

THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2012

Published by the
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2012 PROGRAMME

The Rhododendron Newsletter is produced quarterly. 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 and as necessary.

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 8.00PM

- MARCH 16TH
- JUNE 15TH
- SEPTEMBER 21st
- NOVEMBER 16TH

FOUR WORKSHOPS AT THE NATIONAL RHODODENDRON GARDENS; 2.00PM

- FEBRUARY Sunday 19th
- MAY Sunday 20th
- AUGUST Sunday 19th
- OCTOBER Sunday 7TH

MAY 2012

SUNDAY 20TH – 2.00PM at NRG. Plant Sale. Meet in the lunch room. Plants from the ARSV nursery will be for sale. Limited supplies of some species.

JUNE 2012

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 2012

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2012

SUNDAY 19TH 2.00PM National Rhododendron Garden. Workshop.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT APRIL 2012

I start this Presidents report where I left off in the January Newsletter, with a push for more members to be involved in the society's activities. The reason I want more members involved isn't because things aren't happening. It's quite the reverse; interesting and valuable things are getting done. It will be a shame if more members, as many as possible, don't involve and enjoy themselves in the projects currently under way.

The new propagation house is up and running. The humidity control and air flow look to be working very well. There is plenty of hot bed space for seedlings and cuttings. The temperature range within the house is good and the light is bright and even. So we are hoping for very good results. The new propagation house will be used to grow seedlings and cuttings for the Gardens and for the Society and it has been suggested (and we will try) having one third of the bench space set aside for members own use. So if you have plants at home you want to propagate or you want to try plants from the Gardens then there is room and material available for you to use. There are proviso's on this of course. They are that:

- * you don't damage plants in the Gardens, or monopolize the propagator and
- * material propagated is clean, disease free and labelled with plant name, members name and date started.

The propagator will also play a critical role in our aim of preserving as many Rhododendron species and hybrids, both within the Gardens and within members gardens as possible. In this regard there is much work to be done to prioritize what plants need to be propagated because they are rare or because they will grow well in our environment or just because a particular plant is beautiful it should be more widely spread. Any help/suggestions members could provide with plant recommendations for propagation would be gratefully received. Just email any of the committee.

With the propagator finished we are now in a position to move on to the refurbishment of the Vireya House. The plans are fairly solid, materials have been sourced and, at the last general meeting, a budget of \$20,000 was agreed to. The hope is that we will have finished the house by November, in time for us to use it for this year's Spring Rhododendron Show. The building of the Vireya House and work in the propagator will form a major part of the activities for the Tuesday morning volunteers group, so if you are interested come and lend a hand.

Several Society members are planning a trip to North Queensland in August/September to collect Rhododendron from the exposed tops of mountains over 1000 metres high. It is hoped this expedition will provide material of known provenance for study and cultivation. There is room for more members interested in joining the expedition, but be warned the walking and climbing will not be easy.

John O'Hara

AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY'S NATIONAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In the National Council teleconference held on Sunday 22 April a decision was made to have a regular report to Branches, by the President, to be circulated via branch Newsletters.

I take this first opportunity to let people know of the exciting initiative by National Council to organize and partially sponsor a collecting trip to Nth Queensland.

As many of you would know there is still contention over whether Australia has one or more species of Rhododendron.

The original thought of only one species *R lochiaie* had been with us since the first discovery on Mt Bartle Frere until there was a morphological difference noticed in one particular collection from Thornton Peak which became the more common form in cultivation.

This resulted in a fair bit of debate some of which can be still read on the Australian Native Plant Society Website if you type *Rhododendron viriosum* in to the search engine.

The aim of the collection expedition, to be held in September 2012 and more than likely again in 2013 at a similar time, is to collect from the wild as many geographic forms as possible to grow and study in ex situ gardens such as Olinda NRG , Emu Valley RG and Botanic gardens of Adelaide site Mt Lofty Botanic Garden.

The excitement that this causes, to someone like myself in particular, is indescribable. To have an opportunity to do something like this does not come around often. The National Council endorsing this during the period I am President is also something that pleases me greatly but at the same time throws up a significant challenge.

