

THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2012

Published by the

Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z)

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**A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR
TO ALL OUR MEMBERS & THEIR FAMILIES.**

THE 2012 PROGRAMME

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

FOUR GENERAL MEETINGS AT NUNAWADING: 3rd Friday

- **MARCH 16TH** 8.00pm. Begg's visit to Edinburgh Botanic Garden's vireya collection, Jardin Botanique Lyon and the Vireya House at Bremen's Rhododendron Park. C'tee meeting 5.00pm.
- **JUNE 15TH** 8.00pm Speaker, Francis Crome - "Recent biological exploration in New Guinea - the plants and animals of the world's second largest block of rainforest". Speaker to be advised. C'tee meeting 5.00pm.
- **SEPTEMBER 21ST** 8.00pm Speaker to be advised. C'tee meeting 5.00pm.
- **NOVEMBER 16TH** 8.00pm AGM. Speaker to be advised. C'tee meeting 5.00pm.
- **DECEMBER 14TH** No General Meeting. C'tee meeting 7.00pm at Nunawading.

FOUR OPEN WORKSHOPS AT THE NATIONAL RHODODENDRON GARDENS;

- **FEBRUARY Sunday 19th** – 2.00pm Propagation
- **MAY Sunday 20th** - 2.00pm Growing rhododendrons in Melbourne
- **AUGUST Sunday 19th** – 2.00pm
- **OCTOBER Sunday 7TH** – 2.00pm Different groups of rhododendrons
- **NOVEMBER Saturday 3rd to Tuesday 6th**: Rhododendron Show

JANUARY 2012

SATURDAY & SUNDAY 21st & 22nd - LILIUM AND VIREYA SHOW AT FERNY CREEK HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY 100 Hilton Rd Ferny Creek

PLEASE ENTER IF YOU HAVE BLOOMS.

PLEASE READ PAGE 10 to see how to get SHOW SCHEDULE AND WHEN ENTRIES CLOSE. YOU CAN'T JUST ENTER ON SATURDAY MORNING

THURSDAY 26TH AUSTRALIA DAY BBQ at NRG, 6.00PM. BYO everything. Park near the lunchroom.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I deem it to be a great privilege to be given the opportunity to work as President of the Victorian branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society. You only need to walk around the Olinda garden, one of Australia's best gardens, to appreciate the amount and quality of the work carried out by the Society Members over the last fifty odd years. It is the legacy, established by the Society, which will be the focus of the incoming committee and the on going work of the Tuesday morning volunteers group.

Much of the work by the Victorian branch over the next few years will be, to continue locating, identifying and labelling the plants at Olinda (new laser engraver for labels comes in January, 1/3 ARSV). To propagate what is rare or at risk a new propagation house is to be established by February ('Re-purposing' as they now say of the old Quarantine house). The appropriate housing for a world-class vireya collection is to follow, with the refurbishment of the main glasshouse at Olinda in the first half of the year. The work of adding to the collection with an emphasis on species endangered in the wild and of known provenance will continue to be a long- term priority.

There is, as you can see, much work that needs to be done but it is the prospect of these activities, which has re-invigorated the committee. The November AGM voted four additional members onto the committee, with Prue and Francis Crome adding a great breadth of experience and energy. Graham Price returns to the committee as Vice President with his particular interest being the further development of our vireya collection, and myself as President.

One of the good outcomes for the new committee is that all the previous committee members have elected to stay on. Mike Hammer, as Vice President, will continue to pursue Botanic Gardens status for Olinda. Val Marshall continues to look after the Library and the Beggs, at least for a while, will continue to edit the newsletter. The hardest working member of the committee is Mick Hare who continues to carry out the role of Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Steward.

Congratulations must go to the previous committee for their excellent work in organizing the golden jubilee conference (Marcia in particular), raising funds for the gardens, arranging meetings and outings and representing the Society at umpteen gardening shows.

