

THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

January 2010

Published by the
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PROGRAM

General Meetings are held at the Municipal Horticultural Centre, Jolimont Rd, Vermont. Mel 62 G4 unless otherwise stated.

JANUARY 2010

SAT 16TH AND SUN 17TH : LILIUM & VIREYA SHOW at the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society, 100 Hilton Road Sassafras Melway 66E12. ARS members will be selling vireyas and entering the competitive show. Details and schedule inside.

SUN 24th AUSTRALIA DAY BBQ. 5.00 pm Join members & friends on the Cherry Lawn below the sheds at the Rhododendron gardens. BYO everything. There are some tables & chairs. Drive in through the golf course & the back gate. Park above the Cherry Lawn.

Ph: Inge Hammer 9755 2176 or Marcia Begg 9751 1610

FEBRUARY 2010

FRIDAY 19TH GENERAL MEETING 8 pm The Begg's will give a presentation of their trip to New Zealand and the NZ Rhododendron Conference held in November. Some most unusual gardens were visited including a bromeliad garden with rare examples of the species.

MARCH 2010

FRIDAY 19TH GENERAL MEETING 8 pm Speaker to be decided
VIREYA GROUP. Andrew Rouse has seedlings of his hybrids and species which are ready to be potted up into tubes. He is very kindly donating these to members. We plan to have a special day to pot up. All members are invited to participate at a date to be decided in March or April. Ph: 9751 1610

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Well another year and decade are over. The noughties are now history, so I guess we will have to start behaving. On the subject of rainfall here in Melbourne, of considerable concern to us as gardeners, according to my measurements the rainfall for the year up here in the Dandenongs was as shown below. I also include the bureau of meteorology long term average data from the nearest site to us.

Month	Rainfall in mm	Long term average (Dunns Hill)	Cumulative anomaly
January	8.5	65.4	-56.9
February	0	68.6	-125.5
March	115	73.9	-84.4
April	104	95.1	-75.5
May	40.5	85	-120
June	71.5	88.5	-137
July	136.5	85.3	-85.8
August	87	85.7	-84.5
September	226	91.5	+50
October	110.5	89.3	+71.2
November	118.5	103.2	+86.5
December	69	84.8	+70.7
TOTAL	1087mm	1016.3mm	

I measure rainfall up to 5pm on the target day (for my convenience in measurement). On the last day of December we had a further 33 mm of rain after 5 pm which I count to January 2010. As you can see we had overall about average rainfall with the first half of the year drier than normal and the second half wetter than normal. Hopefully the wetter trend will continue in 2010. Feedback from one of the local growers suggests that the increased rainfall has led to a resurgence of interest in rhododendrons. We hope it continues.

The Rhododendron show in November went very well with a much livelier and more diverse display in the hall. The feedback from Parks is that they were happy with the outcome. This year the show will be considerably different because of the 2010 conference. Instead of a 6 week display we will be having a 1 week show to coincide with the conference. Conference planning is advancing well with an exciting mix of talks and garden visits. Please consider attending.

The AGM was held in November with no new committee or office bearer nominations and no change in these positions. It is a pity that there is so little interest on the part of our members

to take a more active role in ensuring the continuation of the society. Without new blood and new enthusiasm the society cannot continue. Please consider stepping forward and becoming more active.

There have unfortunately been some serious illnesses among our very dedicated long term members. Alan Walker suffered a bad rose thorn scratch which became seriously infected. The result was a very lengthy stay in hospital and it has left him with significantly reduced mobility in his right hand. Recovery is likely to take significant time but we hope it is as speedy as possible. Bill Taylor has suffered a stroke and will be in rehab for some months. Murray McAlister has been diagnosed with prostate cancer and is undergoing treatment. Our prayers are with all three for a speedy and complete resolution.

On the 16th and 17th of January there is a liliium and vireya show on at Ferny Creek. This is a continuation of the show we started last year now expanded to a 2 day show instead of a 1 day show. It is being run by Ferny Creek this year but the ARS still has close involvement and I would urge our members to consider entering exhibits or at least coming along to the show.

Michael Hammer

THE SPECIES COLUMN.

liliiflorum -Section Maddenia, Dalhousiae Alliance. [photo page]

Rhododendron *liliiflorum* is a little-known species which seems to grow well in our climate. We have only three plants so far, but it should strike easily from cuttings. It is important to preserve all of the Maddenias we have because of the difficulty of growing these in the cold and frosty climate of Europe and North America.