We as a Plant Society are going through a very turbulent period. The interest within the community as far as gardening is at an all-time low. We are competing for time with instant gratification of the latest technology in computing and telecommunications.

We need to come up with our own KONY2012 campaign to enthuse the current generation of potential Rhodophiles. Someone suggested we should try to mount a campaign to make our native species of Rhododendron as significant to the Australian and International psyche as the Wollemi Pine.

To that end I issue a call to arms to all of you to start talking about this planned expedition to anyone who will stand still long enough and if you use Facebook or twitter to tweet and post about it as often as you can.

I will be endeavouring to get the News Media interested locally and if anyone has access to any journalistic connections within their network of acquaintance I encourage the same.

The other major item of discussion was a lot less exciting, however very necessary. This was around the Levy to National Council. In the past the amount that the levy was set to was linked to the cost of production of the *Rhododendron* our Journal produced once a year. This has been set at \$17.50. The cost impacts, on several fronts, have made us look at the levy from several angles. The decision we have come to is that the levy will decrease next year to

\$12 and the fully printed copy of the *Rhododendron* will be only available for those that order one prepaid for at \$10. There will be an electronic version of the *Rhododendron* available to members if they do not wish to have a fully printed version. How this is to happen is yet to be worked out however most likely it will be in PDF format and most likely as a link on the ARS website.

I leave you to contemplate the ways to promote growing Rhododendrons and getting more people to become active members of our Society.

I am happy to receive emails in person.

My email address is robert.hatcher@sa.gov.au or hatcherhouse@internode.on.net

Robert Hatcher

THE SPECIES COLUMN.

moulmainense -Section Choniastrum (Formerly Stamineum section). [Photo Page]

This is an elepidote species which is not widely grown in Europe. Peter Cox writes in the “Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species” that the Choniastrum Section is a much neglected group of species with great potential for warm climates such as S,E.Australia and the milder parts of New Zealand and California. Generally these species have done well at Olinda but we lost a number of plants due to lack of water during recent dry summers. .

Generally the species in the Choniastrum Section do not hybridise readily with the more common Asiatic elepidotes.

Name:

Named after Moulmein, Burma.

Related Species.

The R.H.S. Handbook (1980) listed 19 species in the former Stamineum Series but this number has been radically revised for the Choniastrum Section. Peter Cox lists only 5 species in cultivation, namely:.

championae 7 plants in the N.R.G.

hancockii 2 plants

latoucheae 5 plants

moulmainense 13plants

stamineum 1plant

Characteristics.

In the wild, *moulmainense* grows up to 15 metres in height but much less in cultivation. The leaves tend to be narrow up to 17 cm. long and are often bronze or pink when young. The flowers are white to pink with a yellow blotch, and come from multiple buds giving a very floriferous display.

Where to See These Plants:

Most of these have been planted in the area North of the Maddenia Walk under the shade of the eucalypts, and can be seen in flower from early to mid-November. There is also one plant near the centre of the Main Rockery.

Alan Kepert.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

R ruttenii [photo page]. According to the classification proposed by Dr George Argent *Rhododendrons in subgenus Vireya* RHS 2006 *R ruttenii* is one of 62 members of Section VII EUVIREYA subsection iii Solenovireya. Sadly the classification of plants is under constant revision. A paper published on 20 July 2011 by LA Craven, F Danet, JF Veldkamp, LA Goetsch and BD Hall *Vireya Rhododendrons: their monopholy and classification (Ericaceae, Rhododendron section Schistanthe)* Blumea 56, 2011: 153-158 proposes that *Schistanthe* is a section of the genus *Rhododendron*, not a sub-genus as proposed by Dr Argent and not, properly called *Vireya*, though the latter name remains in common usage. Moreover though Craven *et al* recognise subsection Euvireya and they recognise an informal group corresponding to Argent's subsection solenovireya they do not recognise it as a sub group of Euvireya. For the time being we continue *Newsletter's* adoption of Argent's treatment though we have to recognise that change is coming.

Name

The species is named after L Rutten, a Dutch Geologist, who also collected plants and led the expedition that collected this species in July 1918.

Habitat

The species comes from Indonesia, specifically Maluku, C Seram, Mt Murkele, Mt Binala in primary forest abundant on limestone from 1900-2500m. It was introduced into cultivation in Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in 1987. It is very similar to *R jasminiflorum* but with larger flowers. It has not got the diverse geographical range of *R jasminiflorum*.