Our program of meetings this year will follow last year's timetable, with four Friday night meetings at Nunawading and four Saturday afternoon meetings at Olinda. We are like so many gardening societies these days, under threat of extinction, some new (even young) members would be nice, but even so attendance at meetings of as many members as possible is needed to ensure our survival.

The Tuesday morning volunteers group is also a very good way to stay in touch with the Society. It is a very educational and enjoyable mornings activity. The group is working away on a number of projects to benefit the Gardens and the Rhodo Society; there is a great esprit de corps within this group. New participants are always welcome (even if you can only

come very occasionally) and best of all you can pretty much please yourself as to what you do.

John O'Hara

THE SPECIES COLUMN.

simsii -Section Tsutsusi (Formerly Azalea section).

This species was introduced into cultivation before 1812 and has been widely used in hybridising. These were called the "Indian Azaleas" although most originated from China, resulting in some confusion. In England *simsii* is regarded as a glasshouse plant, too tender to be grown outdoors. Fortunately in Australia it can be grown almost anywhere with sufficient water and light shade.

Name:

Named after J. Sims, former editor of the Botanical Magazine.

Distribution:

This species comes from a wide area in China, Taiwan, Upper Burma, and Thailand at altitudes of 300 to 2400 metres. It seems adaptable to most situations, growing in open, rocky, or shady sites.

Characteristics:

This forms a twiggy shrub of 1 –3 metres. The foliage consists of larger Spring leaves of 3-7 cm. long, followed by smaller Summer leaves of 1-2 cm. long. The leaves have short bristly hairs on both sides of the blade. The corolla is broadly funnel-shaped , 2.5-6 cm. long in various shades of deep pink to bright red.

Hybrids.

This azalea has been used since the 19th century in hybridising and there are few records of their parentage. *Rhododendron simsii* was used widely in the production of the "Indica" hybrids and also in the Glen Dale hybrids from U.S.A. The Kurume Azaleas have smaller leaves and flowers, and are either selected forms of wild plants or hybrids of *kiusianum*, *kampferi*, *obtusum*, etc.

Where to See These Plants:

There is a medium sized plant growing in the middle of the main rockery, which puts on a show of orange-red flowers in late October.(see photo). There is also a large older plant growing in the azalea species bed.

Alan Kepert.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

R goodenoughii [photo page] According to the classification of Vireyas by Dr George Argent *Rhododendrons in subgenus Vireya* this species is in Section VII Euvireya subsection

iii Solenovireya. The Section is the largest and the subsection, alone, has 35 members about a third from West Malesia [Malaya, Phillipines, Indonesia] and two thirds, including this species, from New Guinea. The subsection includes many of the Vireyas most commonly grown in Olinda; tuba, rhodoleucum, radians, jasminiflorum, ruttenei, and loranthiflorum.

Name and Place of Origin

The species is named after the Island from which it was collected which, in turn, was named after Commodore Goodenough a British naval captain. Goodenough Island lies on the Northern side of the Easterly tip of Papua New Guinea. The species is found on Mt Goodenough from 800-1500m.

Description [largely taken from Argent]

A shrub to 2m. Internodes 4-15cm. **Leaves** 4-6 together in tight pseudowhorls. Blade 50-100 x 30-60 mm, broadly elliptic to obovate; apex very shortly acuminate, broadly obtuse to almost rounded; margin entire, narrowly recurved or flat; base broadly tapering, glabrescent above, sub-densely scaly beneath. Mid vein broadly raised and grooved for the proximal 10 mm or so, distally narrowly impressed; beneath broadly raised for most of its length and tapering gradually; lateral veins 7-9 per side, diverging at 45 degrees, straight proximally but curving in the distal one third, reticulation obscure. **Petiole** 10-15 x 3-4 mm, a little flattened, not grooved above or very faintly in the distal part, scaly initially. **Inflorescence** of 8-22 flowers at first held semi-erect in a tight cluster, later the umbel becomes open with the flowers horizontally displayed. **Corolla** 65-75 x 30-35 mm trumpet-shaped, white, sweetly scented; tube 55-65 x 4-5 x 7-9 mm, cylindrical, slightly curved, weakly grooved or angled. Lobes 15-17 x 12-15 mm, spreading obliquely, the lower two becoming reflexed., the upper three staying semi-erect.

