

Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 87 – April 2015

Coming Events

Next Meeting, 15th April 7:45pm

There will be a presentation by Richard Illman on some great gardens of Britain.



Please 'bring a friend', a plate, and an item for the Trading Table.

Festival of Flowers

Sat & Sun Apr 11&12, 10am-4pm

Formerly held at the Enfield Community Centre and now at St Pauls College, Gilles Plains- 792 Grand Junction Road, at this flower show you will find plants from the Begonia Society, Weald View Fuschia gardens, Tupelo Grove Nursery, Mylor, African Violet Society & SA Orchid Club. From past experience this is a most worthwhile excursion for all plant lovers.

ABC Adelaide Gardeners' Market

Saturday April 11, 8am-1pm

Twice each year the ABC's Collinswood car park is transformed into a giant market full of gardening goodies.

In addition to the plant market, you can join in with broadcasts, take a tour of the ABC Radio and TV studios, enjoy live music, food, and much more.



Visit the [Gardeners' Market](#) web page for more information.

Autumn Rose Show

Sat April 18 and Sun April 19

Magnificent rose displays, plant stall, afternoon tea, photography competition and lots more.

Burnside Community Centre, 401 Greenhill Road, Tusmore.

Visit the [Rose Society of South Australia](#) web page for more information.

March Meeting

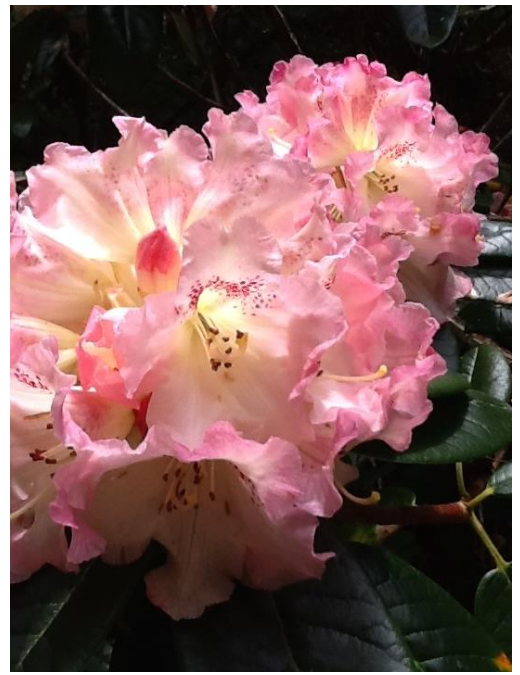
The first meeting of the year for the Society was very well attended (obviously members were suffering from slight rhodi withdrawal, a condition which often manifests itself annually around late February). The review of the International Rhododendron Conference held in Dunedin, New Zealand in 2014 was very informative. The presenters Bron Illman,

Peter Wiadrowski and Jeff Jenkinson. All presented different aspects of the conference, which they felt members would be interested in. Having the three different perspectives made for a very interesting discussion. Peter also showed some stunning photos.

The evening's raffle was won by the Illmans.

As usual an abundant supper table was enjoyed by all.

Michelle.



At the March meeting Lianne Healey brought to the attention of the committee and members a letter to the Australian which gave advice on pruning of rhododendrons which she felt required a response from the society.

Printed below is the response from Robert Hatcher.

TWIG HELEN YOUNG

My rhododendrons have become increasingly leggy. What pruning technique and fertilisers will encourage bushy growth and more flowers?

KATHERINE HEALY, ALDGATE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The usual method is cutting just behind the spent flower clusters, or twisting them off by hand. You can rejuvenate leggy plants with harder pruning, even into old wood. If plants are not very vigorous, do this to just half the stems, and the remainder the following year. Rhododendrons like acidic soil enriched with compost but don't need a lot of fertiliser. An organic-based fertiliser for azaleas and camellias is ideal.