Name:

The name is appropriate and means flowers like a liliium. It could be mistaken for a Christmas lily (*lilium longiflorum*).

Distribution:

This species is quite rare in the wild, and was originally discovered in China in 1902, but not introduced into cultivation. It was later collected by Guiz in 1985 , which is probably the source of the seed we raised here. This species is found in Guizhou and Guangxi (Central/South China) at altitudes of 600 to 1400 metres.

Characteristics:

This is a tall and rather straggly shrub up to 3 metres high . The leaves are up to 13 cm. long ,dark green above and with unequal brown scales below.The corolla is narrowly funnel–campanulate, pure white, and densely scaly on the outside. This species is related to *lindleyi* and *taggianum* but is distinguished by its more scaly corolla and later flowering time. Its geographical distribution is much further East than the other two species.

Where to See These Plants:

We have recently planted one of this species in the main rockery just above the main road and have two more in pots in the shade house. They put on a great show last year in late September.

Alan Kepert.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

R herzogii [photo page]. According to the classification proposed by Dr George Argent *Rhododendrons of subgenus vireya*, RHS 2006, the species is a member of Section III *Siphonovireya*. This, according to Argent, is the smallest section with just 9 species, doubtfully homogeneous. found in mainland New Guinea save for one on a nearby island. The section was originally proposed by Dr Sleumer in 1960. *R herzogii* was the first species of this section discovered, in 1888. But it was not introduced into cultivation until the early 1960s.

Name

The species is named after Th. Herzog, a missionary in the Finisterre Mountains in New Guinea.

Description [taken in part, from Argent]

R herzogi is an erect shrub to 2m. **Twigs** are rounded, sub-densely scaly young, whitish, glabrescent later; internodes 3-13 cm. **Leaves** 4-6 together in tight pseudowhorls. **Blade** 40-60 x 20-40 mm, elliptic or obovate-elliptic; apex broadly obtusely acuminate, sometimes rounded; margin slightly revolute towards the base; base broadly tapering to almost rounded, sub densely scaly young, though early glabrescent above and persistently impressed-scaly beneath. **Petiole** 4-10 x 1.5-2 mm, semi-circular, grooved above, scaly, pink or green. **Inflorescence** a 5-10 flowered umbel of stiffly semi-erect flowers. **Corolla** 40-90 mm pure white or slightly pinkish at the tube externally, fragrant, trumpet shaped; tube 35-85 x 3-4 x 5-6 mm straight or slightly curved; lobes 8-9 x 5-6 mm spreading to somewhat reflexed, circular to elliptic obovate.

Habitat

R herzogii is found in both PNG and Indonesian West New Guinea along the main range from the Wissel Lakes to the Owen Stanley Range and in other places at from 1530-2500m. It is terrestrial or epiphytic, and found on cliff faces, landslides, steep eroded banks or slopes but also in montane forest or heath-like scrub.

Hybrids

“Starburst” is a hybrid with *R culminicola* which grows and flowers spectacularly at Pukeiti garden, New Zealand. There are other hybrids. I have one with *R viriosum* that has erect pink, slightly curved, scented flowers right now. My hybrids are about 1.5m in many branched bushes in 10 years.

Verdict

A worthy addition to a garden, especially protected from direct hot sun. I was prompted to pick this species this issue because my very small [300 mm] plant is flowering for the first time. Three trusses of 8, 6 and 5 florets, quite curved. I have grown many, supposed, *R herzogii* plants only to discover that they were *R jasminiflorum* var. *punctatum*. The first time this happened I vividly recall Bob Withers seizing on my plant, in flower, at a general meeting and getting out the library copy of Dr Sleumer’s *Flora Malesiana* to prove his point. I had bought it, mislabelled, from a well known grower. But, later, plants supplied by the Society to me, and I think, many others proved, on flowering to be *R jasminiflorum* var. *punctatum*. It is many experiences such as these that have taught me the importance of checking plant identities and never, knowingly, to on supply wrongly labelled plants. It also teaches the importance of provenance. The provenance, so far as known, should be attached to the plant with doubt and uncertainty stated. A label in a pot can often be removed by birds or humans and wrongly replaced.