Description

It is a shrub to 2m flowering in July in its native habitat but, mostly, in late spring in Edinburgh. Spring, also in Olinda though a flower on a small rooted cutting in April has prompted this article.

Twigs are rounded, smooth, moderately densely brown scaly; internodes 1.7-4.5cm [mine about 4cm] so slow growing. My biggest plant, in ground, looks better suited to a hanging basket, though quite vigorous. Another that, optimistically, I planted out when quite small, struggled for a while then turned up its toes. **Leaves** 4-6 together in tight pseudowhorls. Blade 30-80 x 12-45 mm, obovate to elliptic; apex broadly tapering, obtuse to rounded, sometimes slightly retuse; margin entire, narrowly revolute, base narrowly tapering.

Flower buds 12 x 8 mm, green strongly flushed with dark purple. **Inflorescence** 4-8 flowered, the flowers held stiffly semi erect to half hanging, white or very lightly flushed

pink at the lobes as the buds open, strongly and sweetly scented. Corolla 45-50 x 21-30 mm trumpet shaped; tube 41-50 x 6-8 x 5-6, straight cylindrical; lobes 10-13 x 10-12 sub-circular with irregular margins.

Verdict

I like it but recognise that it won't grow readily for everyone.

Simon Begg

NATIONAL RHODODENDRON GARDEN UPDATE

The Garden continues to have good visitation with over 100,000 people last year. I think one of the great things we are seeing is the locals using the garden more and many people on repeat visits. International visitors continue to rise as well and families can be seen enjoying the gardens. While not everyone comes to see the Rhododendrons they go away having experienced the garden in a multitude of ways and go away hopefully having learnt something about the Rhododendrons and the experienced some of the beauty of nature.

Staff

We are enjoying the work Dan (gardener promised at last election) is doing and his contribution and enthusiasm in the gardens is contributing to an improvement in maintenance and appearance of the gardens. We have also recruited to fill the position vacated by Neil late last year and hope to make an appointment before this newsletter goes out. This will mean that we will have five gardeners and a plant operator based at the Rhododendron Gardens which will add up to about three full time gardening positions allowing for part timers and the time that the new gardener will spend at other properties. Certainly we have the most skilled people available to work here since I started here in 2006. In a time of cut backs the ARS and gardens management have done well to grow a skilled team to work here on the collections.

Collections Policies

The collection policies are ready to be started with the template adapted from the Melbourne Botanic Gardens and peer reviewed. I am hoping to start some rolling meetings with different 'experts' for different collections. The aims of the policies are to measure collections against overall goals of the garden and then give us direction in what we do in collecting and maintaining for the immediate and long term future. These should be reviewed and updated periodically.

Other Projects

Labelling - we are progressing slowly through Parks Victoria's IT red tape but hopefully we will end up with a modern, efficient accurate labelling system for the gardens.

Database – we are at a bit of a standstill for a time while some software difficulties are sorted out. This affects all the database activities within Parks Victoria so I am hoping that there will be a solution soon. Then we can get this project active.

ARS projects

Modernising the propagation house is well underway with the old quarantine house refurbished and almost ready for use. Hopefully the better propagation facilities will be easier to use and results will improve. As we investigate the refurbishment of the old glass house I look forward to working with the Tuesday crew to implement the new Vireya house plans. I think it presents a great opportunity for the ARS and the gardens to collect and display a wide variety of Vireya.

In the next year I hope to report that we have made significant progress on all these projects. They are all interlinked to each other in forming a stronger link with and standing among Botanic Gardens on national and international levels.

Glenn Maskell

THE NEW PROPAGATION HOUSE

Tuesday Volunteer Group

The new propagation house at Olinda began life as the old quarantine house, nestled under tall trees by the edge of the golf course. Falling branches had smashed many of the panes of glass, moss had grown over most of it and ivy was about to swallow the back half. The benches were all rotted, the louvers did not open and the insect screens were a solid green mass.

After removing the glass, ivy, electricals and benches, we, like the seven little dwarfs lifted the frame and hi ho, hi ho it was off through the gardens we went, carrying the aluminium frame. We brought it up to a spot next to the parks office, under the big shade house roof.