Hi Cathy

A concerned member of the SA Branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society brought along a segment from the Australian by Helen Young in response to Katherine Healey, asking about pruning of Rhododendrons. While the advice in general terms may have been acceptable, not all Rhododendrons are equal when it comes to pruning and when pruning back to old wood it is a good idea to look for dormant buds. The advice on doing it in halves or stages was good though.

May I also suggest when getting a specific plant group question, Helen may like to recommend the local or closest branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society in Victoria, SA or Tasmania and the group that run Campbell Memorial Garden (at Blackheath in NSW I think it is). We are always happy to welcome interested people to our fraternity.

Kind regards

Rob Hatcher (Immediate past National President Australian Rhododendron Society)

Horticultural Supervisor

Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens

Botanic Gardens of South Australia

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources





By Bill Voigt

Culture Notes

"What you should be doing with your rhodies and garden this April"

Although rhododendrons will grow in the higher reaches of the Adelaide hills e.g. Crafers, Stirling, Piccadilly, Aldgate, Bridgewater and adjoining areas, climatic conditions are not as favourable as those found in the eastern states and Tasmania. We experience drier and hotter months of late spring and summer resulting in greater stress on rhodos, particularly those more recently planted. Therefore it seems the most practical solution for gardeners who would like to grow some rhodos is to plant the much hardier varieties such as the Whibley hybrids and old tested toughies "Sir Robert Peel", "White Pearl", various forms of Ponticum, "Mrs G.W.Leak", "Sappho" and "President Roosevelt".

If your heart is set on a beautiful but not-so-easy-to-grow variety, then it would be a good idea to grow the plant in a container which can be easily moved into a more sheltered position during heat waves and prolonged dry periods. On really hot days any exposure to sun after 9:30am will probably result in sun scorch.

The chief reasons for death of newly planted rhodos are

1. The soil around the roots of the plant when taken from its container has dried out. This can happen even if the plant is put into the ground and watered. Sometimes the water does not penetrate through the root ball, so in order to avoid this problem, soak the plant in its container by immersing it in a large bucket or tub for a least an hour, then plant it in its permanent position.
2. With clay soils, if a hole not much larger than the root ball is dug, it can quickly fill with water which will not drain away so the plant will suffer root rot. The solution is to thoroughly break up the soil and incorporate some humus or compost into the site to create a more friable environment for the roots.



Sappho



President Roosevelt



Death by too much mulch

3. Reflected heat from a fence, hard paths or walls of buildings. This can so damage the foliage that the plant cannot survive.
4. Inappropriate use of mulch. While mulch can keep the roots cool and lessen the rate of evaporation, here are several factors to be taken into account. Mulch should only be added to soil that is already well watered. When watering mulched areas, it is not enough to just dampen the surface, water must penetrate the layer of mulch and properly wet the soil beneath.



Too close to wall

Ever active blackbirds can completely cover young plants. The two chief pests on rhodos are lace bug and weevils. Systemic insecticides which are now available will control these pests. Remember to spray any new growth that emerges because that is very vulnerable to attack.

Now is the time to plant Ranunculus and Anemone corms. The dry shrivelled corms can be soaked in water for about an hour to plump them up and make them easier to handle. The pointy ends should be placed down so the tiny crowns are just below the surface. Many bulbs and corms will be sending up tender shoots now, and these are caviar to slugs and snails. Some snail baits would be useful for protection of the young plants. It is past the time for planting sweet pea, but there are seedlings available now. The dwarf variety, usually labelled as “Bijou” is very suitable for pots, troughs, window boxes, and hanging baskets.

As the autumn leaves fall, watch to see that small plants are not completely buried.

Have a bottle of your favourite wine ready to be drunk when the real rain finally arrives.

Bloom of the Month

Azalea Yochelle

Azaleas that are currently putting on a wonderful autumn display are Yochelle and Reinhold Ambrosius. Azaleas are great at providing colour prior to the show put on by all our deciduous trees.