Simon Begg

COMPARING BOTANICAL GARDENS

I read each issue of the ARSV Rhododendron Newsletter with interest and am grateful that it is available by e-mail to those outside Australia. Two articles in the most recent issue are concerned with the management of botanic gardens a subject which I studied for six years. During this period I visited over 50 gardens and in more than a dozen gardens discussed management problems with the Chairman of the Board, the President and the Director of Finance. These meetings always started with their desire to give me pamphlets and information about the success of their garden. At this point, I explained that I wanted to focus discussion on the weaknesses in the management of the garden. This resulted in a complete change of tone in the discussion. More often, most of the good information came in follow-up one-on-one meetings.

With this in mind and the fact that my wife and I have visited your garden (National Rhododendron Gardens) three times, I would like to make the following comments.

I agree with Mike Hammer that the greatest draw-back is obscurity and that there is a need to publicise the Gardens' existence and scope. As visitors to Melbourne who wished to see the garden we found that the information at the visitors' centre was less than adequate. In fact, I probably knew more about the garden and its location than they did. Furthermore, information from the telephone transport service as to how to get there by public transport was wrong! I wrote to the garden director and the tourism department suggesting a small brochure describing the garden and giving very explicit instructions on travel alternatives. We now hire a car.

A weakness of many gardens is that they do not gather information about their visitors. All tickets sold should be accompanied by a request for the visitor's postal code or country and, for a sample of visitors, detailed personal information. This information would be the foundation for subsequent marketing as the sample represents a population segment that is receptive to garden visits.

There are very many types of botanic gardens that have quite different objectives and origins. Mike Hammer is wrong to compare the ARS garden to Butchart Garden. The first could be considered a botanic garden with a strong scientific base, an emphasis on the species, an objective of labelling most plants, etc. Butchart is a display garden which emphasises a beautiful colour display with plants. Once a bed of dahlias or begonias has stopped flowering it is immediately removed and a new planting of a different species is in place. This turn around may happen as quickly as overnight. Massive advertising and this management focus on visual perfection means that privately-owned Butchart is profitable and has the highest visitor numbers of any tourist attraction in Canada - around a million/year. These visitor numbers are also the result of non-gardening activities: the fireworks displays and musical events on summer evenings and the Christmas light displays in particular. You can go to Butchart any month of the year and enjoy something different. Just do not go to the fireworks display and expect to get out of the parking lot during the first hour after the show!

Neither garden is "better", they are just different and are designed to attract quite different primary audiences.

I agree with Mike Hammer that the buildings need a complete re-think at Olinda. A successful garden should make more money from "other" activities than from direct visiting of the plants. This means that it should be impossible to leave the garden without going through the shop. It must straddle the exit gate. A prime example is the butterfly house at the

Niagara Conservancy garden. Finding the way out through the maze of shelves is a feat in itself. The result is high sales. The Director of Finance at the world famous Missouri Botanic Garden pointed out that they have failed as their well-designed shop is off to one side and does not receive a high percentage of those leaving.

The shop manager is also important as they determine the stock and tone of the shop with high price products for the wealthy retiree quite separate from the \$1 items, down low on the shelves, for children. Denver Botanic Garden has this down to an art. My impression of the shops at Olinda or Melbourne Botanic Garden is that they do not generate a high return. Sydney has a far better designed and stocked shop.

The shop's income should be matched at least by the food services. Two types of visitor come to gardens - the average visitor who wants a cafeteria service [Kew and Wisley do well here] and those wealthy retirees who want a restaurant with a full-service lunch or dinner with wine.

One success at the ARS garden is the truss display hall near the main entrance. I have not seen this approach done as well at other gardens. A small improvement might be to add the location within the garden of each plant on display.

Other sources of income that are very successful in other gardens are named benches [\$5-10,000 each], donations for special garden features [eg statues], memorial trees, paid guided tours, and arrangement for regular, specific bus tours from downtown Melbourne, etc. Income from all these activities should provide sufficient flow of funds to improve the overall financial situation in the garden and to allow the percentage [not the amount] of government support to be reduced. It may require some initial capital expenditure on buildings but these would add to the long-term viability of the garden while answering the point made by Glenn Maskell.

The ARS garden is a wonderful garden that does not need to be compared with any other. All gardens are different. I recommend it highly to anyone who will listen. I wish the garden continued success and hope to visit it again. I also hope that my comparison of other gardens with Olinda has identified a few areas of change that might contribute to that continued success.