We have since poured a concrete slab and set the frame up on treated pine footings. The frame was re-clad in clear 8mm twin walled polycarbonate supplied by a company called Palram (you can get this material retail from Bunnings). We remade three benches as 250mm deep ACQ (non-toxic) treated pine boxes, 2.4 metres long by 0.9 metres wide. These were lined with shade cloth to keep the filling in place and then filled with a layer of polystyrene to insulate the base then a heat traced wire mesh (heat tracing from Heatec Cables in Queensland) followed by a thick layer of Perlite.

Parks Victoria very kindly installed a weatherproof electrical box on the outside wall with enough power points to run the electrical items in the glasshouse and a timer set lighting system.

As well as the heated propagation benches and lighting there is installed in the glasshouse a Sage Horticultural Humidifier HR50, which can deliver up to 2 litres of water per hour as a fine fog of droplets. This unit is capable of maintaining a set relative humidity level within

the glasshouse and is actuated by a wall mounted hygrometer. To maintain an even atmosphere and air circulation an electric fan is placed at one end of the house and runs continuously.

John O'Hara





R. moulmainense



R. ruttenii



R excellens growing in Andrew Rouse's garden. He received the seed in the 1993 through the American Rhododendron Society seed exchange (#1600 AC370), the seed was wild collected by Alan Clark in northern Vietnam. It flowers round Xmas time and flowered particularly well this summer as we had coolish weather (hot weather prematurely finishes off the flowering). Plant is about 2 m x 2 m.

Simon Begg's *R. konori*





Above: Victoria Station homestead & Post Office.

Left: *Crinum flaccidum*, Darling Lily.

Below: Devil's Elbow Gorge on the Murray River.





Alex Pottage's garden at King Lake 3 years after the Black Saturday bushfires.

Alex is one of the keen volunteers working at the NRG on Tuesdays.



STARTING OVER IN KINGLAKE

We began gardening 3 months after the fires. After the loggers and Grocon cleaned up I had a blank canvass to work with. There was more garden area than before but then there was no canopy and the soil was damaged.

I had a soil analysis done and the results were disappointing. Up to 70% nitrogen was gone and the soil was sterile from 6 inches to 15 inches depending on where the hot spots were. Before considering plants I got hold of manufacturers of soil products. I sourced soil microbes, dried sea weed, rock dust and had a delivery of 200 bags of organic manures.

I began with the garden in front of the house as it was accessible and I would not be in the way of whatever workers were there at the time. Surprisingly after a few months some of the South African bulbs popped up and the tree peonies re-emerged.

In the meantime I began to obtain plants from all over the place. I decided on collecting dwarf heritage fruit trees. Previously I had espaliered them and this time I thought I would make life simpler. It also meant that I could have more in a given space and at last count there are 60 apples planted.

Over a period of 2 years the garden is taking on a structure. I have been able to re-establish a rhododendron collection thanks to the society and Laurie Begg and others. People gave me lots of plants over time and bit by bit things have fallen into place. I was driven to go to many plant fairs and markets and arrived home with pots and [pots of plants which made John wince. Eventually we brought them up to Kinglake and, where an area was available, planted them out.

The garden is a collection of garden rooms. There are the rhododendron areas with woodland plants. The north area of the block is planted with She oaks, native frangipani and Mulberries. The winds from the north have been ferocious at times so these trees are tough enough and will eventually provide protection. On the west fence line, which is sheltered, there are plantings of *Correa lawrenciana*. Another part of the garden is a woodland collection with Birches, Daphnes and smaller Rhododendrons. Where the fruit trees are planted I have put a collection of Salvias to attract bees for pollination as Lavenders don't do well due to wet and cold. There are 2 dry garden areas which have plants that tolerate compacted soils and some of the plants here are roses, galtonias, dahlias, salvias and maples. We put in a pond as a soak so, when it rains, water collects. I have planted a few native water plants plus iris ensatas.

I think I have broken every design rule for landscaping. Amongst the native plants are ornamentals. If it looks good I have planted it. There is also a large vegetable garden with 10 raised beds constructed in the no dig method. Of these 3 are for perennial veggies like asparagus, rhubarb and the Australian native limes. I have also planted a collection of European plums, pistachio nut trees, medlars, apricots and there is a raspberry patch.