Cultivation

Though discovered in 1895 it was not introduced into cultivation until 1964 from seed sent by Rev N.E.G. Cruttwell to Kew. Subsequent introductions led to wide distribution and the species is now grown in many parts of the world. Argent describes it as vigorous and a very desirable plant in cultivation flowering prolifically at least once a year. One of my plants flowered for the first time last year in mid year [while I was away, of course] and another, planted in the garden, is flowering now. I nearly lost this plant in the summer heat of 2009 but it has revived well.

Simon Begg

RHODODENDRON SHOW 2011

At the Rhododendron Gardens the Tuesday group and helpers set up benches, covered the carpeted floor with green plastic and took great pains to protect the newly renovated 'Mist' reception venue once built and owned by the ARSV. Only half the hall was used and there was concern that even that may be too large an area for the dwindling number of members showing their best blooms. Despite the 'doom and gloom' it was an excellent show with high quality blooms in all the major classes and over a dozen entrants entering nearly two hundred blooms between them.

The hall was open to the public over Cup weekend and many favourable comments were heard and questions asked. Plants were being sold at the Parks nursery at a steady rate and many visitors put in requests for rhododendrons they had seen in the garden. Many of these are not available from nurseries and the question remains – should the Society propagate and sell more plants?

Thanks to all those who entered and congratulations to all prize winners.

SHOW RESULTS

Perpetual Trophies

Alistair MacLeod-Cooch: S Begg
Dowd Trophy : A Rouse
Gibson Trophy : L Begg
Pritchard Trophy: A Rouse
Alfred Bramley Trophy: N Brown

Annual Awards

Banksian Medal: A Rouse
President's Award: E. Xipell
Best Vireya Species: S Begg
G Louise Anderson Prize: E. Xipell
Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch, Prize: I Hammer
Children's Prize: K Noonan
Floral Prize: S. Begg

Michael Hare

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

A happy group of members and friends gathered at Les Chesselles French restaurant at Mont De Lancey Homestead and Museum in Wandin for a very pleasant lunch on a beautiful day in December. Last year we had a very successful day there during the Golden Jubilee Conference and it was a pleasure to return to such an interesting historic venue.

The usual lucky numbers were increased by a generous donation of half a dozen bottles of champagne by Hugh Leitzke, a knowledgeable member who rarely misses a meeting. Sue Jarvis was the keen photographer.

Marcia Begg

SOCIETY PICASA WEB SITE

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

of NRG

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



Above: *Rhododendron simsii*
Below: Simon's Rh: *goodenoughii*, Jan 2012





Rhododendron Show 2011: Trophy table (left), Gardenia Odyssey surrounded by other beauties (right)



Left: Mrs Craig Faragher, a regular visitor to Society events, with Craig Faragher's brother. Right: the winning floral arrangement.
Below: some of the group at the Christmas lunch.



IMPORT OF RHODODENDRON SEED

I first addressed this topic in *Newsletter* for March 2008. Since then the species whose seed I obtained a permit to import have been added to AQIS database ICON 'permitted list'. I have now revised my paper to 3rd January 2012 and I have identified new priority wish lists that I have asked AQIS to request Biosecurity Australia to test for 'weediness'.

I now have email notification that I can get a permit for

- All species [Asiatic and Vireya] that I have identified as being in Australia that, as yet, are not on ICON 'permitted list'
- All vireyas held by Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh not yet on ICON 'permitted list'

I have decided to defer the permit until I, or another ARS member, has a source of seed to import. To this end my new wish lists include seed of rhododendron species that will be on RHS seed list in 2012 and also Alan Clark's 2011 wild collections. I am enquiring also of RSF website to see what seed it has that is not yet permitted and not on another wish list.