Ian E. Efford

Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society, Vancouver Island, British Columbia

[Previously, founder and President of the Ottawa Botanical Garden Society created to promote the re-establishment of the botanic garden in Canada's national capital.]

THE FERNY CREEK HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY Inc.

LILIUM AND VIREYA SHOW SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 16th January 2010 11.30 - 4.30

SUNDAY 17TH January 2010 10.00 - 4.30

To be held at

**The Ferny Creek Horticultural Society Hall
100 Hilton Rd., Sassafras (Mel: 66 E12)**

**The Hall will be open for the staging of Exhibits on
Friday 15th January from 3 pm to 8 pm and
Saturday the 16th January from 8 am to 10 am**

ENTRIES CLOSE 9.30 am SATURDAY 16TH JANUARY, 2010.

**Entries can be lodged by phone to;
Inge and Michael Hammer 9755 2176
Or Marcia and Simon Begg 9751 1610
Thursday 14th and Friday 15th 5 pm to 9 pm.**

Entries can also be made during staging times till 9.30 am Saturday.

**Containers will be supplied for individual flowers and trusses.
Exhibitors can provide their own containers for exhibits if they wish.**

Lilium Vireya show schedule January 2010

Liliums

1. species lilium not otherwise mentioned single flower
2. species lilium not otherwise mentioned stem
3. hybrid oriental lilium single flower
4. hybrid oriental lilium stem
5. oriental trumpet interspecific single flower
6. oriental trumpet interspecific stem
7. longiflorum oriental interspecific single flower
8. longiflorum oriental interspecific stem

9. longiflorum single flower
10. longiflorum stem
11. predominantly white trumpet single flower
12. predominantly white trumpet stem
13. yellow/orange trumpet single flower
14. yellow/orange trumpet stem
15. pink trumpet single flower
16. pink trumpet stem
17. hybrid Asiatic liliium single flower
18. hybrid Asiatic stem
19. any liliium growing in a pot or container

Vireyas

20. one container of vireya species with a flower diameter less than 4 cm
21. one container of vireya species with a flower diameter greater than 4 cm
22. one container of vireya hybrid with a flower diameter less than 4 cm
23. one container of vireya hybrid with a flower diameter more than 4 cm
24. 3 trusses or sprays of species distinct varieties staged separately
25. 3 trusses or sprays of hybrid distinct varieties staged separately
26. one potted plant or hanging basket of a species vireya
27. one potted plant or hanging basket of a hybrid vireya

Other catagories

28. one container of flowering material from a bulb or corm other than a liliium
29. one container of flowering annuals
30. one container of flowering perennials
31. one container of flowering material from a shrub other than a vireya, azalea or rhododendron
32. a table decoration comprising flower and foliage (foliage and flowers can be from different plant species or genera)

A container refers to cut plant material not a growing plant.

Unless otherwise specified a container can hold any number of stems

The judges decision in all cases is final and binding



R liliiflorum

Alan Kepert photograph September 2009



R herzogii RBGE May 2006



R stenophyllum ssp. *angustifolium*

Andrew Rouse's winning entry





R "Silver Salver"
 NZRA Rhododendron Convention
 Auckland November 2009



"Ian's Triumph"
 NZRA
 Rhododendron
 Convention
 November 2009



2010 GOLDEN JUBILEE CONFERENCE

Plans are well in hand for our Golden Jubilee Conference to be held from Sunday 17th October to Wednesday 20th. Not only is it 50 years since the Australian Rhododendron Society was formed but it is also 50 years since the National Rhododendron Gardens were officially started.

Two mornings of speakers will be followed by garden visits and local attractions. The ARS National Council is generously funding Kenneth Cox from Scotland and other international, local and interstate speakers have been invited. Ken Cox is well known as an author of Rhododendron reference books, owner of Glendoick Nursery and plant hunter. He is a lively and entertaining speaker with a broad knowledge of rhododendrons and other species.

The first afternoon of the conference will be a 'Members Day' which will be open to all ARS members and delegates and will follow a combined Azalea and Rhododendron Show.

Registration forms and more detailed information about the programme will be published, soon, in a newsletter. The committee is hoping many members and friends are planning to visit the Dandenong Ranges for the Conference and a list of convenient accommodation will be included in the information. Local members who would be happy to provide "Home Stay" accommodation for interstate or overseas visitors or speakers would be greatly appreciated and could register with Michael Hare 9844 2232 or Marcia Begg 9751 1610.