Pictured in our header is Azalea Yochelle currently flowering at Richwyn, an Australian hybrid.



Recipe of the Month

At the Christmas gathering Gill Jenkinson brought along a delectable slice. Here is the recipe extracted from the book “Slices a fine selection of sweet treats”, Murdock Books (it can be sourced from the internet, eg [amazon](#)).

Florentine Slices

Ingredients

125g (4½ oz/½ cup) unsalted butter
115g (4 oz/½ cup) caster (superfine) sugar
155g (5½ oz/1¼ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour, sifted
1 teaspoon baking powder
2 tablespoons custard powder
2 teaspoons water
1 egg yolk

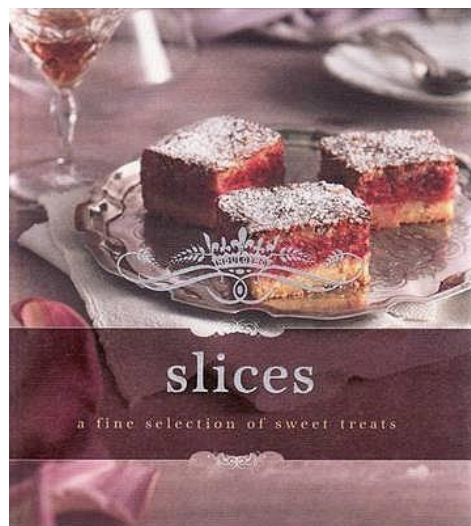
Topping

180g (6¼ oz/2 cups) flaked almonds
200g (7 oz) glacé (candied) cherries
100g (3½ oz) mixed peel (mixed candied citrus peel)
130g (4¾ oz/1 cup) dried sweetened cranberries
350g (12 oz/1 cup) honey
200g (7 oz) unsalted butter
30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour
30g (1 oz) dark chocolate, melted

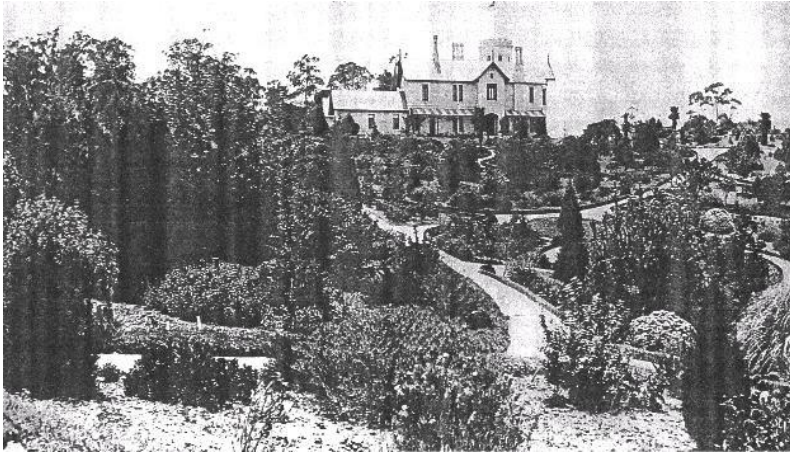
Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4). Lightly grease a 20 x 30 cm (8 x 12 inch) baking tin and line the base and sides with baking paper, extending the paper over the long sides for easy removal later.

Combine the butter, sugar, flour, baking powder and custard powder in the bowl of a food processor and pulse in short bursts for 1 minute, or until combined. Add the water and egg yolk and pulse until the mixture resembles moist breadcrumbs. Press into the prepared tin and smooth the surface with a spatula. Bake for 20 minutes, or until lightly golden. Set aside to cool slightly.

To make the topping, place the almonds, cherries, mixed peel and cranberries in a large bowl. Melt the honey and butter in a saucepan over low heat. Whisk in the flour, then add to the fruit mixture and stir well. Pour over the base and bake for 40 minutes, or until golden. Set aside to cool in the tin. When completely cool, drizzle the melted chocolate over the top in a zigzag pattern. Once the chocolate has set, cut into pieces.



