinn – Ph: 5968 1027
Simon Begg – 9751 1610 (Newsletter Editor)	Alan Walker-Ph: 9726 8836
Len Sloggett – Ph: 9808 6484	Mike Hare- Ph: 9844 2232

SOCIETY PICASAWEB SITE

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

Additions since the November 2007 Newsletter are :

- More Vireya Species arranged alphabetically
- Asiatic species at NRG arranged alphabetically
- A Start on Vireya Hybrids
- Xmas Lunch at Lady Chatterley's

For the latest on the "Beechmont" Picasaweb site visit

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

SWB