Already there is a group from the New Zealand Rhododendron Association planning to attend and interest has been shown from a tour group in USA. Members from South Australia and Tasmania are also coming to celebrate this exciting event. We hope to see you all there in October 2010!

MNB

JOTTINGS

NEW PLANT INTRODUCTION IN UK. *Rhododendron* 'Logan Delight' is one of two *R. edgeworthii* hybrids with scented blooms bred at Logan Botanic Gardens, Dumfries and Galloway. While *R.* 'Logan Delight' has flowers with a bright red calyx, *R.* 'Logan Surprise' has white blooms. Plants are not available yet but stock is being bulked up by micropropagation. (*Taken from 'The Garden' Nov 2009*).

GLOBALISATION: Following is a definition of 'Globalisation' that I can understand and to which I can relate sent by someone from somewhere!

Question: What is the true definition of 'Globalisation'?

Answer: Princess Diana's death.

Question: How come?

Answer: An English princess with an Egyptian boyfriend crashes in a French tunnel, riding in a German car with a Dutch engine, driven by a Belgian who was drunk on Scottish whisky

(check the bottle before you change the spelling!), followed closely by Italian paparazzi on a Japanese motorcycle, treated by an American doctor using Brazilian medicines. This was sent to me by a Canadian using American Bill Gates' technology and I am reading it on a computer that uses Taiwanese chips and a Korean monitor, assembled by Bangladeshi workers in a Singapore plant, transported by Indian truck drivers, hijacked by Indonesians, unloaded by Sicilian longshoremen and trucked to me by Australians.

That my friends, is 'Globalisation'!!!!

MNB

NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING AND AGM

The meeting included the AGM which was over very quickly. The 2009 committee was re-elected with no changes. The Treasurer reported a healthy financial position. Awards were presented to recipients who were present. Notably Inge Hammer won the Banksia Medal.

The National Council delegates reported the following as a result of their meeting held in South Australia in October:

- that the National Council agreed to grant Ken Cox a \$7500 Travelling Scholarship to attend the 50th Anniversary Conference in Melbourne and to travel to other state branches for talks.
- The Rules will be up-dated, notably to allow for the use of email.
- The Victorian Branch proposal that affiliation fee be reduced to \$15 was defeated.
- N C requested that the valuable books, at present stored at Olinda, be moved to a safer location for the "fire season". The possibility of donating them to a Library will also be investigated.
- Maurice Kupsch was awarded a Life Membership.
- The next meeting of NC is set for 17 April 2010 at Emu Valley, Tasmania.

The hall at Nunawading is in the process of being renovated and there was some difficulty displaying the flowers for the General Meeting Bench.

Ian Wallace was our speaker for the evening. His topic of 'Dwarf Rhododendrons' stimulated many questions as he spoke.

He started by asking 'What is a dwarf rhododendron?' and answered with reservations about climate, micro-climate, soil, water, etc. All of which will affect growth not to mention the plant's own characteristics. He gave R. "Sappho" as an example. In the suburbs it might grow low and tight but in the Dandenongs with good conditions it is tall and gangly. He quoted Peter Cox as saying 'The greater the altitude the more dwarf they become' referring to northern hemisphere conditions where frosts and cold are a major problem whereas in Australia the heat of the sun and hot winds are the problem.

He gave advice on growing conditions:

- Dwarf rhododendrons grow well in pots and a lot can be fitted into a small garden. They can also be moved to suit their requirements. If growing in pots mix water saving crystals into the potting mix.
- Keep pots off the ground to prevent water born diseases. Symptoms are leaf drop and dieback.
- In the ground the pH needs to be balanced with free calcium, pH can then be as high as 7-8.
- Dwarfs are easy to move because they are shallow rooted but keep away from new concrete and Lilydale toppings
- Do not add mushroom compost as the pH is around 7 and too high.
- Use a slow release fertiliser in spring and autumn and sprinkle some sulphate of potash around the roots.
- Keep mulch at least 3 inches away from stems.
- Some sort of spray is essential to control pests and diseases such as red spider and lace bug.
- Plants with indumentum have some protection from pests but not from weevils.
- *R. Moupinense* and *R. cilliicalyx* are barometer plants – they are the first to suffer insect attack.
- Reference material written for Australian conditions are the best as growth is quicker here.