Tales from Forest Lodge



Once again I must report that it has continued to be dry, only 15.5 mm of rain has fallen, and none of it heavy enough to make a big difference to the plants and soil. However, it has been relatively cool without any heat waves and it has been a lovely living month. Eating out in the evenings is always a delight, even if the days are occupied with watering the garden and lawns.

The dry weather has encouraged both the lace bug and the thrip, and some

azaleas and many viburnums are looking scrappy. They will recover once it rains and I am looking forward to the mists of winter.

Milton Bowman

Trading Table

The Trading Table was in full swing for the first meeting of the year! The table was stocked with a large variety of rhododendrons, thanks in no small part to Peter and Jill divesting some of their collection. The proceeds from the night was a whopping \$171.00, thank you to all those who contributed. Let's keep a good thing going!

Michelle



Chris Suggests

For reducing soil pH (making soil more acidic, can also alleviate lime induced chlorosis).

Soil Type : Sandy – Mix 25-50ml in 2L water

Loam – Mix 50-80ml in 2L water

Clay – Mix 80-120ml in 2L water

Frequency : Every 4 weeks until required soil pH is achieved

Timing : Apply as necessary

Area : 2L / 2m²: apply to moist soil around plant

It costs \$10 a container for 500 ml. Using 50 ml to 2 litres of water to a plant it works out at \$1 per plant. Not expensive considering the cost of a rhodo.



Bird of the Month



Masked Lapwing

Vanellus miles

Previously known as Spur winged Plover.

Call is a loud "kekekekekekek".

Often heard and seen at night time, as they walk along the road or footpath and they fly even in the dark if you get too close.

Masked lapwings are shy and harmless in summer and autumn but are best known for their bold nesting habits, being quite prepared to make a nest on almost any

stretch of open ground, including suburban parks and gardens, school ovals, and even supermarket car parks and flat rooftops

At times they nest on road verges, such as the Crafers Freeway on ramp.

Uses the classic "broken wing" syndrome when nest with young is threatened.

Chris Thomas

Ballarat Begonia festival-2015

This was another excellent display of tuberous begonias and well worth taking the time to go and visit. Richard and I took a couple of days out of our busy autumn schedule to travel to Ballarat where we really enjoyed the morning at the Begonia festival



and the afternoon at Lambley Nursery just outside Ballarat. The Begonias were breathtaking and only inspired us further to grow these spectacular plants.

Brownyn

From the Propagating Bench

Raising cyclamen from seed



By Richard Illman

For any members who collected cyclamen seed late last year and sowed it in a pot it should now be looking something like this photo to the right, and in about two years should provide a display of massed blooms.



Cyclamen seedlings



Massed Cyclamen blooms

three years you should have a range of your own hybrids. We have just flowered some seedlings which are blooming from our back door.

Clematis

Keen growers of Clematis should find at this time of the year numerous heads of seeds on their plants. When dry, these can be harvested and sown densely in a pot and covered lightly with soil or fine gravel. They should germinate in the spring, and in about



Clematis seed head



Clematis seedlings blooming
Not Too Late!

The mild autumn weather still provides an opportunity to take a few late cuttings of any rhododendron and azalea.