The garden is about 2 acres now and there is a new area further in to the block which will be planted with *Nothofagus*, Celery Top pine and native Sassafrass. I was able to get *Nothofagus gunnii* from Tasmania and so far they are doing well.

Alex Pottage

VIREYA COLLECTING IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

The National Council of the Australian Rhododendron Society, the National body of which the Victorian Branch is a member, voted last Sunday in favour of a proposal to mount an expedition to collect Australia's native rhododendrons from their North Queensland mountain habitats. A feasibility study has been conducted by Robert Hatcher, National President, and myself with very considerable help from John O'Hara, Victorian Branch President, Francis Crome, Victorian Branch Committeeman, Lyn Craven, Emeritus Principal Research Scientist, Australian National Herbarium, CSIRO Plant Industry Canberra and Mary Gandini, James Cook University, Cairns Campus.

Robert and I have concluded that the expedition is feasible and desirable though we have yet to establish detailed costing, a precise itinerary, and the membership of the expedition.

What we have decided and discovered is:-

- four weeks will be needed, being the first two weeks in September in 2012 and again in 2013. That time may not be enough, even working hard.
- there are 10 peaks in the wet tropics North Queensland where *Vireya* are known. Three are south of the Barron River where *R lochiaie* is found and the remainder are North of the Barron River where *R viriosum* is found.
- 8 of the 10 peaks are in National Park Reserve, indeed in a World Heritage Area; 1 is in a Forest Reserve and 1 in a Resources Reserve
- Expedition members will, for the most part, pay their own way. Exceptions will be hire of any necessary transport, postage and, perhaps, packaging of specimens and press for herbarium specimens. And any guides who need to be paid.
- In 2012 we plan to collect from the *lochiae* peaks, being Bell's Peak North, Mt Bartle Frere and Mt Bellenden Ker plus a few of the *viriosum* peaks, Mt Finnigan and Mt Lewis. Perhaps, also Windsor Tableland and Mt Spurgeon, being close to Mt Lewis. The rest in 2013. The precise order may change because of the availability of guides etc.
- The expedition has support from the Royal Botanic Garden Adelaide and Parks Victoria at National Rhododendron Garden as well as our permit referees, Lyn Craven

and George Argent and Mary Gandini's proposed DNA researchers at James Cook University.

- We have been helped by the relevant Queensland Authority, DERM in the permit process, though, as yet, our application has not been considered. It will be shortly.
- We will collect herbarium specimens for the Queensland Herbarium Brisbane, The Australian National Herbarium Canberra, The Australian Tropical Herbarium Cairns and there are likely to be others

Mt Finnigan is important because the vireyas there differ from all the others. It is the most northerly known site. Thus I assume, if vireyas descended south from New Guinea, Mt Finnigan was the first Australian site.

There is no doubt that if the expedition succeeds it will be of immense scientific value. It will settle how many Australian species there are. Whether there are natural hybrids short of species status. It will provide properly provenanced specimens for major Australian and overseas collections. As propagation proceeds private collectors, too, should have their needs satisfied. Just think of the interest that a properly labelled and well laid out display garden of all the Australian sub varieties will create!

Simon Begg

JOTTINGS

'SUPER NEW NAME' : *Rhododendron x superponticum* is the proposed new name for the invasive rhododendron causing problems in the wild across the UK. Botanists have suspected that the invasive plants are hybrids descended from three parents, one of which is *R. ponticum*. The hybrid is hardier and more vigorous than its parent. (*'The Garden'* Feb 2012)

TESSELAARS GARDENERS MARKET: Tesselaars invited the Society to set up a stand at the Gardeners Market in March. It was an excellent opportunity to display our plants and encourage new members. Andrew Raper and Simon Begg supplied plants for sale which had to be re-stocked on Sunday. The weather was perfect and gardeners arrived in droves. By 4.00pm on Sunday we had one plant left and lots of interest in the Society's activities.

TIME FOR A SMILE!

"The Grand Plan" An elderly man in Olinda calls his son in London and says, "I hate to ruin your day, but I have to let you know that your mother and I have decided to separate—forty years of misery is enough for anybody."