Some of his recommended plants are: *R. tsariense* and *proteoides* which are both grown for their indumentum, *balsamaeflora*, *hanseanum*, “Princess Anne”, *nakaharae*, *ledoides*, *megeratum*, *valentinianum* and *lepidostylum*. Ian gave me a long list which is available if anyone is interested.

MNB

RHODODENDRON SHOW 2009

The Rhododendron Show was held over Cup Weekend in the hall at the Rhododendron Gardens and was very well attended with 14 exhibitors presenting 250 entries. We had to find more benches to fit all the entries. The hall looked very colourful with the show entries, plants for sale, art exhibition, water feature and display plants. A feature of note was the trophy table with the magnificent silver urns displayed beside the winning entries. These have been updated as has the Honour Board in the Vireya Cafe and visitors and members alike were interested to read the names of the recipients.

Once again the judges and stewards did an excellent job and thanks go to those members who tidied the hall after the show.

The next show the Rhododendron Society will be involved is the Lilium and Vireya Show to be held at the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society Hall on the 16th and 17th January. Members and friends are encouraged to enter the show competition with both liliiums and vireyas and we will have a stand selling vireyas on behalf of our society. Volunteers who would like to help sell plants over the two days would be very welcome. Please ring Inge Hammer, 9755 2176 or Marcia Begg 9751 1610.

RHODODENDRON SHOW AWARDS 2009

CERTIFICATE OF MERIT: CERTIFICATE awarded to John Quinn

An award of the Society's Certificate of Merit may be made by the Judges for **an exhibit considered by them to be of exceptional merit**. Only one award of Certificate of Merit can be made each year at the Society's Rhododendron Show. Such an award can only be made for an exhibit of the genus Rhododendron.

PERPETUAL TROPHIES:

ALISTAIR MACLEOD-COOCH TROPHY awarded to Andrew Rouse

For the best exhibit of three (3) trusses of rhododendron, species or hybrid, distinct varieties, one (1) truss of each variety staged separately. The exhibit may be from any of the following **Section A 2, Section B 14, Section C 25 or Section C 26**.

DOWD TROPHY awarded to Andrew Rouse For the best exhibit of three (3) trusses or sprays of rhododendron species, distinct varieties, one (1) truss or spray of each variety staged separately, from either **Section A 2 or Section C 25**.

GIBSON TROPHY awarded to John Quinn

For the best exhibit in the Show of **one (1) truss** of a rhododendron.

PRITCHARD TROPHY awarded to Andrew Rouse

For the best exhibit of a rhododendron hybrid, produced by the Exhibitor and raised from seed by the Exhibitor, from either **Section B 18 or Section C 28**.

ALFRED BRAMLEY PRIZE awarded to Inge Hammer

For the best exhibit of three (3) trusses or sprays of rhododendron, two (2) species and one (1) hybrid, distinct varieties, one (1) truss or spray of each variety staged separately. **Section A 8**

ANNUAL AWARDS

BEST VIREYA SPECIES awarded to Andrew Rouse

For the best exhibit of a truss or spray of a **vireya species**.

G. LOUISE ANDERSON PRIZE AND SASH awarded to Inge Hammer

For the best exhibit of a truss or spray of a **vireya hybrid**.

AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY, VICTORIAN BRANCH PRIZE
awarded to Laurie Begg

For the best exhibit of an azalea in **Sections D and E.**

SS Mac Kay Memorial Medals: For the most points attained at General Meetings

Vireya Section: S. Begg

Azalea Section: S. Begg

Rhododendron Section: S. Begg

BANKSIA MEDAL awarded to **Inge Hammer** Awarded to the exhibitor with the highest number of points in both the Azalea and Rhododendron Shows.

NEW ZEALAND RHODODENDRON CONVENTION, AUCKLAND,
NOVEMBER 2009

Marcia and I journeyed to Auckland on Melbourne Cup Day arriving in time for the New Zealand Rhododendron Association 2009 Rhododendron Convention held there 4-6 November 2009.

The Conference Venue was Fairway Lodge, Takapuna, on Auckland's North Shore. Our busses collected us for the short journey there, bright and early on Wednesday morning, at 7.30 am for an opening lecture from Kaiyun Guan Professor at the Kunming Institute of Botany, the Chinese Academy of Sciences: Research area, Conservation Biology & Horticulture. An early start was to be repeated every day! Professor Guan spoke three times including at the Convention opening and the Dinner on the opening evening. He covered the world distribution of Rhododendrons including the significant proportion found in China and particularly Yunnan. Yunnan was home, also, to many other plant species including camellia, magnolia and daphne.