Librarians Report

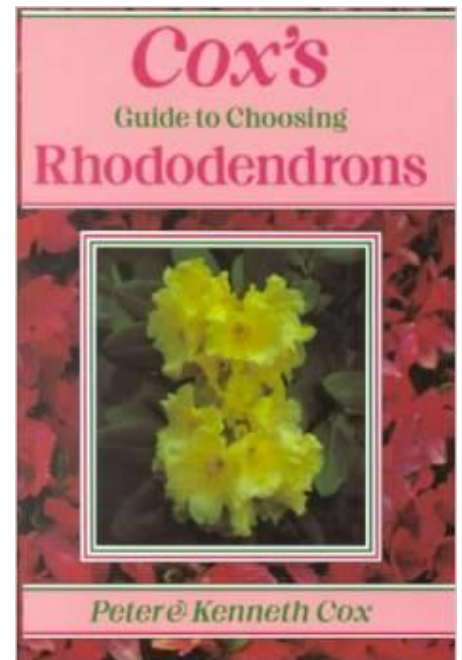


by Ann & David Matison

We would very much like to thank Jill and Peter Wiadrowski for their generous donation of books to our Rhododendron Society. A few duplicate some already in our collection, some are new to us and some are general gardening books. Whether they are all added to our library or whether our society can offer some for sale are questions for discussion at an appropriate meeting.

Gardening is a time honoured pleasure or passion and our knowledge and skills grow over time. We learn from our parents, our friends, industry experts and books and this is how our library can be so useful. It is why donations such as Jill and Peter's are so appreciated. However, during the summer break we have been going through the collection list that Milton so kindly left for us and it is very obvious how old many of the publications are. Hence our plea to all of our members, if you hear of any recent publications please let us know so that we can attempt to source them and add them to our collection.

Ann's suggestion of the Month: "Cox's Guide to choosing Rhododendrons", it is still available from [Amazon](#) - probably a second hand copy, because it was published in 1995.



Pukeiti Gardens

During Jeff Jenkinson's presentation he mentioned Pukeiti Gardens in the North Island of New Zealand, a 360 ha rainforest property renowned for its rhododendron collection. The collection is well in excess of 2000 varieties. As Jeff mentioned, accommodation is available to members at a very reasonable \$80.00 pp. Subscription to the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc is \$30 per annum. For interested Society members this link provides [information on the gardens](#), and this link provides [information on membership](#). These links are also available on our website.



Michelle

Neutrog orders

The Neutrog order has now been placed and members will be informed as to the date and time for collection from the MLBG.

More from Dunedin

More of Peters photos from Dunedin.



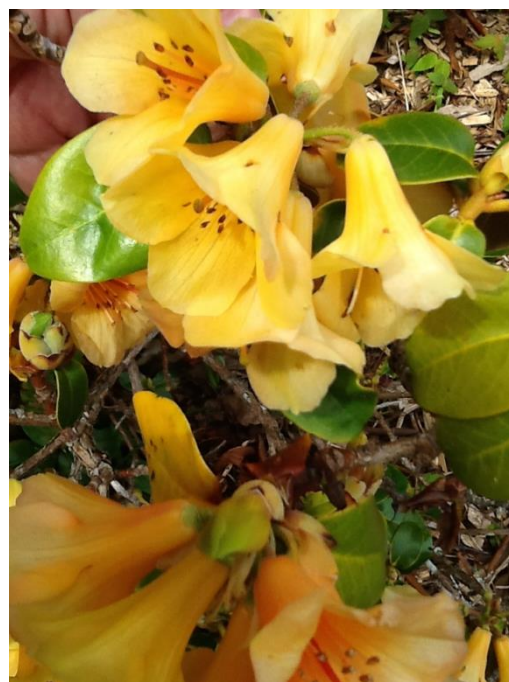
Article Submissions

The news editors welcome submissions for the monthly newsletter. In addition to Problem Corner, Recipe of the Month, and Bloom of the Month, members are welcome to submit articles on any topic that will be of interest to the Society's membership.

We have a deadline of the 1st of the month to allow time to prepare the newsletter for distribution a week before the meeting.

Submissions can be made directly to Michelle or Bronwyn, or emailed to; news.editor@sarhodo.org.au

Michelle & Bronwyn



Helpful Tips

Editors Tip : Where possible images for articles in this Newsletter are sourced from members. Where this is not possible, images are sourced from the internet. Due to deadlines it is not possible to seek permission to use each image, so we hyperlink each of the images in acknowledgement of their source. This has an additional benefit, if you click on these images you may be able to find information in addition to that in the article.