"Dad I can't believe it!" his son exclaims.

"We can't stand the sight of each other any longer," the old man says. "We're sick of each other, and I'm fed up of talking about it, so you call your sister in New York and tell her." He hangs up the phone.

Out of his mind with worry, the son calls his sister, who explodes down the phone. “They simply cannot get a divorce,” she shouts. “Leave it to me.” She calls her father immediately and screams at the old man, “You are not divorcing Mum! Please don’t do a single thing until I get there. I’ll call my brother now and we’ll both be there in two days. Until then, don’t do a thing, promise me?” and she hangs up.

The old man puts down the receiver and turns to his wife.

“Okay,” he says, “They’re coming for our Wedding Anniversary and they’re both paying their own air fares.”

‘Big Business’: A middle aged man decides it is time for a life change. He makes an appointment to meet his local bank manager to discuss the possibility of starting his own small business. The bank manager is very helpful and has several suggestions but as the man leaves he says: ‘What you could do is to start a big business and just wait’!

LAKE VICTORIA STATION

Simon and I recently had a relaxing diversion from our predominantly European garden to the relative remoteness of an oasis on the Murray River. Lake Victoria Station is in NSW halfway between Wentworth, where the Darling and Murray Rivers converge, and Renmark in South Australia. Nearly one hundred kilometres from a shop and to receive internet or mobile phone connection one had to take a walk up a rise to the shearing shed a kilometre away. The drive there from Wentworth was by a rough corrugated road through salt bush scrub. There were six cars in our cavalcade and as we neared the accommodation we passed Lake Victoria where our guide stopped to explain its importance to Adelaide.

Lake Victoria is about ten kilometres by eleven kilometres and it is under the control of the South Australian Water Board because it supplies Adelaide with drinking water. The water enters the lake via Frenchman’s Creek from the Murray and leaves via a controlled discharge outlet into Rufus River and back into the Murray until Morgan where it is stored and treated before being piped to Adelaide.

Lake Victoria has aboriginal burial sites, artefacts and middens which have been protected. Rufus River was the site of a massacre in 1841 when thirty-five people were killed.

On then to Lake Victoria Station which was built in the 1860’s of local rock and would have been a thriving community during the age of the paddle steamers. Right on the river it was a major stopping place for paddle steamers from Mildura and Renmark. A separate stone building housed a Post Office which the new owners plan to restore. Paddle steamers would bring mail, passengers, stock and supplies and these would transfer to the Pony Express or Cobb and Co. for the two hundred kilometre ride to Broken Hill.

There are two houses set in a lush shady garden which is irrigated from the river and fenced off from the local fauna of kangaroos, emus and rabbits. A previous owner had irrigated a large area and grown asparagus as a commercial crop. The venture was successful until the demise of Ansett Airlines in 2001. Ansett was their interstate carrier.

Wheat is grown successfully and we recognized some familiar wild flowers – *Brachyscombe*, *Prostanthera*, a yellow daisy, a pink *Solanum*. The biggest surprise was the Darling Lily, *Crinum flaccidum*, which we first thought was an escapee related to Belladonna Lilies (*Amaryllus*) but actually has relatives in Africa, Asia and USA.

Two and a half million years ago there was an inland sea from this area down to Sea Lake in Victoria. The Devil's Elbow gorge along the Murray and the small round pebbles all over the ground might be indications of the ancient sea. Though there is no sea now there is plenty of water in the Murray and more to come from the recent torrential rains in Queensland, NSW and Victoria. In the week we were there the Murray rose over 350mls. The River Red Gums, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, some hundreds of years old, are lapping up all this wonderful water and are able tolerate being flooded for many months. It will be weeks or months before the peak but the owners of the station are certain the homestead will not be flooded. The worst floods occurred in 1956 when Renmark was flooded.

We had a very relaxing week enjoying walking, canoeing, bird watching, reading and fishing among other activities.

MNB

Have you been on an interesting trip or holiday? We would love to have some short articles with photos.

CAN YOU HELP?