Anyone with access to a computer can search ICON.

Set out below are the species for which my 'wish' has been granted. These species are yet to appear on ICON permitted list but will do so next time it is updated. Anyone who can access seed to import for any of these and wants to import it should contact me.

Already in Australia

Asiatic

R saxicilum

Vireya

R bryophilum

R heterolepis

R leptobrachion

R milleri

R muscicola

R sojoense

Not Already in Australia and held at RBGE

Vireya

R arenicola

R apiense

R banghamiorum

R carrii

R carstensense

R chevalieri

R coelorum

R densifolium

R fortunans

R glabrifilum

R inscultum

R incommodum

R leytense

R loboense

R mindanaense

R nanophyton

R oreites

R prainianum

R pseudobuxifolium

R reynosoi

R roseiflorum

R scortechenii

R syrngoideum

R. ultimum

R vidalii

R wilkiei

Simon Begg

JOTTINGS

RED LIST OF RHODODENDRONS: (*The Garden* magazine August 2011) The newly published 'Red List of Rhododendrons' reports 36 species to be critically endangered and a further 280 to be endangered or vulnerable in the wild. Habitat clearance, climate change and natural disasters are thought to be the causes. The book was published last year by the

Botanic Gardens Conservation International and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh who had done a survey of the conservation status of rhododendrons. More information can be found at www.bgci.org/ourwork/Rhododendron-Red-List

USING WOOD ASH: (*notes from RHS Advice 'The Garden' December 2011*).

The potassium in wood ash will benefit plants grown for flowers or berries but it is alkaline and will increase the pH if used too often. A good idea is to put thin layers in the compost heap. Young wood has a higher level of potassium than old wood. Ash with large particles can improve soil structure.

BOTANICAL NAMES: (*notes from RHS Advice 'The Garden' December 2011*).

There are some of us who still have trouble with botanical names so I thought this article might be useful.

'Botanical names are made up of two parts. The first part is the **genus** (plural genera) and the second is the **species** (plural species), eg *Primula vulgaris*'. The botanical names are usually typed in italics or bold or underlined to differentiate them from text. The genus has a capital letter and species has lower case. Variation within species can be recognized by the terms subspecies (subsp.), varietas (var.) and forma (f.), each level representing a lower band of variation than the last.

Cultivated plants are bred, selected or brought into cultivation and are given **cultivar** names which appear in single quotes in normal font after the botanical name, eg *Acer palmatum* var. *dissectum* 'Ellen'.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY?

Quick sand works slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham?

If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth? One goose, 2 geese. So one moose, 2 meese? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it? Is it an odd or an end?

If teachers taught, why don't preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? In what language do people recite a play and play at a recital?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

English was invented by people not computers and it reflects the creativity of the human race, which, of course, is not a race at all. That is why, when the stars are out they are visible, but when the lights are out they are invisible!

Marcia Begg

EDITORIAL

It is appropriate for a member of the 2011 Committee to welcome our new President, John O'Hara returning Vice President Graeme Price and new committee members Prue and Francis Crome. Prue also becomes a National Council Delegate.

These new office bearers and committee bring with them a new spring in the Society's step into 2012 and new hope for the future, that, nearing the end of 2011, looked bleak indeed. Now as John says, a new propagation facility is nearing completion and it will be used with purpose. 2012 will see a new Vireya House.

Victorian Branch members have expressed keen interest in participating in the vireya collecting trip to North Queensland mountains planned for August- September 2012. If successful not only will members have properly provenanced *viriosum* and *lochiae* plants but the Society will be able to provide them to Lyn Craven *et al* for their DNA study and it will have them for export to collectors throughout the world thus gaining brownie points that might translate into seed of species we do not have. It is with this possibility in mind that I have been pursuing permits to import them.