After morning tea we made a start with 3 of the 15 gardens we were to visit. There was a great variety of gardens from quite small to very large. While most featured rhododendrons many were primarily focussed on other features or plants. Some had no rhododendrons at all. All had something special to offer. Our first three gardens were Becroft House, which showcased sculptures in a setting landscaped 40 years ago, the Morton Garden, set on a cliff top between Cheltenham and Narrowneck, which showed just what could be done with a mere 1/3 acre with a seaside warm micro-climate and the Wilson home, a large heritage property for children with a disability which dedicated volunteers had transformed into a showpiece. After lunch we journeyed south of the harbour to Eden Garden, 5 acres tucked into Mt Eden maintained by volunteers. Marcia and I had been there several times before.

This garden has a magnificent collection of vireya species and hybrids as well as Asiatics and many other species. It has one of the largest collections of camellias in the Southern Hemisphere. What stands out is the health of the plants. Glossy leaves and careful pruning. We are used to tidy camellias, but, here, vireyas were also at their very best. We wish Parks,

or ARSV, had the person power to do the same at NRG, Olinda! I wish Marcia and I could achieve as much at “Beechmont”.

We finished the afternoon with a harbour cruise. This was followed by the Conference Dinner at which Prof Guan spoke again.

On the Thursday, we visited 6, mostly larger, gardens 3 before lunch and three after with the NZRA AGM just before lunch. Rhodo-ville is the home of Tony and Lyn Blyth. Tony is a serious rhododendron collector of both Asiatics and Vireyas. He has significant collections of species as well as hybrids. I noted, particularly, good sized vireya species in flower, some of which I had not seen in flower before; *R taxifolium*, *R yelliottii* and *R alborugosum*. Others in flower included *R loranthiflorum*, *R radians*, *R christianaiae*, *R bayerinkianum* and *R herzogii*. There were also substantial plants of *R wilkiei* and *R kawakamii* with flower buds. Hybrids, in flower, that caught my eye included R “Tupare” [a *nuttallii* x], R “Purple Splendour”, R “Douglas R Stephens”, R “Lems Monarch”, R “Lady Galway”, R “Felicity Fair” and, back to vireyas, R “Dr Sleumer x leucogigas [pink]”.

Totara Waters, the home of Peter and Jocelyn Coyle, is a “Garden of National Significance”. It is a 2 acre subtropical garden on upper Waitemata Harbour with extensive plantings of rare and unusual plants. Palms, cycads, aloes, agaves, beaucarneas, yuccas, dracaenas, bromeliads and succulents. I think I recall a couple of vireyas! Different and interesting.

Brookgreen Park, the home of Bryan and Helen Airey completed the morning. It, too, is a “Garden of Significance”. It has spreading lawns, box hedging and roses. And a “Monet” bridge over a small lake.

After lunch we visited Mincher and Woodbridge, two large ‘Gardens of National Significance’ and Pinelee, a much smaller garden, with 50 vireyas, 360 degree views and shrubs from New Zealand South Africa and Australia. Woodbridge comprised 10 acres of immaculate lawns and carefully planned gardens. Magnificent hedging, a lake and beautiful plantings set off by established trees. Mincher, too, was beautifully maintained. It had lawns and ponds and, penned up for the day, Angela Spooner’s prize King Charles spaniels. We thought they should be hounds and looked for the missing hunt. In these properties one would search in vain for weeds. We, from Australia, envied the plentiful water.

Friday was a perfect spring day. One tour organisers dream about. First we returned to Fairway Lodge and another talk by Prof Guan. After morning tea we journeyed to the Waitakere ranges and Westridge, the home of Richard Cadness and Geoff Haughey. It was near the top of the range with high rainfall and rainforest. The small property was, literally, planted out. We remembered the bromeliads, the brick paths and a truss of R “Rio Rita” in a vase. Next was the garden of Craig and Bronwyn Thorburn with lush Singaporean style exotic plantings. I photographed daturas and banana palms. And, inevitably, a creek at the bottom of the garden. For lunch we visited Landsendt, another “Garden of National Significance”. This garden evolved from a subtropical orchard. It was a nursery as well. There was but one Asiatic rhododendron, a *nuttallii* x in flower. But there were some very nice vireyas in flower as well as cycads, orchids, bananas and many palms.