ARSV LIBRARY. A decision was made at the committee meeting to sort all the library books kept at Nunawading and Olinda. All books will be stored at the NRG in future and will be available to all members. If you would like to help sort please come to the NRG on Sunday 6th May at 10.00am.

A TRIP TO YUNNAN AND USA.

We had a beaut botanising trip to Yunnan in the middle of the year. Francis had always said how wonderful it was so we joined a rare organised botany tour. Things have changed in Yunnan. It is a vast construction site now with roads being built everywhere and acrobatic drillers clinging to cliffs in road cuttings to insert bolts to stop the cuttings collapsing. Not that it matters much. Yunnan doesn't have 'stop' and 'go' men or women. You just wander at will through the road construction. These can last hundreds of miles. The country is gorgeous and the plants phenomenal – rhododendrons, conifers, alpine, orchids, every garden plant you can think of.

Not long after that we drove across America, without the botanical tourists. Our friends Stella and Charlie were moving from San Francisco to North Carolina so we drove one of their cars for them – a convertible Audi TT. What a fantastic country. Spectacular and lots of forest. Food was cheap and nutritious and you could buy hunting gear everywhere. You could get camouflaged everything. This was obviously the home of camouflage cloth CPAP masks – a must for hunters who don't want to keep their buddies awake in the woods. In Yellowstone we received a "what to do if confronted by a bear" pamphlet. Apparently the thing to do is stand your ground, if the bear doesn't go away lie down with your hands over your head with your legs apart. The pamphlet was written by the bears. Oh Forgot! We actually went to the US twice. Francis had meetings in Houston so we both went. We visited NASA, which was inspiring and exciting and generally good. We came away with a

toddler astronaut suit for our granddaughter Ava and a “failure is not an option” T shirt for Francis. Prue didn’t get anything!

Prue Crome

MARCH GENERAL MEETING

Our new President, John O’Hara, presided over the meeting and showed slides of the old quarantine glasshouse in its new position in the shadehouse. Set up with new heated beds, fans, humidifier, concrete floor and fogger it will be used to propagate new stock for the NRG and members. One third of the bench space can be used by members for their own propagation needs.

The large glasshouse which was originally built to house vireyas will be re-vamped as a Vireya House and open to the public. It will be stripped inside and out and will add a new dimension to a visit to the NRG especially for those visitors who are unable to venture down to the lakes. The members at the meeting agreed to set aside \$20,000 from the Society’s investments to proceed with this exciting structure.

Following supper Simon Begg showed a presentation of photos from his trip to Europe last year focusing on vireya collections at three botanic gardens. These were Edinburgh Botanic Garden’s glasshouse, Jardin Botanique in Lyon, France and Rhododendron Park in Bremen, Germany.

MNB

RHODODENDRON PLANTS REQUESTED

At the March General Meeting Graham Price asked if members could supply him with any vireyas from his ‘wish list’. I can supply most of them but some need propagating. I also had a request from Mt Tamborine Botanic Garden for Vireyas. I supplied all save one of them. If anyone can help with the ones I have not got, immediately available, please let me know. Finally I have a request to supply species of Vireya that Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden does not have. I have a list of what EVRG does have. The task of filling the gaps, I suspect will fall to Andrew Rouse and me though, going forward my hope is that the Tuesday Group will turn its attention to growing cuttings and plants from seed both to replenish NRG stock and fill members’ and sister Societies’ wish lists. Because there is now an acute shortage of nurseries growing rhododendrons, save the most common ones, our Society can fulfil a valuable service by cultivating rhododendrons of all varieties, species and hybrids, vireya, azalea and Asiatic. If the Society grows good saleable plants it could well add significantly to Society coffers.

GRAHAM PRICE’s Wish LIST

R “Pink Jazz” I have plants of this in ground but nothing to supply. Can propagate.

R. hellwigii [(Dr. Sleumer x aurigianum) x leucogigas]

R. "Fantasia"

R. goodenoughii

R. leucogigas

R. lowii

THE 2012 PROGRAMME

The Rhododendron Newsletter is produced quarterly. 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.

MAY

SUNDAY 20th - 2.00pm National Rhododendron Garden **Plant Sale.** Meet in the lunch room. Plants from the ARSV nursery will be for sale. Limited supplies of some species.

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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OFFICE BEARERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2011-2012

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