Every Society needs renewal. Ours is no exception. A new President and new purposes are really meaningful.

So, I have edited *Newsletter* since Ken Cathie died in 2003. I am, sadly, not getting younger. I think the time has come for renewal in this area also. This issue is only 12 pages, the smallest in several years. May we have a volunteer for Editor? I am happy to help and to keep writing but new blood is needed.

Simon Begg

LILIUM AND VIREYA SHOW AT FERNY CREEK SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 21st AND 22nd JANUARY

I assume **all local members with blooms** will enter. The Vireya entry categories are similar to ARSV shows. Get a full schedule from FCHS web site or ask me and I'll email it to you. If I know your email address!

25 one container of a vireya species with flower diameter less than 4cm

26 one container of a vireya species with flower diameter greater than 4 cm

27 one container of a vireya hybrid with flower diameter less than 4 cm

28 one container of a vireya hybrid with flower diameter greater than 4 cm

29 one potted plant or hanging basket of a vireya species

30 one potted plant or hanging basket of a vireya hybrid

Email entries to Inge Hammer ingedora@gmail.com from Mon 16th Jan to 8 am Thurs 19 Jan

Phone entries Wed 18 Jan 3 pm to 8 pm to Mike and Inge Hammer 9755 2176 or Simon and Marcia Begg 9751 1610 or Thurs 19 Jan 10 am to 12 noon to FCHS 9755 1882.

Simon Begg

THE 2012 PROGRAMME

NB The Rhododendron Newsletter will be produced quarterly this year. Issues will be sent out by email or post in January, April, July & October. Contributions would be greatly appreciated. Committee meetings will be held at 5.00pm before General Meetings & as necessary.

JANUARY - Newsletter

SATURDAY & SUNDAY 21st & 22nd - LILIUM AND VIREYA SHOW AT FERNY CREEK HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY 100 Hilton Rd Ferny Creek. **Help educate the public about vireyas by entering your blooms.** Schedules are available from Mike and Inge Hammer Ph: 9755 2176 or FCHS.

THURSDAY 26TH AUSTRALIA DAY BBQ at NRG, 6.00PM. BYO everything. Park near the lunchroom. BBQ available.

FEBRUARY

SUNDAY 19TH 2.00PM. National Rhododendron Garden Propagation workshop. Everyone is welcome to bring cutting material of any species they wish to propagate.

MARCH

FRIDAY 16TH 8.00PM General Meeting at Nunawading. Beggs' visit to Edinburgh Botanic Garden's vireya collection, Jardin Botanique Lyon and the Vireya House at Bremen's Rhododendron Park.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 17TH AND 18TH Tesselaars Gardening and Rare Plants Expo, Monbulk Rd Silvan. The Rhododendron Society will have a plant stand. Volunteers needed please. Ring Marcia 9751 1610 if you can help for a couple of hours.

APRIL - Newsletter

MAY

SUNDAY 20th - 2.00pm National Rhododendron Garden Workshop to be decided

JUNE

FRIDAY 15TH 8.00pm General Meeting at Nunawading. Speaker, Francis Crome - "Recent biological exploration in New Guinea - the plants and animals of the world's second largest block of rainforest

JULY - Newsletter

AUGUST

SUNDAY 19TH 2.00PM National Rhododendron Garden. Workshop.

SEPTEMBER

FRIDAY 21st 8.00pm General Meeting at Nunawading.

OCTOBER - Newsletter

SUNDAY 9TH - 2.00pm National Rhododendron Garden Workshop

NOVEMBER

FRIDAY 16TH 8.00pm AGM and General Meeting at Nunawading. Speaker to be advised.

SATURDAY 3rd -TUESDAY 6th - RHODODENDRON SHOW.

DECEMBER

SUNDAY 9TH Society Christmas lunch.

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NATIONAL COUNCIL DELEGATES

Marcia Begg
Prue Crome

OTHER OFFICE BEARERS

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