Our conference concluded with visits to the Cunningham and Stewart gardens close together in the Waitakeres with sweeping views. Both were beautiful gardens and the Stewart garden, particularly, had an extensive collection of rhododendrons.

On the Saturday Marcia and I visited the home of Brian and Jan Oldham in Auckland. We had seen magnificent trusses of Brian's vireya crosses on display at Fairway Lodge and went to see the plants. We were not disappointed. Among many magnificent plants in flower I noted *leucogigas* and *suaveolens* crosses. The latter, crossed with *maijus* produced most unusual trusses. See a photo of R "Silver Salver" on Page 11. It is such a shame that we can no longer import plants from New Zealand!

Simon Begg

NATIONAL RHODODENDRON GARDEN JANUARY 2010

Glenn Maskell is on holiday and Alan Walker is not, at the moment, able to provide the Vounteers' report. So I thought I would improvise.

Last Tuesday, just prior to New Years Day, I went to the Gardens to wish the volunteers a happy new year. And to look for contributions to *Newsletter*. Not many were there, with illness and holiday commitments. Laurie Begg suggested I look at the Vireyas along the Golf Course bank. So I did.

The Vireya Bank has been transformed! Parks have unearthed a true treasure. A volunteer named John. Unfortunately I did not catch his surname, a combination of my being hard of hearing and John's surname being hard to hear, and to pronounce.

John has weeded and mulched the Vireyas almost to the bottom end. He has staked those lying down and tidied the rest. Many are in flower. The result is stunning. On the way back I looked at the Rockery where the Sue and Elizabeth from the volunteers have tidied and weeded and Alan Keper has directed the planting of 150 small Asiatic species. Again most impressive. The Gardens as they should look. Just a shame that the automatic watering that Parks promised has not, yet, eventuated. So the new plantings are vulnerable in the summer sun.



**National Rhododendron Garden,
Rock Garden**



**Vireya Bank and Hydrangeas National Rhododendron Garden, Olinda,
January 2010**

When readers read our President's Report for November and Ian Efford's article in this issue they have a true measure of the Gardens' potential. To realise that full potential effort is still needed on many fronts. The work John and the Volunteers are doing, if there were more of him and them, would address physical presentation of the Gardens as a garden. There remains presentation of auxiliary features; entrance, signage, restaurants, children's and family features and costing and marketing; all of which comparable, renowned, gardens address well. The Volunteers do sterling work but age is catching up with them. Parks, and they, need to address volunteer recruitment. More Johns! Given Parks' financial constraints Parks cannot employ enough staff to do all the maintenance work that needs to be done. More volunteers are a possible answer.

This summer season, so far, has been kind to the Gardens. Rain, and plenty of it, and no fires, have produced prodigious growth with last years' sunburnt foliage well covered. The summer flowers, including vireyas look a treat. Members should lead the way and visit the Gardens. Let others know what a treat is in store.

Simon Begg

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ARSV COMMITTEE 2009

A new committee was be elected in November 2009 for a year. There are no changes from the outgoing committee. There continue to be vacancies on the committee and members who would be interested to be more involved would be made very welcome. The committee meets at Nunawading at 5.00pm before the Monthly General Meeting on the 3rd Friday.

PRESIDENT: Michael Hammer Ph: 9755 2176

VICE PRESIDENT No 1: Vacant

VICE PRESIDENT No 2: Vacant

TREASURER: Neil Webster, Ph: 9859 3622

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Alan Walker, Ph: 9726 8836

Elizabeth Xipell, Ph: 9859 9934

SOCIETY PICASA WEB SITE

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

Additions since the November 2009 Newsletter are :-

*Bench November 2009 General Meeting

*National Rhododendron Garden, Olinda, January 2010

*Brian and Jan Oldham's Vireyas, Auckland, November 2009

*Eden Garden, Auckland, November 2009

*Rhodo-ville Vireyas, Auckland, November 2009

*ARSV Rhododendron Show 2009

*13 Auckland Gardens November 2009

For the "Beechmont" Picasaweb site visit <http://picasaweb.google.com/simonwbegg>

Additions are Marcia and Simon's trip to New Zealand November 2009